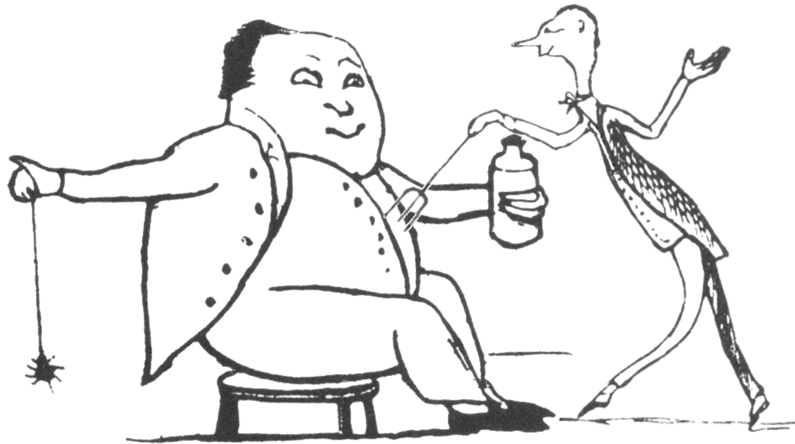
Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate



Volume 22 (2012/2013) Number 2
Waxmann Münster / New York

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Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate
Published by *Connotations: Society for Critical Debate*

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Printed in Germany
ISSN 0939-5482

Connotations is a member of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals.
Contributions are indexed, for example, in the *MLA Bibliography*, the
World Shakespeare Bibliography and the *IBZ/IBR*.

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Connotations
Vol. 22.2 (2012/2013)

Ellipsis and Aposiopesis in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"*

EDWARD LOBB

On October 4, 1923, T. S. Eliot wrote to John Collier, a prospective contributor to *The Criterion*, about a poem Collier had submitted. "This particular type of fragmentary conversation (see p. 4) was invented by Jules Laforgue and done to death by Aldous Huxley," Eliot noted; he went on to admit that "I have been a sinner myself in the use of broken conversations punctuated by three dots" (*Letters* 241). The "sin" of ellipsis was one to which Eliot succumbed frequently in his early poetry,[1] and his disdain for the three dots suggests that he found them too easy a means of suggestive omission. Poetic economy has of course always depended on the omission of superfluous connectors, allowing the reader to infer the meaning; modern poetry took the process a step further, emphasizing the reader's construction of meaning, but also often alienating readers who found that they needed more guidance than the new poets were giving them.

I want to approach the most famous ellipsis in modern poetry—the "overwhelming question" which is mentioned twice in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and implied throughout, but never formulated—by examining Eliot's use of local ellipsis throughout the poem. In juxtaposing things, persons, and issues with no clear connectors, Eliot draws attention to Prufrock's idiosyncratic personality, but also, ingeniously, to the ways in which Prufrock's mind reflects universal modern anxieties. Taking my cue from Eliot's own impatience with "three dots," I shall discuss this form of ellipsis only when necessary

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/deblobb0222.htm>.

to make other points. The "dots" generally require little analysis in any case, since they typically indicate pauses rather than actual omissions:

> I grow old ... I grow old ...
> I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled. (ll. 120-21)[2]

The five dots between verse paragraphs likewise require little comment. Eliot uses the device just twice in "Prufrock," and the breaks are no more decisive in changing a scene or topic than the white spaces between any two verse paragraphs in the poem.

All of these different breaks, however, suggest the broader importance of ellipsis in the poem: along with the other forms of this device I shall be discussing, they adumbrate the Grand Ellipsis of the "overwhelming question" and clarify both by implication and exclusion what that question is. The first form of local ellipsis I wish to discuss is that of the missing connector in some of Prufrock's similes and metaphors.

1. Simile as Ellipsis

When Burns writes, "O, my luve's like a red, red rose," we know immediately what the simile means; when Prufrock says "the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherised upon a table" (ll. 2–3), on the other hand, we have to work hard to find the connection. Early reviewers and critics, expecting a visual simile, accused Eliot of writing nonsense[3] and failed to see that he was using a Modernist form of the traditional trope that Ruskin defined in *Modern Painters* as pathetic fallacy. It is part of the poem's brilliance that most of us fail to see the qualities projected onto the landscape until we have finished reading the poem, or, more often, until we have read it many times. The trope of pathetic fallacy is as old as literature itself, but here it is also specifically Modernist in its emphatic *imposition* onto a landscape of qualities that no actual scene could possibly suggest.

After several readings, we can see that the etherized patient perfectly embodies many of Prufrock's most salient characteristics. Both are sick; both are anaesthetized in one way or another to escape pain; both are mentally isolated, one in literal unconsciousness, the other in a dream-like sequence of pictures from the unconscious; both are, for different reasons, passive, radically vulnerable, and unable to communicate ("It is impossible to say just what I mean!" [l. 104]). The initial opacity of this famous simile as such—particularly in the first lines of a poem—is balanced by an almost overdetermined psychological profile.

The various meanings of the etherized-patient image are reinforced when we read other initially cryptic statements that reflect Prufrock's psyche. These often involve animal analogies that suggest something of Prufrock's alienation:

> The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
> The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
> Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
> Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
> Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
> Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
> And seeing that it was a soft October night,
> Curled once about the house and fell asleep. (ll. 15-22)

The fog-cat does not at first appear to describe Prufrock at all, nor does Prufrock say it does, but its falling asleep parallels that of the etherized patient and anticipates later images of sleep and death, including the evening that "sleeps so peacefully" (l. 75), the severed head of John the Baptist (l. 82) and the mermaids' victims in the last lines of the poem (l. 131).[4] The cat image also reflects Prufrock's sense of isolation, which is projected onto the fogbound house as well. Two later animal images, the pinned insect (ll. 57–58) and the pair of ragged claws (ll. 73–74), focus our sense of Prufrock's vulnerability and alienation. Like the opening simile of the patient, all three animal images convey Prufrock's fears and sense of himself in highly indirect ways that make sense only after we have come to know the poem as a whole.

None of this is entirely new; I draw attention to the gap between the elements of simile in the poem to suggest that it is always and only Prufrock himself who provides the link. This is equally true of the apparent disjunction between Prufrock's major preoccupations.

2. The Gap Between Sex and Metaphysics

Most critics remain as silent about the overwhelming question as Prufrock himself.[5] Perhaps they take our knowledge of it for granted, but I suspect that many of them are afraid of being told "That is not what [he] meant at all" (l. 97). To be clear, however, the question involves the meaning of life and the existence of God, not simply because the question must be overwhelming, but because the historical and literary figures in the poem—Dante, Michelangelo, St. John the Baptist, Lazarus, Hamlet—are all associated with religious and philosophical themes and narratives. If Prufrock is talking to himself (a subject of debate we shall return to), he has no need to articulate what he knows he means, and when Eliot speaks to us as readers, he may simply be employing poetic indirection. But I think this Grand Ellipsis, as I have called it, is explicable in thematic terms, and that these are clarified by Prufrock's other, non-metaphysical obsession: women and sex. This is so overtly developed in the poem that I need not discuss it here; what is more interesting from both a technical and thematic point of view is the *juxtaposition* of sex and metaphysics in "Prufrock."

There are no fewer than fifteen questions in this poem,[6] but the most important, implied throughout, are unstated and can be summarized roughly as "Can I ask a woman for a date?" and "What is the meaning of life?" The disjuncture between the orders of magnitude of the two questions is comic, and suggests that the questions exist in ironic counterpoint: how can Prufrock imagine that he might "disturb the universe" if he cannot even talk to a woman? In dramatic and psychological terms, this is plausible, but there is a thematic reason for the juxtaposition as well, and one that goes to the heart of the poem.

"Prufrock" is a poem of loneliness, and that loneliness exists on both the personal and the metaphysical levels. The two questions are in fact versions of the same problem—a desire to get beyond the prison of the self, whether that loneliness is personal and sexual or cosmic and metaphysical. Pascal wrote of the heavens that "Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinies m'effraie" (Fragment 206), and Prufrock is talking, or declining to talk, about the same fear, the same desire for refuge and solace in the arms of a lover or of God. Sex and metaphysics are analogous in the poem, but while analogies typically clarify, this one remains opaque until we find the missing link between them, and, as with the opening simile, that link is Prufrock's consciousness.[7]

Certainly the poem is filled with images of personal isolation: I have already mentioned the etherized patient, the yellow fog-cat, the fog-bound house cut off visually from the world, the pinned insect, and the "pair of ragged claws" (l. 73). The crab's exoskeleton is echoed in Prufrock's own stiff attire, his "morning coat [and] collar mounting firmly to the chin" (l. 42), formal dress that keeps people at a distance. The image that generalizes Prufrock's situation is particularly interesting:

> Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
> And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
> Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? ...
> (ll. 70-72; Eliot's ellipsis)

This is perhaps the most poignant of Prufrock's images, since radical isolation, one man per lonely bed-sitter, is paired with its contrary, the longing for connection, as the men lean out from buildings into the world like figures in a Stanley Spencer painting.[8]

The longing is obvious in Prufrock himself: why not reach out, then, either to another person or to a God who makes the universe a less cold and frightening place?

> But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
> Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,
> I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;

> I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker
> And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
> And in short, I was afraid. (ll. 81-86)

The Footman's snicker immediately precedes and obviously parallels another rebuff, this time by a woman:

> Would it have been worth while,
> To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
> To have squeezed the universe into a ball
> To roll it towards some overwhelming question,
> To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
> Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
> If one, settling a pillow by her head,
> Should say: "That is not what I meant at all,
> That is not it, at all." (ll. 90-98)

It is in these two imagined scenes that the sexual and the metaphysical, which Prufrock has discussed or implied separately to this point, collide with deliberate awkwardness. Prufrock cannot imagine an encounter at either level that is not marked by embarrassment, specifically through the intrusion of the other element. The "eternal" and presumably cosmic Footman engages in a merely personal, implicitly sexual sneer at Prufrock's appearance[9]; Prufrock then imagines attempting to discuss the afterlife, "That undiscover'd country from whose bourne / No traveler returns"[10] in a clearly erotic setting, and being deflated by a woman with more physical activities in mind. In the first case the cosmic descends bathetically to the sexual, in the second it is subverted by it. The pairing of the two in Prufrock's mind explains his tendency to juxtapose them, and we sense that he feels inadequate in both areas. His failure to connect the two issues except by implication is, like his elusive similes and images, a form of reticence—of ellipsis—at the poem's thematic level. Eliot's treatment of Prufrock's *personal* sexuality in the poem, however, goes even deeper in its exploration of sexual loneliness as a reflection or microcosm of a metaphysical problem.

3. Men, Women ... and Prufrock

Prufrock's obvious insecurities about his appearance—thin arms and legs, probably premature baldness (ll. 40-41, 44, 82, 122)—reflect the anxieties of many men, and are often read as a sense of inadequate masculinity. Prufrock is candid about his insecurities, but most suggestive when he is most indirect, and his gender presentation contributes to the parallel of sex and metaphysics in the poem.

Many commentaries on "Prufrock"[11] mention that lines 90-93, cited above, allude to a famous passage in Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress":

> Let us roll all our Strength, and all
> Our sweetness, up into one Ball:
> And tear our Pleasures with rough strife,
> Thorough the Iron gates of Life. (ll. 41-44)

The *carpe diem* philosophy of Marvell's speaker is at odds with Prufrock's assurance that "there will be time" (ll. 23, 37), suggesting Prufrock's subliminal awareness of his self-deceptions. More importantly, however, Marvell's sexual image of storming "the Iron gates of Life" is made ironic here in a personally self-deprecating way. If Marvell's speaker anticipates tearing a cannonball through the gates, Prufrock, transferring Marvell's earlier verb, can only imagine *rolling* his cannonball towards the overwhelming question—implying that he is not up to the job—and the response of his would-be mistress suggests that she is far more interested in sex than he is, a witty reversal of the situation in Marvell's poem.

This reversal is not simply of outlooks but implicitly of sexes as traditionally conceived. The woman is sexually frank and aggressive, impatient with mere talk, and therefore "male"; Prufrock is implicitly feminized as he talks at length to no apparent purpose, and senses that his own masculinity is called into question by his appearance and his hesitations; his own image of the merely rolling cannonball is the objective correlative, in Eliot's terms, of his fears.[12] It is tempting to fix on Prufrock's (or Eliot's own) sexual anxieties, but it is more productive, I think, to look at what this reversal of sexual roles does to the

relation of sex and metaphysics in the poem. Prufrock takes on the woman's traditional role of procrastinator and becomes "coy" in both senses: 1) making a show of sexual shyness or modesty, and 2) reluctant to give details, as when we say that someone is coy about his age. Prufrock's sexual coyness is the exact parallel of his metaphysical coyness—his elliptic refusal to state the "overwhelming question," much less discuss it. He refuses to move forward in either area for various reasons, including the possibility of disappointment ("And would it have been worth it, after all"), but the real motive, as he admits, is fear. Although men experience it all the time, fear is traditionally considered unmanly, and Prufrock's admission that he is afraid adds to our sense that his gender identity—not his sexual orientation, but the broader complex of emotional and psychological factors that constitute his sexual nature—is neither masculine nor feminine as customarily defined. This, too, is an ellipsis: despite his hints and suggestions, Prufrock avoids any discussion of his gender identity and moves on, crabwise, to other subjects.

We have seen how sex and metaphysics are linked in Prufrock's mind and can infer some of the reasons for his fear of women. He has explained his fear of raising metaphysical questions, however, only in sexual terms; would it not be possible for him to raise those questions in a non-erotic setting with the right woman or a male friend? Prufrock himself seems to forestall this possibility when he first brings up the "overwhelming question":

> Oh, do not ask "What is it?"
> Let us go and make our visit. (ll. 11-12)

We never learn whether Prufrock is speaking to another person or to himself. As mentioned earlier, if he is talking to himself, he does not need to articulate the question; in this case, short-circuiting the inquiry may simply be a way of avoiding another round of fruitless introspection about (in the words of "Ash-Wednesday I") "These matters that with myself I too much discuss / Too much explain" (ll. 28–29). If he really is talking to someone else, however, a different

explanation seems plausible. Prufrock is reluctant to bring up ultimate questions in a hostile or mocking environment, to feel the desperate unfashionableness, the *uncoolness*, of bringing up meaning or God in an emphatically secular atmosphere. If “Prufrock” is, as I have suggested, a poem about kinds of loneliness, it is also a poem, *the* poem, of awkwardness and embarrassment, and not just in the erotic sphere.

The fact that the erotic is always there suggests that Prufrock’s anxiety about bringing up the overwhelming question is not simply personal and psychological—the fear of being thought foolish, credulous, unsophisticated—but philosophical and even corporeal: his fears about his own body’s inadequacies are analogous to his anxieties about language and the possibility of expressing meaning, and this constitutes yet another link between sex and metaphysics in the poem. I would also like to suggest that Prufrock’s positioning of himself as effectively androgynous[13] is not simply an excuse for avoiding sexual pursuit but also, as with the analogous figure of Tiresias in *The Waste Land*, a way of encompassing contraries and avoiding definition. The importance of this will become clearer when we look at Prufrock’s need to avoid both coitus and intellectual commitment.

4. Avoiding Conclusion

Prufrock’s fear of mockery haunts both the sexual and metaphysical levels of the poem, and that fear is his major reason for not beginning a serious metaphysical conversation under any circumstances. He also has more purely intellectual reasons to hesitate before broaching the “overwhelming question,” including miscommunication (“That is not what I meant at all,” l. 97), and oversimplification (“It is impossible to say just what I mean!” l. 100). The poem’s images of isolation, discussed in section 1, suggest not only Prufrock’s loneliness but also the extreme difficulty of real communication at the best of times, and even the fear of actual solipsism.

Again and again in Eliot's early poetry we find individuals isolated in lonely rooms. The predicament of "lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows" (l. 72) recurs in many of the early poems. We hear of "all the hands / That are raiding dingy shades / In a thousand furnished rooms" ("Preludes" II), of "female smells in shuttered rooms" ("Rhapsody on a Windy Night"), of Mr. Silvero, "who walked all night in the next room" ("Gerontion"). It is clear that these closed rooms are images not only of loneliness but of limited, self-enclosed, or even solipsistic consciousness,[14] and the essential gloss on all of them is the image of the prison in Part V of *The Waste Land*:

> I have heard the key
> Turn in the door and turn once only
> We think of the key, each in his prison
> Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison. (ll. 413-416)[15]

This fear of solipsism lies behind one of the poem's most famous couplets:

> In the room the women come and go
> Talking of Michelangelo. (ll. 13-14, 35-36)

We assume that their conversation is silly and trivial, although Prufrock says nothing to suggest that this is the case. Perhaps we come to this conclusion because of the bathetic and comic rhyme; certainly our feeling is reinforced, consciously or subconsciously, by the poem's recurrent images of personal isolation and failed communication, as in Prufrock's and the woman's cross-purposes.

The poem's images of isolation and self-enclosure suggest that Prufrock's ultimate fear is that all of his thoughts may be mere solipsistic projections.[16] That this is a real possibility in his own mind is implied by his lurid and obviously extreme imagining of victimization and death—the pinned insect, St. John the Baptist, the mermaids' victims in the last lines of the poem. His solution in both the sexual and metaphysical domains is to procrastinate: "And indeed there will be time" (ll. 23, 37).[17]

The references to Marvell and *Hamlet* make clear that procrastination is not a good choice, but delay has its advantages. It would have been tempting twenty-five years ago to call this deferral and to make Prufrock and Eliot into proto-deconstructionists, aware of the terrible gap between signifier and signified. This has been seriously argued, with good evidence both from Eliot's philosophical and critical writings and from the poems[18]; when Prufrock says, "It is impossible to say just what I mean" (l. 104), he may mean exactly that in purely linguistic terms. In an essay on Eliot's early poetry, J. C. C. Mays claims that Eliot's starting-point "takes breakdown for granted" and "supposes that will cannot obtain its object and that theme and technique cannot be reconciled in any meaningful way" (110). Mays wisely refrains from invoking an anachronistic deconstruction, and it is clear that Eliot was influenced by far older traditions of skepticism about language. His reading in the work of Nagarjuna, so ably analyzed by Cleo McNelly Kearns, suggested that reality can best be described by a complex system of double negation (not this, not that, not *not*-this, not *not*-that), and Christian apophatic theology asserted that "any attempt to specify the characteristics or mode of being of the divine is not simply inadequate, which would be a truism, but essentially misleading and even false, because divinity is so far beyond the categories of human understanding as to make them a hindrance rather than a help to its apprehension" (Kearns, *T.S. Eliot* 135, 131).[19]

Indian linguistic philosophy, apophatic theology, and deconstruction may only be more sophisticated versions of Addie Bundren's claim in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* "that words are no good; that words don't ever fit even what they are trying to say at" (115). If "Prufrock" merely drew attention to the shortcomings of language, however, it would not be one of the central poems of the twentieth century. It remains vital because it dramatizes eloquently several aspects of modernity. The most important of these is the modern sense of intellectual incoherence, the fear that all the great systems which made sense of the world, from religion to Newtonian physics, can no longer command our adherence. That Eliot "takes breakdown for granted" is apparent not only in the form of his early poetry but

also in the actual inability of many of his speakers to think in any consequential way at all. When Gerontion describes himself as "A dull head among windy spaces," we have gone beyond the shortcomings of language or personal indecisiveness—Hamlet's "resolution [...] sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" (3.1.84-85)—and are back in the world of Pascal's eternal silence of the infinite spaces; similarly, when one of the Thames-Daughters in *The Waste Land* confesses "I can connect / Nothing with nothing" (ll. 301-02), personal crisis becomes general. This breakdown of thought leads, naturally, to inaction, and the general passivity of Eliot's early personae reflects a pervasive modern sense of bafflement and paralysis which we recognize in Ford's Dowell (in *The Good Soldier*), Kafka's Josef K., and the sometimes literally immobile protagonists in Beckett. That Eliot had experienced this sort of breakdown personally confirms Mays's statement that Eliot "translated the sad accidents of his own life into poetry in a way that miraculously contained the exultation and despair of a generation" (110-11).

Eliot as the pathologist of modern life is not news; I mention these truisms only to emphasize that ellipsis and avoidance occur in "Prufrock" not simply because language is an unstable medium, an idea Eliot returned to obsessively in his poetry (most notably in *Four Quartets*), but because of a far deeper problem. I also want to suggest that Prufrock's deferral of both sex and the overwhelming question—the coyness mentioned earlier—has a more positive significance. It is impossible to say what he means in part because that meaning *must not* be stated. And this takes us back, as everything in this paper seems to do, to sex.

In *Modernism, Memory and Desire: T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf*, Gabrielle McIntire notes that in Eliot's early poetry, "male-female relations are distressingly *undesirable*. Yet, although they are usually more disquieting than attractive, verging on gothic rather than enchanting, Eliot diligently returns to female figures in every single poem in the *Prufrock* volume" (90). McIntire suggests that "the female body stands in as a metaphor for memory and history in ways that anticipate this figuration in 'Gerontion,'" and I agree with her, but I want to go in a

rather different direction with her observation about the undesirability of desire. If sex and metaphysics are analogous, then coitus or climax is analogous to the resolution or conclusion of a discussion or argument. If Prufrock fears sexual failure, he also fears intellectual failure (mockery, miscommunication, oversimplification, actual solipsism) and prefers not to try.

And it is here that my second subject, aposiopesis, becomes vitally important as a strategy of pseudo-engagement and real delay. If ellipsis in "Prufrock" is, as I have argued, a form of reticence about things Prufrock takes for granted or is reluctant to discuss, then aposiopesis, the trope of breaking-off, suggests unwillingness or inability to continue in the face of a more immediate threat, that of consecutive thought that might actually lead to a conclusion. If desire is undesirable, as McIntire says, so is thinking, and Prufrock has developed ploys to circumvent it, or at least the kind of discourse that usually represents it. These ploys are all forms of aposiopesis in one way or another in that they break off a potential discussion, and the means employed range from forthright deflection ("Oh, do not ask 'What is it?,'" l. 11) to abrupt changes of topic and scene (from a roomful of women to the yellow fog, from an imagined erotic encounter to thoughts about Hamlet and Polonius) to the displacement of discussion by the many rhetorical but nevertheless real questions in the poem. The technique, "as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen" (l. 105), famously avoids sequence in favour of collage or bricolage; it also remains faithful to the vagaries of modern consciousness. I do not intend to examine the mechanics of aposiopesis, which are fairly straightforward in all the poem's discontinuities, but to place the trope in the context of Prufrock's coyness and procrastination, and Eliot's early poetry and thought, as concisely as possible, and to suggest why the avoidance of conclusions is desirable not only for Prufrock but for Eliot.[20]

If we look again at "Gerontion," for example, we find the same conjunction of physical anxieties (this time the result of real rather than anticipated age), sexual obsession, and metaphysical speculation. The central verse paragraph of the poem, as McIntire has shown, is an

extended double-entendre on the themes of sexual consummation and epistemology (see McIntire 44).[21] In the next verse paragraph, Gerontion confesses to failure in both areas:

> The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours. Think at last
> We have not reached conclusion, when I
> Stiffen in a rented house. Think at last
> I have not made this show purposelessly
> And it is not by any concitation
> Of the backward devils. (ll. 48-53)

The stiffening is finally *rigor mortis*, but in the short term it is both the stiffness of old age and of tumescence, and the failure to conclude either sexually or metaphysically is a source of *relief* for Gerontion. In a "new year" of "juvescence" and restored vitality, "Christ the tiger"—from Blake *via* Henry James's "Beast in the Jungle"—would make his leap and, like Rilke confronted with the torso of Apollo, Gerontion would have to change his life.[22] This is also part of Prufrock's dilemma. Like the inhabitants of *The Waste Land*, Gerontion would prefer not to alter his present life even as he sees its sterility, but he insists rightly that his talk is not futile, and I want to suggest that the inconclusiveness of both Prufrock and Gerontion is not simply an enactment of ellipsis by means of aposiopesis, but a *positive* agenda of avoidance facilitated by aposiopesis.

Recent studies of Eliot's philosophical position in the 1910s suggest that he saw all binaries as human constructions, necessarily relational within an ambivalent whole.[23] Any "conclusion," then, shuts down alternate possibilities that may have merit and partial truth; the important thing is to go on talking, keeping alive a sense of the complexities of any issue, forestalling or disrupting consensus, which can become deadening in the intellectual sphere and tyrannical in the political. If neither "Prufrock" nor "Gerontion" shows us that discussion, it is because Eliot dramatizes the situation, not the prosaic details; he famously disliked any poetry of ideas, and dismissed Browning and Tennyson, who "ruminated" on the same great philosophical and religious issues that Eliot's speakers so pointedly avoid (cf. Eliot,

"The Metaphysical Poets" 288). When Eliot praised Henry James's mind for being "so fine that no idea could violate it" ("In Memory of Henry James" 2), he meant what he said; he also observed that poetry should not embody a philosophy but replace it (see "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama" 68). This does not mean, of course, that poetry should be free of ideas, but that they must be expressed in image or situation rather than discursively, or at least framed indirectly and tentatively and with due regard to the possibility of error and the subjectivity of the speaker. (This leads to what some see, wrongly, as elephantine discriminations in *Four Quartets*.) If "Prufrock" is a poem of fragments and of erotic embarrassment, a poem of longing for escape from sexual and cosmic loneliness, it is also a poem haunted by the fear of conclusion, and this is perhaps the true significance of Prufrock's scenarios of being pinned, beheaded, or drowned. The alternative is to hold in suspension various possibilities, just as Prufrock contains within himself both genders, and the strategy of aposiopesis is vital in accomplishing this end.

As with the opening simile and the pairing of sex and metaphysics, we have another dyad which is held together only by Prufrock's consciousness. Prufrock wants both to address *and* to avoid answering the overwhelming question, and this results in paralysis. Eliot's early poetry is obviously not optimistic, but it is bracing in its clear-sightedness, and it is positive in that it keeps hope alive; if nothing is certain or concluded, nothing can be ruled out, including God and meaning. The way out of the intellectual impasse of inconclusiveness was Eliot's subject after *The Waste Land;* it involved, among other things, a recognition of the futility of thought and, depending on your point of view, self-surrender and humility or (to the cynical) giving up. It is, in any case, beyond the scope of this paper.

* * *

In "Prufrock," then, what I have called the Grand Ellipsis—Prufrock's inability or refusal to articulate the overwhelming question—is adumbrated in the smaller ellipses of the poem that omit connections between the tenor and vehicle of a simile or metaphor, between the

large subjects of discussion (sex and metaphysics), and between incompatible aspects of Prufrock himself: male *vs.* female characteristics, the desire for sexual pursuit *vs.* inertia and fear of failure, the need to discuss large metaphysical issues *vs.* the fear of mockery, miscommunication, or solipsism, as well as the vital need to keep all possible conclusions in play. The missing connectors in each case are Prufrock's mind and personality, in which disparate and often contrary elements co-exist as they do in the work of the Metaphysical poets Eliot admired. Instead of connections, we have elision and complexity within Prufrock himself: his gender identity embraces opposites, and possibly incompatible ideas co-exist in the space before conclusion because he is unwilling to sacrifice any of them quite yet.

Despite his preoccupation with sex, Prufrock manages to avoid coitus not only because he doesn't get the girl, but also because *all* forms of coming-together are deliberately and in one sense fortunately and creatively absent from all the elements of the poem that I have been discussing. This frustration of coitus (I would like to call it *interruptus*, but in fact it never begins) is facilitated by Prufrock's and Eliot's use of ellipsis and aposiopesis, omission and abrupt change of topic, which draws attention not only to the gaps in Prufrock's monologue but to the breakdown of the *sensus communis*, of systems, and of coherent consciousness itself in the modern world: "On Margate Sands. / I can connect / Nothing with nothing."

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NOTES

[1]See, e.g., "Mr. Apollinax," "Hysteria," and "Portrait of a Lady."

[2]Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950* 7. All further references to "Prufrock" and other Eliot poems are to this edition and will be given simply as line references.

[3]For examples, see Grant.

[4]Prufrock's statement that "I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each" (l. 124) may well refer to a passage in R. L. Stevenson's essay "Crabbed Age and Youth" (1877): "We sail in leaky bottoms and on great and perilous waters; and to take a cue from the dolorous old naval ballad, we have heard the mermaidens singing, and know that we shall never see dry land any more. Old and young, we are all on our last cruise" (56). Prufrock is certainly concerned (probably prematurely) with the coming of age; his reference to the mermaids also acts as an effective final image of his fear of "fatal" women.

[5]Neither Grover Smith nor Martin Scofield, for example, attempt to define it.

[6]One is quoted ("What is it?" [l. 11]) and two take up a verse paragraph each, beginning in each case with "And would it have been worth it, after all" (ll. 87, 99) and concluding without a question mark. Many of the questions are addressed by Prufrock to himself and deal with his timidity: "Do I dare?" (l. 38, twice), "Do I dare / Disturb the universe?" (ll. 45–46), "And how should I presume?" (l. 61), "Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets (l. 70).

[7]The linking of sex and metaphysics has a long history, and Eliot was well aware of the sexualized language of Christian mystics, Bernini's extraordinary depiction of St. Teresa, and Donne's fantasy of violence and rape at the hands of his "three-person'd God. "

[8]Stanley Spencer (1891-1959) was Eliot's contemporary, and his great themes—religion and human sexuality—mirror those of Eliot's early poetry.

[9]The "eternal Footman" may have been suggested by John Bunyan's *The Heavenly Footman*, particularly since the metaphysical theme is explicit in Bunyan's text: "They that will have heaven, must run for it" (6). Bunyan also emphasizes the need for immediate action, which Prufrock resists, most obviously in his distortion of Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," discussed later. But Bunyan's footman is a runner, and Eliot's is obviously a servant, perhaps an angelic one in the courts of Heaven, but still capable, Prufrock imagines, of a sneer.

[10]See Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 3.1.79-80.

[11]See, e.g., Scofield 60.

[12]See Eliot, "Hamlet" 145.

[13]Christopher Ricks notes "the suggestive contrariety between splitting the name [...] at *pru* and *frock*, as against splitting it as *proof* and *rock*" (2). Ricks's discussion of the resonances of words and lines in "Prufrock" and the expectations they create is always alert to the prejudices created by sex and gender; see esp. 12-20.

[14]I have discussed this more fully in two articles, listed below.

[15]Eliot's footnote to these lines cites a passage from F. H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*: "My external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts or my feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and, with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it. [...] In brief, regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul" (Bradley 306). Critics' frequent use of this as a gloss is understandable, but Eliot's relationship to Bradley is complicated, as Childs among others has shown, and it is important to remember that Eliot disliked intensely interpretations of poetry that translated it into philosophy; see "In Memory of Henry James" 2. My own discussion of solipsism may err in the same philosophical direction, but I am trying to analyze the issue in poetic rather than philosophical terms.

[16]The classic account of solipsistic fear in literature is that of A. D. Nuttall, listed below.

[17]While solipsism is not fatal, its consequences—radical intellectual as well as personal isolation—represent the extreme of the loneliness Prufrock already feels, and thus constitute a kind of death. In this regard, the epigraph from Dante's *Inferno* is important here. Guido da Montefeltro will speak only because he is certain that Dante is damned too, and thus cannot return to tell Montefeltro's story to the world. The narrative is enclosed, Montefeltro thinks—though we are in fact reading it; similarly, we overhear what may only be Prufrock's internal and self-referential monologue.

[18]See, e.g., Davidson Brooker and Bentley provide a subtler and more detailed analysis which generally avoids technical vocabularies.

[19]See also Kearns, "Negative Theology and Literary Discourse in *Four Quartets*."

[20]I am deeply indebted to Jeffrey Perl's work on Eliot and skepticism; what follows is not an attempt to reprise his arguments but to place his conclusions in the context of my own argument about ellipsis and aposiopesis in "Prufrock."

[21]McIntire focuses on Eliot's use of the female body, and argues her case persuasively; I see no conflict between this and my belief that Gerontion and Prufrock see their own bodies as metonymical images of linguistic inadequacy, particularly as both are implicitly feminized.

[22]"You must change your life." ["Du mußt dein Leben ändern," l. 14]

[23]On Eliot's complex relation to Bradley, see Riquelme and Childs *inter alia*.

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Connotations
Vol. 22.2 (2012/2013)

A Collection of Selves: Louis MacNeice's *Autumn Journal*[*]

TERESA BRUŚ

> *[…] because a diary is like lacework, a net of tighter or looser links that contain more empty space than solid parts.*
>
> Philippe Lejeune, *On Diary*

1. Salvaging of Order

Louis MacNeice started writing *Autumn Journal* in August 1938. Before February 2, he sent T. S. Eliot its completed typescript. Preceded by an introductory note, the poem came out in London in 1939. Unlike some other poets of his generation, who were writing pamphlets and turning their attention to political action, MacNeice was writing a journal. He intended it as a simultaneously public and private form of life writing, a form where a "man writes what he feels at the moment," and where that scope is extended by "some standards which are not merely personal" (*Collected Poems* 101).

"I found that I read it through without my interest flagging at any point," admitted T. S. Eliot, the journal's first recorded critical reader. He praised its "imagery of things lived through, and not merely chosen for poetic suggestiveness" (qtd. in Stallworthy 237). Over the decades, *Autumn Journal*'s conscious and balanced looking inwards and outwards continues to draw readers' attention. Critics tend to classify *Autumn Journal* as either an autobiographical or a biographical document, either as central for understanding Louis MacNeice's

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debbrus0222.htm>.

oeuvre or as central for grasping the reality of life in the thirties. There are also those critics who experience it as an elegiac fusion of the two.[1] The diversity of these positions shows, among other aspects, the composite wide-ranging form and content of the journal as a genre, its instability as well as its capacity to mark with great economy the conjunction of subject, place and moment.

Autumn Journal's singularity lies in its sustained journal effect. It was written not in the *form* of a journal but *as* a journal. The acknowledgement of the resulting lyrical diaristic infrastructure is absolutely central for any attempt at reading *Autumn Journal*. It connects in twenty-four cantos[2] discontinuities and meaningful gaps; it records personal experiences; it metaphorically collects, adjusts, and contains the poet's various roles, masks, and personae, as well as many ordinary things. *Autumn Journal* is an inclusive personal archive of echoes of public events.

Autumn Journal, informed by proleptic anxiety of the expected loss which is familiar and which is going to happen,[3] is propelled by massive archival stockpiling aimed at aesthetically collecting "various and conflicting / Selves" (*Autumn Journal* XXIV) of the diarist and traces of social, political, and economic pressures of his time. This paper proceeds by first assessing *Autumn Journal*'s composite and very intricate nature as a journal which secures and manages the coherence and economy of the lyric. Then, drawing on Manfred Sommer's thinking on collecting, classifying, and creating, the paper engages with a reading of the journal as an archive of a collector, a modern figure who wishes to "fit everything in" (Longley, Introduction xviii); and, thanks to the things he collects, he addresses a pressing set of crises. He believes his private collection can help him salvage some sense of order. Because for the rootless MacNeice home as the ultimate space of gathering seems unattainable, often undesirable, he locates self-invention, self-representation, and self-discovery in imaginative territories. Attentive to this blurring of diaristic and poetic rhythms in *Autumn Journal*, I propose in the final part of this paper to approach the journal's most problematic aspect, its prevalent additive method of parataxis. This parataxis results in a propulsive synthesizing mode

of accretion, patterning, and registration of thoughts, feelings, experiences, and things grasped. I will argue that the paratactic lists in *Autumn Journal* embody untidy territories of the self. The lists establish also a radically different new order, a historically specific "altering speech for altering things" (Auden 45).

The speaker of *Autumn Journal* is both a witness and an ordinary "man-about-town," who always assumes a sympathetic audience, and who accommodates to his sense of their presence. His journal turns to the world of the ordinary and, in the most compressed and perspicacious way, offers itself as a document by an observer perpetually struggling with maintaining and marking off his own life. MacNeice's recognition that life is a flux and that "we […] cannot catch hold of things" (*Collected Poems* 64) does not prevent him from approaching them to attempt a conjoining, open reconciliation of randomness and disparity, also of what he elsewhere calls "the bitter dialectics of opposites which makes humanity" (*Selected Literary* 51).

In response to T. S. Eliot's request, with commercial reasons in mind, MacNeice defined the nature of his poem. Thinking of the "Spring Catalogue," he wrote "in haste" a note to Eliot, dated "November 29(?) [sic], 1938" (*Letters* 312). A long time prior to the publication proper, this explanation was meant to sustain claims for the journal-effect and to justify the poet's censoring operations. The definition, quoted in its entirety below, is also the declaration of MacNeice's poetics in the thirties. Stallworthy suggests that this poetics contains "the impurities of the world, the flux of experience, in a documentary form that, for all its seeming spontaneity, would be directed into patterns on a page—as images fixed on film—by the invisible imagination." Here are the major features MacNeice asked of a poem in 1938 (228):

> Autumn Journal
>
> A long poem of from 2,000 to 3,000 lines written from August to December 1938. Not strictly a journal but giving the tenor of my intellectual & emotional experiences during that period.

> It is about nearly everything which from first-hand experience I consider significant.
> It is written in sections averaging about 80 lines in length. This division gives it a *dramatic* quality, as different parts of myself (e.g. the anarchist, the defeatist, the sensual man, the philosopher, the would-be good citizen) can be given their say in turn.
> It contains reportage, metaphysics, ethics, lyrical emotion, autobiography, nightmare.
> There is a constant interrelation of abstract & concrete. Generalisations are balanced by pictures.
> Places presented include Hampshire, Spain, Birmingham, Ireland, &—especially London.
> It is written throughout in an elastic kind of quatrain. This form (a) gives the whole poem a formal unity but (b) saves it from monotony by allowing it a great range of appropriate variations.
> The writing is direct; anyone could understand it.
> I think it is my best work to date; it is both a panorama and a confession of faith. (*Letters* 312)

As an autobiographically conscious writer, the poet explains his own method and the nature of its inventiveness; he addresses questions of the inventory of his memory, the journal's rhythm, and its themes. He also expresses his approach to exposition and effects he desires to produce on the readers of his journal. The apparent contradictions between honesty and objectivity are promised to be resolved and reconciled by a paradox where truth claims are infused with the inaccuracies and errors of the perceiving subject. In the introductory Note to *Autumn Journal*, written in 1939 and included in the text, MacNeice emphasizes that the nature of "this poem" is to be "neither final nor balanced" (*Collected Poems* 101).

We read in the 1939 *Note* that *Autumn Journal* is "something between the lyric and the didactic poem […] in as much as it is half-way towards a didactic poem." MacNeice writes that *Autumn Journal* embraces "criticism of life" as well as some impersonal "standards." MacNeice could be and was at once personal and ideologically focused. The poem is not, however, intended to fulfill what he identifies as demands of his public: "a final verdict or a balanced judgment." Anticipating criticism of the poem's qualities like equilibrium or

finality, the aesthetic measures, the poet emphasizes instead the moral value of his creation, the journal's honesty. "I had been writing what I have called a Journal" (*Collected Poems* 101). Anticipating also the reactions to the plausible consequences of immediacy and contingency that associations with the journal form might bring, what he calls "over-statements and inconsistencies" (*Collected Poems* 101) he repeatedly summons the honesty-premise. MacNeice explains that he has not altered anything, he has not qualified any events retrospectively, and he has not turned into abstractions the contents of the beliefs presented in the course of his writing. Honesty, honest voice, is thus reasserted as faithfulness to the moment of writing. Its provisional character is repeatedly self-advertised to enhance the readers' interest and cooperation. Truth and honesty, less so diction or the art of fiction in diary, are often the motor of our interest in life writing. MacNeice re-validates truth again and again: "It is still […] possible to write honestly without feeling that the time for honesty is past" (*Selected Literary Criticism* 98).

These reiterations communicate his alliance with time, with the recognition of being caught up by the moment in the process of truth-seeking. Such claims allow Lejeune to consider the diary as a "superior form of truth" (162). Stallworthy, attending to the poetic dimensions of this remarkable journal, extends its meaning beyond poetry to a powerful and "symbolic" working of "communication," "honesty," and "the unity of form" (89) which, as he perceptively charts this arrangement, "undercut poetry itself" (94).

Following Manfred Sommer, we can say that MacNeice's journal is not a mere subjective gathering of experiences, a product of spontaneous interferences, but a collection, which Sommer always understands as a complete form, a nuanced, conscious, and aesthetically consolidated accumulation. Such a collection can be created by one who is not a specialist, who is not interested in becoming an owner, but, as Sommer points out, someone who is interested in "making," in bringing into being through acts of *poiesis*. The collector gives form; he is a poet (cf. Sommer 206).

Concerned with responsible economy of wording in which every word can acquire a nuanced signification thanks to its place in a rhythmical scheme, MacNeice vindicates verse, noting its ability to lure and hypnotize readers with its visual framing; its special auditory effects of rhythm, repetition and rhyme. We respond to verse's graphic devices with an expected though challenging pleasure, especially with respect to MacNeice's treatment of anxious moments of what the poet elsewhere described as "complex, unmusical world" (*Poetry* 145).

Clearly, in *Autumn Journal* meter plays a very personal emotional role which cannot be experienced in isolation from the poem's communication pattern. The twenty-four cantos in verse address and recapture the flow of time, tracking the journal's various selves in time, integrating both personal and public coordinates, and maintaining a sense of rapid movement. The medium MacNeice devised offers a formal synthesis of freedom, formality, and fluidity which allows the poet to "accommodate the total-subject matter of the 1930s" (E. Longley 59). Generally, lines carry a propositional sense. In *Autumn Journal*, uneven and diverse, ranging from monometers to heptameters, lines control the 405 sentences of the journal. Lines help create a sense of order, a sense of continuity. Using lines, the poet sanctions the dynamic movement of sensations, names, things, ideas. The "elastic" and self-contained quatrain rhymed either *abac* and *abcb* with irregular lines and repetition of motifs can be said to sustain coherence and cohesiveness. Though they dominate and nicely alternate up to canto XII, *abca* and *abbc* also occur and are especially prominent towards the end of the poem. This is a deliberate and directional effect allowing the poet to highlight some instances while deemphasizing others, also to include juxtaposition of series of viewpoints.

There are then roughly two "standard" rhyme patterns but within later cantos, especially XVIII, XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, major internal changes dictate the use of contrastive modes, tones, and contexts. Often, the poet brings them about by a shift in addressees. For example, in XVIII, after denying the presence of pastorals and idylls in England, the "I" exchanges the reportorial tone and *abcb* pattern for a prayer with a direct address—"What shall we pray for, Lord? Whom

shall we pray to?"—orchestrating the ensuing litany-like part of the canto in *abac*. In XXI, the restlessness of the thoughts of "many regrets" triggers a deployment of many patterns which, like "the radiant cavalcades" of fire evoking life, affirm diversity and chance. Binding the self in the defining time of the Spanish conflict, canto XXIII moves by a broken pattern and anxious incompatible shifts which bear powerfully on the processes of self-collecting. The canto thematizes the decisive personal shift from consciousness of "broken rambling track" of his life illustrated by long, irregular paratactic lists, to a decision "to correlate event with instinct," to follow a more disciplined measure.

MacNeice's journal serves clear aesthetic and social agendas. He comments that its form "(a) gives the whole poem a formal unity but (b) saves it from monotony by allowing a great range of appropriate variations" (qtd. in Stallworthy 233). Improvising, MacNeice escapes what he calls "that 'iambic' groove" which "we were all born into" (*Selected Literary Criticism* 247). As a contingent, "impure" practice, poetry for MacNeice should be transgressive. Abundant themes, untidy sentences and very rich forms of verse break readers' expectations. Robert Skelton detects in the structure of *Autumn Journal* diverse forms of Celtic, Welsh, and Greek origin (52). In English, writes MacNeice, one can only approximate un-English forms, "attempt to suggest Horatian rhythms," and introduce what he calls "technical Horatianizing" (*Selected Literary Criticism* 248). And thus in patterns like *deibide* (rhyming stressed with unstressed syllables) or *aicill* (internal rhyme), he escapes the definite "groove" with more hovering stresses of Irish patterns.

Autumn Journal's design, its forms of language, its molds, its select features of reiterating personal inscription, and its distinctive poetic rhythm of coordinating the grand and the banal, mark the infrastructure of what I posit is a very carefully orchestrated collection. The inclusion and support of the ordinary and everyday in a verse journal contextualize the subject. Exposing his collection, he exposes himself and his understanding of meanings of life; he exposes the culture.[4] The journal's distinctive, propulsive élan, spirit, tone, and vibration are used by MacNeice as a response to the challenges of the moments

of being. As I have emphasized, by unifying the journal through the disciplined application of verse, the poet extends the force of his response. These features bring out the key subtleties of the concept of collection critical for this essay. Sommer argues that collection is a series of acts of collecting (*colligere*) and a product of that collecting, a work or phenomenon that has lasting qualities and which always remains open even after it has been finished or abandoned. To exist and last, a collection absolutely needs a unifying principle, that which gives it a sense of identity and which ensures its support (*Erhaltung*). Sommer says a collection is not an inordinate multiplicity; it is a being together. Bringing things together, the collector needs to make things stay together, for a collection is always threatened with disintegration (214).

In *Autumn Journal*, the speaker knows that "the dice are loaded / Against the living man" (IX); he anticipates a "harder life" (I) to come, and yet he sees life as always promising complexity and mystery. Life is "worth living" (XXI). Recollecting his former love's scent and moments of perceptible fullness of life (IV), holding on to a memory of life as a "ladder of angels," the poet engages his rhetoric of enumeration and excess driven by a desire to see life as an object that can be defined through attributes and tokens. He creates an ensemblage of possible modalities of lived life. They reveal the truly banal and flat: "life rotating in an office sleep" (X). They underscore the empty and sterile modern life of a modern man whose "Dad was off the scene" (XIX). They highlight the most glamorous "fancy lives of the few" (III) or the rare "luxury life" valued by those who live "As if to live were … / But a leap in the dark, a tangent, a stray shot" (XVII).

The essential diurnal pattern of the journal, as I have established, does not aim to reveal in any way the unified pattern of a lifetime. In an effort to address the unrepeatable presentness of the now, to escape some false and corrupting sense of identity, the speaker in *Autumn Journal* departs now and then to Greek but also to relevant Roman *exempla* of human experience and behavior. Horace's delightful and useful (*dulce et utile*) "appetitive decorum," his "Middle Way,"[5] greatly influenced MacNeice's life writing and his later poetry.

Autumn Journal unleashes and gathers up a multitude of selves. The journal inscribes also a multitude of alternating times, locations, and experiences. We attend to the modern conditions of abundance but also of paucity. A witness, with "no wife, no ivory tower, no funk-hole" (VIII), the diarist in *Autumn Journal* makes statements about the self, while always focusing his attention on the world outside. MacNeice's title issues a diaristic contract, setting horizons not for a continuous narrative but for collecting practices, sets of entries and variations, which define the character of this economic diary and suit the difficult moment of change.

In the journal which is a product of a difficult allience, MacNeice, sketching positive and negative balance sheets of his life, is clearly aiming at preserving what Didier calls the "ultimate capital: the 'I'" (54). Auditing accounts of what otherwise would be unfulfilled, collecting and preserving what would escape attention and in the end disperse itself, the poet is taking care of himself. In the flux of life, the poet anxiously attempts to diarize in order to redeem his version of the world's incorrigible plurality,[6] and this occasions aesthetic integration of his own multiple and incorrigible selves.

2. Collecting "I to I"

The provisional plurality of perspectives in the journal form appeals to MacNeice as do cumulative effects and the option to re-experience how "we find our nature daily or try to find it" (*Collected Poems* 63). For the one who says, "I not only have many different selves but I am often, as they say, not myself at all" (*Poetry* 146), the diary presents psychological and aesthetic possibilities of coordination, communication, and possible transformation of selves.

MacNeice vehemently defends his perspective in poetry not as universal, but always as "essentially personal" and even intimate (*Selected Literary Criticism* 112). The dramatic quality of *Autumn Journal* gives this personal space much extended, polarized openness. As MacNeice wrote to Eliot, "different parts of myself (e.g. the anarchist, the defeat-

ist, the sensual man, the philosopher, the would-be good citizen) can be given their say in turn" (*Letters* 312). These are the assets of the form of the journal, which "flows from human life" (*Selected Literary Criticism* 114), by accreting more than "self-glory" and "self-indulgence" (*Autumn Journal* III). We read in this autobiographical record, composed at a critical moment of personal anguish connected with the collapse of the poet's marriage, another rehearsal of indeterminacies embracing his changed experiences of subjectivity. These are what he calls the "accidents" of a poem (*Selected Literary Criticism* 11).

Autumn Journal opens up many dimensions of the poet's private and public functions. It divulges not only many levels of his variegated experience, but also an abundance of positions that he occupies and fantasizes about taking. In *Autumn Journal*, he tracks his many selves in time. He is a train traveler, taxi rider and driver, tripper, jazz lover, newspaper reader, a consumer of goods, party goer, lonely man, reader of books, smoker and drinker, student and teacher, lover and ex-lover, countryman and townee, husband and ex-husband, classicist and modern man, citizen, Irishman, Londoner. But he is also a man who is not married, one who does not have an access to an ivory tower, and, perhaps most importantly, one who does not have a funk-hole (VIII). Though he barely hints at traumas and is reticent about his family history, he does seem like an "all-rounder" (M. L. Longley xix).

The self-criticism of *Autumn Journal*'s plurality culminates in a question "Who am I—or I—to demand oblivion?" (II). The journal invariably orchestrates the collection of these selves, "various and conflicting / Selves" (XXIV), as well as the abundant shadow selves and anti-selves. Their familiar presence is disturbing or even harassing as they buzz, rustle, or fly around like "hidden insects" (V). He only senses their presence "when the cold draught picks my sleeve" (XVII), or when he hears their voices. He speaks of "the tempter" who "whispers" (III) and of the critic "jailed in the mind," who chooses to "murmur gently" and remember what the speaker would gladly forget (X). There are familiar devils, "the flowery orator in the heart" (XIX); there are familiar haunting bogeys: "horrible, stiff / people with blank faces" (XV). There are invisible forces; he can only intuit

their attendance when they are standing "behind the doors" (VIII). There are also his spirits, brain, senses, hunger, spite, and "coward doubts" (XXIV). The catalogue is mutable and curiously rich, especially if we include those figures that he calls up in his imagination as his fantasized others, like "the gangster or the sheiks" who would "Kill for the love of killing, making the world my sofa, / Unzip the women and insult the meek" (III).

Autumn Journal conjures up this panorama of selves as it takes the course of conservation of both, his personal losses and deficits as well as gains, autumnal wastage and fruitage. Because the "I's" assets are so dispersed, their collection and control requires diverse figures of accumulation. Acquisitions and losses are additionally mixed with the "debris of day-to-day experience" (XXI), the refuse of all possible sorts polluting the *bios* of a modern man living in "the world of error" (XII), but hoping for a final moment of "equation" (XXIV) in the living time, also for a place where one day "both heart and brain can understand / The movements of our fellows" (XXIV). Thus a stabilizing personal inventory, compiled in preparation for an ending which is also a beginning, opens a site for always new additions, new forms of stocktaking, and possibly new retrieving methods.

Recollection, an act of retrieving, is strongly tied to collection. The subject of *Autumn Journal* says, "and I remember" (XVI), activating the storage of his memories, summoning memories with *ands* and consolidating his memories with *ands*. His *collecta*, objects "coersed into presence" (Sommer 208; my trans.), are joined by the preposition *and.* Searching through their contents, he creates an arbitrary system. Rudimentary as it is, it helps enlarge the significance of his collection. A list imposes some order, it has traces of form and thus it can facilitate recognition of patterns of his experience.

The poet recollects his childhood in "the half-house"; he enumerates "wogs and dogs and bears and bricks and apples." He remembers Ireland, "like a ship or a car," a "female" who equips her people with "a gesture and a brogue / And a faggot of useless memories" (XVI). Education received in Marlborough and Merton lodged "a toy-box of hall-marked marmoreal phrases / Around in his head" (XIII), which

he "carted" along with masses of other "unrelated facts" (X). Oxford, isolated and unreal, features as a place "crowding the mantelpiece with gods— / Scaliger, Heinsius, Dindorf, Bentley and Wilamowitz" (XIII). Love life, like a chapter in a book, furnishes the "mind's museum" with elegant but no longer "full and fragrant" "broken jars / That once held wine or perfume" (XIX). These defining personal possessions and their forms of containment not only organize his archive but also determine the principles by which he patterns life experiences. Thus *Autumn Journal* becomes a receptacle of many more additional meanings clustered around collections of the ordinary, of what depends on inattention and habit, objects with power to be experienced and re-experienced. So, in a personal metaphoric act of collecting days and trying to gather his selves, the poet creates an expandable depository with intimate metaphoric structures interwoven with trans-individual ones. He escapes from pure subjectivity by linking his intimate *collecta* with counter-intimate publics. Like the very first journals in the English tradition, MacNeice's quotidian and intimate collection is a result of its subject's participation in the public spheres. Reaching in, the poet reaches out, making his experience linkable with other collecting practices.

He tests this principle to its limits in *Autumn Journal*, where not only the excess, the precipitate of lived days, but also the confusion of "this our world" find their remarkably abundant and disturbing presence. The choice of the topos of boundlessness for the management of the journal designed in verse, always more paratactic than prose, allows gathering of pluralities. Any objects, subjects, events, and experiences can be included in the journal. *Autumn Journal*'s nomadic subject follows trajectories that take him to intimate and public spaces, from the "mind's museum" (XIX) to chromatic Ireland, "the land of scholars and saints" (XVI); to countries like Spain, the experience of which he captures affectively as an encounter with "painted hoarding" (VI); or to England as a "toy bazaar" (VIII). He comes into contact with big towns like Birmingham, the "hazy city," and numerous, dispersed small places like Bewdley, Chilterns, Henley, and Nettlebed in the countryside, a modern "dwindling annex to the factory" (XVIII). This

dynamic, heterogeneous, and fluid space traversed by the speaker on foot, on train (most often "in a bijou car"), and by plane is the space of emotional traces left on previous contacts. London "littered with remembered kisses" (IV), like Birmingham or Barcelona, contains dispersed things and people and their memories. They constitute the vertiginous space of contamination, noise, and the surplus of daily existence. He re-visits these places to collect memories of things and people, and to form them into territorial and architectonic lists *per excessum.*

In *Autumn Journal* the subject activates the excess and puts it to personal use. Sommer says that, without the process of moving, collecting cannot happen; to collect the collector first needs to become dispersed (215). The autumnal diarist creates an inventory of a world in which he can attempt self-coordination and self-stabilization. The concentrated diary becomes a version of a world *en miniature*, where what is collected is proximate and held together. But the achieved convergence forms only a temporary asylum.

3. "And" as *Terminus Technicus*

"Those who take the whole modern world for their canvas are liable to lapse into journalism," the poet as critic explains, and yet in *Autumn Journal* he allows the part of himself that "includes the journalist" (*Poetry* 30) to condition the character of his remarkable journal. MacNeice, painfully aware of the "now-time," nets in abundant successions the excess of the life he lives and observes. He creates catalogues of details linked by the preposition *and* to accrue in a determined fashion the vastness of history and diversity of life.

To approach art, the poet responds to "concrete living." He desires to bring in the messy, the contingent, and the circumstantial. Life and content are his greatest value. Committing himself to "the muck and wind of existence" (*Selected Literary Criticism* 58), to raw, not pure and intense experience of aesthetes like Walter Pater who attached so much attention to style, MacNeice, while strongly defending formal

unity, repudiates the high modernist treatment of form as a basis for telling the truth. In *Autumn Journal*, rejecting the "luxury-writing" of aesthetes (*Modern Poetry* 3), their notion of form as a principle of transcendence, MacNeice invokes unmediated formlessness of a self-made collection.

A collecting aesthetics constitutes a paradigmatic form of modernist art. Braddock argues convincingly that modernist artworks "themselves resemble collections," and the collection itself functions as a means to present the modernist work of art to its audience (1-3). Speaking of collections as expressing something inherent in modernity, Pound, for example, emphasizes that the modern world needs a "rag-bag to stuff all its thoughts in" (qtd. in Lewis 146).[7] Unsettling sequenced juxtapositions of *Autumn Journal* can allow us to assimilate it within a general model of modernist intertextual collecting. However, a product of the growing pressures of historical circumstances, *Autumn Journal* communicates a distinctive set of relationships. It offers not a dialogue with modernist forms but a striking point of departure for the late modernist[8] poetics of reopening "the modernist enclosure of form onto the work's social and political environs" (Miller 20).

When "war seemed round the corner again," when Woolf felt too "black" to "gather together," she recognized the intense necessity to oppose the dispersal of things and souls. She notes in her *Diary* that, despite everything, she wanted to "gather rosebuds while we may" (*Diary* 5: 165). The last sections of her *Diary* abound in a striking use of polysyndeton. Criticizing *Autumn Journal* as poetry, though, she attributes what she identifies as the lack of transitions and accumulation of oppositions to the influence of films (5: 175). Yet, Woolf herself is not above polysyndeton. In her own 1930s' diary, Woolf compounds worries and anxieties with long strings of *ands.* We likewise find the encyclopedic strategy in Eliot and Joyce, two collectors adopting devices for putting things together and rendering the unorganized truths of history. Spender, for instance, calls Joyce's "infinite cataloguing of the outer events" his "unendingness" (129). In the case of lists of "ands," we seem to be dealing with "trans-individual mental struc-

tures,"[9] the late modernist *langue* framing individual experiences. In diaries, such a structure allows to attain simultaneity, a rapid succession, and a sense of exhilaration. In the poetry of the 1930s, Martin Dodsworth notices, "addition" is a multifaceted characteristic of the time. He argues that it is a product of "the general tendency of the Thirties poets to employ catalogues of objects or similes in their poems" and also of "the kind of feeling that drove them to do this" (186). Dodsworth estimates that, because addition does not logically clarify the relation between the items it conjoins, it is necessary in each case to study the individual nature of its use, the sort of emphases that are placed in every text, like the tone of voice (cf. 187).[10] For Hindrichs, however, "much of the attraction of late modernism lies in the paradoxical excitement that the sense of endings, even catastrophic ones, generate." The critic welcomes the reading of the "valedictory strain" of late modernists in the large contexts of "audience and market forces, cultures and history, and biography" (851).

List making "is a form of collecting, of course" (Gass 178). In *Autumn Journal*, the abundance of the world is held together by means of "and." *And* loosens and tightens MacNeice's cataloguing processes, optimizing accumulation by reducing distance, condensing and shaping the proximity, appointing intimacy but also keeping some knowledge out. "It must be remembered," says MacNeice, "that conjunction like a gate, is also disjunctive" (*Modern Poetry* 162). Indeed, used in lists and pairs, *and* produces opposing results. Unlike lists, pairs are forms which "close upon themselves like clapping hands" (Gass 179). When MacNeice remembers Spain in canto VI, he recollects its "revolt and ruin" and "sun and shadow," "the begging cripples and the children begging." But *and* finally connects, even forces, the presence of many *collecta* to sustain one strong *collection* (cf. Sommer 210). It works paratactically.

Gass persuasively shows that this seemingly unspecific, inessential, indirect, invisible, sloppy, and ordinary word can be found in "regressive-harried circumstances" but also in "child-like speech" (169). Poets and critics treat it with caution, as *and*s can be instrumental in suppressing the movement and vital flow and in evading causality. *And*s

can and often do overwhelm with excess. In *Autumn Journal*, *and* is used 675 times. Singled out by MacNeice to add and compile his dailiness, it seems fitting that the meanings of *and* and its disturbing presence will designate a very kinetic collection. *And* carries with it the idea of fronting and facing a boundary, edge, or extreme case; it "separates and joins at the same time. It equalizes" (Gass 175).

And is employed by the poet almost compulsively, creating a total effect of what Lejeune calls "the madness of repetition that is life itself" (170). As there is no such thing as "pure repetition," in *Autumn Journal* the recurring *and* is an amorphous figure. It is set regularly in some sections; in others it functions as repetend. In the whole poem, *and* is instrumental in the creation of diverse expressivity, it is a fundamental unit of correspondences and parallels. *And* is MacNeice's personal key to his arbitrary version of reality. It is distributed unevenly but persistently, ranging from eleven to seventy-four per canto. MacNeice's *and*s create constellations of complex local and total impact. They not only display the fullness of the world, but also apprehensions of defining his world. *And*s accommodate a series of coterminous and contradictory positions, relating but also separating the incidentals. *And*s arrest movement, establishing chasms and sites of anxiety, filled with verbal heaps and nervous suddenness: "I am afraid in the web of night / When the window is fingered by the shadows of branches, / When the lions roar beneath the hill / And the meter clicks and the cistern bubbles / And the gods are absent and the men are still—" (II). *And*s are also agents of good flow, controlling the movement of the revival of past experiences. Perhaps unexpectedly, these excessive *and*s produce in the end a sense of regulatory rhythm, a soothing sense of pleasure: "Sleep, the past, and wake, the future, / And walk out promptly through the open door" (XXIV).[11]

In canto X of *Autumn Journal*, MacNeice uses *and* 74 times, twice more than in most other cantos. The tenth canto is an autobiographical entry organized between the event of a new school term as "work" for the diarist and his recollections of previous semesters as a student. "And now, in Nineteen-Thirty-Eight A.D., / term is again beginning." Between "the beginnings of other terms" and "now" there are memo-

ries of his life seen as an "expanding ladder" until graduation, when "life began to narrow to what was done— / The dominant gerundive—." Narrowing brings dissipation and loss of *and*s in the growing awareness of the pressure to conform to and perform in society, visibly manifest in the use of active verbs. *And* in the meditation on the early happy memories exerts itself visibly as a connective force; it designates incidentals and separate things brought together: "dogs and cats, and plasticine and conkers," where "things" "get better and bigger and better and bigger and better." In its unstudied accumulation, that excess is the excess of childhood for the one who remembers the "house of childhood." It is also dynamic and vast; it generates significant forward movement: "we went on / growing and growing, gluttons for the future." The *and* of childhood and early youth enumerates not only things but also conditions: "alarm and exhilaration"; "And we had our little tiptoe minds [...] / And a heap of home-made dogma." With years passing, subsequent terms bring different additions; this time their function is to force collisions of different spaces and objects: "A string of military dates for history, / And Gospels and the Acts / And logarithms and Greek and the Essays of Elia." These heaps alert the reader to the suddenness and passing character of everything. Because they suppress verbs, multiple *and*s mark the disappearance of a sense of time. These are *and*s Gass identifies as *and*s of nervousness, of worry (170). Dominated by nouns, the lists retard the forward movement of the mind. From then on, we enter a site that Gass calls, after Borges, "a ceremonial space, overburdened with complex figures" (182): "And school was what they said it was, / an apprenticeship to life, an initiation." *And*s in canto X balance and coordinate two modes of excess in a world of bankruptcy. Yet, as such, the formulary of *and*s, the internal movement and proximity it establishes, does not render the process of personal gathering in any way conclusive.

On the one hand, *Autumn Journal*'s additive method, interspersed with less frequent but still numerous *with*s, provides a flexible resource for conveying information, "the normal business of poetry," says MacNeice, justifying thus the necessity of "word patterns" (*Mod-*

ern Poetry 40). On the other hand, attentive to what he identifies as the "present day taste" for economy and concentration, he seems to choose the additive *and* with his readers in mind. Readers in the thirties became psychic collaborators of the texts, powered like *Autumn Journal* by agglomerated fragments. MacNeice certainly identified with his public as the determiners of forms of expression, and he consequently modified the use of his aesthetic forms, opening them up to conditions of an acceptable economy and the dynamics of his readers. In canto XIX, for example, MacNeice exercises the figures of omission and paucity of linking relationships, asyndeton, and the related brachylogia, to produce the effect of broken delivery. The entire canto contains only eleven *and*s, the smallest number of all the cantos. The breathless paratactic rhythm serves to condense long and short snaps of a "busy morning." We find in this canto a disturbing *bio* of a modern father:

> Under the stairs is a khaki cap;
>   That was Dad's, Dad was a plumber—
> You hear that dripping tap?
>   He'd have had it right in no time.
> No time now; Dad is dead,
>   He left me five months gone or over;
> *Tam cari capitis*, for such a well-loved head
>   What shame in tears, what limit?
> It is the child I mean,
>   Born prematurely, strangled;
> Dad was off the scene,
>   He would have made no difference. (XIX)

In this micro-section of a life, deletion of connectives in canto XIX communicates economically a spasmodic speed of developments. Its smallness and irregularity construct the personal account in terms of a mosaic of broken tessera and missed alignments. This very rationally organized portion of reality emphasizes relations free from constraints, free from imposing conjunctions, open and direct. The paratactic technique in the whole canto marks a farewell to an experience of rejoining "blight and blossom." The speaker in the canto feels

despondent because he has to bury what was full of connecting and energizing relation in his "mind museum" (XIX).

Yet, MacNeice's accounting of his experiences and items is principally structured not by asyndeton but by repetitive addition, by incantatory polysyndeton, which stabilizes more satisfactorily the collecting "I." Didier, analyzing inordinate uses of repetition and other play with words in diaries, refers to their clusters as the notebook style ("le style d'agenda") and the quasi-telegraphic style ("un style quasi-télégraphique"; 163-64). She says diarists exercise them in order to break away from the limitations of the monadic world of the diary, to construct psychological aiding mechanisms which allow continuity, despite expected and unexpected interruptions and breaks in the process of diary composition. She argues that repetition ("la répétition") and self-repetition ("la redite"), for example, provide the impulse to keep on writing; they act as a kind of a springboard (166). She says it is not "the architecture of the phrase profoundly structured" that creates and sustains the boring-enchanting ("endormeur-charmeur") rhythm of the journal which "interiorize[s]" and "appropriate[s]" the stifling monotony and the recorded days. Rather, it is the obsessive repetition, enumeration, and presence of incomplete phrases that does so (168-69). This "hypnotic" rhythm of gathering certainly provokes the reader. "Any enumeration of objects or events," says MacNeice, "will take on a rhythm, as we read it, just as the monotony of the noise of a train takes on a rhythm as we listen to it." He knows rhythm can "hypnotiz[e] us into an escape from reality" (*Selected Literary Criticism* 50).

In *Autumn Journal*, the accrued pattern of functional and mechanical repetitions of words, sonic devices, and syntactic structures, linking and riveting details to details, creates poetic cumulative expansiveness, which staves off the boredom of ordinary life repetitions. But Didier suggests yet another, more nuanced feature of a seemingly monotonous style produced by compulsive repetitions. She compares its hypnotic effect to religious ecstasy. She believes that it is generated by a barely perceptible yet obsessive sort of "presence-absence." In the

diary, the "I," like God, is omnipresent, yet invisible. Didier says that the reader tries always to turn towards him, to this pervasive pronominal "I" like a fly to a lamp. Yet for psychological, historic, and social reasons, the notion of the "I," while central, remains uncertain. The journal revolving around this "I," revolves around a subject which is beyond capture (cf. 166-68).

Because there is no single wholeness available to *Autumn Journal*'s modern subject, his life is animated by multiple attempts to localize and mark off some small meaningful territories. Caught in the developments of "evil time," recording its reverberations as they gather up and impose on his mind, anxious and uncertain, he is reviewing possible instruments and ways to reaffirm his sense of self. Himself a stranger to a long residential experience of home, with its localized intimacy, though not a stranger to experiences of stifling domesticity, he re-collects the deposits of his imaginary life collections to integrate a temporary asylum, his capacious journal. MacNeice's large catalogue of composite images of home comprises a range of habitats, a collection which reconfigures the concept of home not as a *locus* enabling only movement but as a *locus* of accumulations, variations, and climaxes. In *Autumn Journal*, home is a nonstatic principle, tearing the subject from itself more so than the dispersing force of historical events. Following the speaker's journey of the survey of lumber rooms, houses and homes he experienced, we grow also convinced by his claim that "no poet writes a poem about a house; any poem he writes about a house is also a poem about himself, and so about humanity and life in general" (*Poetry* 18).

Autumn Journal houses metaphoric worlds of diverse experiences. We read of a house which is a solid "sanctum under pelmets" (I) surrounded by "farmyard noises," still alive and available to some but not to the speaker, who only senses the house's strength from a distance. He says that there are some who still find happiness in "the hive of home," protecting its inhabitants' intimacy of "thigh over thigh and a light in the night nursery" (II). But this light is not meant to be shared. Those who "are hungry" and live "under the starry dome" can't see or use it. His flat on Primrose Hill, exposed to "the

dahlia shapes of the light" outside, is heated by fire, decorated with heavy curtains, and occasionally even cozy, especially when he can be there and look at his flowers. But it is not a "sanctum." There is a "bloody frontier" which "converges on our beds" and which defines the split barren life of the place. The flat sprouts from his pillows not dreams but "feathers" (V). Removed in time and space, his remembered cluttered "place in the sun," his Birmingham funk-hole, stands in an impossible opposition to his present flat: "With two in a bed and patchwork cushions / And checks and tassels on the washing-line, / A gramophone, a cat, and the smell of jasmine." Yet, as a short though intense episode of spending, not of cultivating, the place is a lost experience, impossible to retrieve: "Memory blocks the passage." This house did not secure anything; its sunny place he so exuberantly "docketed" is gone (VIII).

Moving between interplaces of all sorts like railway stations and village pubs, place-rich maps of his daily experiences, porous multiplicities vaguely engaging his visual perception, the "I" pauses at "jerry-built abodes" which the housewives try to "bolster up […] / With *amour propre* and the habit of Hire Purchase" (XIV). He follows working men to their places, where "the kettle sings and the bacon sizzles," and where the signs marking domestic virtues are disappointingly empty. There is little to do in such homes but to eat, watch television, and go to bed. He catches sight of small objects like "a wistful face in a faded photo" and a "khaki cap" that belonged to somebody's absent dad. In a lifeless house, "the torn shirt soaks on the scrubbing board" (XIX), forming a visually captivating image behind which there is abandoned effort. Such stagnant foci make England the "home of lost-' illusions." Driving through English villages, he sees "tracks of darkness" everywhere, even the country "is damp and dark and evil" (XIV). Ireland is more complex because its deceptive intimacies still allure strangers; it is "small enough / To be still thought of with a family feeling" (XVI). But there is nothing solid or limpid about its homes. The houses in the North, he complains, are "veneered with the grime of Glasgow"; the houses are surrounded by coughing unemployed men, and their children are playing on "wet pavements."

Even the houses of the rich possess liquid qualities, a "sagging tennis net / On a spongy lawn beside a dripping shrubbery." Belfast, where he spent his childhood, is a city "built upon mud" (XVI). Water's unstructurable, dissolving, permeating, and feminine character conditions Ireland's self-deceptive reality. She, the alluvial Ireland, is his real fascinating mother; returning to her, he returns to his origins, his birth. "Her name keeps ringing like a bell / In an under-water belfry" (XVI).

In the journal, homes are evoked out of *horror vacui*, a likely condition of atopia, of having no-place-at-all. Whether anthropomorphized, as houses in war-stricken Barcelona "with empty eye sockets" (XXIII), or arranged in rows, like sleeping animals, "breathing fires," empty and hostile, the homes assembled in the journal have no histories. They are not complete aborescent creations. Without any power to stabilize the subject and to protect him from the approaching "zero hour" of anticipated destruction, the accumulated houses embody disjunctive orders, territories of rhizomatic dissipation amplifying a sense of paucity of real relations in the modern world.

4. Autumnal Archiving

Autumn Journal's archival accretion of experience, the journal's peculiar vertigo of repetitions, create a strong alliance with its time in the face of real crises: "We have come to a place in space where shortly / All of us may be forced to camp in time" (XXIII). MacNeice hopes that recorded confusion of the moment and the traces of time will prove instrumental both for him and a future reader. He finds that writing a journal is a necessity, a way of not stopping to write in the face of growing fear. He also believes that facing "the inrush of a posteriori (commonly called 'life')" is a natural poetic activity. Selecting and weighing; "sweep[ing] away the vastly greater part"; forming a new pattern, "the first pattern of its kind and not particularly ours," must result in "the paradox of the individual and the impersonal" (*Selected*

Literary Criticism 43). The choice of his medium seems motivated by its contingency undisturbed by hindsight.

Compelling external circumstances press the poet to more increased political concerns and his acceptance of the political nature of man. They play a critical part in the conditions of his journal as do the poet's love of novelty and variety. Suited for recording personal circumstances chronologically, or at least sequentially, the journal serves to maintain a search for communication. A journal is a site for rehearsing, accommodating, and stabilizing contradictions of its author. As I have shown, *Autumn Journal*'s to-and-fro movements, its dramatic growth, and its intermittent rhythm take up diaristically the personal challenges as well as stresses of the now. *Autumn Journal* yields and surrenders to that difficult moment in history; it also takes up the poet's struggles to create an intimate and highly diverse space for a panoramic journey across the span of his intense life to attempt to prove and to articulate himself to himself: "I to I" (*Collected Poems* 331).[12] *Autumn Journal* exposes that private self as a critic of his own discourse with his secrets and the events he finds worth reporting. And, as he hoped, the poet's act of tentative but harmonizing self-identification and unification, an attempt however "uneven" and "unbalanced" (*Collected Poems* 101), survives as a document of its time.

As the personal, so the public accounts of the year appear problematic: "The year has little to show, will have a heavy / Overdraft to its heir" (XVIII). Like the first journals of antiquity, *Autumn Journal* records in a form of an account book the climate of the "needs of commerce and administration." Lejeune says that "up until the sixteenth century, the journal was basically a *community* affair" (52). Here is its thirties version:

> International betrayals, public murder,
>   The devil quoting scripture, the traitor, the coward, the thug
> Eating dinner in the name of peace and progress,
>   The doped public sucking a dry dug;
> Official recognition of rape, revival of the ghetto
>   And free speech gagged and free
> Energy scapped and dropped like surplus herring

> Back into the barren sea;
> Brains and beauty festering in exile,
> The shadow of bars
> Falling across each page, each field, each raddled sunset,
> The alien lawn and the pool of nenuphars;
> And hordes of homeless poor running the gauntlet
> In hostile city streets of white and violet lamps
> Whose flight is without a terminus but better
> Than the repose of concentration camps. (*AJ* XVIII)

In one sense, an archive is a space where documentary traces of public events, traces of experience, are ratified. The journal invests dated traces with personal meanings. Available for reviewing, emendation, and expansion, the journal transmits experience as knowledge intentionally collected and preserved by a participating and knowing subject, who makes them public. The journal preserves and reveals experience, it is used to testify to a contact with the real world.

More than action, MacNeice regarded witnessing as a position available for him to take. In the face of the unknown, to prevent forgetting but also to cope with the present moment, distressed by tensions of his identity, he produces a lyrically elaborated archive that he retrospectively described as an "honest" journal. Its archival space is held together by the rhythm of the beginnings and endings of its entries; by the natural rhythm of the changing season; and by the recorded rhythm of trains and cars, jazz songs and newspaper slogans, all of which define the rhythm of MacNeice's powerful poetry. Most problematically, however, the internal rhythm of the whole journal is sustained by the indistinct conjunction *and* with its all-inclusive force. An archive gathered by means of *and*s is an archive open to the future, or, as McDonald puts it, "pitched into the future" (93).

This paper has sought to show that *Autumn Journal* is the all-inclusive aesthetic collection consolidated by hypertactical *and*. For the *Journal's* multiple subject the collection serves as an aid ensuring his forward movement. Harmonizing and balancing, *and* emphasizes the subject's difficulty in making sense of historical crises, of grasping history. To make sure that anyone could understand his journal, and

that it would survive, MacNeice wrote *Autumn Journal* in verse. Indeed, "seldom can the lyric have carried so much freight and remained airborne" (M. Longley xvii).

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NOTES

[1]For example, Alan Gillis reads *Autumn Journal* as "explicitly autobiographical" (48). Edna Longley and Peter McDonald defend *Autumn Journal* as a major poem to emerge out of the dark decade of the 1930s. Edna Longley also argues that "[a]ll the currents of MacNeice's writing during the 1930s flow into *Autumn Journal*" (56).

[2]MacNeice refers to his poems as cantos. This study uses uppercase Roman numerals to refer to them.

[3]I owe this powerful image to Patricia Rae, who investigates the idea of the proleptic use of English arcadia in elegies written in the thirties. Her essay provides also a good understanding of the nature of the decade's "Janus-faced grief" that she traces in thirties texts' "mingling" of the "ghosts of the dead with the premonition of future deaths" (258).

[4]MacNeice exposes not only symbolic systems of culture but also its diverse material productions.

[5]I am indebted here to Alan J. Peacock, who argues that the poet assimilated "Horace into his own experience […]. [S]ubscribing in his attitude to life to something not very different from Horace's 'Middle Way,'" but he adds that MacNeice was a "more astringent commentator on human experience" (128). Also Marsack provides a useful comment from MacNeice himself who, writing about the poet's own re-reading of canto IX, said that he was not objective about the ancient Greeks: "I saw them," he says, "in the light of the mood induced in me by Munich" (49). But it is Horace whose influence on MacNeice Marsack singles out, particularly in features of his writing like rational approach, application of debate, and certain skepticism, as well as "stylistic affinities: ease, neatness, rapidity" (53).

[6]"Incorrigibly plural" are MacNeice's words from his acclaimed "Snow" (*Collected Poems* 30).

[7]Pound's reference to the excess of experience that the poet has to deal with in the so-called modern world is informed by his continuing fascination with emptiness and his awareness of the inadequacy of the lyric to address all the diverse materials he wanted to weave into his poetry.

[8]"Late modernism" is used in recent theoretical discussions as a periodizing term to mark what Miller identifies as a "*historically* codified phenomenon" (22).

For Hindrichs what defines late modernism is "a group of aesthetics evolving out of the impasse of modernist humanist and imperialist ideals"; it is primarily "the intensity of awareness of a moment of transition (in aesthetics as well as economics, politics, and epistemes)" (844). I am not developing the concept of "late modernism" in this paper as it seems to me to be more fruitful in studies focused on bringing out resemblances between diverse texts. For a discussion of the remembered and proleptic senses of crises in the thirties, see chapter one of my *Life Writing as Self-Collecting in the 1930s.*

[9]"Trans-individual mental structures" is Goldmann's term, used by Raymond Williams, who speaks of the collective "structure of feeling" helping to shape the literary expressions of a period (28).

[10]In his analysis of "poetry of addition" and the dominant "cumulative style," Dodsworth relies on Bernard Spencer's "Allotments: April," Auden's "Spain," and MacNeice's "Bagpipe Music." Dodsworth makes an interesting mention of Mass Observation, though, going even as far as calling "accumulative poetry" like Spencer's its "literary equivalent" (187). William Barrett, on the other hand, calls the strategy of putting odd bits together an "encyclopedic form of imagination." He considers Joyce as a "complete bricoleur" recycling and putting everything (slogans, radio blurbs, proverbs, songs, gossip, popular sayings) together as a way of redeeming time (335).

[11]Gass addresses all these and many other uses of *and*, providing a wide range of powerful examples from Joyce, Stein, Hemingway, Dickens, and Borges.

[12]In *Autumn Sequel*, canto I, he extends this connection: "An autumn journal—or journey" (*Collected Poems* 331).

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Connotations
Vol. 22.2 (2012/2013)

Language Matters: An Investigation into Cliché in *The Light of Day*[*]

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While Graham Swift's *The Light of Day* (2003) was not an overwhelming success with readers and reviewers, with Germaine Greer speculating that it had been rewritten too many times and labelling it "stillborn" (Gove, Greer, and Lawson), it has come to be viewed as an intriguing attempt to create serious literature devoid of poetic language. The stripping away of poetic language and deliberate repetition of non-literary cliché phrases could be interpreted as measures in poetic economy. Swift does not dazzle with million dollar phrases but tries to squeeze poetry from well-worn colloquialisms. What is meant by poetry in this paper is really the accumulation of layers of meaning through language. This is an effect achieved by many writers through the use of advanced vocabulary and unusual collocations—language that is more literary than conversational, which sends the reader to the dictionary for demystification. In *The Light of Day* Swift attempts something quite different. He uses clichés that everyone understands but in such a way that they resonate, and we are made to reconsider their meaning. When the method works, Swift is able to create a literary effect through colloquial language which this paper argues is a form of poetic, or literary, economizing.

At a recent conference in Nice, France, Swift declared that "[w]riting is not about words," and that good literature expresses what is "beyond words": "the more ordinary they are, the more brilliant they could be" (Swift, Interview by Adam Begley). This is not a new position for Swift, who said in promoting *The Light of Day* seven years

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debjames0222.htm>.

earlier: "The real art is not to come up with extraordinary clever words but to make ordinary simple words do extraordinary things" (O'Mahony). In the novels which followed *Waterland* (1983), Swift's determination to move beyond words led him to simplify his prose and to use clichéd and hackneyed phrases shunned by novelists with more literary pretensions.

A possible justification for having *The Light of Day*'s narrator George Webb think in clichés comes from his profession: he is a modestly educated private detective, not a student of literature, and common-place language is all that he has at his disposal. In order to understand past mistakes and a present passion, George writes down his story, and in the process begins to pay attention to language. As he ponders the implications of being in the dark and seeing the light of day his perception of reality changes. The novel suggests that intellectual curiosity and love can help one see truth. The problem of seeing clearly in a murky world fogged with emotion and deceit is a recurring theme in Swift. This paper would like to add to the discussion on vision and language in Swift by looking more closely at the nature of clichés and how they work in the novel. It also traces the development of vision as an organizing principle back to an early, uncollected Swift short story which has yet to receive critical treatment. Finally, markings made to the manuscript draft contained in the British Library's Graham Swift Archive are cited to show the author's acute awareness of creating an effect by repeating clichés. It will be argued that, to an extent, the benefits accrued through verbal simplicity are mitigated by Swift's dependence upon the reader understanding the highly literary game he is playing and being willing to participate in that game.

Swift's interest in clichés is particularly apparent in a series of poems he composed shortly after the completion of *The Light of Day* and which were later published in his 2009 memoir *Making an Elephant*. Though Swift often reads poetry in between novels, this marked his first attempt at poetic composition. "One poem seemed to lead to another," he explained in the memoir, "so that I acquired, until it suddenly stopped, the cautiously darting momentum (quite unlike the momentum of writing a novel) with which you hop from stepping

stone to stepping stone" (227). The poems too are dominated by images of light and vision. In "We Both Know," memory and desire hover "around us when we meet / Like some trick of light" (*Making an Elephant* 2-3), while "Rush Hour" opens with "The fog of [commuters'] massed breath, / The still-sleepy glitter of their eyes" (1-2); most of the thirty-one poems feature impediments to vision and reminders that nothing is wholly as it seems. The cycle opens with "This Small Place," a study in clichéd expressions of quantity in measuring the smallness of human life against oblivion. The contrast is established in the first two lines: "The world is big enough, / Though getting smaller, they say" (1-2). We each inhabit our own "place of small talk and whispers and memories / And small mercies and small blessings, / And small comfort, true enough, sometimes" (5-7), and we know "where we'll be at the finish" (13), Swift muses: "Sure enough, true enough, big enough" (15). The style of "This Small Place" mirrors that of *The Light of Day*. In the poem the contrast between small and large things is made through clichéd expressions that contribute to a discussion of a philosophical question: the position of humanity within the world. The novel uses clichés based upon light and dark in asking us to consider questions surrounding the nature of love and limits of knowledge. For some reviewers of the novel, the method was more contrived than earthy, with Germaine Greer saying that it "smelled of the lamp" (Gove, Greer, and Lawson). James Wood, on the other hand, praised Swift's "commitment to ordinary speech," calling *The Light of Day* "as close to seeming spoken as any novel I have read. It dares the ordinariness of flat, repetitious, unliterate narration. Perhaps this doesn't sound daring; but it is certainly risky" (28). Robert Ross was also impressed and deemed it "a metaphysical riddle of loss and redemption" (230).

The Light of Day would appear to be a slow-moving murder mystery told in reverse. The crime was committed and solved two years earlier, and events are retraced until the reader is brought back to the present. The binary opposition of clichés in "This Small Place" is replicated, with quantitative imagery giving way to images of light and dark. First-person narrator George Webb is a disgraced police-

man-turned-private detective hired by university lecturer and translator Sarah Nash to follow her husband in November 1995. Bob Nash, a gynaecologist, has been having an affair with Kristina Lazic, a Croatian refugee half his age. Sarah becomes suspicious and confronts her husband, who agrees to terminate the relationship when Kristina leaves London for her homeland. With the departure date looming, Sarah hires George to follow her husband to the airport, ensure that Kristina boards the plane alone, then report back by telephone. Everything goes according to plan, and Bob returns home, where Sarah has prepared an elaborate reconciliatory dinner. Before they eat, however, she stabs him to death with a kitchen knife. The novel begins and ends on the second anniversary of Bob's death, with George visiting his grave, then Sarah in prison. George has fallen in love with his former client who, after initially refusing to see him, now accepts his visits and tutors him in writing. George's attempt to understand the crime and his passion by writing it down enables Swift to conduct what James Wood termed his "investigation of cliché" (28).

While reviewers were divided on the novel's merits,[1] over the last decade Swift scholars have seen much to admire in the linguistic innovations of *The Light of Day*. The colloquialisms and clichés seem to work in two different ways: they simplify the narrative while creating deeper levels of meaning through heightened ambiguity. Both David Malcolm and Peter Widdowson thought that the use of cliché was a ploy on George Webb's part, labelling him an unreliable narrator who selects vague, often trite language for the purpose of deception. Malcolm argues persuasively that George frames both the narrative and his suspect by arranging truth to suit his needs. His obsession with Sarah is pathological, and he deceives the reader via imaginative but often inaccurate storytelling (205-06). Widdowson focuses on the repetition of the verbs "know" and "tell" in order to prove the unreliability of George, who reveals more than he intends to and offers a biased account due to his infatuation with Sarah (103). Widdowson sees the novel in terms of a critique of suburbia as an emblem of civilization, and the misguided substitute of fine cuisine for passion and real love (103-07). Daniel Lea, the writer of another Swift mono-

graph, does not use the term "unreliable narrator," instead characterizing George as "delusional" (212) because he sees reality through a thick filter (209).

According to this interpretation, the use of limited and delimiting vocabulary is part of an authorial strategy to create a complex "edgy, uncontrolled voice" (203). Stef Craps, the writer of another Swift monograph, considers the effect of the clichés cumulative, as their repetition allows the acquisition of "ever more shades of meaning," giving the novel the depth of poetry (176). The words may be the same, but they acquire greater depth through the changes in context. This is a recurring interpretative line among contemporary scholars: the use of simple language does indeed allow Swift access to a wider range of possible meanings, and it ought to be viewed as a positive achievement.[2] While these interpretations of *The Light of Day* are not necessarily flawed, they do not go far enough in considering the nature of clichés and colloquial language before evaluating Swift's success in doing extraordinary things with ordinary words.

The overriding concern for language in *The Light of Day* gains further support from Swift's own protestation that the novel should not be labelled detective fiction. "I never set out to write a detective story," said Swift. "The character George was other things before he became a detective. The notion that he would be a detective came quite late, and it led to certain other possibilities, but I never had the original intention of writing a detective story." He concluded: "I prefer to think of it as a novel that has a detective as its main character, not as a detective story. I can't see myself writing another detective story. If I entered a genre, I did so inadvertently" (Interview by Fiona Tolan). In 2007 he made a similar disavowal, explaining that George Webb only became a detective because Swift "wanted a character who, for professional reasons, would be very close to what was going on in some household" (Interview by Francois Gallix). In truth, both textual and manuscript evidence shows that Swift is more concerned with language than murder. As detective fiction, it is tediously slow and unsatisfying because, as one reviewer said, the reader tires of watching the author do all the detecting (Quinn).[3]

Cliché expressions become the vehicle for exploring the following questions: can words ever express their intended meaning, and is it possible to understand the essence of what lies behind language? Swift's reliance upon clichés to make his points in a work that aspires to literature is a calculated risk; language purists and writers with literary aspirations shun them, and even dictionaries look upon them askance. One wonders, then, if clichés, as Swift uses them both in *The Light of Day* and his poetry, are up to the task of broaching linguistic and metaphysical problems while telling a story that is worthy of being called literature. *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary* defines cliché as "[a] stereotyped expression, a commonplace phrase" (348), while *The American Heritage Dictionary* calls it "[a] trite or overused expression or idea" (356). Although little mystery surrounds the meaning of most overused pieces of language, there is no consensus on the question which words, expressions, or ideas deserve the label "cliché." One dictionary compiler explains the problem in the following terms: "They are impossible to pigeonhole. Classifying something as being overused and stale does not immediately call to mind a distinctive linguistic category" (Kirkpatrick vii). The above definitions raise a further problem in relation to cliché and *The Light of Day*: can something new be created from stale material?

That Swift uses clichés, trite phrases, and commonplace expressions deliberately is evidenced by markings made to the manuscript, now held in the British Library's Graham Swift Archive. He drew rectangular boxes around dozens of phrases such as "To love—is to be ready to lose" ("Clear" 78), and "You never know what's in store" ("Clear" 38), then marked them with uppercase "R's," possibly signifying repetition, as almost all of these phrases appear again later in the text. When asked about this, Swift replied in a personal letter, "I do not instantly recall marking up the manuscript, but no doubt I would have done so at the time for a purpose" (Letter to the author). Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the repetition of these commonplace phrases—and a possible justification for their presence in a literary work—is that in each usage the meaning alters. "To cross a line" is one of the author's favourite clichés, and in the manuscript

Swift enclosed the three passages connected to this cliché with boxes: "They cross a line" ("Clear" 40); "As if there's a line for them too. All the lines" ("Clear" 179); and "You cross a line" ("Clear" 187). The first sentence refers to the line crossed by Sarah Nash and other women who spy on their adulterous partners, the implication being that their status is complicated through the investigation because they are no longer passive victims. The second, altered in the published novel to "You take a step, you cross a line," reminds the reader that Bob Nash could very easily have joined Kristina and thrown away his marriage and life in London. After all, "people do weirder things" (199). The third reference was ultimately excised, though others, unmarked in the manuscript, survive. One such example follows the narration of the murder, with its victim described as "a gynaecologist who'd crossed a line—and taken advantage (if it was that way round) of a poor helpless refugee girl" (224).[4] In all of the above instances, the reader is made aware that some decisions result in an irrevocable change in status. By having her husband followed, Sarah in some way ceases to be a victim; if Bob runs away with Kristina, he will forfeit his job and family in London; and once Bob has slept with Kristina, he is no longer the good Samaritan offering shelter to the needy. Cumulatively, then, crossing a line implies the breach of a contractual or ethical rule and a loss of innocence. The repetition of two other cliché phrases—to be in the dark and to see the light of day—works in a similarly economical way. The same words are used in different contexts to invoke different meanings, showing a progression from ignorance to knowledge.

There are at least two problems with Swift's experimental use of clichés in *The Light of Day* that make it uneconomical in a literary sense. Although he would have us believe that he is trying to make his novel closer to reality by replicating the speech and thought patterns of his unintellectual narrator, the deliberate repetition of light and dark imagery betrays the presence of an artist hiding in the shadows behind George Webb. The readers most likely to appreciate the game the author is playing are those aware of literary traditions, who understand the intended effect. Swift's ideal reader is not the man or

woman on the street but the student of literature. Further, appreciation is contingent upon knowledge of the taboo against cliché in literary novels. Most writers avoid clichés, except in dialogue, because it suggests a lack of verbal ingenuity. The best stories, and the ones that win literary prizes, are told in voices that seem original. As Frank Kermode has argued, the originality of a book cannot be measured without knowledge of the genre and conventions within which the author is operating. In a discussion of Robbe-Grillet's experimental novels, Kermode admitted to being sceptical about "how far these books could make their effect if we were genuinely, as Robbe-Grillet thinks we should be, indifferent to all conventional expectations. In some sense they must be there to be defeated" (20). Thus, if the author of *The Light of Day* (and winner of the Man-Booker Prize) employs a first-person narrator to tell the story through clichés he must be doing so for a reason, and not just to reproduce the mind and milieu of his central character.

The textual justification for the repetition of clichés is that George has begun looking at the familiar with a fresh eye. "Before Sarah became my teacher," he says, "I never used to think much about words—hold them up to the light" (177). This is precisely what Swift was doing when he drew boxes in the manuscript draft: holding commonplace expressions up to the light, altering angles and circumstances in order to consider as many interpretations as possible. In the novel people too look differently as the light changes. George remembers that Sarah "had eyes that seemed to shift—under a slight frost—from black to brown, to ripple. Tortoise shell. The hair was the same. Black, you'd say, but when the sunlight from the window caught it you saw it was deep brown" (17). Appearances can be deceiving, as George clumsily reports while examining identification photographs of Bob and Kristina: "people don't always look like they look" (57). The message is that one must go beneath the surface in order to truly understand, and *The Light of Day* traces George's search for the meaning beyond words to illuminate and elucidate memory.

There is a sharp divide separating writers and linguistic commentators on the utility and propriety of clichés. Eric Partridge, the author

of *A Dictionary of Clichés*, which first appeared in 1940, advances the negative view. The 1978 edition's dedication is to one A. W. Stewart, a "lover of good English," who assisted Partridge "in that excellent blood sport: cliché-hunting." The preface contains an attack on linguistic lassitude: "Only those of us who are concerned to keep the language fresh and vigorous regard, with dismay, the persistence of these well-worn substitutes for thinking and the mindless adoption of new ones." He is critical of "well-known writers of every sort" who "bore us by employing a cliché when they could so easily have delighted us with something vivid or, at the least, precise" (Partridge ix). Martin Amis would agree with Partridge, for he even called a collection of literary and cultural essays *The War Against Cliché*. At the end of the foreword, Amis announces that "all writing is a campaign against cliché. Not just clichés of the pen but clichés of the mind and clichés of the heart. When I dispraise, I am usually quoting clichés. When I praise, I am usually quoting the opposed qualities of freshness, energy, and reverberation of voice" (Amis xv).

There are, however, some potential advantages in using clichés that one ought to consider. Although they might not always be fresh or vibrant, they sometimes succinctly capture an idea or sentiment. While James Rogers, the compiler of another dictionary of clichés, admits that their bad reputation is generally upheld, he maintains that "[a]mong people who do pay attention to their phrasing […] clichés can serve as the lubricant of language: summing up a point or a situation, easing a transition in thought, adding a seasoning of humor to a discourse" (Rogers vii). Language guide author H. W. Fowler, too, thought it unfair to view all clichés negatively for this "obscures the truth that words and phrases falling within the definition are not all of a kind." While he has no use for "those threadbare and facetious ways of saying simple things and those far-fetched and pointless literary echoes which convict their users either of not thinking what they are saying or of having a debased taste in ornament" (90-91), he argues for the necessity of phrases like "foregone conclusion" and "white elephant," whose implementation in conversation is "the obvious choice." Such clichés are "readily recognizable, and present them-

selves without disguise for deliberate adoption or deliberate rejection" (91).

Graham Swift clearly sides with Fowler for he, too, believes that just because clichés are the obvious choice, writers need not always reject them in favour of the flowery or esoteric:

> I do not automatically regard clichés in the pejorative way that some people do. On the contrary, I think they can often be an effective, consensus way of communicating certain things. In any case they are language "such as men do use" and novelists should reflect this, particularly if, as I do, they wish to get intimately close to their characters and so register their (non-literary, non-original) use of words. (Letter to the author)

Swift goes on to say that he tries "to give new life, new relevance and depth to well-worn, common or proverbial phrases, be they clichés or not (for example the phrase 'to be in the dark' in *The Light of Day*)." He describes George Webb as Sarah's student, "with language as one of his subjects. Never having been a wordy man, he now dwells on words quite often, they are among many things he sees in a new light." He concludes by making a familiar appeal: "More and more I believe that the real art of writing lies in giving new power and meaning to ordinary, even simple language, not in finding extraordinary, 'impressive' language for its own sake" (Letter to the author).

When one considers poetic economy, Swift's use of clichés makes sense. The goal of directly communicating with the reader in the plainest terms leaves little room for misunderstanding. And yet the negative reviews of *The Light of Day* find it problematic that he deliberately mystifies the narrative by withholding information and repeating the same vague clichés while leaving so much unsaid. Is this, one wonders, really language such as men do use? The author appears less like "a man speaking to men," to borrow Wordworth's definition of the poet, than a tease imparting just enough information to keep the story going and readers in the dark, and this did not escape the attention of reviewers. Mark Lawson speculated that "there are two kinds of novelists, the ones who put stuff in and the ones who take stuff out," and that Swift "has taken a lot out," citing "huge gaps" in the

romantic relationships; he even went so far as to say that "something has gone wrong" with the author (Gove, Greer, and Lawson). Michiko Kakutani praised Swift for his skill in "slowly revealing the hidden patterns and impulses that connect the lives of George and Sarah and Bob," but disliked the "labored and ceremonious gravity with which it was done." However, there is a logical contradiction inherent in a novelist employing colloquial, non-literary language to argue for the power of words, and this requires further analysis.

David Lodge has pointed to the difference between conversational and textual communication in cautioning against "the naive confusion of life with literature" (184). When one engages in conversation, it is always theoretically possible to interrupt and demand clarification or restatement. But reading a text is a different matter: "the fact that the author is absent when his message is received, unavailable for interrogation, lays the message, or text, open to multiple, indeed infinite interpretations. And this in turn undermines the concept of literary texts as communications" (192). *The Light of Day* paradoxically imitates conversation without narrowing the range of potential interpretations. As we have seen, the meaning of "to cross a line" is on one level obvious, but excessive and indiscriminate use has turned the phrase into an imprecise cliché, the meaning of which is wholly dependent upon context. If it is made to stand alone, the potential interpretations are endless, though generally negative. If you really want to know what someone means by the phrase, you will have to ask for an explanation. This is not possible with a novel, as Lodge says. There are numerous examples in the novel of situations in which a cliché is not the natural choice, and its deployment is puzzling. In one such scene, George says the cut flowers to be placed on Bob Nash's grave "are almost superfluous. It's the thought that counts" (22). Perhaps Pascale Tollance is right in saying that George strives "to bring out the excess that the simplest words contain, to allow words to mean always more than they seem to mean" (69), but the reader also has a simple desire to know what is being conveyed. It is unclear in this scene whether George is making a black joke or giving a positive appraisal of the dutiful, albeit murderous, wife's celebration of the anniversary. Some-

times clichés do function as puns, though the reader cannot always discern whether George is indulging in wordplay for its own sake or in order to arrive at a deeper meaning. When George recalls his wife leaving him because of his "taint," he says, "I didn't have a case, a leg to stand on. She might have made *me* do the walking, with no leg to stand on" (96). The potential meanings of "to have a case," and "no leg to stand on" are undercut by George receiving his walking papers, and one wonders if it is worth the effort of disentangling the mess of clichés to figure out what, or how deeply, the narrator means.

Swift has received numerous letters from readers asking what his novels mean and, while he sometimes agrees with suggested analyses, he refuses to enlighten the confused,[5] citing the reader's prerogative to make meaning as he or she wishes. His mantra is as follows: "I believe in mystery and, more and more, in writing by instinct and intuition. I want to write the kind of novels which get more mysterious as they progress and reach their end, not less. Which is also like life." He concludes: "I don't want to write novels that solve things. More mystery by the end, not less!" (Interview by Paula Varsavsky).

Swift is also a tireless tinkerer, who enhances mystery by cutting back the prose in each successive draft. Early novel drafts often contain insightful explanations and descriptions that are later cut. When Picador reissued *Waterland* in 1992, Swift was asked to check the proofs and took the opportunity to "clarify the prose where sometimes it seemed to get a bit clotted, and to lighten some of the heavier emphases or repetitions," as he explained in a letter (23 July 1994) to a bewildered American who was teaching the novel in a university class. In answer to the question of which edition he considered definitive, Swift wrote: "As a matter of principle, the more recent, revised text should take precedence over the earlier one, but I'd urge your students to get on with responding to the book (as I hope they can) and not to be side-tracked by the business of comparing variations." He then expressed surprise that his revisions would catch the eye of anyone except "a certain kind of scholar (aaagh!)" and instructs his correspondent to tell his students: "if I had to sit an exam on *Waterland*, I wouldn't do any better than any of them" (The Letters). In an

earlier letter of 15 January 1993 to an American student reader, Swift admitted to having made minor changes but insisted that none of them were significant enough to attract the average reader's attention.[6] "I hope you're enjoying studying WATERLAND in your course (though I should say I write simply to be read not to be studied)" (The Letters).

Swift himself did not seem to recognize the inconsistency in making voluntary changes to a novel published ten years previously, then dismissing them as irrelevant. But when this editorial episode is viewed alongside the deliberate use of clichés in *The Light of Day* a pattern emerges. Simply stated, Swift prefers half-meanings to full ones, is unbothered by misinterpretations of his work and feels no need to supply sufficient details to help readers draw satisfying conclusions. When other novelists rely on plot twists and poetic description to heighten mystery, Swift opts for chronological contortions and, in the case of *The Light of Day*, vague language. In his later novels one even has the impression that Swift writes with the intention of keeping his readers in the dark. This deliberate mystification makes his style of fiction particularly difficult to classify, for one of the most obvious differences between literary discourse and ordinary language lies in the evocation of secondary meaning. Stein Haugom Olsen explains that "[a]mbiguities and paradoxes both of single terms and of whole phrases are used in literature to give language what has been called 'semantic density'" (90). While *The Light of Day* is full of ambiguity and paradox, its tone is more conversational than literary. At times the clichés pile up, one on top of another, giving the sense that one is moving further away from, rather than towards clarity. During his visit to the prison, George asks about Sarah's translation of a biography of the Empress Eugenie, and calls the exchange: "Small talk, dodging the issue. Time's precious—but you just play the cards" (244). Surely this is not a case in which the cliché is the obvious choice because four colloquial phrases feature in a very short span.

In *The Light of Day* Swift is at pains to avoid the richly associative poetic language favoured by English writers such as Martin Amis and Will Self, and to suggest shades of meaning through the repetition of

clichés and trite phrases. When Swift limits himself to examining single cliché phrases, the method is more effective than instances such as the prison exchange cited above, when the accumulation of clichés seems contrived and the power of the overall meaning is diminished. In an interview, Swift said that the novel's title refers both to the "brilliant clear weather" and "the light of someone's new vision of the world" ("The Challenge of Becoming Another Person" 142). It is the type of "phrase that you might have heard or used over and over again in a mundane context [that] will suddenly pop up [...] in a way that takes on a different level of deliberation" (Tonkin). The definitions offered for "light of day" by cliché dictionaries vary somewhat and emphasize different points. Kirkpatrick lists it under "to see the light of day" as "to be born, be first invented, have its first performance, be first in evidence" (63). Rogers, meanwhile, introduces "first saw the light of day" as "a biographer's clichéd way of recording the birth of a subject. The phrase 'light o dai' was in print by 1300" (106). In Swift's novel it is the rebirth of George Webb which is most strongly evoked by the phrase. He has started to see things in a new light and his vision of the world is changing.

Vision was the central theme in "Myopia," *The Light of Day*'s understudy,[7] a little-known, uncollected short story first published in *Punch* in 1979. It begins with forty-three year old Mr Sharpe deciding to have his eyesight checked because he suspects his wife of carrying on an affair with her fitness instructor. "I ought to open my eyes in other ways too," he thinks. "To act on what I saw" ("Myopia" 1). After confessing to his optician, "I thought what I saw—the fuzzy faces, the illegible lettering on signs, the general impression of cloudy, impenetrable distance, was normal," he is assured that this is "[a] common experience," for "[h]ow are we to know we are not seeing all we could?" (1). The word choice is significant. Swift would have us believe that the commonplace in life and language is not always properly understood and is worthy of investigation. When he learns that myopia begins in one's teenaged years, Sharpe makes a horrifying realization: "So I've always been like it, always not seen the world for what it is" (3).

George Webb is a year younger than Sharpe, and his dismissal from the police force for framing a suspect forces him to admit that he might not be as clear-sighted as he thought. His daughter Helen, however, has been issuing warnings like the following for years: "You're a detective, Dad. But you don't see things. You don't notice things" (63). The names of both characters alert us to their failings. Just as Mr Sharpe's vision sharpens with his new eyeglasses, enabling him to understand at a glance his wife's reason for enrolling in fitness classes, George Webb escapes from the web of past mistakes by following Sarah Nash's orders to the letter and resisting the desire to form convenient conclusions. Mrs Sharpe dreams not of a new love but of regaining lost youth, and her husband is comforted by this fact. He may be unable to fulfil her needs, but no one else can either. When the daughter asks where the mother goes each Tuesday and Thursday, Mr Sharpe mentions the keep-fit classes as "something you think about when you're getting old." "Daddy, why do we grow old?" she asks and, in the story's final sentence, Mr Sharpe privately admits, with a certain equanimity: "I can't answer her question" (7).

Regarding metaphysical matters, Mr Sharpe remains in the dark, a phrase that experts agree qualifies as a cliché and means to have "no or little knowledge about something; [to be] ignorant of something" (Kirkpatrick 94). This is a state that the typical Swiftian protagonist inhabits for most of his life; he thinks he understands, only to learn later that he was mistaken all along. Throughout his fictional oeuvre, Swift has proved to be primarily interested in analysing those moments when the veil is lifted and darkness turns to light. Knowledge can both empower and destroy, and this dangerous duality is embodied in the idea of crossing a line.

An episode that occurs one afternoon in George's childhood, while caddying for his father, teaches him that ignorance is not always a bad thing. At the golf course he accidentally overhears talk of his father's affair, and at this moment George knew he had "crossed a line" (133). He embarks on his first detective assignment, following the alleged mistress and peeping into his father's appointment book. It was "as if I was on guard" (137), George says, remembering how he followed

Mrs Freeman to her rendezvous with his father. He explains his reasons for conducting the investigation thus: "If you knew something then you had to *know* what you knew, you had to have proof. Otherwise you might be tempted to think it was all a mistake, everything was like it had always been" (134). The scenario is doubtless one that intrigues Swift. In a previous novel, *Shuttlecock* (1981), he explored the implications of the son investigating the father in an even more complex manner. While Prentiss attempts to discover the truth about his war hero father's behaviour as a prisoner-of-war, Prentiss's own son spies on him, following him in the street when he goes to work. The young George Webb, following Prentiss's example, meticulously gathers proof, then does nothing with it, overcome by the "mysterious urge to protect" (137). This is another of the novel's recurring phrases, marked twice by rectangular boxes and uppercase R's in the manuscript.

As a young policeman, George first meets his future wife Rachel when they are both off-duty: he has stopped in a coffee shop where she worked as a waitress until moments before his arrival, when she was fired for refusing the manager's advances. Unlike Mr Sharpe, who has never seen things as they are, George is a keen observer at this point in his life. He will tell Rachel later on the same day: "Only women smoke like that—blowing the smoke straight up—women who are angry. Like a kettle on the boil." Impressed, she says: "You notice things" (118). As a married man and crooked policeman, George stops noticing things, his vision narrowing as marital relations become strained. Finally, he is discharged from the police for concocting a story to fit a crime. He wants the thug Dyson to be guilty of an attack on an Indian shopkeeper, and out of desperation implores Dyson's associate Kenny to choose the most plausible version of events and testify against him: "Okay. You weren't there, you weren't with him. Here's another story—tell me if it's any better" (152). Though George claims that ninety-five per cent of the statement about the attack is true (159), his lack of concern for the truth precipitates his descent into darkness. He is rescued by love and rehabilitated by his dedication to recording incidents and emotions as they occur. Late in

the novel's single November day, George reflects on the connections between language, light, and darkness: "Dusk. Twilight. She taught me to look at words. The way I think she once taught Kristina. Strange English words. Their shape, their trace, their scent. Dusk. Why is it so strangely thrilling—winter dusk? A curtain falling, a divide. As if we should be home now, safe behind doors. But we're not, it's not yet half-past four and everything becomes a mystery, an adventure. Now everything we do will be in the dark" (252). This passage reminds us of the implications of George's emergence from darkness into light. And though his growing familiarity with words and their meanings leads towards self-knowledge, he is still capable of writing awful sentences like "people don't always look like they look" (57).

In a sense, *The Light of Day* is problematic because Swift resembles the crooked policeman who frames his story too well. This point has been made in a more limited way through David Malcolm's discussion of George's unreliability (206). But Swift too seems afraid that the reader will not understand the lesson of moving beyond words to oft-overlooked truths if the story is told with too much eloquence. And so we receive a mixed message: it is not about those (poetic) words, he says, while instructing us to look more closely at these (commonplace) words. The novel is not stillborn, but short on vitality because of the dependence on delimiting clichés. It is worth remembering that Swift's favoured pieces of language inherited their bad name from the "past participle of *clicher* stereotype, said to be imit[ative] of the sound produced by dropping the matrix on the molten metal." Stereotype blocks made from metal were used in the late nineteenth century for printing (*SOED* 348). In the end, some clichés merit serious reconsideration but others do not, and discretionary use becomes important. While the commonplace phrases connected with light and dark that feature in Swift's novel are of interest, the greeting card phrase "it's the thought that counts," for instance, is not. As *The Light of Day* progresses, it becomes apparent that complex ideas lie behind the plethora of clichés. It is in many ways a brilliant work, written with a poetic awareness of secondary meaning. The fact that the novel has been better understood by Swift scholars than by reviewers suggests that

one needs to study by the lamp in order to appreciate it, which in turn tells us that it is not written in the language that men do use, for very few men or women deliberately use clichés to plumb emotional or psychological depths.

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NOTES

[1]For a summary of the negative opinions voiced by reviewers of *The Light of Day* and Swift's reaction to them see the interview/review by Dan Cryer. When Cryer asks Swift about Anthony Quinn's negative remarks he replies, "I would say that he's not read the same book," and, on criticism from a female reviewer, Sylvia Brownrigg, in *Newsday*, he adds: "I write what I write. If people don't get it, then that's their prerogative. I've written enough books and had enough reviews to not be particularly affected by the slings and arrows of outrageous criticism" (Cryer).

[2]Beatrice Berna sees "infinite resonance" in the novel's cliches, creating "unlimited freedom to explore possible answers in the silence that follows the questions." She connects them with Swift's paranomasia, a further reminder of the multiplicity of meaning (75). Catherine Pesso-Miquel has seen the use of "terse, clipped nominal sentences" as a way of avoiding bathos and echoing cliché "the better to dismantle it, paring it down to its bare bones" (93). In two essays Laurence Tatarian considers the purpose of verbal repetition and silence in existential terms ("Reprising or the Subject in the Making," and "Vocal Silences"), while Pascale Tollance interprets the employment of cliché "as an attempt to put language at the service of the story, of what needs to be told, rather than allow words to take over and show off" (63).

[3]Both David Malcolm and Daniel Lea concur that it would be wrong to view *The Light of Day* as detective fiction. Malcolm points out that the novel lacks suspense since the reader is able to guess the fact that Sarah has murdered her husband long before it is actually revealed (191), while Lea calls it "insufficiently mysterious" (192). Pascale Tollance makes the interesting argument that the novel's lack of suspense is a product of the textual focus on details in order to increase the accuracy with which events are related (68). This view is not consistent with the argument that George Webb is an unreliable narrator, thus reminding us of the potential for myriad interpretations in a linguistically vague literary work.

[4]Daniel Lea also discusses the crossing of lines in *The Light of Day*. He claims that Swift uses this clichéd metaphor to remind us of "the dissonance between the subjective and objective realms," which is always important in Swift (106).

[5]A letter to Nicole Clements on 10 September 1986 is representative of Swift's evasiveness regarding content questions: "I can't tell you, any *more* than my novel can, whether Willy is a hero or if Irene finds peace, or if the flowerlady represents anything. But even if I could, it would be wrong of me to do so, since I believe that a novel is different for every one of its readers, and your interpretation is free. It follows that you should not take as gospel what your 'English Handbook' says!" (The Letters).

[6]The type of changes Swift made to *Waterland* ten years after its first appearance were primarily lexical and orthographic, thus, in a sense, he is right to say that they do not affect the average reader's experience with the novel. But one wonders why he would tinker if he really thought it unimportant. When *The Light of Day* reached the proofs stage, he made dozens of corrections, none of which are errors in spelling, typing or punctuation. (The manuscript seemed not to have any errors of this sort at all). He had simply changed his mind about which word to use. Here is a representative sampling of the corrections, all of which are found in the British Library's "Page Proofs" manuscript for *The Light of Day*: "Clever, and comfy: the coat" becomes "Clever, and comfortably-off, the coat" (14); the description of the contents of George's sandwich is altered from "lollo rosso" to "a few leaves" (23); "pretty strange" becomes "pretty odd" (61); "even as I sat there, still" changes to "even as I kept on sitting there" (72); "But maybe" to "Though maybe" (81); George sees his father "hurry to where it seemed he didn't have to wait to be let in" becomes "hurry to the same house. He didn't […]" (102).

[7]The roots of many Swift novels are found in his early short stories. Another source for *The Light of Day* is the story of a Hungarian foster-child, "Gabor." The titular character suspects that his father's war exploits were lies, which becomes the focus in the novel *Shuttlecock*. Another point of comparison with *The Light of Day* lies in Gabor's comment at the end of the story: "I like London. Iss full history. Iss full history" (*Learning to Swim* 53). Sarah Nash is translating a biography of the Empress Eugenie into English, and this allows Swift to examine her role in the history of London.

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Connotations
Vol. 22.2 (2012/2013)

Naming and Unnaming in Spenser's *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*[*]

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Both Petrarch and Boccaccio who, according to Walter W. Greg, "founded the Renaissance eclogue, [were] keenly aware of the value of pastoral for 'covert reference to men and the events of the day, since it is characteristic of the form to let its meaning only partially appear'" (18). And so Spenser, following the example of French and Italian pastoral poets, to say nothing of Virgil, in both *The Shepheardes Calender* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* referred to "shepherds" and "shepherdesses," with a few exceptions, not by the actual names of contemporaries they represented but by mostly Greek-sounding pseudonyms. These pseudonyms are often stereotypic, and so sometimes far from clear in their contemporary reference. My argument extends the uncertainty of the reference of names and naming in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, to a degree beyond that noted by other commentators on this poem, into non-pastoral sections of it.[1]

Compounding this uncertainty of reference in the poem is the unrelated phenomenon of the loss of name. Paradoxically, however, rather than ending in loss, what amounts to an indistinct name establishes itself at the mathematical center of the poem through the sheer beauty of the heart-felt poetry forming it. A reader attuned to my subject understands why, given the sixteenth-century commonness of the name Elizabeth, only such an indistinct, private name expresses the singular character of the Elizabeth Boyle loved by Spenser. This is the heart—mathematically and qualitatively—of *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*. Spenser's unorthodox naming of Elizabeth Boyle gains value

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debhunt0222.htm>.

generally from the relative permanence of the printed life of Spenser's poem, and specifically from the forgettable catalogues of pastoral names framing it. This central process of successful naming in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* complements a traditional doctrine of nominal essentiality that applies to names in *The Faerie Queene* as well as to the author's own surname.

1. Colin Clout and Ralegh's Loss of Name

The word "name" appears eighteen times in Spenser's *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, independent of the catalogues of pastoral names for twelve English poets and twelve court ladies. The first verses name Spenser without naming him:

> The shepheards boy (best knowen by that name),
> That after *Tityrus* first sung his lay,
> Laies of sweet love without rebuke or blame,
> Sate (as his custome was) upon a day,
> Charming his oaten pipe unto his peres (1-5)[2]

Elizabethan readers would have understood that, in reading these lines, they might disregard the appearance of Spenser's name—"*Ed. Spencer*"—on the title page of the poem published by William Ponsonby. They could have done so because they were aware of the pseudonymic dimension of pastoral, the initial mode of *Colin Clout*.[3] They would have been inclined to identify the "shepheardes boy" as the *Colin Clout* of the *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579), which had spread through four editions over sixteen years. Spenser's name never appears in this earlier poem.[4] Spenser twice removes himself from his name in the first verse of *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*. The poem's second verse suggests that "Colin Clout" might have appeared in verse one, for it records "*Tityrus*," the pastoral name of Virgil, whose eclogues were an ultimate model of Renaissance pastoralists such as Spenser in *The Shepheardes Calender*. Spenser's pseudonym would have been especially apt here since, by 1595, astute readers knew that he,

like Virgil, had written pastoral eclogues apparently as preparation and advertisement for a later epic poem. Even after Spenser identifies the boy as Colin Clout he continues at times to obliquely name himself.[5] When the shepherdess Alexis, hearing the boy praise himself indirectly in Cynthia's delight in his song sung for her (*The Faerie Queene*), asks him why so great a shepherdess, surrounded by so many shepherd poets, should listen to him, "a simple silly Elfe" (371), her name for him further diminishes—de-names—Spenser.

The loss of name becomes the subject of the lay that the shepherd boy sang in his musical competition with the "straunge shepheard" (60) who joined him keeping his sheep at the foot of the mountain Mole. This companion names himself "[t]he Shepheard of the Ocean" (66), and it soon becomes apparent that the name represents Sir Walter Ralegh, Spenser's neighbor and conductor to England, where he apparently recommended *The Faerie Queene* to Queen Elizabeth. Commentators on Spenser's *Colin Clout* invariably remark that Ralegh was the preeminent English naval authority, that he was Elizabeth's Admiral of the West until the revelation of his secret marriage to the queen's lady-in-waiting Elizabeth Throckmorton—a son was born in March 1592—resulted in his temporary imprisonment in June 1592, that Elizabeth's pet name for him had been "Water" (for "Walter"), and that the "lamentable lay" (164) of the

> [...] great unkindnesse, and of usage hard,
> Of *Cynthia* the Ladie of the sea,
> Which from her presence faultlesse him debard (165-67)

refers to Ralegh's poetic fragment *The 11th: and the last booke of the Ocean to Scinthia*, by which he apparently had planned to try to win back the queen's favor. (Throughout *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* "Cynthia"—the name of the moon goddess that pushes and draws water—aptly stands, given Walter Ralegh's stagnation, for that of never-named Elizabeth.)[6] A contradiction appears when the Shepherd of the Ocean sings his lay in which he complains that Cynthia, unhappy with his behavior, has barred him from her presence (167) and

then urges the shepherd boy to sail with him to England "his *Cynthia* to see: / Whose grace was great, and bounty most rewardfull" (186-87). Patrick Cheney, Jerome Dees, and others have argued that different parts of *Colin Clout* were written at different times between 1591 and 1595 and, like heterogeneous strata, remained unreconciled by revision when the poem was published.[7]

Ralegh and his ill-fated marriage becomes the preferred allegorical interpretation of the topographical myth that Colin recites in his singing match with the Shepherd of the Ocean (88-155). The myth's moral, encapsulated in its final verse, involves the loss of name entailed in achieving a forbidden love. Colin's tale concerns the love that the river Bregog bore for the shiny river Mulla. Spenser refers to the former stream as "my river *Bregog*" because it courses through his Kilcolmen property, eventually flowing into the Awbeg—here named the Mulla, which also runs through his plantation. The former stream sinks into limestone and reappears two miles lower down, just before its confluence with the Awbeg. Name figures early in this lay when the shepherd's boy reveals that Mulla's father, her source, old father Mole, was so fond of his daughter that he embedded her name—"*Armulla*"—in the name for the north wall of the Awbeg (the Mulla) valley (104-09). Name figures again in Spenser's landscape when Colin asserts that the Mulla,

> springing out of *Mole*, doth run downe right
> To *Buttevant*, where springing forth at large,
> It giveth name unto that auncient Cittie,
> Which *Kilnemullah* cleped is of old.[8] (110-13)

Mulla loved the Bregog "[f]ull faine [...] and was belov'd full faine, / Of her own brother river, *Bregog* hight" (116-17). Colin explains that "Bregog" means "deceitful" "[so] hight [named] because" he sought to win Mulla "by a deceitful traine [stratagem]" (118). Here we have an early rare instance of a name that appears aptly to express an essence. But even then the loss of this name occurs just after it registers essentialist meaning. Obsessed with patriarchal power, old Mole

intends to give his daughter, complete with a rich dowry, to the neighboring Arlo, into whose stream he can apparently divert Mulla's flow. Loving the Bregog, she resists this topographical marriage, angering her father, who has jealously seen the Bregog bending his course toward his daughter. Bregog's realization of his name ironically involves the loss of it. The following passage illustrates Bregog's essential deceitfulness.[9]

> First into many parts his streame he shar'd,
> That whilest the one was watcht, the other might
> Passe unespide to meete her by the way;
> And then besides, those little streames so broken
> He under ground so closely did convay,
> That of their passage doth appeare no token,
> Till they into the *Mullaes* water slide.
> So secretly did he his love enjoy:
> Yet not so secret, but it was descried,
> And told her father by a shepheards boy. (138-47)

Bregog's description of his self-dispersal fancifully explains the partial disappearance of this river over its course through Spenser's property. Bregog permanently loses his name when old father Mole

> In great avenge did roll downe from his hill
> Huge mightie stones, the which encumber might
> His passage, and his water-courses spill [destroy].
> So of a River, which he was of old,
> He none was made, but scattered all to nought,
> And lost emong those rocks into him rold,
> Did lose his name: so deare his love he bought.[10] (149-55)

Rather than being an image of the Neoplatonic One becoming the Many, as some commentators argue, the branching of Bregog's stream into progressively smaller rivulets replicates a genealogical tree in which name exfoliates and dissolves into the tiniest of runs (fibrous roots). "Bregog," Thomas Edwards asserts, "shows"—despite some sympathy that Colin feels for Bregog—"the impropriety of deceitfully pursuing what's above your worth, and it is hard not to connect [the

river's] punishment, loss of 'name,' with Colin's failure to make a name for himself at court, not to mention Spenser's bitter fascination with the idea of the anonymous poet, the Immeritó of *The Shepheardes Calender* whose fame even in the early 1590s was less than satisfying, as the first line of *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* hints (57)."[11]

But for John Bernard, William Oram, J. Christopher Warren, Jerome Dees, and Bart van Es,[12] Spenser's lay is mainly about Sir Walter Ralegh's loss of his reputation (his court identity) in his failed attempt to deceive Queen Elizabeth about his secret love and "confluence" with Elizabeth Throckmorton. That deprivation is equivalent to the erasure of his name. In this reading, Elizabeth, who regularly referred to herself with a masculine pronoun, or the word "prince," or even "king," is Mole, and Ralegh's rough punishment represents her patriarchal power, notably the regulation of court marriage and her dependence upon informers to do so. No one, to my knowledge, has suggested that the shepherd boy who informs on Bregog is the singer of this lay. The shepherd's boy—Colin—has emphasized that his lay is no "leasing [lie, fiction] new" or "fable stale," but "auncient truth, confirm'd with credence [belief] old" (102, 103). The ancient truth that Ralegh's demise and imprisonment in 1592 illustrate involves the inevitability of the patriarchal policing of upper-class marriage and the punishment of transgressors. The suggestion that Spenser, who himself had a secret love who had displaced the queen in his devotion, would focus on Ralegh's dangerous marriage is, of course, outrageous. But that is what Spenser has done, in effect, by deciding to include it, thinly allegorized, in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*. Spenser's calling attention to Ralegh's indiscretion is consistent with the persistent strength of Spenser's cold treatment of Ralegh that competed with his expressions of friendship for this courtier. In fact, Elizabeth Throckmorton Ralegh indicated later that "Ralegh's relationship with Spenser was not a friendship of much substance or longevity" (Hadfield 232-35, esp. 232).[13]

Spenser likely added the myth of Bregog and Mulla to his poem in summer or fall of 1592, or shortly thereafter, and almost certainly was

not the original discloser of Ralegh's marriage to Elizabeth and the literate world. Instead, he was probably hoping—at least part of him was—for the queen's reacceptance of her courtier. But by adding the myth, Spenser was treading on treacherous ground, since he was equating the queen with love-thwarting old Mountain Mole. By doing so, Spenser indirectly risked the loss of his name, his own reputation and standing, with the queen (see Koller).

Spenser widens his focus on the loss of identity in his depiction of the sea during Colin Clout's and the Shepherd of the Ocean's journey to London as

> A world of waters heaped up on hie,
> Rolling like mountaines in wide wildernesse,
> Horrible, hideous, roaring with hoarse crie. (197-99)

So described, this watery chaos threatens drowning, the obliteration of any identity venturing unnaturally upon it. In this respect, heaping water becomes analogous to the obliterating rocks cast down by Mole upon Bregog. Spenser's later portrayal of abuses at court constitutes a land equivalent of the sea anarchy earlier described, a land chaos which—Spenser suggests—threatens the loss of name (680-730). In the English court,

> each one seeks with malice and with strife,
> To thrust downe other into foule disgrace,
> Himselfe to raise: and he doth soonest rise
> That best can handle his deceitfull wit,
> In subtil shifts, and finest slightes devise,
> Either by slaundring his well deemed name,
> Through leasings lewd and fained forgerie. (690-96)

A double loss of name occurs here, not just for the slandered courtier but also for the slanderer himself. Spenser underscores this general loss of name at court by having Hobbinol protest that a few "gentle wit[s] of name," such as Lobbin, possibly Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, can be found at court (731-36, esp. 733). Hobbinol protests that many more worthy persons inhabit the court than Colin admits, but, tellingly, their "names [he] cannot readily now ghesse" (740).

Colin agrees that quite a few learned professors of the arts and sciences, including medicine, dwell in court, but, like Hobbinol, he does not name any, either literally or pseudonymically (741-67). Amorous courtiers abuse Love and remain unknown in the poem, appropriately so since

> with lewd speeches and licentious deeds,
> His mightie mysteries they do prophane,
> And use his ydle name to other needs,
> But as a complement for courting vaine. (787-90)

Misusing love, these sensual courtiers make "ydle" ("useless"/"unused") Love's name, and so, aptly, are themselves never named, never recorded in poetry as honorable, ideal lovers.

2. The Name of the Queen

Spenser never explicitly names Queen Elizabeth in his poem. She is called Cynthia, the moon goddess, presumably because Spenser would have her, like the moon, draw "Wa[l]ter" Ralegh to her again (Montrose 98). A. Leigh DeNeef has shown the degree to which Colin's poetic literal-mindedness in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* precludes the understanding and use of metaphoric thinking and language to liberate the poet's mind (41-43, 50-61, 62-63). "'Foolish faultfinders' or wrong readers," DeNeef claims, "fail repeatedly to understand the metaphoric nature of the literary vehicles they use and they therefore commit themselves to narrowly conceived and literal-minded ethical options" (41). Thus Colin, according to DeNeef, thinks in a "literal metaphoric" way about court and country, never realizing that they are not either/or but components of a greater metaphoric unity: "nation" (53). This critic could have noted that Colin's misuse of metaphor informs his repeated attempts, finally unsuccessful, to name a singular queen. This much becomes apparent in Spenser's remarkably drawn out attempt to name her. The insufficiency of

simile to define—to name—Elizabeth can be detected in the tension—the gap—between various circles by which Colin hopes to describe the queen and the yet unnamed essence of her being:

> I would her lyken to a crowne of lillies,
> Upon a virgin brydes adorned head,
> With Roses dight and Goolds and Daffadillies;
> Or like the circlet of a Turtle true,
> In which all colours of the rainbow bee;
> Or like faire *Phebes* garlond shining new,
> In which all pure perfection one may see. (337-43)

"But vaine it is to thinke by paragone / Of earthly things, to judge of things divine" (344-45), Colin concludes. His frustration with the failure of metaphoric naming to produce the queen's name surfaces in this passage:

> For when I thinke of her, as oft I ought,
> Then want I words to speake it fitly forth:
> And when I speake of her what I have thought,
> I cannot thinke according to her worth.
> Yet will I thinke of her, yet will I speake,
> So long as life my limbs doth hold together,
> And when as death these vitall bands shall breake,
> Her *name* recorded will I leave for ever.
> Her *name* in every tree I will endosse,
> That as the trees do grow, her *name* may grow:
> And in the ground each where will it engrosse,
> And fill with stones, that all men may it know.
> The speaking woods and murmuring waters fall,
> Her *name* Ile teach in knowen termes to frame:
> And eke my lambs when for their dams they call,
> Ile teach to call for *Cynthia* by *name*.
> And long while after I am dead and rotten:
> Amongst the shepheards daughters dancing rownd,
> My layes made of her shall not be forgotten,
> But sung by them with flowry gyrlonds crownd. (624-43; my italics)

Five times Colin names the never-named name of the queen, which is Elizabeth—not Cynthia. (If Cynthia were in fact the queen's name, Colin—Spenser—would not in this passage express such frustration about naming her. He would have named her five or six times, not

simply once as Cynthia). Elizabeth is not Cynthia—that is, a mythic pseudonym that serves socio-political aims and ends. As the moon goddess, she draws "Water" Ralegh and all her courtiers toward her in a spiral, a vortex, of Petrarchan love, painful and finally futile because Cynthia is also the goddess of chastity who cannot reciprocate and fulfill this love. Chaste Cynthia precludes the dynamic of the etymology of the name Elizabeth, making it difficult for her and her courtier lovers to keep their affectionate vows and promises to lords, citizens, and the nation itself. (That etymology—as I show below—involves the making and keeping of vows). Stones cast by Mole obliterated Bregog's name; stones, carefully arranged, will spell out Elizabeth's name. Or so Spenser says. He claims that he can teach the "murmuring waters fall" to speak her name. If so, it would amount to a rectifying of the story of Bregog and Mulla, wherein the former's name is lost in the water's flow. In the first part of the passage quoted in the previous paragraph, Spenser—Colin—admits he cannot find metaphoric language sufficiently exact and superlative to spell out Elizabeth's name. And when he does speak of her metaphorically, as he has imagined her, he finds this language incommensurate with her worth. And so he is left with a silent, natural medium to utter Elizabeth's unspoken name. Like Duke Senior in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, who believes he can find in the Forest of Arden "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, [and] sermons in stones" (2.1.16-17), Colin implies that in Nature he can find an adequate language for his purpose. And like Rosalind's lover Orlando in the same play, who resolves that his verse recording his beloved's name shall hang instead of leaves from the branches of trees, and that

> [...] these trees shall be my books,
> And in their barks my thoughts I'll character
> That every eye which in this forest looks
> Shall see thy virtue expressed everywhere, (3.2.1-8)

so Colin, by his own account, intends "[t]hat as the trees do grow, her name may grow."[14] An ironic overtone of Orlando's speech in this

respect conveys the futility of Colin's inscriptions: "Run, run, Orlando; carve on every tree / The fair, the chaste, and unexpressive she" (2.3.9-10). The gloss on this verse in *The Norton Shakespeare* suggests that "unexpressive" means "inexpressible." That word indeed could also describe the result of Colin's natural naming of the queen, for the reader of his poem cannot see her name in the leaf of its page, and the tree wherein Colin says that it will appear will eventually die and so will the record of the name. In fact, that unnamed name will perish in every one of its organic vehicles, for all will one day die. Only the stones may record it, but only if they remain uncovered and undisturbed. And the shepherds' daughters who sing Colin's lays in the queen's praise, even if they explicitly include the name "Elizabeth," will each one in successive generations pass away like the leaves of trees and finally the trees themselves. Only Spenser's published poem remains, and it never registers her true name.

3. Identifying Names

Against this remarkably sustained emphasis upon the indistinctiveness or loss of name in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, Spenser evokes a precious name in the heart of the poem. It is focused by adjacent catalogues of names in which, while some are indistinct, others are not—specifying in fact individual Elizabethans. Paradoxically, among the court poets uncertainly named in the first catalogue are those laboring the queen's "name to glorify." Only two of the poets in Spenser's catalogue are actually named. In fact, the majority of them are never certainly identified since they all have pastoral pseudonyms such as "*Harpalus*," "*Corydon*," "*Palin*," "*Alcon*," and "*Palemon*." Respectively identified are possibly George Turberville, Edward Dyer, George Peele, Thomas Lodge, and Thomas Churchyard, but a spate of scholarly articles and notes on other likely authors makes the issue unresolved.[15] *Aetion* is probably—but not at all certainly—Michael

Drayton. Eric Sams believes this shepherd to have been Shakespeare (85). Colin says a shepherd "gentler" than *Aetion*

> [...] may no where be found:
> Whose *Muse* full of high thoughts invention,
> Doth like himselfe Heroically sound. (445-47)

The name "Shake-spear," taken as a phrase, sounds heroic, just as Shakespeare's English hero Talbot does in the resounding poetry of his speeches of *1 Henry VI*, which Spenser may have seen in London.[16] And a "gentler" man would be hard to find, according to Ben Jonson who praised Shakespeare's gentleness. The point is not whether *Aetion* is Michael Drayton, or William Shakespeare, or someone else, but that knowing who he represents died with Spenser and those court readers in the know, so to say.

Sir Philip Sidney, near the end of *An Apology for Poetry* (c. 1579; publ. 1595), asks his readers to believe poets "when they tell you they will make you immortal by their verses [...]. Thus doing, your name shall flourish in the printers' shops [...]. Thus doing, your soul shall be placed with Dante's Beatrix, or Virgil's Anchises" (142). Spenser, however, in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, could scarcely claim that the poets he names will be known *in* printers' shops, let alone beyond them.[17] If Spenser believed that by enshrining these poets in a poem they would survive generations of readers, he resembles the sonneteer Shakespeare who claims that the young man he never names will live forever in his poems (Kunin). In each case, readers do not know the name of a person they should praise or admire. Only the Shepherd of the Ocean (Ralegh), *Alcyon* (Sir Arthur Gorges), *Astrofell* (Sir Philip Sidney), and *Amyntas* (Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange) are, according to the editors of *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, identified for a modern audience "with complete certainty" (540n). The Yale editors, on the other hand, identify certainly all but four of the court ladies bearing pastoral names (542-48n).[18] The exceptions are *Marian* (possibly Margaret Countess of Cumberland), *Galathea* (possibly Frances Howard, widow of William Parr and wife of Sir Thomas Gorges), and *Flavia* and *Candida*. The Yale editors suggest that these latter two could be any court lady: "It is possible that

Flavia and Candida are thus introduced to obviate injured feelings among the ladies: a maiden might wish to recognize herself in Flavia, a matron in Candida, or a blonde in Candida and a brunette in Flavia" (547). If this is so, Spenser's strategy of naming ironically made explicit a possibility unintended in the inherent ambiguity of the referents of the pastoral names soon to be gone from the earth, like Spenser himself, within a generation. A particular lady who imagined she was Flavia or Candida could have thought that Spenser intended to mask her name with one of these, even though the likelihood that he had done is very remote. A fifth shepherdess—*Stella*—the beloved of Astrofell is clearly the woman Sidney addressed in his sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella*. And while she is probably Penelope Devereux, later Penelope Rich, Spenser's Dedication of *Astrophel* indicates that he believes she is Sidney's widow, Frances Walsingham.

At this point, someone might claim that the convention of assigning Greek-sounding names to personages in Renaissance pastoral poetry based on Classical models necessarily committed poets such as Spenser to using pseudonyms. The objection might be telling had not Spenser in his catalogue twice identified contemporary poets by their actual names: *Alabaster* (William Alabaster) and *Daniell* (Samuel Daniel). (None of the court shepherdesses is called by her actual name.) "Daniel" is hardly a pastoral name. If he identified these two poets by their actual names, why did Spenser not identify the others by their names as well?[19] If Spenser named Daniel because he "doth all [poets] afore him farre surpasse" (417), the same cannot be said of Alabaster, who Spenser says had completed only the first book of his now obscure Latin epic on the trials of Queen Elizabeth titled *Elisaeis*.[20] Alabaster never would complete the epic. Does Spenser introduce this poet's actual name into *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* out of sympathy, out of identification, because he realized that he too was the author of what was going to be an incomplete epic (cf. Pugh 194)? Such speculation however would not explain why he names Samuel Daniel, who was a widely known author who finished the works he started.[21]

4. Nameless at the Center: Elizabeth Boyle

By enclosing Spenser's poetically exquisite naming of his beloved, the imperfect naming of the shepherds' and shepherdesses' in framing catalogues accentuates its intrinsic value. This heightening also occurs because the poetry composing these catalogues, for whatever reason, appears pedestrian by contrast. Some commentators on *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* believe that Spenser's beloved, alluded to in the poem, is the Rosalind of *The Shepheardes Calender*.[22] Still others believe that she is his second wife Elizabeth Boyle, or that she is the queen herself. Spenser's beloved, described in *Colin Clout*, is not Rosalind. David Burchmore has shown that Spenser's verses create a symmetrical balance throughout *Colin Clout*, a symmetry analogous to that of the three Graces surrounded by the circle of one-hundred maidens dancing to Colin's pipe on Mt. Acidale in Book 6 of *The Faerie Queene.* Just as a fourth Grace, Spenser's beloved second wife, Elizabeth Boyle, appears in the midst of the three Graces in Spenser's epic poem, so his beloved, framed by the catalogues of twelve poets and twelve court ladies, appears at the mathematical center of *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*.[23] Between the two catalogues, Spenser professes to be the vassal of a "gentle mayd" whom he serves. She is

> The beame of beautie sparkled from above,
> The floure of vertue and pure chastitie,
> The blossome of sweet joy and perfect love,
> The pearle of peerlesse grace and modestie:
> To her my thoughts I daily dedicate,
> To her my heart I nightly martyrize:
> To her my love I lowly do prostrate,
> To her my life I wholly sacrifice:
> My thought, my heart, my love, my life is shee,
> And I hers ever onely, ever one:
> One ever I all vowed hers to bee,
> One ever I, and others never none. (468-79)

Burchmore has shown structural, numerological, and stanzaic similarities between Spenser's *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (see 396-98). Given Spenser's calling his beloved a maid, Burchmore believes that the quoted verses refer to Elizabeth Boyle during Spenser's 1594 courtship of her and that he wrote this part of *Colin Clout* then. In this reading of the poem, one should not conflate the "gentle mayd" with Rosalind, who most likely represents the woman Spenser loved in *The Shepheardes Calender* (and who remains possibly in a latter part of *Colin Clout* composed at a time different from the writing of the poetry under analysis).[24]

The exact numerological center of *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* consists of these haunting chiastic verses:

> And I hers ever onely, ever one:
> One ever I all vowed hers to bee,
> One ever I, and others never none.[25]

In the tender sentiment expressed, the plain pronouns and verbs possess a remarkable eloquence. The chiasmus created by "I hers ever [...] ever one / One ever [...] hers to bee" forms a tight knot of love, one which makes Elizabeth and Edmund "ever one, One ever." Carefully, beautifully, Spenser never names his beloved, but intimately, privately, names her forever in his heart in the twelve-verse passage quoted above. These verses, taken collectively in their power, exquisitely name Elizabeth Boyle namelessly, so that she and Edmund never risk the compromise of a mutual affection often entailed by public awareness of a rare love and judgments on social class and individual ambition. She, too, will one day die, but she will remain alive as long as printers reproduce *Colin Clout* and readers exist who can infer her name. And even if—as is likely—a large majority do not know how she was called (because they lack knowledge of Spenser's biography), they cherish the beloved for the same reason that Shakespeare's readers do the unnamed young man of the sonnets: that the beloved must truly have been special because she/he inspired such unforgettable poetry.

5. Essential Names: Elizabeth and the Poet

In the *Amoretti*, Spenser writes of "that happy name" by which the most important women in his life were known, his mother, his wife, and his queen. "Ye three Elizabeths, for ever live," Spenser concludes sonnet LXXIV, "that three such graces did unto me give" (13-14; *Yale Edition* 644-45). These are the graces of body (given by his mother), of his [material] wealth (given by his queen), and of his mind (given [stimulated] by his wife) (see 4-5). Readers must be aware of this sonnet in order to understand why Spenser cannot conventionally name his betrothed, Elizabeth, at the very center of his poem. Were he to do so, she could be confused with his queen, as some commentators have done anyway. Paradoxically, his rare spouse and his queen have one of the most common, perhaps the *most* common, of *Elizabeth*an women's names (my italics). The only Elizabeth in the Bible is the wife of Zacharias and the mother of John the Baptist. She is a Levite, the cousin of Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:5, 36). Essentially, her name is a Greek transliteration of a Hebrew name, which consists of two parts, the first a common abbreviation of "Elohim," the genus God, and the second the equivalent of "Sheba," meaning either "oath" or "seven." The name Elizabeth signifies "God is an oath," "God's oath," or "God hath sworn" (see Arthur 293; Kolatch 320). The etymology implies that Elizabeth's vows or promises are divinely kept. That is her essence, her essential name. Spenser's bride assures her betrothed that she will always keep her vows. And that is what Spenser, even though he may not have been aware of this Hebrew etymology, assures her that he will do when he promises "One ever I all vowed her to bee, / One ever I, and others never none."

Among Renaissance writers, Spenser especially depended upon the essentialist theory of names: that only one—and one only name—(*verbum*) conveys the essence of a thing (*res*). Names, according to this doctrine, are not relative, not divorced from the object they name. Plato in the *Cratylus* explored this choice for the ancient world, preferring the belief that only one name exists to convey the special thing-

ness of objects. Sir Thomas Elyot, in *The Boke Named the Gouernour* (1531), remarks that Plato in this dialogue argues that "the name of euery thynge is none other but the vertue or effecte on the same thinge" (2: 227). For Spenser's culture, essentialist naming mainly derived from Genesis 2:19-20: "So the Lord God formed of the earth euerie beast of the field, and euerie foule of the heauen, & broght *them* vnto [Adam] to se how he wolde call *them*: for howsoeuer the man named the liuing creature, so was the name thereof. The man therefore gaue names vnto all cattel, and to the foule of the heauen, and to euerie beast of the field" (*Geneva Bible*). Renaissance commentators such as Richard Mulcaster (1582) and Joshua Silvester (1592), among others, extrapolated from Genesis the idea that Adam's naming the creatures instantaneously conferred upon him the knowledge of their essences (see Carroll 12-13; Mulcaster 188; Ferry 29-31, 73-74). By saying "tiger," Adam intuited the essence of tigerness. Spenser depended upon the essentialist theory of naming in the allegorical *Faerie Queene*, in which characters' names often indicate their inner essence; i.e., Duessa (duplicitous), Timias ("timid"), Turpine ("turpitude"), Una (Oneness), Serena ("serene," to the point of passivity), Mercilla (Mercy), Malecasta ("lacking in chastity"), and so on (see Vink 322, 324, 332).

One might object, however, that people's names are accidental, and that all three of Spenser's Elizabeths cannot express the same etymological meaning of "Elizabeth." That surnames could express essences in Shakespeare's time manifests itself in the dramatist's coat of arms, where a raven shakes a spear, the equivalent of his mighty pen. In a play such as *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare reflects the assumption that given names could reflect essences in giving suddenly savage Orsino the Italian name of "bear," harmonious Viola the name of a musical instrument, and Olivia, to whom Viola figuratively offers an olive branch, the name of "peace."[26] Anne Ferry has explained that Spenser's contemporaries drew on the Classical opinion that accidents clung to substances—so as to make them knowable to the senses—to justify their belief that adjectives and names often fused as one, and

that they considered modifying adjective(s) to be part of the name (cf. 59-61).[27] In this respect, Spenser's phrase "gentle Mayd," considered within the context of his twelve-verse paean, could have constituted for him a single name for Elizabeth Boyle, one separating her from other Elizabeths. Nevertheless, Spenser multiplies that name's force in Melissa's reaction to Colin's praise of his gentle maiden:

> Thrise happie Mayd,
> Whom thou doest so enforce to deifie:
> That woods, and hills, and valleyes thou hast made
> Her name to eccho unto heaven hie. (480-83)

Spenser in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* never achieves for his own name anything as eloquent as his naming of his beloved. Still, by 1595 he had expressed the essence of his surname. And he did so in spite of his pseudonym, which had always had a second-hand quality. The pseudonym appearing in *The Shepheardes Calender* was used by the early Tudor satirist John Skelton as his persona in a poem titled "Collyn Clout" (1522). John Scattergood explains that "'Collyn' derives from Latin *colonus* 'farmer' and was used as early as the reign of Edward II to indicate a person of humble birth. 'Clout' meant 'rag' or 'patch' and emphasizes the rural fellow's poverty" (Skelton 466). Such a name did not convey Skelton's social status at the time he composed this poem: the King's Orator (appointed 1512), Skelton had attended both Oxford and Cambridge, having been made "poet laureate" at both universities in late 1488 and in 1493 respectively. Robert S. Kinsman argues that Skelton's pseudonym suits the traditional conceit of "Vox Populi," the voice of the people that rises in condemnation of abuses committed by the clergy and nobility.[28] Stanley Fish, in his analysis of the poem, singles out Cardinal Wolsey as the unnamed one man described in it most responsible for injustice (180).[29] Given the verbal aggressiveness of Skelton's Colin Clout, a reader understands that his surname's Medieval meaning of "to cuff heavily" is also appropriate.[30] Skelton likely created this pseudonym to shroud his identity and protect himself from prosecution. Spenser may have

adopted Skelton's name for the poet of *The Shepheardes Calender* for the same reason, for some ecclesiastical satires appear in the volume.[31] But they are not many (notably *Maye*, *Julye*, and *September*), and for Spenser to continue to use the name for this reason in mixed-genre *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* makes little sense. Only a small section of the poem could be called satirical (e. g., 680-730), and its content is not dangerous, in that it might provoke retaliation by individual Elizabethan courtiers. Richard Mallette notes—as I do—that Spenser in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* neither actually nor symbolically names the debased poets, or poet apes, that he says also populate the court (37-38).

Thus the humble, cloddish, impoverished connotations of the name "Colin Clout" seem inappropriate to the intellectual poet lifted up to divine intellection in Neoplatonic poetic rapture whose voice resounds in the latter part of *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*. Essentially, Spenser's name signifies someone who "dispenses," a steward—especially of provisions. Robert le Dispenser is listed in the Doomsday Book of 1086; he was likely William the Conqueror's Royal "Dispencier"—King's Steward. Whatever the case, Spenser wanted to claim kinship with the aristocrat Spencers of Althorp. He names (but does not actually name) the three daughters of Sir John Spencer of Althorp in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*: *Phyllis, Charillis,* and *Amaryllis* (Elizabeth, Anne, and Alice Spencer; 540-42). These sisters constitute the "honor of the noble familie: / Of which [the] meanest [Spenser] boast[s] [him] selfe to be" (537-38). The oxymoronic poetic phrase "meanest boast" reflects the oxymoronic composite made up of "Colin Clout," the rustic of humble birth associated with rags, and of "Spenser," the educated poet/plantation gentleman who could be said to deserve relationship with an ancient noble family now made up of a father and three sisters. Still, despite the dubiousness of Spenser's claim to nobility, he could argue that he was a "Dispenser," a spender of his talents, by wonderfully dispensing through his poetry, especially that of *The Faerie Queene*, the knowledge of how readers might

perfect themselves in several virtues. In this respect, he could live out an essential name, if only he could—or would—record it *in* his poetry.

* * *

Spenser's emphasis in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* upon naming and unnaming, upon the allusiveness—and the elusiveness—of names and their essential power, amounts to a paradox difficult to interpret. It reflects other central paradoxes of the poem such as the ambiguity of home. Is it in England, where Spenser was born and educated, where he had lived; or is it in Ireland, where he had founded a plantation and set himself up as a gentleman? The teasing quality of names in the poem also reflects the paradoxical combination of virtues and faults that Spenser finds in both the London court and provincial Ireland. These paradoxes suggest that Spenser's rather obsessive ambivalence about names in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* derives from his belief that he has and has not made a name for himself. He had never been well received by Queen Elizabeth's inner circle of ministers. Moreover, the Althorp Spensers never did recognize Spenser as their kin. On the other hand, Spenser had made a name for himself as an epic poet, as the many poets who gathered in Westminster Abbey for his burial demonstrated by throwing pens in his grave and publishing elegiac poems afterward. The focus upon naming and unnaming in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* reinforces the impression, then, that it indeed qualifies to be judged Spenser's most personal poem.

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NOTES

[1]Some of this uncertainty may derive from the mixtures of poetic kinds making up *Colin Clout.* William Oram argues that "the incorporation of genres" in *Colin Clout* includes "satire, songs of praise, a mythic river marriage, and [...] a mythological hymn in which Colin celebrates the God of Love" (*Edmund Spenser* 161). To this medley can be added the topographical poem, even the chorographic (mapping) poem. For *Colin Clout* as a chorographic poem, see van Es (66-74).

[2]Quotations of *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* and the *Amoretti* are taken from the text in *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. Oram 518-62 and 598-658.

[3]For contemporary readers' suspension of authorial belief in *The Faerie Queene*, see Bellamy 22.

[4]In *Three Proper, and wittie, familiar Letters* (1580), Gabriel Harvey had identified Spenser as the Colin Clout of the 1579 *Shepheardes Calender* (see Montrose 86).

[5]It is only in verse 83 that *Cuddy* identifies the shepherd's boy as Colin Clout, part way through the boy's telling the story of Bregog and Mulla.

[6]See the gloss on verses 164-71 of *Colin Clout* in the Oram edition.

[7]Cheney notes that "Spenser wrote a draft of *Colin Clout* four years before publishing it. We do not know the cause of the delay, but several events alluded to occurred after 1591 [...]. Notably, in 1592 Elizabeth banished Ralegh from court for marrying Elizabeth Throckmorton" (240, 244). Dees remarks that "[a]t some time before the publication of *Colin Clout* in 1595, Spenser added two substantial passages that allude to issues brought on by Ralegh's disgrace, the Mole-Mulla-Bregog myth at 104-55 and the Neoplatonic cosmology at 835-94" (186).

[8]W. R. Renwick notes that "'Buttevant is on the Cork-Limerick road, about three miles from Kilcolman'" (*The Yale Edition* 531).

[9]Spenser accentuates Bregog's and Mulla's deception of her father through the pun on "feign" latent in the repeated phrase for the eagerness of their love: "full faine." Edwards explicates this particular pun in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (51).

[10]Some might object that Bregog never does lose his name. Colin begins his lay by declaring "But of my river *Bregogs* love I soong, / Which to the shiny *Mulla* he did beare, / And yet doth beare, and ever will, so long / As water doth within his banks appeare" (92-95). But to celebrate Bregog's love, one must celebrate its union in a river named Mulla that has absorbed the Bregog. The four quoted verses may be unrevised residue from an earlier version of *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, a section never removed after Spenser had rewritten the myth to reflect Ralegh's loss of name and his demotion.

[11]Edwards notes that "[e]ven the introductory letter [to *Colin Clout*], with its imposing salutation—'To the Right worthy and noble Knight Sir *Walter Raleigh*, Captaine of her Maiestes Guard, Lord Wardein of the Stanneries, and *Lieutenant of*

the County of Cornwall'—dwindling down to the signature 'Yours euer humbly. *Ed. Sp.'* makes its wry point about [the loss of] names" (57).

[12]See Bernard 127-28; Oram, "Spenser's Raleghs" 360-62; Warren 380-81; Dees 194-95; van Es 67-68. For a general moral reading of the river myth as a warning about patriarchal power's ability to thwart unapproved love and marriage, see Meyer 180-81.

[13]Hadfield notes that the dedicatory epistle to Ralegh dated 27 December 1591 intended for the publication of *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* is more abrupt than the tone of the letter to Ralegh appended to *The Faerie Queene*, "the first line being familiar, even rude, in reminding Ralegh that [Spenser] has, despite all appearances to the contrary, been hard at work in [Ralegh's] interests" (239).

[14]The similarity of these speeches of Orlando and Colin is also noted by Vink 342.

[15]Gaffney provides the most thorough analysis of the probable identities of poets not literally identified along with the likely candidates for each (31-87). Also see McNeir. Oram's list in *The Yale Edition* of probable but still not certain identities appears to have been taken from Gaffney's unpublished dissertation, since it matches hers.

[16]Concerning the death of Shakespeare's soldier hero, fellow playwright Thomas Nashe remarked: "How would it haue ioyed braue *Talbot* (the terror of the French) to thinke that after he hade lyne two hundred yeares in his Tombe, hee should triumphe againe on the Stage, and haue his bones newe embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least (at seuerall times) who, in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him bleeding" (Nashe 212). Interestingly, Nashe does not name Shakespeare, but he is certainly the tragedian specified.

[17]Meyer notes that "[n]o key to the identity of veiled persons in *Colin Clout* is known to have circulated, as they apparently did for the *Arcadia*, Sidney's prose romance first published in 1590, which was generally regarded as a *roman à clef*" (162).

[18]Oram's listing of certain and uncertain identities of court ladies again matches Gaffney's in her dissertation (143-44).

[19]Oram claims that "Alabaster and Daniel are sufficiently unknown to the court that Colin uses their actual names" (*Edmund Spenser* 161).

[20]Alabaster's name signifies a translucent white color, especially in a stone such as marble or gypsum. Othello speaks of Desdemona as not wanting to scar "that whiter skin of hers than snow, and smooth as monumental alabaster" (5.2.4-5).

[21]The etymology of Daniel's name—"God is my judge"—originates in his clever saving of Susannah from the evil judges slandering her.

[22]For representative commentators and the linkages, see Hadfield 144-46, 311-12.

[23]Both catalogues compose a single passage of 52 quatrains with 93 quatrains preceding it and following it (see Burchmore 395).

[24]Hadfield persuasively identifies the Rosalind of *The Shepheardes Calender* as Machabyas Chylde, Spenser's first wife, who he either was courting or had married in 1579 (145-46). While this biographer of Spenser claims that the Rosalind of *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* is also Elizabeth Boyle, I suggest that she remains Machabyas Chylde, idealized in death in Spenser's memory, and yet someone who does not displace the "gentle mayd" of Colin's rapturous poetry.

[25]These are lines 477-79 in the 955-verse poem.

[26]For more on the etymological essences of Shakespeare's characters' names, see Leimberg; and Maguire.

[27]Thus when Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* calls a "cave" "hollow," the phrase "hollow cave," rather than amounting to an artless redundancy instead fuses into a single name (60). The same might be said for sixteenth-century poetic phrases such as "darke night" and "wearie woe."

[28]Kinsman provided the groundwork for Scattergood's etymology by citing several examples from Medieval and early Renaissance literature wherein the names "Colin" and "Clout" possess the meanings Scattergood attributes to them (20-21).

[29]Fish notes that Skelton's Colin Clout identifies himself from time to time as a cleric who writes and reports (180).

[30]See *OED*, "clout" *v.* II.7.: "c1410 *Sir Cleges* 246, I schall the[e] clowght. 1551 *Bible* (Matthew's) 2 *Sam.* xxii. 39 (R.), I wasted them and so clouted them that they coulde not aryse." Also see definition III.7.a. of "clout" *n.*[1], cited as early as 1400: "A heavy blow, *esp.* with the hand; a cuff."

[31]Spenser's name did not appear on the title page of the 1579 quarto edition of *The Shepheardes Calender*. Someone had written in ink "by E. K." underneath the title on the title page of the copy used by the editors of *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*.

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Connotations
Vol. 22.2 (2012/2013)

Milton's Identification with the Unworthy Servant in Sonnet 19: A Response to Margaret Thickstun[*]

DAVID V. URBAN

In her fine essay "Resisting Patience in Milton's Sonnet 19," Margaret Thickstun seeks to analyze Milton's sonnet through a close textual analysis of Milton's rhetorical strategy, also specifically considering the poem's context "as part of a small group of early modern English lyrics that address frustrations about the speaker's poetic calling and close with a voice other than the speaker's" (168). As one of Thickstun's interlocutors in this essay, I would like to respond to an interpretive point in which Thickstun specifically demurs to my reading of Milton's sonnet. Against my assertion that the sonnet's autobiographical speaker genuinely identifies with the unprofitable servant of the parable of the talents, Thickstun denies "that Milton's speaker truly identifies with the unworthy servant" (173). She compares Milton's speaker to the speaker in George Herbert's "The Collar," stating that, like the speaker in Herbert's poem, "this speaker protests the lack of return for his service. He is not so much anxious about being found unworthy, or mistaken in trying to tally his 'account' prematurely, as he is aggrieved at being unfairly overlooked" (173). To support her position, Thickstun postulates that the speaker seeks "recognition and validation—by *pretending* that he has been cast into the role of unworthy servant" (173; italics Thickstun's); she notes (following Stephen Fallon and Dayton Haskin) that Milton avoids spiritual vulnerability in his writings (173-74); and she cites Haskin's

*Reference: Margaret Thickstun, "Resisting Patience in Milton's Sonnet 19," *Milton Quarterly* 44 (2010): 168-80.

For debates inspired by Thickstun's article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/deburban0222.htm>.

observation regarding the oddness of the multi-talented Milton identifying himself with the unworthy servant who received but a single talent (174).

But Thickstun's dismissal of Milton's genuine identification with the parable's unworthy servant has several shortcomings. Firstly, by the time Milton wrote Sonnet 19 (ca. 1652), he had already identified with the unworthy servant—and strove mightily to distance himself from such self-identification—on several occasions. As commentators on this sonnet routinely observe (cf. Lieb 50-51; Haskin 30, 33, 36-37, 171-72; Barton 112-13; Urban 1-8, 10-11; Gregory 25-26), Milton wrestled with this self-identification in two earlier, explicitly autobiographical writings: his "Letter to a Friend" (ca. 1632) and his anxious digression during the preface of book 2 of *The Reason of Church-Government* (1642). I have also discussed his self-conscious identification with the unworthy servant within the explicitly autobiographical *Ad Patrem* (ca. 1634; see Urban 8-10). Before Thickstun denies the speaker's identification with the unworthy servant in Sonnet 19, she ought first address the established pattern of Milton's uncomfortable identification with that servant in these earlier autobiographical writings, but she neglects any such discussion.

Secondly, Thickstun simultaneously commits both an either-or fallacy and a deductive fallacy when she argues that Milton's oft-noted proclivity for self-validation and his comparative lack of spiritual vulnerability preclude his genuine identification with the unworthy servant. A more incisive reading of Milton's relation to the unworthy servant in light of his personal complexities is offered by Tobias Gregory. In a recent article, Gregory addresses, like Thickstun, both Milton's frequent "impulse to turn disadvantage to advantage" and his failure to "acknowledge a personal sense of sin" within the sonnet (26). Nonetheless, Gregory also properly points out that in the sonnet, Milton (as Gregory calls the speaker) fears "the unprofitable servant's reward of eternal damnation" (28-29). Here, Gregory recognizes that in Sonnet 19 Milton continues his anxiety-ridden identification with the unworthy servant.

Finally, Thickstun commits another either-or/deductive fallacy by suggesting that Milton's tremendous giftedness precludes self-identification with the unworthy servant. We should emphasize that what is at issue in the sonnet is not the number of the speaker's talents, but his failure to use a specific talent with which he has been entrusted. (We should also note that when the speaker tells of "that one Talent which is death to hide," he employs the parable's imagery of the "one Talent" without actually saying that he has merely one talent. Certainly Milton could consider himself an unfaithful servant who neglected a particularly significant God-given talent regardless of how many "talents" he himself actually had.) As Haskin observes, "many" (103) seventeenth-century British Bible readers identified strongly with the unworthy servant and the parable's threat (103-04), and the "fear of the master voiced in the third figure in the parable had a distinctive resonance in a culture that accorded prominence to doctrines about reprobation and insisted that the elect were required to make their 'calling and election sure'" (34). And certainly fearful readings of the parable were by no means limited to less gifted individuals, as Haskin's examples of John Donne and John Bunyan exemplify (29-34). Moreover, although Haskin sees the sonnet's speaker as a "representative figure" (101), he in no way denies Milton's own identification with the unworthy servant, and Haskin even postulates that Milton may have "regularly heard in the talents parable a burdensome threat" (102).

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Connotations
Vol. 22.2 (2012/2013)

Laws, Characters, and the Agency of the Text: An Answer to Beatrix Hesse and Lyn Pykett*

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Beatrix Hesse's and Lyn Pykett's equally thoughtful and thought-provoking responses to my essay on *The Woman in White* have made me realise that some of the issues raised in this piece are even more muddled than my original argument might have made them appear to be. Both of these responses, for which I am exceedingly grateful, therefore provide me with welcome opportunities to clarify and (where necessary) qualify some of my earlier claims and, by way of an answer to Pykett's and Hesse's queries, offer a selection of fresh thoughts on Collins's text. One of these queries concerns the function of the law or, more specifically, of the proceedings in a Court of Justice, as a model for the way in which the fictitious editor, narrator, and amateur detective Walter Hartright presents what he calls "the events which fill these pages" (5). As Kieran Dolin notes (in a book that has only recently come to my attention), Hartright defines the "pages of the novel" as "an alternative forum for an inquiry into a crime and a proclamation of right that cannot be pursued through the courts" (1). More precisely, Hartright purports to present the reader with the story of a "case" which has not yet been brought before a court of justice, meaning that it "is left to be told, for the first time, in this place" (5). What I suggested in my earlier piece was that this way of

*References: Philipp Erchinger, "Secrets not Revealed: Possible Stories in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*," *Connotations* 18.1-3 (2008/2009): 48-81; Beatrix Hesse, "Writing Backwards—Writing Forwards: A Response to Philipp Erchinger," *Connotations* 21.1 (2011/2012): 28-36; Lyn Pykett, "*The Woman in White* and the Secrets of the Sensation Novel," *Connotations* 21.1 (2011/2012): 37-45. For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/deberchinger01813.htm>.

introducing the narrative of *The Woman in White* implies a conception of what the text calls "the Law" which is ambiguous at best. On the one hand, Hartright dismisses this "Law" as a corrupt social system, "the pre-engaged servant of the long purse" (5), and characterises his own investigations as a *corrective* to the unreliable proceedings of the forensic "machinery" (5). On the other hand, however, he seeks to justify his method of constructing the self-defined "story of what a Woman's patience can endure, and of what a Man's resolution can achieve" by comparing it with these very proceedings. "Thus, the story here presented," we are told, is narrated *as if* it had been presented in a court of justice, which is to say, "by more than one pen, as the story of an offence against the laws is told in Court by more than one witness" (5).

Lyn Pykett, referring to Walter Knoepflmacher and Jonathan Grossmann, points out in her response that this analogy between the novel and the law court (although quite common in nineteenth century fiction) is "patently a false" one since the witness accounts assembled by Walter constitute, prospectively, the very events to which they are supposed to, retrospectively, give testament (39). Indeed, the point I meant to emphasise in the engagement with this analogy that opens my essay was that Walter's equivocal attitude towards the law—his simultaneous rejection and adoption of legal methods—reflects a general tension between a preconceived principle or idea (in this case the idea of the law) and its interpretation and application in time. In the narrative progression of the novel, I would say, this tension is constantly present as a struggle between quasi-authorial theory and figural practice, between the editor's conception and the narrators' execution, as well as between backward-looking representation and forward-looking production. In essence, both Pykett and Hesse seem to agree that this struggle is a central component of the narrative processes through which the meaning of Collins's novel takes shape. Thus Pykett observes that Hartright's insistence "that his ordering of the narratives is designed to 'trace the course of one complete series of events' as clearly as possible" is markedly at odds with Collins's overall method which is "designed," conversely, "to create and per-

petuate the narrative secrets for as long as possible and to maximise the sensational effects" of his text (39). Likewise, Beatrix Hesse draws attention to a friction "between the backwards construction carried out by Hartright and the necessity to present this construction in a narrative that Collins had to compose forwards due to the peculiarity of the publication process" (33). Yet, while both contributors appear to consent with me on the existence of this tension, they pose a number of questions about it to which the following remarks are intended to give answers.

As indicated, one central source of such questions is the role of Hartright's attitude to the law, on which Lyn Pykett in particular has taken a very inspiring fresh look. According to Pykett, "the central tension in the novel is not, in fact, an 'irresolvable tension' regarding the operations of the Law, but rather a tension between the Law […] and Justice" (40). I entirely agree that Hartright stages himself—sometimes in an almost pathetically self-aggrandising way—as a disinterested "fighter for Justice" (Pykett 40) who is compelled, by an ineffective and corrupt system of bureaucracy, to ignore the judicial world and to hunt down the necessary evidence against Percival and Fosco alone. But having said this, I would still maintain that Hartright's relationship to the law is more complex and contradictory than his self-contrived story of seemingly successful self-help may suggest. One central turning point in this story—and one to which Pykett draws attention—is Hartright's conversation with the diffident lawyer Kyrle. For it is this conversation which finally makes Hartright decide, as he tells the reader, to restore Laura (or rather the woman he takes to be Laura) to her rightful identity by his own acts, "though the justice that sits in tribunals is powerless" to achieve this (Collins 454). In Pykett's view, this decision by Hartright to find justice without or outside of "the tribunals" signifies a clear break with the law on Hartright's part. She seeks to corroborate this argument by quoting one of Hartright's own assertions, taking it to represent his insight that "sometimes Justice can only be obtained outside of the operations of the Law" (Pykett 40).

All of this is very well argued and has clearly enhanced my understanding of Collins's text. Yet, while I gratefully accept Pykett's point that it is not so much the "machinery of the Law" as the "Court of Justice" (Collins 5) that Hartright "invokes as an analogy for his narrative method" (Pykett 40), I do not think that his rejection of the law in favour of justice is as straightforward as it may seem. In other words, law and justice, I would say, are not as distinctly opposed in the novel as Pykett's reading might suggest. After all, how could Hartright have ensured that what he calls justice is officially recognised as such if not by appealing, in the end, to the very institution—the law courts—whose methods he purports to circumvent? "You have shown me that the legal remedy lies, in every sense of the word, beyond our means," Hartright tells Kyrle in defiance. "We cannot produce the law proof; and we are not rich enough to pay the law-expenses. It is something gained to know that" (Collins 455).[1] Significantly, however, what Hartright goes on to do then is to search for precisely this "law-proof" by his own "means." In this way, he may save himself "the law-expenses," but he still accepts, willy-nilly, that justice can only be attained through the evidence that is required by law. The law, or some version of it, still functions as the medium of justice.

My point, then, is that Hartright's detective work is conducted in spite, but not outside of or against the law. He parts not with the law as such, but only with one method of using or interpreting this law: namely with the one that is too much informed by what Kyrle calls "the money-question" (Collins 454). Indeed, what Hartright tries to make us believe is that his mode of operation implies a morally better, more just and honest way of conducting a forensic enquiry than that pursued by the professional representatives of the legal system. "There shall be no money-motive," he explains to Kyrle in his rather self-righteous style, "no idea of personal advantage, in the service I mean to render to Lady Glyde" (454). But of course Hartright—and I am glad to say that we all agree on this point—is a far too unreliable narrator to be regarded as a creditable spokesman for the right understanding of the law, not least because the supposedly selfless "service" he seems to "render to Lady Glyde" looks suspiciously like a

rather selfish strategy to "rise up the social hierarchy," as Ann Cvetkovich has shown (111).

One conclusion that can be drawn from Hartright's ambivalent invocations of the law is that this law (the very word), as it occurs in *The Woman in White*, does not refer to a definite concept on the meaning of which one can easily agree. Rather, whatever "the law" or "the Law" means seems to be so indeterminate that it is capable of being read and used in more than one way. "It is the great beauty of the Law," as the solicitor Vincent Gilmore puts this in *The Woman in White*, "that it can dispute any human statement, made under any circumstances, and reduced to any form" (Collins 132). On this account, the meaning of "the Law" is emergent, constantly mediated, interpreted, adapted in relation to different contexts, but remaining inaccessible as such. Indeed, it is no coincidence that there is now a thriving business of *literature and law* studies operating on the central assumption that the referents of both of these terms are essentially constituted through activities of interpretation.[2] What the advocates of the *literature and law* field hold, in other words, is that the social force of the law, like that of literature, is premised on written words which can be used in multiple ways.[3] As Derrida argued in a famous commentary on Kafka's parable *Before the Law*: "The law is silent" (208). It speaks only, and can only be spoken, through its "representatives, its examples, its guardians" (204), but this, Derrida suggests, is how it must be. It is necessary that the law be "prohibited" (204) because only if the law remains immune to be appropriated or "penetrated" (205) by a single point of view can it remain sufficiently flexible to be applied to more than one case. "We must remain ignorant of who or what or where the law is, we must not know who it is or what it is, where and how it presents itself, whence it comes and whence it speaks" (204).

I should emphasise that my purpose in bringing up this concept (or non-concept) of the law is not to propose it as universally valid—Derrida, after all, developed it through an interpretation of a particular literary text—but to suggest that it can be usefully extended to *The Woman in White*. More precisely, what I wish to argue is that whatever Collins's novel represents and enacts as "the law" can be seen as a

metaphor for the tacit principles and rules on which *The Woman in White* has been written and is to be read. Towards the end of the text Hartright himself deploys the law in this sense when he surprises the reader by suddenly conjuring up his "quaint little friend" (Collins 579) Pesca again who, as Hartright concedes himself, had been "so long absent from these pages" that one would have to be forgiven if one had forgotten him altogether by this point (579). Hartright is quick to assure us that the thought of Pesca "naturally occurred" to his mind when he was wondering how to find out more about the unknown history of Count Fosco (579). But he nonetheless feels obliged to justify the unexpected return of this figure, Pesca, by referring the reader to the "law" of his narrative. "It is the necessary law of such a story as mine," he tells us, "that the persons concerned in it only appear when the course of events takes them up—they come and go, not by favour of my personal partiality, but by right of their direct connection with the circumstances to be detailed" (579). In this view, the "law" designates a set of guiding principles for the narration of Hartright's "story" that allegedly determine when certain things are to be said and others to be suppressed. But the very fact that Hartright has to defend his narrative choice so explicitly indicates that the necessity of this law is anything but as self-evident as Hartright says it is. Pesca might as well not have been made to reappear.

What I am arguing, then, is that the "necessary law" defining the course and meaning of what we read in *The Woman in White* does not exist—or is not accessible—outside of the interpretive processes (writing, construing, commenting, debating etc.) through which this law has been and continues to be made up as long as the novel is read. This is why the activities of comprehending and explicating that seek to understand and define this law in the first place are such a prominent part of the text. More precisely, one might say that the hermeneutic process is, in a double sense, *drawn* into the text. For not only is the reader continuously compelled to be distrustful, to watch out for small clues, and to speculate about the meaning of what is still hidden. He or she also constantly reads about characters who are engaged in doing exactly the same: who are distrustful, who (re)write

and read letters and statements, often between the lines, or who debate about the right way of looking at, and interpreting the purpose of, textual details such as the little lake near Blackwater Park. My original essay includes plenty of examples that illustrate this claim. The result of this omnipresent *hermeneutics of suspicion* is an unsettled and unsettling atmosphere, in which nothing, not even a little lake, necessarily needs to occur where, when and in whatever form or function it actually does occur, however much Hartright may protest to the contrary. "This is a world," Elizabeth Langland writes about the world of *The Woman in White*, "in which interpretation is tenuous and vulnerable to sudden shifts in understanding, creating a sense here that intuition may take precedence over reason and that suspicions that lack evidence are liable, over time, to be proved valid" (198). *The Woman in White*, in short, is a novel that is highly alive to its own contingency: to the fact that its meaning could be—and be made out to be—otherwise than the text seems to propose because the law that defines this meaning is "silent," or rather emergent, in progress.[4]

Perhaps one could say that the comparison between Collins's novel and a law court is adequate only in the sense that a case which is still negotiated in court is not (yet) closed. What makes Collins's novel appear like an ongoing law suit, in other words, is that the final judgement about its meaning is still waiting to be made. In this sense, Pykett is quite right to indicate that the proceedings in a court of justice—including the use of "skills […] to interrogate evidence and witnesses, to find gaps in the stories they tell, to advocate alternative readings of the evidence and to tell alternative stories"—may well be seen to resemble the activities of a critical reader of fictional texts (41). But here, too, I would want to defend my earlier argument that the social purpose of judicial courts is to settle and close issues: to come to judgements about them that are decisive—or else why would one need such institutions in the first place? The end or purpose of *The Woman in White*, by contrast, remains open and unsettled. There is no need to read Collins's text as if it were meant to tell a conclusive story. In fact, as Pykett points out (42-43), one cannot even conclusively tell what "the Story" is with which Hartright claims to present us (Collins

5). Instead, there are many possible stories that can be extracted from *The Woman in White*, not least because the novel is so openly ironic about its own secrecy, about what it does not say. As Judith Sanders notes, what this text "conceives of" as really "shocking" is not the criminal or transgressive, but the "uninterrupted convention" of the "monotone, stifling, predictable, *boring*" kind (64). This can explain the prominence of jolts, turns and unforeseen intrusions that consistently deny the reader the comfort of accepting things as what they seem.

Take the wondrously weird figure of Count Fosco, about whom Beatrix Hesse's response has a couple of interesting observations to make. "It is my rule never to make unnecessary mysteries," the Count informs us in his own narrative, "and never to set people suspecting me for want of a little seasonable candour, on my part" (Collins 616). But how could one ever believe such a claim, given that Fosco's whole figure is every inch a mystery, all the way down to his unknown origin (allegedly in Italy) and his connection with the obscure Brotherhood? Is it possible not to be suspicious about Fosco, no matter how candid he purports to be? Hesse seems to think so, for she regards him as a "new type of 'realistic' villain" whose blunt matter-of-factness is contrasted with the gloom of the Gothic and melodramatic that still hangs around Percival (28). But is it really that easy to read the character of Fosco? It may well be possible that some of his traits can later be found in typical characters of twentieth century detective fiction, as Hesse suggests, a hint for which I am grateful (29). Yet, Fosco, as he appears in *The Woman in White*, seems rather to embody everything that is no longer or not yet typical. Above all, he is a prodigious oddity: fool, fat king ("as fat as Henry the Eighth himself" 220), criminal mastermind, impresario and boisterous Falstaff simultaneously, he enters the novel surrounded by "two canary-birds," a "cockatoo" and "a whole family of white mice"—which "crawl all over him"—and exuding an air of eccentricity that is apt to puzzle the reader as much as the other characters (222). In Marian Halcombe's diary, for example, there are several long passages in which she tries to make sense of her self-confessed fascination for Fosco. For one

thing, as Marian notes, everything about Fosco looks peculiar and foreign, and yet he speaks as if he were a native Englishman. "There are times when it is almost impossible to detect, by his accent, that he is not a countryman of our own; and, as for fluency, there are very few born Englishmen who can talk with as few stoppages and repetitions as the Count." This being unusual enough, it is by far not the only feature that makes his figure hard to define, as Marian continues:

> All the smallest characteristics of this strange man have something strikingly original and perplexingly contradictory in them. Fat as he is, and old as he is, his movements are astonishingly light and easy. He is as noiseless in a room as any of us women; and, more than that, with all his mental firmness and power, he is as nervously sensitive as the weakest of us. (222)

The character of Fosco, then, is dazzlingly hard to understand in terms of conventional categories or norms. He has "the fondness of an old maid" for his cockatoo, but manages his white mice with "all the small dexterities of an organ-boy" (223); he can be earnest and learned "with a knowledge of books in every language" (223), but also whimsical and ironic with "a childish triviality" in his "tastes and pursuits" (224); he is strong and powerful, "a man who could tame anything" (219), and yet his "nerves are so finely strung that he starts at chance noises, and winces when he sees a house spaniel get a whipping" (223). In brief, I find it hard to call this singularly hybrid man an instance of a particular "type."

Moreover, where Hesse tries to associate Percival with the stage-villain of "the declining genre of melodrama" and Fosco with the "nascent" class "of detective fiction" (29), one could well make a strong case for quite the reverse: it is Fosco, much more so than Percival, who is presented as a stage figure through and through. Everything that he says and does seems designed to be recognised as a theatrical performance, a display of various roles changing as frequently as the "fine clothes" of which he is so "fond" (224). As Marian notices, he "has appeared in four magnificent waistcoats, already—all of light garish colours, and all immensely large even for him—in the two days of his residence at Blackwater Park" (224). But what we are

never told is whether there is a specific type of person hiding behind these large, colourful costumes accoutring the character we encounter as "Fosco." What, for example, is one to make of the following exclamation which is part of the crime discussion by the Blackwater Park lake. "Ah!," Fosco cries at the end of this scene:

> Ah! I am a bad man, Lady Glyde, am I not? I say what other people only think; and when all the rest of the world is in a conspiracy to accept the mask for the true face, mine is the rash hand that tears off the plump pasteboard, and shows the bare bones beneath. I will get up on my big elephant's legs, before I do myself any more harm in your estimable estimations—I will get up and take a little airy walk of my own. Dear ladies, as your excellent Sheridan said, I go—and leave my character behind me. (239)

Is he (depicted as) "a bad man," or is he not? I think this question is never definitely answered since one never knows to what extent Fosco's behaviour is (meant to be) sincere. All that is certain about this character is that he self-avowedly acts *as* a "character." He does not even seem to attempt to behave in an authentic fashion, whatever that would mean. Instead, his whole manner appears so disingenuous that he might even be wearing a "mask" when he presents himself, in the way he does here, as the die-hard realist who "tears off" all "pasteboard" surfaces in order to reveal "the bare bones beneath." In short, there is an evident secretiveness at the heart of Fosco's performance, yielding the curious "mixture of pitiless resolution and mountebank mockery which makes it so impossible to fathom him," to quote Marian again (561). Surely, if this man is a "type of 'realistic' villain," as Hesse suggests, then he could hardly be constructed in a more obviously artificial way.

Having said all this, one point that can definitely be made about Fosco is that the enigmatic nature of his character, along with the need to understand it, embodies what Kate Flint, among others, has identified as "one of the hallmarks of sensation fiction": the "unmasking of secrets" (229). More specifically, the problem of reading Fosco, which is written into his very identity (or non-identity), may warrant the more general point that *The Woman in White*—like most Sensation

novels—is not primarily concerned with plots, characters, stories, or other seemingly self-contained entities of meaning, but with the activities of sense-making through which such entities are made out in the first place. "Stories as we know them begin as interpretations," Frank Kermode writes in the essay that has suggested much of the critical framework of my earlier piece (81). Moreover, they do not exist, in a completed shape, without such interpretations. According to Flint, the awareness that this is so—that stories and characters follow interpretations rather than the other way around—is one of the central features of Sensation fiction. "Sensation fiction makes one consider the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion; of what constitutes knowledge, how it is obtained, and what might make it reliable or suspect" (229).

To consider these "dynamics" may well include facing up to the tricky question of agency with which Hesse concludes her paper (34-35). Who or what is it that actually "makes one consider the dynamics of inclusion or exclusion," or identify Hartright as an unreliable narrator, or wonder about the strangeness of Fosco's character? Do the meanings and effects of a text originate in the lives and minds of authors or readers, in the social and historical environment of either or both of them, in the material instruments of writing and reading, in the conditions of publication, or in the words on the page? Most critics would probably answer that all of these factors and actors, and many more, participate—to various degrees—in the processes through which the effects and meanings that we ascribe to a particular text have evolved and keep evolving over time. Whatever someone makes (and is made to make) out of a succession of words is influenced by multiple interacting and overlapping contexts, of which the mind of an author is only one. But most critics are aware, too, I think, that all of these historical, personal, ideological, and material contexts that have an impact on how one reads a text like *The Woman in White* are still mediated through an empirical artefact that is different from these contexts. It follows that any variety of abstract concepts (patterns, plots, stories, characters) that one may want to put into or draw out of a novel will always have to be transmitted through a written work—or a work of writing—that is not identical with these concepts. For the

production of a text, this means that whoever composes such a text to convey particular ideas must pass them through a medium which is likely to act on these ideas in ways that no writer can fully control. This being now widely accepted, it has indeed become "customary" among literary critics, to assign "agency" to texts, as Hesse points out, rather than to their authors (35). Hence, for example, such formulations as my above claim that Collins's novel is "openly ironic about its own secrecy." What this formulation implies is that the ironic effects are not generated by Collins, but by the text and the fictitious agents (narrators, characters, editors etc.) that he has contrived.

Hesse, however, takes issue with this "habit," arguing that "it ought to strike us as odd" (35). No doubt, this is true; most habits ought to strike us as odd sometimes. But while I am in sympathy with Hesse's call for greater methodical self-reflection, I cannot, I am afraid, agree with her demand that we overcome the custom of crediting "texts with agency" (35) in favour of a return to some notion of what the author wanted to say or do. On the contrary, my proposal is not to see the talk about textual agency (or performativity) as an awkward compromise born out of a wrong-headed belief in an "ancient taboo" that forces us to "avoid speaking of authorial intention," as Hesse suggests (35). Rather, we should admit it as frankly as possible: texts have agency. They act on their authors, just as much as they act on their readers and on the writing and reading of other texts. Yet, this does not mean that the source of their agency can be located exclusively in the graphic signifiers on the page, for a text is more than these signifiers. More precisely, a text is both an empirical object in the world, a "material artefact" made up of "fixed, determinable, concrete signs" in a particular order and "an ineffable location of immaterial concepts," as D. C. Greetham has pointed out (63). "It is, on the one hand, a weighty authority with direct access to originary meaning, and, on the other, a slowly accumulating, socially derived series of meanings, each at war with the other for prominence and acceptance" (63).

The agency of texts, I would argue, is suspended between these two dimensions: The material part of a text—a string of words on paper or

screens—and its semantics can only act if it is made to act by various mediators (writers, readers, commentators, illustrators, annotators, publishers, book-sellers, search-engines etc.) who contribute to the process of translating these words into meaningful concepts. But at the same time, this process of sense-making, along with the agencies that participate in it, remains dependent on what Wolfgang Iser and Joshua Landy called the "implicit instructions" provided by the material work (Landy 12; cf. Iser 65).[5] Perhaps one might helpfully call the literary text an "intermedium," as Roger Lüdeke has proposed (9), or an "actor-network" in Bruno Latour's sense: a work that "is made to act by a large star-shaped web of mediators flowing in and out of it" (217).

Incidentally, I do not think that these suggestions are necessarily irreconcilable with Hesse's approach. In fact, although Hesse stresses that she sought to focus on "the process of production" in order to explain why, rather than just how, "a text [!] is producing its specific effects," she does not say too much about "authorial intention" either. What she does argue is that the conditions of publication, that is "the process of serialization […] prevented Collins from […] revising and correcting the assembled material" (31). But this only strengthens my point that works of writing—works being both processes and products—can act on their authors in ways that these did not plan or foresee. Certainly, Hesse seems to submit that Collins would have written a different, more conclusive, less ambivalent and open, novel if he had had more time to polish and hone his work. And yet, leaving aside that speculating about what an author did not write is somewhat gratuitous, I am not even so certain on this count. Collins himself, after all, in the "Preface" to the first edition, characterised *The Woman in White* as an "experiment": as an activity whose outcome is, by definition, unpredictable and which, like a series of instalments, can extend over a long stretch of time (644). Indeed, what Collins suggested is that the writing of his novel is experimental in that it lacks a definite vantage point outside of the "characters of the book" through which the meaning of this writing is acted out (644). This experimental method, he maintains, "has afforded my characters a new

opportunity of expressing themselves, through the medium of the written contributions which they are supposed to make to the progress of the narrative" (644). The author, in short, seems to have ostentatiously withdrawn from his work, leaving the creatures of this work to "express themselves" in their own (unreliable) terms.

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NOTES

[1]One of the telling ironies of Hartright's style is that he regularly quotes his own speech, using quotation marks at the beginnings and ends of paragraphs. In his dialogue with Kyrle he does this too, thus distinguishing his utterances as narrator from his utterances as a character. However, since I sometimes cite only parts of Hartright citing himself, I have (for the sake of simplicity) decided to delete all original speech marks from my quotes, especially since they are not immediately relevant for my argument.

[2]See especially the volume edited by Levinson and Mailloux; in addition see Thomas and, for a more critical view, Posner.

[3]In the Preface to their collection, Levinson and Mailloux explicitly take "the ubiquity of interpretation in the process of reading every text" as their starting point (x). By contrast, Richard Shusterman has argued that there is also a form of understanding "beneath interpretation" (115-35).

[4]By implication, this means that the question whether, and to what extent, Collins's novel is morally and formally "just" is a question that each reader has to answer for herself since the measure of this *poetic justice* is a law that remains tacit. The text itself does not spell out the principles of this law, the law on which its own composition is based, in definite terms. In this respect, Collins's work can be seen as a decidedly modern one (see Donat et al. 13).

[5]For a recent approach to these issues from a phenomenological point of view see Lobsien.

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Connotations
Vol. 22.2 (2012/2013)

What Exactly Is It about Wooster's Voice? A Response to Lawrence Dugan*

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1. Introduction

Lawrence Dugan argues that Wodehouse's Jeeves and Wooster novels differ from most of his other novels in their "baroque style" and differentiates between Wodehouse's "baroque" and "classic" works. I find this distinction well applicable, especially since Dugan clearly shows the difference between the two styles (230-32). With respect to the concept of the "baroque" in Wodehouse, however, a more thorough delineation of the characteristics that, in Dugan's view, render the novels "baroque" and an analysis of the textual evidence presented in the paper would have made the argument more convincing to me. Citing from *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Lawrence Dugan defines his use of the term "baroque" only briefly as "marked generally by use of complex forms, bold ornamentation, and the juxtaposition of contrasting elements often conveying a sense of drama" (228-29) as well as related to "grotesqueness" and "flamboyance" (229). As "baroque" he describes the narrator's "unique, vernacular, contorted, slangy idiom" (228). He also presents an example but does not analyse it and only states that "[s]entences like these do

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*Reference: Lawrence Dugan, "Worcestershirewards: Wodehouse and the Baroque," *Connotations* 20.2-3 (2010/2011): 228-47. See also Laura Mooneyham White, "As I have heard Jeeves put it": A Response to Lawrence Dugan's "Worcestershirewards: Wodehouse and the Baroque," *Connotations* 21.2-3 (2011/2012): 327-33; William Vesterman, "The Two Bertie Woosters: A Response to Lawrence Dugan," *Connotations* 22.1 (2012/2013): 85-88. For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debdugan02023.htm>.

not occur in Wodehouse's books outside of the Jeeves and Wooster novels" (229). At the end of his paper, he lists seven characteristics of Wooster's "baroque voice" and presents examples of the different stylistic devices used but does not analyse and explain how they achieve their effects (241-43). Hence, one might venture to conclude that the terms "baroque" vs. "classic" are helpful for a general differentiation between Wodehouse's works, but not very productive for a deeper analysis of the Jeeves and Wooster novels. In my opinion, the phenomena that Dugan calls "baroque" can be more convincingly explained and more thoroughly examined with my approach of "comic dialogism."

What Dugan describes as "contorted" (228) is usually achieved through a dialogic, incongruous combination of different texts and/or images. In the example he presents for "Slang, Clichés and Misquotation," it is the combination of a quotation from *Hamlet* and a slangy and very visual description that the reader bisociates[1]: "if the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune want to crush his proud spirit, they have to pull their socks up and make a special effort" (qtd. in Dugan 242). Moreover, and as often, the "slings and arrows" are personified, which visualises the metaphor again and creates another incongruity.[2] The literally/culturally literate reader further bisociates the rewriting and Shakespeare's original.

Whereas Dugan only lists stylistic devices he names "baroque" without showing how exactly they are used, analysing the novels under the scope of "comic dialogism" explains the idiosyncrasies of Wooster's voice, as the very brief analysis above exemplifies and as will be shown in more detail below. After all, the stylistic devices listed by Dugan (e.g. first-person narrator, metaphors and similes, etc.) could be used by other authors in an entirely different way.

In order to show how exactly Wodehouse uses the characteristics Dugan calls "baroque," I shall analyse them under the scope of "comic dialogism." Before doing so, I will briefly delineate this approach and respond to Dugan's claim that "[t]he new baroque Wodehouse may also have been a response to the incipient modernism of the late 1910s" (229). As will be seen below, I find the novels'

intertextual/intermedial relationships to two popular genres of the time, namely detective fiction and musical comedy, even more fruitful for analysis than their relationship to modernism. In passing, I shall also comment on related points that Dugan makes and with which I (dis-)agree, namely Dugan's interpretation of the "gentleman ideal" and the role of women in the novels.

2. "Comic Dialogism"

In my study *Jokes Don't Jump from Nowhere: Comic Dialogism in P. G. Wodehouse's Jeeves and Wooster Novels*, I have applied a theoretical approach to the novels that links theories of the comic, intertextuality and intermediality in order to explain their popularity and longevity in Anglo-American cultural memory, which, of course, largely depend on their distinctive narrative voice.[3] The Jeeves and Wooster novels are dialogic intertextual and intermedial creations and hence, comic incongruities are created between different texts and between different images as well as between texts and images. As laughter is always a "*fait social*" (Pfister, *A History of English Laughter* vi), the contexts of production and perception need to be taken into account when analysing comic works. Further, intertextual and intermedial relationships are most intense when both consciously employed by the author and recognised by the reader (cf. Pfister, "Konzepte der Intertextualität" 27). Thus the dialogic relations between texts and/or images are embedded into the dialogue between author/narrator, text and reader.

I have used Arthur Koestler's term "bisociation" in order to explain the effects that the incongruities created between different texts and/or images may have on readers. In his bisociation theory, Arthur Koestler conceptualises the creation of the comic as "a thing […] seen in a dual light; a mental concept […] simultaneously perceived under two different angles […] which serves two masters at the same time; it is 'bisociated' with two independent and mutually exclusive mental fields" (36). For Koestler, there is "a quick oscillation of the bisociated

concept between its two contexts, these quick oscillations accounting for the presence of both […] in consciousness" (37). The most straightforward example would be the pun, which triggers two opposed association streams in readers, but Koestler's concept can also explain the effects that Wodehouse's rewritings or intertextual/intermedial combinations have. Here, readers bisociate the visual and the verbal or the "source text" and its comic rewriting or revisualisation.[4]

3. The Intertexts of the 1910s and 1920s

Dugan concedes that one can find similarities to Bertie Wooster's way of speech and expression in *Mulliner Nights* (Dugan 238). While having pointed out the distinctiveness of the "Wooster voice" in my work on the Jeeves and Wooster novels, I have also always argued that it is the mixture of "repetition with variation," the creation of something very idiosyncratic out of well-known phrases and images, that achieves the popularity and comicality of these novels and their narrative voice. As Lawrence Dugan puts it: "All of the key literary tropes appear scattered throughout the other books, although never with anything like Bertie's tangled combinations that break them up and reassemble them in his own peculiar manner, which I call baroque" (237). Wodehouse rewrote and adapted his own works, but the Jeeves and Wooster novels are also intricately linked to many other texts and images rooted in Anglo-American cultural memory.

Like Dugan, I am convinced that it is necessary to take the "textual surroundings" of the late 1910s and the 1920s into account when talking about the narrator's idiosyncratic voice and its "baroque," or in my analyses "dialogic," characteristics. When looking at his contemporaries, however, it is, in my opinion, more fruitful to analyse the novels' intertextual and intermedial connections to some of the popular genres of the time, most importantly the (classic) detective novel and musical comedy, because the intensity of intertextual/intermedial dialogism between the Jeeves and Wooster novels and some representatives of these genres is very strong.[5] Wodehouse

enjoyed reading detective fiction and wrote plentifully for the musical comedy stage in the 1920s. The narrator, Bertie Wooster, is likewise presented as an avid reader of detective fiction and a fan of musical comedy. Hence, intertextual and intermedial references to both genres abound in the Jeeves and Wooster novels. In Wooster's view, "reading for pleasure" equals "reading detective fiction"[6]:

> [Wooster]: "I am sorry to butt in when you are absorbed in your Spinoza and have probably just got to the part where the second corpse is discovered, but what I have to say is of great pith and moment, so listen attentively." (*Much Obliged, Jeeves* 131)

As the example shows, Wooster is certain that Jeeves must be reading a detective novel, because he is reading during his leisure time. However, the sophisticated valet either reads philosophers like Spinoza or the "classics." Interestingly, the following characteristics that Dugan allocates to the Jeeves and Wooster novels are definitely features of the classic detective novel, too:

> The plots have two consistent characteristics: a very *tight* farcical *construction*, and the style I have outlined" (Dugan 232; emphases mine)
>
> his plots adhere to a seamless logic (233)
>
> The story's farcical plot is wonderfully executed, with each chapter of about ten pages leading into the next, and *various loose-ends* that the reader had forgotten about *being snatched up* and handled by Wodehouse, *until the end of the book*. (234; emphases mine)

I am convinced that Jeeves and Wooster are a combination of two character pairs that were popular at the time, namely the clever servant and his stupid master as well as the classic detective and his "Watson."[7] The narrative situation in the Sherlock Holmes novels also resembles the Jeeves and Wooster novels. Both Watson and Wooster seem to know less than the reader. Whereas this creates the pleasure of being the cleverer sleuth for the reader of the detective novels,

readers of the Jeeves and Wooster novels delight in "getting a joke" first or in foreseeing (comic) events.

Furthermore, Wooster describes the fictional world in terms of musical comedy:

> He [Wooster's friend Bingo] always reminds me of the hero of a musical comedy who takes the centre of the stage, gathers the boys round him in a circle, and tells them all about his love at the top of his voice. ("The Pride of the Woosters is Wounded" 45)

There are not only specific references to musical comedy, but also system references.[8] They are responsible for the novels' strong visuality, which creates both affective and mnemonic effects. The intermedial reference used in the quotation above creates a very vivid comic image of Bingo in the readers' minds. Hence, readers are often invited to remember the comic visual scenes, which are sometimes used as "visual running gags," for instance, intratextual references to preceding slapstick scenes that use their visuality metaphorically and at the same time remind the reader of the slapstick scene and thus make him/her laugh about it again.[9]

Despite Dugan's claim that Wooster is a unique character (229), he also concedes that he is "not the first character of his kind" (230). He is a "knut" (230), and he is similar, for instance, to Algernon Moncrieff in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (see Dugan 230, referring to Usborne). I concur with Dugan/Usborne and with Robert McCrum, who says that Wodehouse pastoralises Wilde (cf. McCrum 101).[10] These rewritings are again "repetitions with variation," and their effects resemble those that Linda Hutcheon ascribes to the effects adaptations have on readers/audiences. In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon sees the audience's pleasure in adaptation as simply coming "from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise" (Hutcheon 4). In Jeeves and Wooster, this works both on the level of texts/phrases as shown above and images that are rooted in cultural memory.

4. Analysing Dugan's Seven Characteristics of the "Baroque" under the Scope of "Comic Dialogism"

The seven stylistic devices that Lawrence Dugan lists as features of the "baroque style" are: (1) the use of the first person, (2) outrageous metaphors and similes, (3) a mock-aesthete attitude, (4) slang, (5) clichés, (6) mis-quotation, and (7) the transferred epithet. I shall respond to (1) at some length, as "the use of the first person" can be linked with my comments on what Dugan says about Bertie Wooster as a character and narrator as well as with my critique of how Dugan interprets Wooster's "gentleman ideal" and, related to this, the role of women in the novels.

(1) The Use of the First Person

Dugan gives an example that shows how Wooster narrates, but does not explain what, in his view, is so special about this kind of first-person narrator. Of course, the following list of further characteristics can all be seen as illustrations of how the narrator uses language, but, in my opinion, there is more to Bertie Wooster's comic and, as I call it, "dialogic" voice. Wooster's incongruous split into the narrator and the focaliser and the reader's bisociation of both creates "dialogic humour." As Gerd Dose points out, narrator and character are not congruent because the latter's intellectual weakness is disclaimed by the former's ability to structure the narration, in which associations and digressions are all employed for a purpose (cf. Dose 29). This creates what critics have frequently called "Wooster's wonderful innocence" (cf. McCrum 149) and prompts a "recreative" reader reception in the manner described by Koestler and Hazlitt (cf. Koestler 33; Hazlitt 10).[11] Interestingly, the narrator and the focaliser both find their equivalent in the reader, whose bisociation process consists of an empathetic experience shared with the focaliser but who also experiences, sees and knows more through the way the narrator either tells him about or shows him the events, which makes them appear to him as if he was "the first to find it out" (Hazlitt 10).

Dugan points out that the first person "is the *sine qua non* of the Jeeves-Wooster books, yet, except for the Mulliner stories, they are the only that he wrote (that [he] know[s] of) out of over ninety books of fiction, in the first-person" (241). If one regards the novels' intertexts, *Ruggles of Red Gap* and *What Next?* (also "valet novels"), it becomes even more obvious that the choice of narrative perspective was a very conscious one. Wooster's "slangy and contorted" idiom could not have been used by Jeeves, and it would lack comicality if it was used by a non-descript heterodiegetic narrator. It is the reader's ability to "recreate the witticism," to see what really is at stake while reading Wooster's account of it, that often creates (visual/verbal) incongruities. Besides the incongruous focaliser-narrator relationship, the reader is also often shown more through Jeeves's words.

(1a) Staging Himself as a "Perfect Gentleman" and the Role of Women in this "Male World of Childhood Play"

According to Dugan, Wooster "is like a comic knight who is given a quest and performs it. The comedy lies in his unknightly voice describing himself" (236). Here, I disagree. In my opinion, it is rather the other way round. It is the "voice," Wooster, the narrator, who stages himself as a knight and a "perfect gentleman," but the character and focaliser is presented to the reader as rather a cowardly, though good-hearted, young man.[12] This is often shown through the disparity between Wooster's words and his deeds. In Dugan's view, "Bertie Wooster […] takes his marching orders from his female friends, enemies and relatives, making only the briefest of protests" (236). However, whereas it is true that Wooster never finds good arguments in order to protest, he usually only helps his friends/aunts once he has been blackmailed by them or is in danger of being married to one of his ex-fiancées. Although he repeatedly states that, as a "preux chevalier," he helps any friend in need, he is too scared and cowardly to do so unless even greater danger is looming.

Sometimes it is simply the narrator's employment of irony that shows Wooster to be the opposite of what he claims to be (hence, there

is not only an incongruous doubling through the narrator-focaliser combination, but also through the narrator's use of language):

> I made up my mind that I would pop back and do the strong manly thing by lying low in my flat and telling Jeeves to inform everybody who called that I wasn't there. ("All's Well" 222)

Obviously, it is not manly at all to hide from one's opponents. Dugan's description of Wooster as being "proud (or vainglorious) and humble (or a chump)" (236) is therefore suitable. However, it is not only this mixture, but the fact that in his "innocence" (cf. also Dugan's reference to Usborne 237), Wooster really seems to mean what he so proudly says and at the same time, he is shown to be a "chump." This creates the aforementioned incongruity between the focaliser and the narrator.

When one further regards Wooster and his code of being the perfect gentleman, this becomes even more obvious. Wooster's code not only demands from him that he helps old friends from school, but also that he never breaks an engagement and does not "bandy women's names" (cf., e.g., *Much Obliged, Jeeves* 28). Although Wooster never breaks an engagement, the plots are mainly about Jeeves directing events so that the women break the engagement. Further, both Wooster and Jeeves indirectly talk about women. Wooster, for instance, welcomes the fact that there is "a wealth of meaning in [Jeeves's] 'Indeed, sir?'" (*Much Obliged, Jeeves* 27) because this way they can discuss women without literally doing so, which is important because discussing a woman "would come under the head of bandying a woman's name, and the Woosters do not bandy women's names. Nor do the Jeeveses" (*Much Obliged, Jeeves* 28). With his exaggerated code of moral conduct, Wooster stages himself as a "perfect English gentleman," and thus the novels contain a certain stereotypical image of "Englishness." At the same time, as shown in the examples above, the character/focaliser comically fails adhering to "the code" and (indirectly) breaks it, and so "the code" with its image of Englishness is comically subverted.[13]

Hence, I do not agree with Lawrence Dugan's claim that "Bertie is a gentleman to the core—the unkind reference to a "ghastly girl" above is not typical and of course not heard by the object of it" (235). While Dugan is definitely right about the fact that Wooster never talks badly about women when they can hear it, there are quite a few references to women that are comic, but also quite harsh and not very gentlemanly at all:

> To me the girl was simply nothing more or less than a pot of poison. One of those dashed large, brainy, strenuous, dynamic girls you see so much of these days. She had been at Girton, where, in addition to enlarging her brain to the most frightful extent, she had gone in for every kind of sport and developed the physique of a middleweight catch-as-catch-can wrestler. ("The Pride of the Woosters is Wounded" 44)

> When I had finished, she made one of those foolish remarks which do so much to confirm a man in his conviction that women as a sex should be suppressed. (*Joy in the Morning* 96)

I agree with Dugan, however, that the "importuning female […] is as essential a plot device as the master-servant relationship itself" (235) and that the women are usually "of marrying age or mothers and aunts" (235). The female characters in Wodehouse are part of a conservative tradition in comedy, and they are described by Stott as having "repeatedly been given the role of joyless authority figures […], wives who are simultaneously mothers to their infantilized husbands" (81). Although Wooster never ends up being a husband (the romantic marriage plot is inverted in the novels), he is definitely infantilised. His problems and joys are those of school-boys. The novels present an Arcadian world of childhood play. The female characters are an essential "plot device" because they are "killjoy aunts," who always force Wooster to do something for them, or ex-fiancées, who are "always a lurking menace till [they] get[ ] engaged to someone else and so cannot decide at any moment to play a return date" (*Much Obliged, Jeeves* 27). Hence, the female characters' roles as "mother figures" help to create Wooster's image as the "eternal school-boy" and with that the novels' "public school-boyishness" and

the world of childhood play. The latter needs to be taken into account when talking about the novels' gentleman ideal. When Dugan says that Wooster is a "gentleman to the core" (235), he only regards one side of the coin. As shown above, Wooster stages himself as such a gentleman. According to Christine Berberich,

> the idea of the gentleman [itself] was developed into an "invented tradition" [in the nineteenth century]: based on the mediaeval cult of the knight, it was adapted and modified to fit contemporary needs. The public schools institutionalized this new ideal. The Victorian gentlemen-to-be consciously had to submit to and fashion himself according to a set of rules; without these, society would not be able to consider him a gentleman. (21)

The novels both participate in the creation of such an ideal and subvert it comically, for instance through exaggeration.[14] In my view, it is vital to always take the novels' "comic doubling" into account. There is no containment without subversion and vice versa. "Even when he tries to be aloof, the real Bertie comes through" (Dugan 240). Although Dugan formulates it differently, this description seems to come close to what I would term the "doubleness" and incongruity created between Wooster, the aloof narrator, and Wooster, the cowardly character.

(2) Metaphors and Similes

Metaphors and similes definitely play a vital role in the novels' creation of visual comicality. If one uses Max Black's interaction theory of metaphor, metaphors could be described as "dialogic" in their own way: the images associated with two semantic fields are in interaction. Extended similes in the Jeeves and Wooster novels break up the narratives and slow down narrative pace. Thereby they create suspense and heighten the comicality of the scene as in the example below, in which Wooster has just mentioned the "magic word" that Jeeves told him in order to enable him to blackmail Spode. Spode's miraculous turning from anger to obsequiousness is described as follows:

> If it hadn't been that my implicit faith in Jeeves had led me to expect solid results, I should have been astounded to the effect of this pronouncement on the man. You could see that it had got right in amongst him and churned him up like an egg whisk. He recoiled as if he had run into something hot, and a look of horror and alarm spread over his face.
>
> The whole situation recalled irresistibly to my mind something that had happened to me once up at Oxford, when the heart was young. It was during Eights Week, and I was sauntering on the river bank with a girl named something that has slipped my mind, when there was a sound of barking and a large, hefty dog came galloping up, full of beans and buck and obviously intent on mayhem. And I was just commending my soul to God, and feeling that this was where the old flannel trousers got about thirty bob's worth of value bitten out of them, when the girl, waiting till she saw the whites of its eyes, with extraordinary presence of mind suddenly opened a coloured Japanese umbrella in the animal's face. Upon which, it did three back somersaults and retired into private life.
>
> Except that he didn't do any back somersaults, Roderick Spode's reactions were almost identical with those of this nonplussed hound. For a moment, he just stood gaping. Then he said "Oh?" Then his lips twisted into what I took to be his idea of a conciliatory smile. After that, he swallowed six—or it may have been seven—times, as if he had taken aboard a fish bone. Finally, he spoke. And when he did so, it was the nearest thing to an exceptionally mild-mannered dove, at that. (*The Code of the Woosters* 393)

The extended simile, which compares the dictator character, Spode, to a dog, creates a very strong and incongruous image of Spode's sudden change in behaviour, breaks up the action and heightens suspense for the reader. Moreover, metaphors and similes are, as Dugan puts it, "outrageous" (241), but often at the same time very apt and comically in line with the character types. This can be shown in Dugan's example:

> She drove off, Gussie standing gaping after her transfixed, like a goldfish staring at an ant's egg. (qtd. in Dugan 241)

Gussie is known to the reader as a "spectacled newt-collecting freak" (*Much Obliged, Jeeves* 56) who is usually compared to a fish because of his big eyes and spectacles: "He looks like a fish and keeps newts in a glass tank in his bedroom, but one condones that sort of thing in an old schoolfellow" (*Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves* 5). Hence, the simile is not only comic because of its "outrageousness, " but because it varies and

repeats an "old theme" for "faithful readers." It is an incongruity that is again achieved through a dialogic combination of the well-known and something new. The specific comicality of the Wooster voice is not solely achieved through the use of metaphors and similes in more general terms, but, as just shown, through a very distinct use of these stylistic devices. The last feature, the "repetition and variation" of certain metaphors/similes, is especially interesting as the novels not only repeat and vary their imagery, but also their references to other texts, as the following example shows:

> "Yes, sir. If it were done when 'twere done, then 'twere well it were done quickly," he [Jeeves] said, making for the door and I thought, as I had so often thought before, how neatly he put these things. (*Stiff Upper Lip* 171)

> Feeling, therefore, that if the thing was to be smacked into, 'twere well 'twere smacked into quickly, as Shakespeare says, I treacled the paper and attached it to the window. All that now remained to be done was to deliver the sharp. And it was at this point that I suddenly came over all cat-in-the-adage-y. (*Joy in the Morning* 110)

This repeated and varied rewriting of a well-known quotation creates a feeling of "being at home" in the "Wooster world" for faithful readers of the Jeeves and Wooster novels.

(3) Mock-Aesthete Attitude

Dugan's third point is a "mock-aesthete attitude" (241). The mocking and comically subversive presentation of a certain attitude again means dialogic doubleness and is, hence, related to the novels' treatment of intertexts/interimages. Further, it is part of Wooster's "self-fashioning" as a gentleman. However, whereas the Wildean dandies consciously fashion themselves, Wooster often does so innocently. As shown above, he seems to believe in the image he creates of himself. Moreover, his fashion-consciousness is used as another running gag in the novels. Most novels start with an argument between him and Jeeves about a certain piece of clothing, which Wooster likes and his truly fashion-conscious valet detests, for instance an Alpine hat, a

white dinner jacket, and purple socks. At the end of the novel, Wooster gives in as a sign of his gratitude towards Jeeves.

(4) Slang, (5) Clichés, and (6) Mis-Quotation

Dugan gives one example for his following three points, namely for (4) slang, (5) clichés, and (6) mis-quotation. This example shows that it is not only the use of these features, but also their "dialogic combination," which create what Dugan calls "baroqueness." In his example, a Shakespearean quotation is linked to a slangy and visual idiomatic expression: "and if the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune want to crush his proud spirit, they have to pull their socks up" (qtd. in Dugan 242).

Clichés are also dialogic in Jeeves and Wooster. They are always comically rewritten. This has been shown above with regard to Wooster's "gentlemanly ideal," but there are many other examples, especially concerning the novels' stereotypical presentation of "Englishness." Tea, for example, which is often metaphorically referred to as "the fragrant and steaming" ("The Metropolitan Touch" 182) or "the good old stand-by" ("The Aunt and the Sluggard" 103), is comically described as "life-saving":

> "Leave me," I said, "I would be alone. I can't see anybody till I've had my tea." "When Cynthia smiles," said young Bingo, "the skies are blue, the world takes on a roseate hue; birds in the garden sing, and Joy in the Morning is king of everything, when Cynthia smiles." He coughed, changing gears. "When Cynthia frowns—" "What the devil are you talking about?" "I'm reading you a poem. The one I wrote to Cynthia last night. I'll go on, shall I?" "No!" "No?" "No, I haven't had my tea." At this moment Jeeves came in with the good old beverage, and I sprang on it with a glad cry. After a couple of sips things looked a bit brighter. Even young Bingo didn't offend the eye to quite such an extent. By the time I'd finished the first cup I was a new man, so much so that I not only permitted but encouraged the poor fish to read the rest of the bally thing, and even went so far as to criticize the scansion of the fourth line of the fifth verse. ("The Great Sermon Handicap" 127)

Again, a mixture of subversion and containment characterises the presentation of tea. While comically making fun of this "very English need of a cup of tea," people sharing the same cultural background are included and immersed. Moreover, it is not simply the use of a cliché, but its comic exaggeration/subversion that turns it into such a distinct feature of Wodehouse's style. The cliché is always rewritten and/or revisualised and therefore another feature of the novels' comic doubleness and, as I call it, their "comic dialogism."

The same holds true for mis-quotation. As Dugan's term mis-quotation already indicates, it is not simply the use of intertextual references, but their "comic misuse" that turn them into a distinct part of the Wooster idiom. The ("knowing") reader thus bisociates the "mis-quotation" and its original. Examples are plenty, and Dugan has already presented one. Here is another one:

> It has been well said of Bertram Wooster that when he sets his hand to the plough he does not stop to pick daisies and let the grass grow under his feet. (*Much Obliged, Jeeves* 65)

This rewriting of Luke 9:62 ("[a]nd Jesus said to him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God") revisualises the biblical quotation because it both exaggerates the scene and visualises it differently. Although the original text employs metaphor as well, the image is already conventionalised for audiences who share the same religious/cultural/literary knowledge, and, therefore, the sentence is at once understood in its metaphorical sense. Through adding a more detailed imagery, a more vivid revisualisation is achieved. Moreover, the words "to pick daisies" connote a world of child-like play and trigger a further revisualisation of the idiom "let the grass grow under one's feet." After having imaged Wooster picking daisies, the reader will bizarrely be inclined to image the grass growing under Wooster's feet. Often mis-quotations are used for similar effects. They rewrite/revisualise texts/images rooted in Anglo-American memory, thereby creating comic effects and mak-

ing readers from the same cultural background "feel at home" in the fictional world.

(7) The Transferred Epithet

As a last feature, Dugan lists "the transferred epithet" and presents, among others, the following example: "I lit a rather pleased cigarette. Things were beginning to clarify" (*The Mating Season* 9; qtd. in Dugan 242). Again, an analysis of how this feature creates the "baroque" is missing in his paper. In my view, the transferred epithet is one of a number of devices that create estrangement, incongruity and, hence, a much stronger, incongruous visual image. The use of an "unsuitable adjective" (Dugan 242) serves to personify the cigarette and makes the reader picture it comically; it also shows us Wooster's childlike love of playing with language by using an adjective "wrongly." Moreover, the reader bisociates the grammatically correct sentence and its comic rewriting.

5. Conclusion

What exactly then is it about "Wooster's voice"? My approach of "comic dialogism" allows for a closer examination of the characteristics Dugan calls "baroque" and of his textual examples, thereby showing that the idiosyncratic narration is mainly achieved through dialogic combinations of the visual and/or the verbal, of different texts and/or images. These create comic incongruities that make readers laugh. After all, this is the response the novels aim to achieve. How exactly this is brought about, is both an intriguing as well as debatable subject.

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NOTES

[1]For a definition of Koestler's term "bisociation" see below.

[2]The whole quotation is also an example of Wooster's "self-fashioning," which I shall comment on below when analysing Wooster as a character/focaliser and, especially, a "gentleman."

[3]A thorough delineation of my theoretical approach and some of the analyses presented in this paper have been published in *Jokes Don't Jump from Nowhere: Comic Dialogism in P. G. Wodehouse's Jeeves and Wooster Novels*.

[4]A further note on the concept of "comic dialogism": the Jeeves and Wooster novels are only partly dialogic in a Bakhtinian sense of the term. Whereas the insertion of different texts and images creates incongruities and thus comic scenes and dialogues, it neither creates layers of meaning, nor subverts socio-cultural, literary or historical authorities. The benevolence of Wodehousean comicality makes it hard to assess the novels' ideological standpoint and renders their comedy very light; its humour always includes rather than excludes readers. The texts and images that are rewritten in the novels have usually already been (or were, some are no longer today) part of Anglo-American cultural memory and hence ensure the novels' inclusion in Anglo-American cultural memory.

[5]I have presented evidence for the intensity of intertextual/intermedial dialogism with detective fiction (mainly the Sherlock Holmes, Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot novels as well as novels by Raymond Chandler and Rex Stout) and musical comedy (Wodehouse's own musical comedies) in Säckel 93-123 and 142-68. There I have also analysed the effects of these intertextual/intermedial relationships in more detail. For preceding studies on Wodehouse and detective fiction, see also Carlson, *An Analysis of P. G. Wodehouse's Team of Bertie Wooster and Jeeves*; MacGregor, "A Hatful and a Trace of Heredity," and "'Plumming' Sherlock Holmes," as well as her "Sherlockian Plums: A Study in Contrast," and Thompson, *Wooster Proposes, Jeeves Disposes or Le Mot Juste*.

[6]According to Irina O. Rajewsky, a narrator can be presented whose perception and way of thinking is shaped by a particular medium (cf. 89). This is the case with Wooster. He often perceives and describes the world in terms of detective fiction and musical comedy.

[7]I have shown the novels' intertextual links to two "valet novels" (Harry Leon Wilson's *Ruggles of Red Gap* and Denis Mackail's *What Next?*) and to classic detective fiction of the time (see Säckel 96-115).

[8]In *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien*, Broich and Pfister have coined the terms "Einzeltextreferenzen," which I call "specific references" (cf. 48-52) and "Systemreferenzen", which I call "system references" (cf. 52-58). I use the terms very similarly to them and apply the term "specific references" when analysing references to single literary works (for example, quotations or allusions), whereas I use the term "system references" to the transference of a specific genre or discourse, or to the use of thematic or structural parallels, which are modelled on more than one work of the preceding author.

[9]On visual running gags in the Jeeves and Wooster novels, cf. Säckel 30-31 and 151-52.

[10]I have taken my cue from Robert McCrum, who says that "[i]n this way, Wodehouse silently borrows the aunts, butlers and young Mayfair lounge lizards of Wilde's plays, but pastoralizes them in his own lunatic Eden, cunningly placing them beyond the reach of serious analysis" (McCrum 101). Wodehouse, for instance, recreates farcical elements of Wilde's plots and comic features of his characters, but does not recreate the latter's satirical social criticism. (I have given a detailed analysis of the novels' intertextual links to Wilde's comedies and their "knuts" in Säckel 124-27).

[11]According to Hazlitt, "wit is often the more forcible and pointed for being dry and serious, for it then seems as if the speaker himself had no intention in it, and we were the first to find it out" (10). In Koestler's view the reader also "re-create[s] the witticism or humorous scene" (33).

[12] On Wodehouse's ongoing parodic concern with the subject of knight-errantry, see Inge Leimberg, "'Across the pale parabola of Joy': Wodehouse Parodist," and the ensuing *Connotations* debate at <http://www.connotations.uni-tuebingen.de/debleimberg01312.htm>.

[13]Moreover, "the code" is a very important plot device. If Wooster, for instance, was allowed to break his engagements (which are often the result of a misunderstanding), there would hardly be a problem for Jeeves to solve.

[14]Dugan also mentions Wodehouse's and Raymond Chandler's education at Dulwich College, which, of course, is a biographical evidence for the novels' presentation of "school-boyish masculinity." For an analysis of the parallels between Raymond Chandler's fiction and Wodehouse, see Säckel 120-23.

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Connotations
Vol. 22.2 (2012/2013)

A Letter in Response to Kenneth Muir*

EMMA COLE

In Kenneth Muir's article on Edwin Muir's work, *Chorus of the Newly Dead*, he raises the possibility that the timing of Humbert Wolfe's more popular work, *Requiem*, may suggest that it owes some of its inspiration to Muir, or to Muir's source of inspiration, Herbert Trench. He writes:

> A year after *Chorus of the Newly Dead*, Humbert Wolfe's *Requiem* appeared, and its title is a significant link with Trench's poem. Although Wolfe was a very prolific writer—he published two volumes in 1926—and a regular reviewer of modern poetry, there is some evidence that he had begun *Requiem* before the publication of Muir's poem. (204)

In saying that there is "some evidence that he had begun *Requiem* before […] Muir's poem," he implies the possibility of a derivative reading of Wolfe's *Requiem*. I am researching Wolfe's work, focusing on *Requiem*, and although he does not specify a particular source of inspiration, his book, *Signpost to Poetry*, and his connections with modernist poets may offer alternative suggestions to Trench's poem. The title, *Requiem*, may owe something to T. S. Eliot's seminal work, *The Waste Land*, particularly "The Burial of the Dead" published in 1922. The legacy of the war poets can be traced in "The Soldier" section of *Requiem* where the loss of life is examined in a similarly dreamlike state to Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting," for example:

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*Reference: Kenneth Muir, "Edwin Muir's *Chorus of the Newly Dead* and Its Analogues," *Connotations* 6.2 (1996/1997): 203-06. For the original article as well as contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/muir00602.htm>.

> Down some cold field in a world unspoken
> the young men are walking together, slim and tall,
> and though they laugh to one another, silence is not broken:
> there is no sound however clear they call. ("The Soldier" 1-4)

Chorus of the Newly Dead was published in 1926. In a letter to his wife dated 25 April 1926, Wolfe wrote, "I have been writing all morning, and have got on with 'Requiem.' I want very much to finish it on time for autumn publication." This timing makes it unlikely that Muir's work inspired Wolfe's. Once Wolfe had finished *Requiem,* there is evidence that it was delayed. He writes in a letter dated 8 April 1927, "I have had my usual mass of communications from Benn's. 'Requiem' isn't coming out till the 27th. They had to re-set the whole book, because the first setting was a muddle."

Wolfe writes ruefully in a letter on 7 August 1926 that the structure of pairings of Edwin Muir's *Chorus of the Newly Dead* is "like a clumsy anticipation of me." Kenneth Muir notes that, "[i]n Muir's poem each soliloquy is followed by a chorus. Wolfe has no chorus, apart from the Coda" (205). However, each section of the speakers in *Requiem* is divided into three poems with the third in sonnet form functioning as a chorus, commenting upon and summarising the two preceding poems.

Where Muir and Trench are inspired by pity for "those who are rated as successful, as well as those who are apparently failures," Wolfe was inspired by the Pauline doctrine which inverts the idea of who are the winners and who are the losers (cf. Muir 204). At a time when "post-war malaise" gripped the nation, *Requiem* was Wolfe's response to loss of faith, "couched in language which believed in the music of the word" (*Harlequin in Whitehall* 254). Wolfe's dedication says that "some alien virtue wonderful" stirred him to write ("Dedication," *Requiem* 5); his poetic imagination was inspired, not by the spirit of the times, but by something more hopeful which in turn prompted Gustav Holst to compose twelve songs and Vera Brittain to resume writing *Testament of Youth* (cf. *Harlequin* 254).

It seems that inspiration struck two poets at the same moment. Both of them felt it was their best work. Wolfe's poem of dedication at the front of the volume claims, "I shall not write its fellow / earthsides of immortality." John Willis saw Muir's reputation as a poet continuing to grow and that "it was not until the 1940s that Muir wrote the mature poems on which his reputation, and [T. S.] Eliot's appraisal rests" (Willis 118). Kenneth Muir's footnote suggests that Wolfe had little influence on modernist contemporaries, saying: "It is notable that the 1927 collection of *Oxford Poetry*, edited by W. H. Auden and C. Day-Lewis, showed that the dominant influence on most of the contributors was T. S. Eliot. Not one of them seems to have fallen under the spell of Humbert Wolfe" (Muir 206n5). However, Wolfe's biographer, Philip Bagguley, describes the early influence of Wolfe on Day-Lewis and Spender, which waned under the influence of Auden. "Day-Lewis […] admired Humbert's poems and was grateful for his help in his early days," and "Sir Stephen readily admitted his own admiration as a schoolboy and an undergraduate. He had written an article in praise of Humbert […] in *Cherwell* in November 1927" (280). Posterity may read into the composition of these poems collaboration or competition, but it would appear from the poets' own understanding, none existed.

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Connotations
Vol. 22.2 (2012/2013)

"Occult Sympathy": Geoffrey Household's *Watcher in the Shadows* and *Dance of the Dwarfs*[*]

ROBERT LANCE SNYDER

Drawing on the Edwardian adventure tale's theme of hunter and hunted exemplified by John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male* (1939), his best-known thriller, dramatizes the exploits of an unnamed narrator who, after unsuccessfully attempting to assassinate an unspecified Central European demagogue, is literally run to ground in the Dorset countryside. A belated sequel titled *Rogue Justice* (1982) christens this persona Raymond Ingelram, fictionally the descendant of fifteen British generations whose aristocratic standing has been marginalized by interwar upheavals in the social order.[1] Of immediate interest, though, is what transpires at the end of *Rogue Male*. After eleven days of being besieged in his subterranean redoubt by pseudonymous Major Quive-Smith, an anglicized Nazi agent, Ingelram contrives a ballista and kills his adversary by impaling him with an iron spike. Noticing their facial resemblance, the displaced representative of English nobility then alters his appearance to replicate the photographic image in Quive-Smith's forged passport and thereby ensure his departure from the United Kingdom disguised as a Latin American "gentleman" still intent on completing his earlier mission (181).

Such plot-driven (re)doubling differs from the familiar nineteenth-century *topos* of the *Doppelgänger*. In James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Double* (1846), and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr.*

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debsnyder0222.htm>.

Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), to cite only a few novels, the projected "other" inversely mirrors the putative "self." Narratives of this kind usually introduce us early on to the operative binary and its reversal, thereby proving fertile texts for psychoanalytic critics.[2]

Things are less predictable, however, in the modern thriller. We thus do not discover until *Rogue Male*'s dénouement that its protagonist is prepared to abandon his ancestral identity for Quive-Smith's fraudulent impersonation or that, once he has adopted the ruse, Ingelram will pursue again his appointment with destiny. The governing dynamic of this mode of fiction, consequently, is far removed from the orientation of Erskine Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) in which we encounter valorized emblems of Britannia's inevitable triumph over the combined forces of darkness. Dispensing with such reductive polarities, the genre of the thriller as we know it today first flourished during the 1930s when, in the aftermath of World War I, former constructs of inviolability such as the morally unassailable nation-state, universally shared codes of value, and an integrated, perspicuous "self" were rapidly unraveling.[3] The best of Household's books reflect these changes while sometimes explicitly framing them in relation to manifestations of Edwardian stability.

His character Raymond Ingelram, for example, deviates from such "Clubland heroes" as Buchan's Richard Hannay and Childers's Arthur H. Davies in two important ways.[4] First, whereas *Rogue Male* depicts him as "a bored and wealthy Englishman" in the mold of Hannay (1), *Rogue Justice* casts Ingelram as the offspring of a British father and Austrian mother, no doubt in part to account for how his bilingual fluency facilitates his reentry into the Third Reich. But beyond such practical considerations Household seems committed in several of his productions to denationalizing their protagonists, as though to intimate the obsolescence of ethnocentric or chauvinistic justifications for individual action. The second difference is that the first-person narrator of both *Rogue Male* and *Rogue Justice* figures as a moral casualty haunted by his wartime experience. Household's 1939 novel suggests that this trauma is linked not only to Ingelram's torturous ordeal after his initial capture but also to a subsequent crisis of

conscience because his assassination attempt was motivated by the Fascists' murder of his fiancée. *Rogue Male* therefore concludes with its central character's pondering whether the "ethics of revenge" are the same as the "ethics of war" (181). *Rogue Justice* expands the rationale for his crusade:

> What had begun as a personal vendetta became my response to all those guilty of hurling a civilized world into war, of murdering political opponents, of enslaving defenceless [*sic*] workers, and above all of herding into slaughter-houses a helpless, warm-hearted, gifted people whose religion and customs slightly differed from the national norm. My use of arms was as justifiable as if I had been under military command. (39)

This retrospective vindication in Household's sequel erases Ingelram's earlier qualms about his motivation by invoking the atrocities perpetrated by Adolf Hitler. Two of the author's later thrillers delve further into *Rogue Male*'s pattern of *dédoublement*. Both *Watcher in the Shadows* (1960) and *Dance of the Dwarfs* (1968), which I shall discuss inductively because neither is widely read, develop this theme in divergent ways, but at their core is a comparable fascination with the phenomenon of "occult sympathy" (*Watcher* 223).

The phrase signifies a hidden and unforeseen affinity, or sense of kinship, that develops between hunter and hunted in the course of their pursuit of one another. Its import becomes especially interesting in light of Household's most definitive statement about his fiction in a midlife autobiography titled *Against the Wind* (1958). After reporting that the sole charge brought against him by reviewers six years earlier involved his "searching out and elaborating the exotic," the novelist writes: "It is true that I often take my subjects from war or very foreign parts or Iron Curtain politics or any situation which will allow me to show individual man and woman in direct relationship—that is to say, with no protection but their own character or integrity—to unfamiliar circumstance" (230-31). "Character" and "integrity," however, are by no means fixed attributes. As *Watcher in the Shadows* and *Dance of the Dwarfs* demonstrate, the postulate of "self" may mask fissures which, under the pressure of physical danger, can lead to

anthropological atavism. In this regard an observation by critic LeRoy L. Panek is relevant. Noting that by the mid-1950s Household increasingly distanced himself from the oversimplified thematic oppositions of Buchan's adventure sagas, Panek remarks that "Household never broke Buchan's grip on his fiction" in the rendering of plot action (161). More so than any of Household's other novels, *Watcher in the Shadows* attests to this Buchanesque influence on a story that culminates in a scenario of doubling between erstwhile foes.

Watcher in the Shadows: Mirrored Antitypes

Household's eighth thriller, as both Gina Macdonald and James Purdon have observed, reverses the conceptual design of *Rogue Male* by having a French aristocrat named Raoul Philippe Humphrey, Vicomte de Saint Sabas, stalk Charles Dennim, whom St. Sabas mistakenly believes to have been responsible for his wife's death at Buchenwald. Initially these antagonists are portrayed as radically different from one another. Unlike his monomaniacal adversary, identified only in the novel's final fifty pages, forty-three-year-old Dennim, formerly an Austrian count and spy for Great Britain at the infamous concentration camp where St. Sabas's wife died, has been leading a sequestered life as a zoologist whose primary field of research is the red squirrel. Meanwhile his aggrieved opponent has been consumed by an obsession with exacting blood vengeance.

Dennim's peaceful existence is shattered on the morning of 20 May 1955 when a bomb explodes at his London residence, killing the postman who delivered the package. Disinclined to rely on police investigation of the case because of "the vulgarity of crime and its publicity" (12), he contacts "an old friend in the Ministry of Justice at Vienna" who had been his supervisor in "the private war which we carried on under instructions from London" (15). From this source Dennim learns that his assailant has already tracked down and summarily executed three Buchenwald war criminals. Household's protagonist then communicates with his World War II handler in Eng-

land, Colonel Ian Parrow, who reluctantly assists his friend in trying to flush out the unknown watcher.

Despite this profiling of Dennim and St. Sabas as antitypes, Household's novel makes clear even in its beginning that they share more than either yet recognizes. For his part Dennim opens the narrative by saying, "I look back on my course of action as lunacy; and yet at the time it seemed the only way out. Pride, probably. One can never quite escape from one's ancestors" (3). Shortly thereafter he comments:

> And now I must confess my secret. Even today I hate to put it on paper. Yet I suppose every one of us, whatever the nationality, who fought without a uniform or, worse still, in the enemy's, must have memories which defile him and from which he shudders away. Perhaps the aristocratic tradition of my family made it harder for me than most. (19)

Much later we learn that St. Sabas, roughly the same age as Dennim, had been a leader in the Resistance during World War II who, under the cryptonym of Savarin, "carried on his own private war against the German occupiers" (196). Both men, in other words, are linked not only by their principled opposition to Fascism but also by the burdensome legacy of class descent and its prescribed code of conduct. The stage is thus set for their climactic one-on-one confrontation.

First, however, *Watcher in the Shadows* evokes a milieu that harks back to the Edwardian era, betraying Buchan's impact on his successor's fiction. While focusing on the opponents' preliminary skirmishes in the west Midlands countryside to which Dennim has retreated, Household delineates character types and gender relationships unmistakably associated with a bygone time. Foremost among the secondary figures are Aunt Georgina, a fiercely independent woman in her sixties with whom the protagonist has been living quietly in London ("We were both survivors from another age," remarks her nephew [10]); retired Admiral Peregrine Cunobel, a former suitor of Georgina ("He was an arbitrary old charmer whom long years at sea had preserved from most modern thinking" [56]) who presides unofficially over the Cotswolds village of Chipping Marton; and graphic artist Benita Gillon, daughter of a local vicar, who bridges the novel's two

settings of country versus city as a bucolic "wood nymph" employed by London advertising agencies (130). In addition to several rustics who round out the region's social hierarchy, this ensemble frames the protagonist's attempts to lure his adversary outside England's metropolitan capital. Household's inclusion of these personae allows him to develop a romantic sub-plot involving couples from two generations, Aunt Georgina/Admiral Cunobel and Charles Dennim/Benita Gillon, through whom *Watcher in the Shadows* limns an older set of cultural values that presumably epitomize an ideal. Charles's growing love for Benita, twenty years his junior, also serves as an index to his difference from St. Sabas, psychologically crippled as the latter is by the loss of his wife during the Holocaust.

All the while Household concentrates on the battle of wits and tactical maneuvering between his main adversaries. In this contest Dennim's stalker seems at the outset to have the advantage because of his ability to pass himself off as a British squire, but the protagonist eventually outflanks his opponent. In the novel's first section titled "Burning Bright," which alludes to William Blake's poem "The Tyger," former spymaster Colonel Parrow advises Dennim that "'If one is going to tie out a fat goat for a tiger, it is essential to let the tiger think he has found it for himself.'" Not fond of this trope for its being "too typically and heartily English" (26), the narrator proposes another:

> What had started as Ian's crude goat and tiger was now beginning to have more resemblance to the German Intelligence chess, in which a player never sees his opponent's men at all. He is told by a referee when a move is impossible and when he has taken or lost a piece. From that he must construct his own picture of the squares which are occupied and the pattern occupying them. (61-62)

Dennim's preference of metaphors suggests that he wishes not simply to avoid the peril of being staked out as unsportsmanlike bait but also, in keeping with his ancestral code, to regard the challenge as one that involves imagination and established rules. Ironically, then, he elects

to rely on instinct rather than intellection, remarking that "I give all this analysis of my thoughts as accurately as I can; but at the time my approach to the problem far more resembled the wordless pictures in an animal brain than the calculations of a computer" (47). Such atavistic reversion is not unusual in Household's fiction, as *Dance of the Dwarfs* graphically demonstrates. In the finale of *Watcher in the Shadows* it surfaces when the paired combatants, each embracing the medieval paradigm of chess, decide to settle their differences via a duel that only superficially formalizes a far older ritual of Darwinian predation.

The culminating struggle between Dennim and St. Sabas occurs after their face-to-face meeting outside a village inn where, with loaded pistols trained on one another, they agree to reenact a time-honored tradition. "Whatever century we were in," comments the protagonist/narrator in a curious aside, "both of us were in it" (205), as though suggesting the anachronistic resurgence of their aristocratic past's protocol for resolving peer conflict. Knowing that he "could never kill Savarin in cold blood" (197), Dennim stipulates a plan whereby each man will take up his starting position near a hilltop barn and commence the manhunt. After Household painstakingly recounts their feints and ploys in "the end game of this blind chess" (208), Dennim recognizes the emergence of an "occult sympathy between us," which he attributes to "intense concentration upon the other's mind" (223). Their "true duel" thus fulfills what is required by a shared class legacy, in the course of which transpires an almost telepathic doubling, but otherwise the standoff amounts to a "savage hunting" (226, 225).

Shortly before the end game reaches its bloody climax, Household inserts an odd hallucination by the protagonist/narrator that reveals a gendered gap in the text. Although earlier he had maintained that the prospect of a future life with Benita Gillon sustained him in his fight to the death with St. Sabas, Dennim records a countervailing *mise en scène* after both men have suffered multiple gunshot wounds:

> For me the night returned. I was hunting through dark woods, trying to find Benita *or sometimes hunting Benita herself with an appalling sense of guilt which I tried to persuade myself I had no need to feel*. There were policemen in Gestapo uniforms, though I knew they were British, and *the forest extended over the whole sphere of the world so that there was never any way out of it and never any more light to be*. (236; my emphasis)

One hesitates to read too much into this passage, yet its first sentence reverberates with anti-feminist overtones traceable to the Edwardian era when the New Woman and the suffrage movement were arousing a misogynistic backlash in some quarters.[5] The segments I have italicized suggest that the price of masculinist warfare, albeit governed by the rules of chess, is victimization of the female principle and, by extension, the apocalyptic end of all normative human relationships. So construed, I think, the brief interpolation indicates not Household's own views regarding women but rather some of the cultural bias he inherited via his sentimental attachment to Buchan's era. Another and equally valid way of interpreting the excerpt, however, is to see it as an extension of his indebtedness to Blake's famous poem, the first two incantatory lines of which are "Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright / In the forests of the night." The symbolic association of "forests" and "night" with the primordial, more pronounced in *Dance of the Dwarfs*, suggests that in *Watcher in the Shadows* Household is using the image to signify a barbarism that threatens to reclaim the "whole sphere of the world."

True to both modern expectations of successful romance fiction and his thriller's formative literary influence, *Watcher in the Shadows* ends with Dennim's professing his love to Benita Gillon while also reciting his aristocratic commitment to a dying peer. "[T]he evidence of collusion between St. Sabas and myself was suspicious" (246), asserts the narrator in a multivalent statement. Whatever we make of this admission by one of Household's two mirrored antitypes, the novel closes with the antagonists' gripping each other's right hand and reaffirming their exclusive bond of parity. "'No one,' St. Sabas muttered. 'No one knows enough. Only Dennim,'" to which the latter responds, "'I have always understood, Savarin'" (248).

Dance of the Dwarfs: Atavistic Doubling

Eight years later, after three intervening novels—*Thing to Love* (1963), *Olura* (1965), and *The Courtesy of Death* (1967)—that met with desultory reviews, Household struck out in a bold new direction with *Dance of the Dwarfs*. Although book-jacket copy is notoriously inflated, the publisher's blurb came close to an accurate assessment by averring that in his twelfth production Household had "rivaled (some say surpassed) his own best-known books," including *Rogue Male* and *Watcher in the Shadows*. The promotional piece then went on to claim that in *Dance of the Dwarfs*, "as never before, he explores the mute, almost mystical collaboration between the hunter and the hunted, the victim's response to pursuit, and its translation into the human emotion of sheer animal panic." Despite the copywriter's penchant for sensationalist rhetoric, laughably evident when he or she warns that "THIS NOVEL SHOULD NOT BE READ AFTER DARK," the appraisal again is not too far off the mark. At a time when Konrad Lorenz's *On Aggression* (1966) and Desmond Morris's *The Naked Ape* (1967) were widely discussed bestsellers, Household once more plumbed the phenomenon of "occult sympathy," but this time from an unsettling anthropological angle that left far behind the Buchanesque cast of *Rogue Male* and *Watcher in the Shadows*.

The shift manifests itself in part by Household's choice of a protagonist and narrational strategy. At age thirty-three Dr. Owen Dawnay, an Argentine agronomist educated in England who, having "opted for British nationality," worked as a field researcher for the "British Tropical Agricultural Mission" in Colombia (27, 8), suddenly disappears in late May of 1966. Upon his skeleton's being discovered, along with that of a young female, at his compound twelve miles distant from Santa Eulalia in the border region between grasslands and tropical forest, he is assumed to have fallen prey to guerilla revolutionaries affiliated with the Colombian National Liberation Army. Six months later a metal box containing Dawnay's handwritten diary, which constitutes Household's first-person narrative, is delivered to the publisher of his monograph titled *Fodder Plants of the New World*.

Dawnay's motive for compiling this confessional text, declares its isolated scribe at the start, is "to marshal the facts of my relationship to my environment and compel myself to think about them." Informing this goal is an existential "questioning of the self" driven by some "background sense of insecurity—well, not exactly of insecurity but of something unfinished—which I am unable to analyze" (7). This disquieting intimation haunts Dawnay in the "no[-]man's[-]land" he inhabits (8), soon becoming the novel's recurrent metaphor of a metaphysical "blank spot" (11). Then, coincidentally it would seem, the scientist learns of ghostly presences in the adjacent tracts of primeval forest that indigenous residents of Santa Eulalia refer to as "duendes," and he is drawn into investigating the mystery.

At the same time as Dr. Dawnay becomes increasingly intrigued by such reports, he expatiates further on the yawning chasm in his personal life, one that he describes as an all-pervading sense of *néant*:

> We are able, when in good spirits, to preserve the self in a solid piece; but if anything disturbs this integrity we expand into nothingness. Alcohol is a cure, and the llaneros [grasslands inhabitants] give themselves to it as I suspect they do to a woman: very quickly and then to sleep. Myself, when [...] my sheer inability to extract straight answers to straight questions [...] gets me down, I feel that the gift of speech is useless and wish that I could revel in the nothingness like my ancestor, the running ape, when he first broke out from the crowded darkness of the trees. (50-51)

This admission by one of Western civilization's discontents suggests that Household's deracinated protagonist has recognized an inescapable void in his day-to-day existence despite his earlier decision to lose himself in the Colombian hinterland. When Dawnay almost simultaneously finds that a fifteen-year-old Peruvian castoff named Chucha has been sent his way by anti-guerilla loyalist Captain Valera and that his compound is under siege by unidentified creatures from the neighboring forest, he becomes more alert to external danger. Meanwhile, in the safety of his walled compound, Dawnay revels in erotic fulfillment: "For civilized man—if I still am—it is a refreshing experience to be sexually and aesthetically satisfied, yet not emotionally involved. Love, no. Tenderness, yes. No concern for the future

beyond a firm intention to preserve her [Chucha] as she is" (167). Clearly operative here is a mythic paradigm of the "Noble Savage,"[6] no less disturbing because it involves the Europeanized Dawnay's sexual fascination with a Third World girl less than half his age.

Counterbalancing this regressive idyll, however, is the protagonist's curiosity about the forest denizens that, shortly after Chucha's arrival, have breached his estancia's outer perimeter of defense. "[N]o longer interested in fortifying [him]self against a blank spot which isn't there" (69), Dawnay unaccountably determines that he must teach his young consort to ride horseback in order that she might appreciate the milieu's "horizons" beyond the "oasis" of their outpost (75). In these joint excursions he gradually guides Chucha closer toward the forest, which according to local legend is rumored to be the sinister haunt of either pygmies or dwarfs. Now unconstrained by his official duties as a researcher for the British Tropical Agricultural Mission, Dr. Dawnay, when not accompanying his Peruvian mistress on these forays, elects to probe the surrounding glades on his own, impelled as he is by the prospect of becoming "the discoverer of Homo Dawnayensis" (87). This aspiration, given the vanity of how he would designate a hitherto unknown species, suggests not only that he has implicitly anthropomorphized such creatures but also that he conceives of them as atavistic precursors of humankind. Such doubling is borne out when Household's protagonist finds himself drawn irresistibly into the forest's deeper recesses, where Dawnay becomes the hunter committed to tracking down a primordial variant of himself.

What the adventurer actually finds, however, is a grotesque parody of his expectations. Far from being even remotely anthropoid, the duendes, when Dawnay at last confronts a pair of them near a swamp, are not fanciful "little people" (143), as earlier he had affirmed (see 139), but rather vampiric predators that dispatch their prey by biting down on a victim's medulla oblongata with powerful fangs before lapping up the blood. In outward appearance, concludes the taxonomically minded researcher, "they belong to the family of the Mustelidae, not the Viverridae" (180), but, Latin nomenclature notwithstanding, his scientific detachment soon gives way to abject terror. After killing

one mustelid and fatally wounding its mate, Dawnay is stalked to his very door by other such duendes. If previously the protagonist/narrator wished that he "could revel in [...] nothingness like my ancestor, the running ape, when he first broke out from the crowded darkness of the trees," he now recognizes an altogether different anthropology that reduces him to being "a connoisseur and analyst of fear" (191). In the novel's final stretch, just as Dawnay is planning to leave Colombia and marry Chucha, both he and she are besieged at their estancia, the agronomist who once described himself as a "hunting ape" realizing under these circumstances that he is merely "a hunted mammal" (142, 207). The circle comes full round as the narrative pattern of doubling completes itself, but Household gives nothing away. *Dance of the Dwarfs* ends in mid-sentence as Dawnay rushes to defend his compound's threshold.

Before the "intimacy" and "curious companionship" of his several encounters with the forest-dwelling mustelids (254), Dr. Owen Dawnay was amused by Santa Eulalians' superstitious fears of duendes, later inferring that "the power of myth is vaster than I ever imagined" (230). However, when he repeatedly raises the subject with the villagers' shaman, an evasive man named Joaquín, the outsider receives only cryptic responses that fail to satisfy his need for demystification. One of their dialogues nevertheless seems to shed some light:

> I told him that I had seen his duendes and that they were solid as ourselves, though I could not yet put a name to them.
> "How do we know what we are, we men? So how can we tell if duendes are the same?"
> He kicked a log, exactly like Doctor Johnson refuting Berkeley, but drawing a different conclusion.
> "Is my foot? Is the log? I only know what my toe feels. When we are afraid, that is the duende. That is what a duende is." (166-67)

Although Dr. Dawnay is unsure of having translated accurately Joaquín's replies in Spanish, he goes on to paraphrase their gist as meaning that "The only reality is [...] fear" (167). Later he echoes the same exact point (see 191), leading the reader to believe that something like it is the thematic undercurrent of Household's twelfth

novel. Behind the often blithe assumptions of post-Enlightenment rationalism, he suggests, lies an equivocal fascination with savagery.

Conclusion

In this essay I have focused on the motif of "occult sympathy" in *Watcher in the Shadows* and *Dance of the Dwarfs* as it relates to the thriller's emergence as a popular genre. Implicit has been an argument that Household's most successful fiction of this kind dramatizes situations in which, under circumstances of extreme fear, the concepts of autonomy, integrity, and self are undermined by discovery of a preternatural affinity between hunter and hunted. The visceral thrill elicited by such literature derives from its audience's being vicariously positioned in an imaginary borderland where we, like the protagonists in both of these Household novels, must come to terms with some form of abjection.

Although scholarship on this genre is relatively scant, two early studies—Ralph Harper's *The World of the Thriller* (1969) and Jerry Palmer's *Thrillers: Genesis and Structure of a Popular Genre* (1978)—provide illuminating theoretical frameworks for clarifying the trope of "occult sympathy" more fully in connection with Household's revamping the Buchanesque tale of adventure and straightforward ratiocination. The two critics' different approaches are instructive and, when overlaid as templates, reveal more than one might expect about the dynamics of *Watcher in the Shadows* and *Dance of the Dwarfs*.

Harper presents a "phenomenology [...] of reading thrillers" that concentrates on their "existential themes" and the "psychology of the reader's involvement" (ix, viii). Among his operating premises is the idea that, "[i]f thriller literature is typical of the twentieth century, it is because of its content[,] not its form. We do not usually think of thrillers as examples of new or experimental writing" (8). That caveat established, Harper goes on to propose that thrillers constitute a new "literature of boundary situations" wherein "millions of us meet

ourselves at a level we are at pains to deny at other times" (51, x). Terror, not merely fear, stems from the "experience of being hunted" or of "being stalked or [...] watched" (55, 56). Mentioning *Rogue Male* in passing, he adds that "[t]he fictional subject of the thriller differs from the heroes of other adventures not only because he is both hunter and hunted, but [also] because of a transformation of identity that must take place when he elects to take on evil single[-]handed" (114). This transformation, posits Harper, entails "the unhinging of the one thing in human existence that we can count on[—]namely, the central nature and stability of the self" (114-15), reinforcing our recognition of a putatively core self's tenuous nature.

Nine years after Harper's assessment, reflecting a then current (though short-lived) shift in literary theory, Palmer published a structuralist analysis that began by asserting the following: "Thrillers have their own morality. It is a morality [...] of unequivocal self-assertion tempered only by an entirely personal sense of decency. Sometimes even that minimum restraint is lacking, and then it is the morality of the jungle" (5). Palmer's exposition is often frustrating because it favors the *noir* crime novels of Raymond Chandler and the James Bond potboilers of Ian Fleming as leading examples of the genre, but he nonetheless advances the insight that "individualism is fundamental to the thriller" (67). In the course of discussing the form's sociology, he demonstrates that it projects the legacy of a debate harking back to John Stuart Mill and Thomas Hobbes about the threatening import of "men's competitiveness" (163). By the late nineteenth century, argues Palmer, this difference of opinion had been filtered through Herbert Spencer's notion of "social Darwinism" to lay the groundwork for a concept of "competitive individualism" that became the modern thriller's inspiration and field of literary scrutiny (see 153-80).

How, then, does this pair of critical models pertain to Geoffrey Household's *Watcher in the Shadows* and *Dance of the Dwarfs*? For one thing, we can hypothesize that the backward-glancing elements of the former novel, including its Buchanesque invocation of an Edwardian ethos, may reflect a sentimental nostalgia for some supposedly simpler age than the post-World War II world. At the same time, cultivat-

ing the characteristic *frisson* of terror associated with the Gothic *Schauerroman* as an antecedent of the thriller, Household discerns a dark competitiveness, Palmer's "morality of the jungle," that cannot be superseded or annulled and in fact is more pronounced than ever in modernity. The otherwise paranoid "experience of being hunted," of "being stalked or [...] watched," as Harper states, then becomes definitive of the contemporary anti-hero's confrontation with the self as a simulacrum, which in turn fuels the reversionary mechanism of "occult sympathy." To be connected, however fleetingly, with the primordial, after all, is preferable to a nothingness that masquerades as a suspect individualism. Such, intuits Household in these overlooked novels from the 1960s that build on his early success with *Rogue Male*, is the bleak situation faced by latter-day reincarnations of Raymond Ingelram in their pursuit of authenticity.

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NOTES

[1]For a further discussion of this issue, see my "Confession, Class, and Conscience in Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male*."

[2]During the 1960s and 1970s there appeared numerous scholarly discussions of the three nineteenth-century novels I cite. Usually they invoked Gothicism's literary history and Sigmund Freud's construct of the unconscious, although sometimes one can detect the imprint of R. D. Laing's "anti-psychiatric" writings. See, for example, Masao Miyoshi's *The Divided Self: A Perspective on the Literature of the Victorians*. Another useful source, published just when revisionists Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva were coming to the fore, is Elizabeth Wright's *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice*.

[3]I have explored these points more fully in "Eric Ambler's Revisionist Thrillers: *Epitaph for a Spy*, *A Coffin for Dimitrios*, and *The* Intercom *Conspiracy*."

[4]Richard Usborne coined the term "Clubland heroes" in his 1953 book of the same title. For more on what the descriptor signifies, see David A. T. Stafford's "Spies and Gentlemen: The Birth of the British Spy Novel, 1893-1914."

[5]See Ann Heilmann and Lucy Delap's six-volume compendium of primary documents titled *Anti-Feminism in Edwardian Literature*. Their sixty-page introduction to Volume 1 is particularly illuminating.

[6]By way of textual support for this claim, Dawnay records the following about Chucha: "She has the innocence and goodness of the savage. Well, more the animal than the savage. The complicated mind of the savage is repulsive to anyone but an anthropologist. Chucha is all simplicity. I suppose that's what I mean" (68).

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Connotations
Vol. 22.2 (2012/2013)

Epigraphs and Absences: A Comment on Rajeev S. Patke's "Ambiguity and Ethics: Fictions of Governance in Geoffrey Hill's *Mercian Hymns*"*

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The supplying of contexts is a basic task of literary criticism and textual interpretation. A context may be selected to demonstrate a possible influence, or to indicate a synchronic affinity, or to rely on the atemporal force of analogy or typology. This is valid not only for the citation of one poet to elucidate another, but for contexts of whatever order. Thus, apart from specifically literary influences, critics may cite philosophers, scientists, psychologists or experts from any other discursive discipline: for example, Galileo in relation to Milton (influence), Einstein in relation to Yeats (synchronic affinity), or Nietzsche in relation to Shakespeare (analogy). These three "uses of context" may not represent all possible motives for citation, but they surely cover the greatest number of actual instances in textual interpretation and criticism, whether classical, Biblical or modern.

The literary text has, at least since Homer, incorporated citations on which it relies for support; less obviously, it can suggest preferred contexts through the device of allusion, illuminated by Christopher Ricks in *Allusion to the Poets* (2002). Yet the poet can cite or allude only to those works which must be reckoned as falling within the sphere of influence. A poet cannot cite a contemporary of whom she is unaware, nor a later writer of whom no awareness is mortally possible. In turn, the critic's explication of a literary text will rely heavily on whatever contexts are supplied by or may be detected within that text: whether

*Reference: Rajeev S. Patke, "Ambiguity and Ethics: Fiction and Governance in Geoffrey Hill's *Mercian Hymns*," *Connotations* 20.2-3 (2010/2011): 253-71. For the original article as well as contributions to this debate, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debpatke02023.htm>.

citation or allusion, these are to be acknowledged as "influences." The search for synchronic affinities, or for analogies that ignore temporal sequence, will usually be undertaken only where there is a shortage of incorporated citation, of what we might call "intrinsic contexture," or when those contexts have been thoroughly explored and exploited.

Is an epigraph to be regarded as a citation incorporated within a text? Though it stands apart it must be seen to be attached to the text. Yet in remaining apart it can be absolved of responsibility for either its theme or its argument. The epigraph falls on a spectrum anywhere between the axiomatic and the cryptic. If it presents itself as an axiomatic truth, the reader will thereby admit it as an initiation to the argument; and reckon it an argument likely to demonstrate or confirm the truth stated in the epigraph. However, the reader may take the epigraph not as axiomatic but as cryptic, or gnomic; in this case the reader would be enticed to move into the text in order to solve the riddle posed by the epigraph. (There are numerous riddling epigraphs, too often passed over in awkward uncertainty; that to Nabokov's *Pale Fire*—concerning Hodge the cat—remains unsolved, despite the admirable epilogue to Jeffrey Meyers's *Samuel Johnson: The Struggle* 457-63.) In the initial taking of the epigraph each of these extremes has its risk: the axiomatic offers the conclusion without the trouble of reading the text, while the cryptic may be merely off-putting.

As with literary texts, so with criticism, where the epigraph is often set to do the critic's work. Preceding Rajeev S. Patke's argument about Geoffrey Hill's *Mercian Hymns*, and standing apart from it, are these words attributed to Simone de Beauvoir: "Is the ethical concern, even in its realistic and concrete form, detrimental to the interests of action?" One's initial response, a form of resistance, might be to ask whether this differs much from Hamlet's "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all" (3.1.83). And, responding further, we could ask what might be meant by the "realistic and concrete form" of ethical concern? What would distinguish the realistic or the concrete from action itself? And why go to a figure as apparently antithetical to

Geoffrey Hill as is Beauvoir to find an idea that is hardly unique to her?

As the epigraph to an essay on Geoffrey Hill, the mildest words ascribed to Simone de Beauvoir will, simply by proximity, be charged with provocation. Are we to see the relationship as one of influence, or as one of synchronic affinity? By both influence and affinity one must of course allow for the antithetical, not only the accordant; for the riddling as well as the explicit. The essay's opening sentence does not resolve our doubts, as it might have done by asserting that Beauvoir has been an important though neglected figure for Hill's thinking. Patke's essay does begin with a general claim, that writers more than philosophers are alert to the fact that imaginative literature is responsive to the ethical sensitivities of what Martha Nussbaum calls "the lived deliberative situation." The phrase "writers more than philosophers" itself begs the question as to which of these categories might hold the figure of Simone de Beauvoir. Or any number of others: are writers so easily distinguished from philosophers? The name of Martha Nussbaum has been introduced into the text of the essay even before the epigraph has been addressed. Are Nussbaum's words to stand as a sort of counter-epigraph, a negotiated stance of reconciliation: not the ethical *or* the decisive, but that which is at once lived *and* deliberative? Yet the two citations, with their specific concern with action and ethics, need not be antithetical; they are not markedly differentiated.

At this point Patke promises to connect the two epigraphs with the poem under consideration: "A singular instance of such alertness is provided by Geoffrey Hill's *Mercian Hymns* (1971)" (254). We may note that the words of Beauvoir were published some twenty years before Hill's volume, while those of Nussbaum appeared some twenty years after. *Mercian Hymns*, Patke writes, "dramatizes an imaginary interplay of voices" (254), yet a reader will have observed that the voices of Simone de Beauvoir and Martha Nussbaum have anticipated the drama, have been solicited already by epigraph and citation.

To this in itself there need be no objection: it is the task and the prerogative of the critic of any text to supply a context. And, as noted, critics tend to be inventive and far-fetching in this matter to the degree that the literary text is lacking attached or internal citation, "intrinsic contexture"; or to the extent that such allusions and citations have been thoroughly worked on, and out. Is this the case with Hill's poem? *Mercian Hymns* comes to us replete with its own contexts, not least the extensive epigraph taken from an essay by C. H. Sisson. This may not be entirely consonant with either Beauvoir or Nussbaum, yet to any reader of *Mercian Hymns* the words of the latter will inevitably be seen as commenting on those of Sisson; and insofar as Sisson's words go quite unmentioned in Patke's essay, the reader may even reckon them to have been judged inadequate or redundant. C. H. Sisson (1914-2003) was an admired poet who was also an eminent civil servant, a thinker to whom the relation between ethics and action was of deep and daily concern: "His study of *The Spirit of British Administration* (1959) remains a classic exposition of the underlying principles of public service in Britain." Thus the obituary in the *Daily Telegraph* of 8 September 2003. The title of the essay from which the epigraph is drawn is not given by Hill, nor indeed, as Hill acknowledges, can the source be easily located: "The epigraph is taken from the privately-printed *Essays* by C. H. Sisson, ©1967 by C. H. Sisson, and is reprinted by kind permission of the author."

The epigraph to *Mercian Hymns* is reprinted here not by anybody's kind permission, but in the interests of scholarship and according to the rules governing fair use:

> The conduct of government rests upon the same foundation and encounters the same difficulties as the conduct of private persons: that is, as to its object and justification, for as to its methods, or technical part, there is all the difference which separates the person from the group, the man acting on behalf of himself from the man acting on behalf of many. The technical part, in government as in private conduct, is now the only one which is publicly or at any rate generally recognised, as if by this evasion the more difficult part of the subject, which relates to ends, could be avoided. Upon "the law of nature and the law of revelation," Blackstone said, "depend all human laws." This quaint language, which would at once be derided if it were in-

> troduced now into public discussion, conceals a difficulty which is no less ours than it was our ancestors'.

Mercian Hymns concerns Offa, a ruler of the West Midlands in the late eighth century; its epigraph is drawn from a living civil servant who is also a poet, a thinker explicitly and intricately concerned with the relations between government and private persons, between public action and private conduct, between means and ends. Implicitly, Sisson's concern is also with the ruler and the ruled, and with the ways of executing (or acting on) the decisions of a sovereign authority. Sisson's words are as pertinent to Hill's theme as those of any moral or political philosopher, or indeed of any writer; given their status as epigraph they should be accorded the privilege of the primary context, a context that though detached by a certain expanse of blank paper is properly inseparable from the text. Not least, one would suggest, should this epigraph be acknowledged in an essay that goes under a title containing the phrase "Fictions of Governance."

Given Hill's lengthy epigraph from C. H. Sisson, and passages from other authors cited in the notes, there is little obvious need to set forth such contexts as may be supplied by Beauvoir or Nussbaum. *Mercian Hymns* itself holds rich intrinsic contexture: rich but by no means yet worked out, whether as a seam or a crux is worked. Moreover, there is in Patke's essay no mention of the poet's note on *Mercian Hymns* in Hill's lengthy "Acknowledgments," on its historical foundations and the liberties taken therewith: "I have a duty to acknowledge that the authorities cited in these notes might properly object to their names being used in so unscholarly and fantastic a context." That itself raises a question not only of scholarship but of courtesy: like a guest, a text may be offended or dishonoured by proximity to another. This is the question that might be raised when one sees an epigraph from Simone de Beauvoir leading us into an essay on Geoffrey Hill. (Let it be clear that we have nothing against Simone de Beauvoir. Were Geoffrey Hill to be cited as epigraph to an essay on *The Second Sex*, one's response might be similarly querulous: the invoking of contexts is a matter of courtesy as well as of argument.)

Hill's own notes to *Mercian Hymns* are predominantly of an archaeological and even antiquarian cast. Those notes survive in some of the re-printings of "Mercian Hymns" within diverse *Collected* and *Selected Poems*, though seldom when single "hymns" have been included in anthologies. Patke lists only a single source of textual authority for *Mercian Hymns*: Hill's *New and Collected Poems 1952-1992*, of 1992. This work is unavailable to me, so I do not know whether it contains the four pages of "Acknowledgments" at the end of *Mercian Hymns*; in a volume I happen to own, these are fitted without loss into three pages of "Notes and Acknowledgments" (201-03) at the back of the Penguin *Collected Poems* of 1985. (*New and Collected Poems 1952-1992* is available online, but some pages are omitted; such online texts certainly have their uses, but they cannot be relied upon for precise bibliographical data.) The Notes or Acknowledgments seem to turn up here and there, yet the epigraph is—to the best of my knowledge—nowhere to be found outside of the volume *Mercian Hymns* published by André Deutsch in 1971 and subsequently reprinted two or three times; as a separate volume *Mercian Hymns* has not been re-issued at all since c. 1980.

Late in 1922 W. B. Yeats wrote to T. S. Eliot: "I find *The Waste Land* very beautiful, but here and there are passage I do not understand—four or five lines" (22). Eliot responded in January 1923 that the poem, read by Yeats in the first issue of the *Criterion*, would shortly be appearing "as a book, with notes" (*Letters of T. S. Eliot* 22). The most famously annotated of all English poems began its printed life without notes; it is hard for us to remember that detail, or to imagine the predicament of Yeats and the other readers of the *Criterion*. For the notes are now not just the immediate context for *The Waste Land*: they are a part of the poem, all but intrinsically so, and no critic would venture an account of "the poem itself" that entirely ignored the notes. (The poem has never to my knowledge been reprinted, even in an anthology, without its notes.)

By contrast to the publishing history of *The Waste Land*, *Mercian Hymns* began as a volume laden with a panoply of epigraph and notes yet subsequently it has, mostly, gone without them. This sets up an

interesting predicament for the critic. Is it not a question of academic manners, or scholarly decorum, that C. H. Sisson be accorded "contextual precedence" over Simone de Beauvoir, Martha Nussbaum or any other writer not cited by the poet by way of intrinsic contexture? Rajeev Patke might respond that the presence of Sisson's epigraph in early editions of *Mercian Hymns* is now of merely bibliographical or antiquarian significance; its non-attachment to "Mercian Hymns" since c.1980 might suggest that Geoffrey Hill has ceased to consider it of importance for his poem. One might counter with alternative hypotheses: that Sisson had withdrawn his kind permission, or was not willing to extend it to the various *Collected* and *Selected Poems*; or, most probably, that such a lengthy epigraph was deemed by another publisher to take up too much space. Even this, the most innocent of available explanations, bears the drastic implication that an epigraph is disposable. Imagine any of Eliot's poems appearing in an anthology shorn of its epigraphs. The textual history of Hill's sequence—from *Mercian Hymns* to "Mercian Hymns" (as unitalicised the poem should properly be styled when it no longer fills its own volume)—challenges a common assumption about the epigraph, that though separate from a text it ought to remain attached. What, then, is the status of an abandoned epigraph?

There are other matters to be discussed in Patke's essay—plenty of points and words to comment on—but my attention has been entirely taken up with what must be reckoned a serious textual anomaly and its consequences for textual scholarship and literary criticism: not "fictions" but "protocols of scholarly governance." On the one hand, there's a familiar and deeply conservative dictum: all literary scholarship should have recourse to the earliest printings of any literary text. Against this, reception history would insist that the more extended readership of Hill's poetry has been brought about by easily accessible volumes of *Collected* and *Selected Poems*. Reception history is certainly not hostile to the idea of a variorum edition, one that would trace all changes in the text from the first edition through (so convention usually enjoins) to the last edition seen to press by the author. However, reception history would want to go much further, to

investigate how a poem reaches readers through selections and anthologies, without any limitation being conferred by the termination of authorial intention. Reception history can make for a fascinating scholarly narrative, but it is likely to remain always outside the frame of a variorum edition, at least as a printed volume: digital possibilities are not to be circumscribed. Even in the most restricted terms—limited to what the poet saw, oversaw or overlooked—a variorum edition is ambitious in its elaborations, and needs to make a burden of precision.

The burden of textual precision is not easily reconciled with a recording of popular access, of all the jacket illustrations and other paratextual elements by which a text is mediated and marketed. Paperback editions may be easily and cheaply available, but even scholars are restricted in the number of variorum editions each one owns, as in the number of Collected and Selecteds that might be available. That a variorum edition is likely to be available only in academic libraries does not pose a problem for academic critics. What does pose a problem is the expectation that academic critics should have easy access to first editions. Given the rise of Hill's reputation, there can be very few academic libraries that hold a printing of *For the Unfallen* earlier than that of 1971, by which date the emendation to "In Memory of Jane Fraser" had been introduced. *For the Unfallen* was published by André Deutsch in 1959; second impression, 1960; third impression, with emended final stanza of "In Memory of Jane Fraser," 1971. On page 23 of the 1971 printing the poem bears the subscribed date "[1953-67]"; on p. [7] we read

> AUTHOR'S NOTE (1971). "In Memory of Jane Fraser," page 23, is here reprinted with the revised final stanza, as in the postscript to *King Log* (1968).

Curious readers may like to know that the unrevised stanza can be found in the easily available anthology *The New Poetry*, ed. A. Alvarez (Penguin, 1962).

Academic libraries seldom catch the first edition of the earliest publications of a writer later to be judged of the greatest importance, nor should they feel an obligation to do so. Given the establishing of

Hill's reputation after the publication of *King Log* (1968), academic libraries are unlikely to have a printing of *For the Unfallen* earlier than that of 1971. On the other hand, no academic library can be expected to acquire each re-printing and every popular edition of any poet's books or collected or selected works. (As mentioned, the availability of digital editions can do little for the bibliographical study of a poet in copyright, as the text is seldom made available in its entirety; protection currently extends to seventy-five years after the last manifestation of an author's intentions.) The textual needs of literary critics are usually but not always in accord with the acquisition policies of academic libraries. Most importantly, it is only the most important poets who are accorded the distinguishings of a variorum edition. A variorum displays a level of dedication befitting only the canonical, and any academic library in the humanities would reckon it obligatory to acquire such.

Through my own lived deliberative situation of figuring out how to respond to Rajeev Patke's essay, I must conclude with a confession of an uneasy sense that Patke has had access to "Mercian Hymns" only in *New and Collected Poems 1952-1992.* Given that there is not yet a variorum edition, nor a scholarly bibliography of Hill's work, this is hardly culpable. Yet one must now look afresh at Patke's epigraph from Simone de Beauvoir: her presence, though still provocative, can no longer be thought to have deliberately brushed aside C. H. Sisson, shouldered him out of view. The discourtesy, we might suppose, was not intended. Nor should any of us be discouraged by the anomalies, accidents and casualties of publishing history, nor need we feel inhibited by the constraints of the holdings of our academic libraries. Yet—and it is not to find fault that I have been moved to respond to Patke's essay, but to point out only this—there are unforeseen and often unwitting consequences for literary scholarship in those limitations, in the bibliographical blindnesses that can accompany critical insights. These ought not to be concealed, nor where evident should they be politely overlooked. Neither ethical scruple nor awkwardness between colleagues should be accounted detrimental to the interests of action: the action, here, of calling for an editorial enterprise worthy

of the most admired of living poets. Among much else, Patke's essay demonstrates the need for a variorum edition of the poems of Geoffrey Hill, epigraphs included and, where excluded, with each absence meticulously registered.

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