

Somebody Else's Poem: Poetry and Fiction in Rudyard Kipling's "Wireless" and "Dayspring Mishandled"^{1*}

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For any scholar interested in the relationship between poetry and narrative fiction, the oeuvre of Rudyard Kipling immediately suggests itself as an appropriate example. For not only was Kipling equally prolific and popular as a poet and as a writer of short fiction, he also tended to incorporate examples of his verse in editions of his short fiction in the form of mottoes or epigraphs. Although this is an aspect of his short story collections that is immediately visible at first glance, there exists no consensus in the academic community as to the status and purpose of this interpolated verse. In a new German book on Kipling, Christine Müller-Scholle argues that his method of introducing short stories by a brief poem or fragment from a poem is related to the practice of baroque emblem poetry. According to Müller-Scholle, while the motto of the story recalls the motto of the emblem poem, the visual image (*pictura*) corresponds to the text of the story itself, and the epigrammatic subscription is relegated to the reader who has to draw the necessary inferences concerning the relationship between motto and picture (cf. Müller-Scholle 28). It is certainly correct that, in Kipling, the task of unearthing the relationship between the epigraph and the story generally becomes the responsibility of the reader; but this is particularly hard because the relationship tends to vary from story to story. A scholarly article of average length is clearly not the place for an in-depth investigation of all of Kipling's stories and their accompanying poems. For this reason I will consider two stories, "Wireless" and "Dayspring Mishandled," that recommend them-

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debhesse0242.htm>>.

selves for analysis because they are not merely introduced by poems but also deal with the process of poetic production itself. Hence, besides the epigraph, we also find a poem “inside” the text, which—for want of a better term—I will be calling the “embedded” poem. A poem introducing the story (or following it), by contrast, will be termed an “accompanying” poem. The two stories I have selected are moderately well-known, but still a brief plot synopsis at the outset may prove helpful.

“Wireless” was first published in *Scribner’s Magazine* in 1902, probably prompted by the recent experiments in wireless telegraphy conducted by Guglielmo Marconi (cf. Stewart 108). The seminal idea for the story is the parallel between the (then) mysterious process of telegraphic communication and the (still) mysterious process of artistic inspiration. In the story, an early experiment in wireless telegraphy is conducted in the back room of a chemist’s shop. While the technical preparations are performed, the narrator has a conversation with Shaynor, the chemist’s assistant, who is young, tubercular and in love with a young woman named Fanny Brand, who comes in to take him for a short walk “by St. Agnes”—a first hint of the way the story is to develop. The narrator concocts a “medicine” for Shaynor’s cough from various drugs he finds in the shop, and the combined influences of drug, disease and love trigger off a fit of literary composition during which Shaynor produces some remarkable verse that the narrator recognizes as a more or less distorted version of Keats’s “The Eve of St. Agnes,” although Shaynor (as he later declares) has never read Keats. The narrator concludes that identical circumstances must indeed beget identical effects, and that Shaynor at least temporarily was a minor Keats. This process of imperfect transmission is mirrored by the purely technical experiment in telegraphy which also ends unsuccessfully.

While in “Wireless,” the presiding genius is Keats, in “Dayspring Mishandled” (first published in *McCall’s Magazine* in 1928), the revered dead poet is Chaucer. “Dayspring Mishandled” is the story of an elaborate hoax: Alured Castorley and James Andrew Manallace,

both formerly employed as hack writers in the Fictional Supply Syndicate, a factory for the industrial production of formulaic literature, become deadly foes out of rivalry for the love of an unnamed woman. Castorley makes good and rises to the rank of a renowned literary scholar, a specialist on Chaucer. Manallace continues to write what Kipling calls "standardised reading-matter" and nurses the woman he loves, who has been married and deserted by another man and is now terminally ill. After the woman's death, Manallace's sole object in life is to be revenged on Castorley, who refused to help the woman he once loved and (worse still) slandered her name. To effect his revenge, Manallace forges a medieval manuscript, supposedly a lost "Canterbury Tale" (adhering precisely to Castorley's pet theories on the characteristic traits of medieval manuscripts in general and Chaucer in particular) and plants the manuscript on Castorley. His plan is to make Castorley announce his find and then expose him before the entire academic community. Shortly before the plan comes to its successful culmination, Manallace retreats, overcome with scruples: Castorley is now terminally ill, he lives in a loveless marriage, and his wife (who has seen through Manallace's manoeuvres) hopes her husband will die of the exposure of the forgery. Manallace finds himself in the paradoxical situation of having to protect Castorley, and he manages to delay the exposure until after his former enemy's death.

The Embedded Poems and the Issue of Authorship

Whether we consider the embedded or the accompanying poems and their relationship to the stories, the same two main aspects constantly resurface: The question of authorship and the issue of fragmentation as well as the related problem of the missing link between poem and story. I have called this article "Somebody' Else's Poem" (in joking reference to the "somebody else's problem field" in Douglas Adams's *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*), because, in both stories, the poems "quoted" in the text are in several ways always "somebody else's." To

begin with, both stories feature what might be termed a “covert” first-person narrator, who is a character in the action but about whom next to nothing is known.² These narrators, however, are not the authors of the embedded poems; they merely witness the production of poetry from one remove. Secondly, the authorship of the character who does produce the lines of poetry is also in question. In “Wireless,” Shaynor, in a process that recalls “automatic writing,”³ brings forth verse that the narrator and the reader immediately recognize as lines from Keats’s “The Eve of St. Agnes.” The sustained reference to wireless telegraphy suggests that Shaynor is by no means an “author” in the sense of “creative artist” but merely the “coherer,” a primitive form of radio signal detector used in the first radio receivers during the wireless telegraphy era at the beginning of the twentieth century, an instrument finely tuned in to receiving messages from outside—or rather, “beyond,” since it has been argued that the incident described in “Wireless” resembles telepathic “channelling” as customarily occurring in a spiritualistic séance (see Dillingham 131). Shaynor has thus temporarily become possessed by the spirit of the dead Keats or, possibly, by the same impersonal spirit that also possessed Keats when he composed “The Eve of St. Agnes”—for why would the spirit of Keats be so desperate to “get through” to a living writer in order to produce a poem that he had already written?

This concept of poetic creativity as a kind of demonic possession fits in perfectly with the few statements we have by Kipling himself about the mystery of literary creation. In his autobiography *Something of Myself* Kipling describes the writer as being in the grip of a personal daemon (cf. 121-22), and in a letter to Rider Haggard of 22 May 1918, he even claims—in a metaphor closely related to the imagery of “Wireless”: “We are only telephone wires” (100). That the poet is merely the “coherer” of the poetry that apparently exists, already fully formed in its precise phrasing and wording, before pen is even put to paper, is a notion Kipling was also to express in his address to the Royal Academy in 1906: “The magic of literature is in the words, and not in any man” (“Literature” 50).

The concept of poetry being the result of a kind of possession is also in evidence in "Dayspring Mishandled" more than twenty years later. Manallace describes the *furor* of poetic production as "a sort of possession, I suppose. I was in love, too. No wonder I got drunk that night. I'd *been* Chaucer for a week!" (17). The ingredients necessary for the creation of poetry are the same in both stories: there must be an initial erotic impulse, an intoxicating drink, and the influence of a dead poet. The possession by a dead writer makes the acts of poetic creation in both cases seem somewhat futile and hopelessly belated—Shaynor merely manages to compose (under enormous birth pangs) poetry that already exists, while Manallace produces nothing but second-rate Chaucerian pastiche and lacks a distinctive poetic voice of his own. In this respect, Kipling's two stories seem to anticipate later twentieth century discussions of authorship from Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence" to the "death of the author" proclaimed by Roland Barthes. Concerning the initial erotic impulse, it may be added that, in another of Kipling's short stories, "The Finest Story in the World," the creation of poetry is also linked to sexual desire. In this story, Charlie, a young man gifted with genuine artistic imagination but lacking skill in verbal expression, suddenly turns into a third-rate poet when he falls in love for the first time—and the nameless first-person narrator in this story (who has a way with words but somehow only manages to produce prose) can only look on helplessly.⁴ Lacking the initial erotic impulse, the narrator of "Wireless," even though subject to the same sensory impressions as Shaynor, can only turn them into prose fiction; his words refuse to shape themselves into any likeness of poetry. This is the more regrettable since the narrator tends to rank poetry immeasurably above prose:

My throat dried but I dared not gulp to moisten it lest I should break the spell that was drawing him nearer and nearer to the high-water mark but two of the sons of Adam have reached. Remember that in all the millions permitted there are no more than five—five little lines—of which one can say: "These are the pure Magic. These are the clear Vision. The rest is only poetry." (155)

These five lines comprise two from Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" (and these Shaynor chases through five variations, still remaining comparatively far off) and three lines from Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," which the narrator repeats to himself, mantra-like, while witnessing Shaynor's effort of composition. The sly reference to "Kubla Khan" reveals the narrator's concept of poetic creativity as a state of divine madness, facilitated by intoxicating substances. Arguably, however, "Kubla Khan" may also be said to serve as a model for the construction of the entire story, since this poem is the prime example of a fragmented poem shaped into a coherent structure by a frame narrative.⁵

The Fragmentation of the Embedded Poems

This brings me to my second major point, the fragmentation of the poems within the two stories. In "Wireless," as we have seen, only individual lines of poems apparently considered familiar to the implied reader are being quoted and, more importantly, initially *misquoted*, which produces a jarring effect—we are eager to correct the speaker, telling him how the line should actually go.

Against this background, it is worthwhile to examine Shaynor's variations on Keats in greater detail. There are only two passages (of one line and six consecutive lines respectively) that Shaynor more or less gets right: "And threw warm gules on Madeleine's young breast" ("Wireless" 228; "The Eve of St Agnes" l. 218), and

Candied apple, quince and plum and gourd,
And jellies smoother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups tinct with cinnamon,
Manna and dates in Argosy transferred
From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one
From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon.

("Wireless" 233; "The Eve of St. Agnes" ll. 265-70)

Kipling uses the beginning of "The Eve of St. Agnes" ("St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was! / The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;

/ The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass"; ll. 1-3) to create what we might call a "myth of origin," a fantasy on how lines like this may have come to be written. Shaynor's first approach to the poem consists of nothing but a stammering expression of immediate sensory perceptions: "Very cold it was. Very cold / The hare—the hare—the hare— / The birds—" ("Wireless" 228). The second attempt, however, already produces a perfectly regular iambic pentameter line: "The hare, in spite of fur, was very cold" ("Wireless" 229). Similarly, when approaching the line "Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died" ("The Eve of St. Agnes" l. 200), the first variation ("The little smoke of a candle that goes out," "Wireless" 231) mentions the bare facts in a sentence that closely resembles ordinary speech—the only peculiarity that may be considered in some way "poetic" is the adjective "little." The second variation reads "The little smoke that dies in moonlight cold" ("Wireless" 231), again adding a regular metrical structure and appearing generally more self-consciously "poetical" in its transformation of the matter-of-fact "goes out" into the figurative "dies" and the use of inversion in "moonlight cold."

In the following example, Keats's "Like pious incense from a censer old, / Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death, / Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith" ("The Eve of St. Agnes," ll. 7-9) becomes "Incense in a censer— / Before her darling picture framed in gold— / Maiden's picture—angel's portrait—" ("Wireless" 229). This may be considered an instance of the secularization of the poem in its transfer from the Romantic to the Victorian period. The "sweet Virgin's picture" in Shaynor's hands becomes "her darling picture," "maiden's picture" and "angel's portrait," and since these terms appear semantically interchangeable, the "angel" is obviously but a term of endearment for a mortal woman. This variation to some extent unravels the religious imagery of "The Eve of St. Agnes" as well, suggesting that Keats's "sweet Virgin" is not the Virgin Mary but Fanny Brawne. It may also be useful to remember that—as Dillingham points out—the love letters between Keats and Fanny Brawne had only recently been published when Kipling wrote

this story, shocking Victorian readers with their frank sensuality (see Dillingham 134).

In his next effort, Shaynor produces a shift from the third to the first person, turning Keats's phrase "and his weak spirit fails / To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails" (ll. 17-18) into "And my weak spirit fails / To think how the dead must freeze / Beneath the churchyard mould" ("Wireless" 229). While "The Eve of St. Agnes" provides an insight into the private thoughts and feelings of several characters (in what we would call a "figural narrative situation" in prose fiction), the variation shifts to a stance of radical subjectivity (as often associated with Romantic poetry). In "Wireless," a direct insight into the workings of another person's mind no longer seems possible, and the idea of wireless communication and telepathy in all likelihood is deemed so very interesting just because it occurs but rarely.

The final example shows us Shaynor's fit of creativity on the decline. The original "meantime the frost-wind blows / Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet / Against the window-panes" ("The Eve of St. Agnes" ll. 322-24) is rendered as the comparatively remote "The sharp rain falling on the window-pane, / Rattling sleet—the wind-blown sleet" ("Wireless" 234). As in the beginning, only general sensory impressions are recorded, and the dash (that typical punctuation mark of modernist stream-of-consciousness) is reappearing. At this point, Shaynor only quotes individual words correctly: "sharp," "window-pane," and "sleet." Likewise, his repeated attempt to (re-)create the three "magic" lines from "Ode to a Nightingale" only leads to the reader's repeated frustration—for each word or phrase that Shaynor gets right in each of his five consecutive attempts there is always something else that he gets wrong.⁶

The original passage in Keats reads: "Charm'd casements, opening on the foam / Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn. / Forlorn! The very word is like a bell" ("Ode to a Nightingale" ll. 69-71). Shaynor's first attempt, "A fairyland for you and me / Across the foam—beyond ... / A magic foam, a perilous sea" ("Wireless" 234) presents a promising first approach since he gets at least four terms right:

“foam,” “magic,” “perilous sea,” and “fairyland,” even though the latter may be considered a Victorian domestication of the archaic (and presumably more wild and dangerous) “faery land.”⁷ The second attempt is very far off (“Our windows fronting on the dangerous foam”; “Wireless” 235), because Shaynor has retained merely “foam” and replaced “perilous” by “dangerous.” The next variation (“Our open casements facing desolate seas / Forlorn—*forlorn*”; “Wireless” 235) is rather more promising, since Shaynor has hit on “open casements,” “seas” and the repetition of the term “forlorn”; but we must keep in mind that, in return, he discards all the words and phrases he had already found in his first attempt at rendering the line. The fourth example (“Our windows facing on the desolate seas / And pearly foam of magic fairyland”; “Wireless” 236) retrieves some of the lost material from the initial attempt (“foam,” “magic,” “fairyland”) but at the same time loses two discoveries from the previous example (“casements” and “forlorn”). The fifth and last rendering ends up being further off than the initial one: “Our magic windows fronting on the sea, / The dangerous foam of desolate seas” (“Wireless” 236), leaving the beholder and the reader rather disappointed.

While the verse fragments in “Wireless” may merely prompt the reader to correct them, the fragmentation of poetry in “Dayspring Mishandled” invites a more creative contribution, for here the reader is in fact asked to imaginatively create the poem him/herself after having been given merely a bare outline of plot—an undesired marriage, an undesired crusade, and a man deliberately collaborating in his own entrapment⁸—and altogether 25 lines of verse. These belong to three different parts of the pastiche Chaucer poem which is itself supposed to be a fragment of 107 lines. The use of the fragment as a literary genre conforms to Kipling’s general aesthetic convictions at this point of his career. In *Something of Myself* he claims that the removal of superfluous material increases the energy potential of a literary text: “A tale from which pieces have been raked out is like a fire that has been poked. One does not know that the operation has been performed, but everyone feels the effect” (121). In his later, more

“modernist” short fiction, Kipling sometimes performed the “operation” so rigorously that critics were (and still are) at a loss to describe what actually happens in the story—the example of “Mrs Bathurst” most immediately springs to mind. Accordingly, the additional energy that is being produced is the energy of the reader, not of the author, since it is the reader who is required to fill in the blanks. Quite fittingly, “Dayspring Mishandled” is a story largely concerned with the relationship between poet and reader, with the reader Castorley providing the guidelines for the finished poem and thus contributing rather more to it than the ostensible “author” Manallace. A further peculiarity of the poem “Dayspring Mishandled” (which bears the same title as the story that houses it) is that, like the story itself, it is accompanied by another poem, in this case the fragment of a monk’s hymn written in *vulgate* Latin: “Illa alma Mater eccae, secum afferens me acceptum. Nicolaus Atrib.” This accompanying poem turns out to conceal an encoded hidden meaning, since—as Manallace points out to the narrator and hence to the reader—it is an instance of an acrostic: you need to read the first letters in each line from top to bottom and then the second letters, which gives you “James A. Manallace fecit.” (Manallace’s pun on “fecit” and “faked” is probably deliberate). The secret that the poem will yield to an observant reader, then, is nothing more profound than a declaration of authorship, but authorship in this case seems to be essential to convey a sense of identity. At first glance, we tend to decipher the beginning of the acrostics as “I am,” which we may read as an adaptation of Descartes: “I write, therefore I am.”

Accompanying Poems, the Issue of Authorship and the “Missing Link” in “Wireless”

This has brought us back full circle to the issue of authorship, and the question of authorship also presents a significant issue with respect to the “accompanying poems.” As pointed out above, in most of his

collections of short fiction, Kipling inserted poems or fragments of poems between the individual stories, and often a poem belongs to one particular story in the manner of an epigraph or motto. After its initial magazine publication, "Wireless" was included in *Traffics and Discoveries* (1904), where it is accompanied by "Kaspar's Song in 'Varda,'" for which a source is given: "from the Swedish of Stagnelius." The accompanying poem hence is another instance of "somebody else's poem"—at least apparently, and has sent critics on a wild goose chase for origins. In an article in the *Journal of English Studies* of January 1965, C. A. Bodelsen pointed out that Erik Johan Stagnelius (1792-1823) never wrote a poem remotely resembling Kipling's "translation," and, incidentally, that there is no work called "Varda." Thus, the ostensible "somebody else's poem" turns out to be Kipling's after all. As we have seen, the difficulty of establishing "authorship" is a central concern in both stories under examination, but what is the purpose of Kipling's denial of authorship in this case? Why does he present a poem that he has composed himself as an "objet trouvé"? The answer may lie in the rather tenuous relationship between poem and story, which leaves it to the reader to provide the "missing link." By pretending that the poem was "found" rather than deliberately created for this specific purpose, Kipling largely declines responsibility for the gap between the poem and the story.

The poem itself, which is brief enough to be quoted here in its entirety, is a rather poor specimen, which Lisa Lewis has even described as deliberate parody (qtd. in McGivering).

Kaspar's Song in 'Varda'
(From the Swedish of Stagnelius.)

Eyes aloft, over dangerous places,
The children follow where Psyche flies,
And, in the sweat of their upturned faces,
Slash with a net at the empty skies.

So it goes they fall amid brambles,
And sting their toes on the nettle-tops,
Till, after a thousand scratches and scrambles,
They wipe their brows, and the hunting stops.

Then to quiet them comes their father
 And stills the riot of pain and grief,
 Saying, 'Little ones, go and gather
 Out of my garden a cabbage-leaf.

'You will find on it whorls and clots of
 Dull grey eggs that, properly fed,
 Turn, by way of the worm, to lots of
 Radiant Psyches raised from the dead.'

'Heaven is beautiful, Earth is ugly,'
 The three-dimensional preacher saith;
 So we must not look where the snail and the slug lie
 For Psyche's birth. ... And that is our death! (212)

The apparently openly didactic poem begins with a description of a group of children chasing butterflies. In the course of the poem, the children's father forces them to acknowledge the singularly unprepossessing physical and material foundations of the beautiful ephemeral creature. In the final section of the poem, the butterfly is expressly compared to the human soul. The reference to "[r]adiant Psyches raised from the dead" in the last line of the poem's penultimate stanza suggests a rather obvious resurrection motif.

We can only forge a link with the story if we assume that the main point of the narrative is not—as previously assumed—the mystery of literary creation but the survival of the soul after death. In this case, the interest in the new wireless telegraphy as foregrounded in the story would reside in its ability not to overcome spatial distance but the border between the living and the dead; the category to be overcome would be not space but time. Carrington sums up Kipling's initial fascination with Marconi's invention after his cruise with the Channel Fleet in 1898 in the following terms: "If messages could pass through the impalpable 'aether,' as if material obstructions in space were of no account, why could not time be equally penetrable?" (440). This would also explain the narrator's cryptic comment: "For reasons of my own, I was deeply interested in Marconi's experiments at their outset in England" (216). What are these mysterious "reasons of his own" he fails to specify? Dillingham, for instance, believes they refer

to the narrator's profound desire to prove that communication with the dead is indeed possible (see 135-36).⁹

Accompanying Poems—Authorship and Missing Links in “Dayspring Mishandled”

The issue of the accompanying poem is even more complex in the case of “Dayspring Mishandled.” The story is followed by “Gertrude’s Prayer,” the complaint of a girl separated from her lover and forced into a loveless marriage, which is part of the Chaucerian pastiche composed by Manallace.¹⁰ As in any example of literary pastiche, the effect of this poem is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, this is Kipling showing off, demonstrating his expertise in literary ventriloquism, his ability to write in different voices, just as in the case of “Kaspar’s Song in ‘Varda.’” On the other hand, the pastiche is to some extent defined by being deficient: it is not quite Chaucer, just like the lines produced by Shaynor in “Wireless” are “not quite Keats.” To give the reader an opportunity of judging the success of the pastiche, “Gertrude’s Prayer” is also presented in full.

Gertrude’s Prayer

That which is marred at birth Time shall not mend,
 Nor water out of bitter well make clean;
 All evil thing returneth at the end,
 Or elseway walketh in our blood unseen.
 Whereby the more is sorrow in certaine—
 Dayspring mishandled cometh not agen.

To-bruized be that slender, sterthing spray
 Out of the oake’s rind that should betide
 A branch of girt and goodliness, straightway
 Her spring is turned on herself, and wried
 And knotted like some gall or veiney wen—
 Dayspring mishandled cometh not agen.

Noontide repayeth never morning-bliss—
 Sith noon to morn is incomparable;
 And, so it be our dawning goth amiss,

None other after-hour serveth well.
 Ah! Jesu-Moder, pitie my oe paine—
 Dayspring mishandled cometh not againe! (33)

As readers, we approach this poem with a twofold purpose: we use it to create our mental image of Manallace's poem (of which we have only been allowed tantalizing glimpses so far),¹¹ and we read it as a comment on Manallace's own situation when composing the poem, as a kind of epilogue or conclusion to the story itself. Particularly in the second stanza, a number of direct verbal echoes between poem and story occur. The references to "oake's rind" and "some gall" vividly recall Manallace's boiling of the historical type of ink he uses to pen the manuscript:

I found him, for instance, one week-end, in his toolshed-scully, boiling a brew of slimy barks which were, if mixed with oak-galls, vitriol and wine, to become an ink-powder. We boiled it till the Monday, and it turned into an adhesive stronger than birdlime, and entangled us both. (8-9)

The motif of self-entrapment, as we have noted, is prominent in the story, and it also resurfaces in "Gertrude's Prayer": once in the immediate vicinity of "oake's rind" and "gall," when we learn that the spring of the young spray "is turned on herself," and, more explicitly, in the warning in the first stanza: "All evil thing returneth at the end / Or elseway walketh in our blood unseen." The evil that "walks in the blood" may be Manallace's own obsession with revenge, but it may also be a reference to Castorley's death from a lingering internal disease (first diagnosed as "gall-stones," which on a secondary level turns the reference to "gall" into a rather sick joke). More significantly, the "evil walking in the blood unseen" might refer to the "paralysis" contracted by the woman Manallace (and, in his fashion, Castorley) loved, which more recent critics (for instance Angus Wilson) have diagnosed to be syphilis. Most profoundly, however, Manallace's situation is summed up by the statement that finishes every stanza: "Dayspring mishandled cometh not againe," and, to my mind, this sounds very much like the single "inspired line" that triggered the

writing not only of the poem but of the entire narrative. Manallace's early youth has been misspent as a hack writer, in his relations to the woman he loved he was merely allowed to nurse her in her terminal illness, and his single masterpiece may never be published. The main interests of his later life, all revolving around the creation of his elaborate fraud, have been more or less posthumous activities: "I've been dead since—April, Fourteen, it was" (20), he declares.

However, "Dayspring Mishandled" is not only succeeded by a poem supposedly written by one of the characters in the story, it is also preceded by a brief motto in French:

C'est moi, c'est moi, c'est moi!
 Je suis la Mandragore!
 La fille des beaux jours qui s'éveille à l'aurore—
 Et qui chante pour toi!

As E. N. Houlton has pointed out in an article of 1986:

[I]t is not so easy to see the point of the epigraph, which comes from a story written by Charles Nodier in 1832, in which a young man finds himself in "le jardin des lunatiques à Glasgow" and is haunted by the sinister plant, the Mandragore, which sings repeatedly the little song quoted by Kipling. (66)

Nodier's *La fée aux miettes* actually is a full-length novel, containing the brief poem quoted by Kipling—and thus yet another instance of poetry in fiction. Jane Tompkins has read the mandrake (which, according to tradition, is a root that screams when pulled out of the soil and a dangerous narcotic) as an image of Manallace's revenge, since the revenge plot has its origin in Manallace's "dayspring" and is hence "la fille des beaux jours." What is more relevant for my present purpose is that Kipling has here—for once—included a poem that actually is "somebody else's," and, what is more, also a genuine fragment, since the average reader could not be expected to recognize the context. Since the fragment is also in French, some readers will be excluded from understanding it simply on grounds of language—in this case the epigraph has a purely decorative function.

If we consider the content of the fragment, the first conspicuous feature is that the mandrake in the poem does not scream but sing and may hence be considered an image of the poet. What it does sing, however, always amounts to one and the same thing: "C'est moi, c'est moi, c'est moi" — "It's me, it's me, it's me," much like the acrostics in Manallace's "The Monk's Hymn": "I am." While in Nodier, poetry and imagination as represented by the mandrake provide an escape from the disappointments of real life, in Kipling the composition of poetry becomes an act of self-assertion.

As in the case of the supposedly "found" butterfly poem that precedes "Wireless," it is once again left to the reader to provide the connection. In this manner, Kipling allows the reader to contribute to the creation of the composite artwork consisting of both poetry and prose fiction, thus making not only the poem but also the short story "somebody else's," namely the reader's.

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NOTES

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²This type of narrator is very common in Kipling's short fiction and is frequently tacitly assumed to be a mere projection of the personality of the author. This assumption may have to be questioned at some point, but this aspect would also go beyond the scope of this paper.

³It may be interesting to note that Kipling's sister Alice had experimented with automatic writing from 1893, having read papers on the subject by Frederick W. H. Myers. She later became a famous medium under the name of "Mrs. Holland."

⁴A comparison between "Wireless" and "The Finest Story in the World" is instructive in yet another way: in "The Finest Story," artistic inspiration is limited to the seminal "vision" of the events to be depicted, while the verbal expression in the medium of prose is considered a conscious craft. The inspiration for poetry as presented in "Wireless," by contrast, does not consist of images but of words.

⁵On "Kubla Khan" as a model for the construction of Wharton's novel *Hudson River Bracketed*, see Saunders, this volume.

⁶There is one variation in the story I myself have not been able to make sense of: in the 1904 edition of *Traffics and Discoveries*, the narrator even misquotes the three lines from "Kubla Khan" after insisting that they represent "the pure Magic," "the clear Vision," substituting "spot" for "place." This "mistake" has been tacitly corrected in later editions, but it may be that it was not a mistake in the first place and intended as a signal indicating the unreliability of the narrator. On narrative unreliability in "Wireless," see Dillingham.

⁷The *OED* entry for "faery" e.g. notes: "sometimes (esp. in recent use) the form *faerie* is deliberately chosen to describe beings which differ from the conventional representation of fairies as small, delicate winged creatures, esp. in being more dangerous and sinister."

⁸As the synopsis shows, all these plot elements reappear in the frame narrative.

⁹The butterfly motif and the concern with the possibility of overcoming temporal distance rather strangely seem to foreshadow the works of another writer equally famous for his poetry and his prose, Vladimir Nabokov, who produced one of the most recognized instances of an aesthetic structure composed of both poetry and narrative in his novel *Pale Fire*. This novel was discussed by a number of participants in the original conference (see Charney, "Adopting Styles, Inserting Selves: Nabokov's *Pale Fire*," and Kullmann's response, this vol.). Incidentally, Nabokov was also to make use of the acrostic as a means of communication with the dead in his late short story "The Vane Sisters."

¹⁰Incidentally, this was not Kipling's only attempt at Chaucerian pastiche; he also composed "The Prologue to the Master-Cook's Tale," "The Justice's Tale," and "The Consolations of Memory."

¹¹Harry Ricketts has pointed out the parallels between "Dayspring Mishandled" and Henry James's novella *The Aspern Papers*, in which the reader is also finally denied a full vision of the supreme artwork; cf. Ricketts 381.

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