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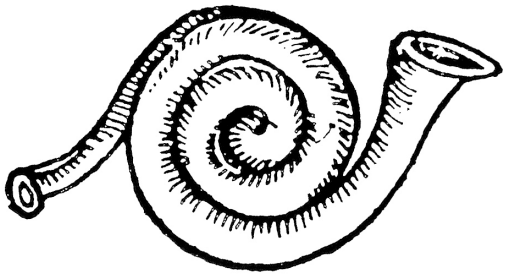
A Journal for Critical Debate



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Donne's *The Second Anniversarie*

Other ARTICLES and RESPONSES

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Speculative Tensions: The Blurring of Augustinian Interiority in *The Second Anniversarie*[*]

SARAH POWRIE

As the second of two commemorative poems marking Elizabeth Drury's untimely death, John Donne's *The Second Anniversarie* revisits the theme of mortality from a perspective that is more private and introspective than that of its predecessor. While *The First Anniversarie* addresses its reading audience as it catalogues evidence of decay throughout the physical universe, the second poem features an interior conversation between the speaker and his soul regarding the mysteries of the soul's hidden aptitudes and its afterlife.[1] The technique of inner colloquy as a means to disclose the soul's nature is fundamentally Augustinian in origin, being most evident in his early dialogues, but also implicitly shaping his discussions of self-knowledge.[2] Augustine uses the framework of inner dialogue to focus his mental attention on the interior self and thereby disclose interior truths hidden within the soul's cognitive capacities. *The Second Anniversarie*, designed to trace the *Progres of the Soule*, draws upon Augustinian techniques of introspective scrutiny to craft its spiritual itinerary, as Louis Martz, Edward Tayler, and others have demonstrated.[3] However, what remains less recognized is the poem's complex renegotiation of that tradition, as it both engages and resists techniques of Augustinian interiority. *The Second Anniversarie* represents the psychological perspective of an inconstant, conflicted speaker, whose persistent attachment to the world's follies and

[*]See the parallel articles on Donne's *The Second Anniversarie* in this issue, as well as the response by Judith Anderson.

For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debanniversaries0251.htm>.

curiosities undermines his attempts to gain the very spiritual knowledge that he professes to desire. Alternating between moments of interior presence and external distraction, the poem charts a digressive and vexed progress, as Donne's speaker remains simultaneously enticed by terrestrial and transcendent ambitions, a state of mind pertinent to the poet himself.

1. Augustinian Foundations: Interior Dialogue as a Basis for Epistemic Certainty and Spiritual Understanding

In order to understand *The Second Anniversarie*'s unusual engagement with Augustinian dialectic, it will be helpful first to consider Augustine's own use of the dialogue form and to recognize its importance for his philosophy and spirituality. Early in his career (386-96), Augustine composed a collection of literary-philosophical dialogues, which he described as mental conversations taking place between himself and his reason. Through a scripted sequence of questions and responses, the dialogue's literary personae discuss a range of philosophical concerns, including the soul's relation to the body, its immortality, and its capacity for self-understanding.[4] Even after abandoning the dialogue's literary form, Augustine continued to write dialectically, advancing his philosophical argument through a sequence of questions (see *Confessiones* 10*; De Trinitate* 10-15). One of the assumptions underpinning the dialogue form is the notion of *anamnesis* or recollection: a Platonic belief that the soul once enjoyed complete understanding in its heavenly pre-existence before it descended into its life in the body (see *Meno* 81 c2-d4). Consequently, the process of learning represents the recollection of forgotten knowledge from within oneself and not the acquisition of evidence from without.[5] The dialectical process serves to excavate and disclose answers that were latent and previously unrecognized within one's own mental capacities.[6]

The notion of anamnesis held a powerful appeal for Augustine, since it reinforced both his belief in the capacious powers of memory

and his suspicion of sense experience. While granting that knowledge of temporal particulars is useful and necessary for lived experience, Augustine considered such sense-based knowledge to be less significant than the interior truth discovered from within the soul.[7] Hence, in his early dialogue *Soliloquies*, Augustine's Reason advises him to develop the spiritual eye of the mind, which has the capacity to perceive interior truth. The power of inner perception is strengthened by distancing oneself, both physically and psychologically, from the world's distractions.[8] The soul does not learn from outward signs and sounds; it learns by withdrawing into itself to consult the subtleties of the "interior teacher," namely Christ, who is the source of wisdom (see *De Magistro* 38). In the dialogue *On the Magnitude of the Soul*, Augustine argues that the soul grows by withdrawing from materiality and engaging its interior rational powers (see *De Quantitate Animae* 17.30). In the concluding chapters of this work, he illustrates the way in which the soul's flourishing is realized as it advances through the interior hierarchy of its aptitudes, which extend from regulating the body's responses to engaging the transcendent aspiration for divine wisdom. Repeatedly exhorting his soul to "rise up" through its interior powers, Augustine offers a textual record of the soul's journey toward the summit of its own capacities to encounter divine wisdom.[9] In each of these works, Augustine argues that attention to the temporal, material world represents a distraction, diverting the soul from the more urgent task of dialectically excavating interior wisdom. As we shall see, *The Second Anniversarie*'s interior colloquy borrows the same rhetorical technique of interior exhortation so as to advance the soul's progress; however, the speaker's persistent attraction to external goals ultimately undermines his own aspirations for interior wisdom.

The technique of interior dialogue is important for Augustine, since the exercise enabled him to discover a basis for epistemic certainty, thereby countering the arguments of philosophical skepticism. Augustine had for a time subscribed to the skeptics' doctrine that nothing could be known with certainty.[10] Through the exercise of

inner dialogue, Augustine discovered a means to refute this doctrine: his awareness of his own thinking could offer proof for the inviolable certainty of his own existence: even if he is deceived, even if he errs, he knows that he exists. The mind's certainty of its own existence and its own cognitive operations becomes the basis for epistemic confidence and the repudiation of skepticism. Inward attention focuses the mind on these certainties; outward attention engenders doubt and confusion, since the mutable nature of physical phenomena resists absolute claims.[11] An early expression of this philosophical discovery is found in the *Soliloquies*, where Reason asks Augustine: "Do you know that you think?" Augustine responds in the affirmative, and, as their colloquy progresses, Reason points out that Augustine has discovered several irrefutable truths; namely, that he exists, that he knows that he is alive, and that he knows that he has a capacity for knowing (see *Soliloquies* 2.1). These certainties become the basis for knowing anything else.

In addition to disclosing an effective refutation of skepticism, the technique of inner colloquy also offered Augustine a basis for establishing the soul's unique dignity as an image and likeness of God. In his later work *On the Trinity*, Augustine unpacks the spiritual implications of self-knowledge. In pondering the Delphic exhortation to "know thyself," Augustine recognizes not only that he exists, but that he remembers, that he understands, and that he desires to understand, thus introducing one of many interior cognitive trinities that affirm humanity's divine image as a reflection of the Trinity (see *De Trinitate* 10.3-4; 10.10). Augustine further substantiates his argument for the soul's divine image by drawing on two biblical passages: the first is Genesis 1:26, describing humanity as created in the image and likeness of God; the second is Paul's claim that "we see now through a glass darkly, but then, face to face" (1 Cor 13:12). Augustine transforms Paul's "dark glass" into a metaphor for illuminative contemplation, suggesting that the soul's self-reflection on its interior sacredness represents a powerful foretaste of the beatific vision. He parses Paul's *speculum* (mirror) to signify *an image*, since mirrors produce images;

further, the term *aenigmate* (commonly translated as *darkly*) represents for Augustine *a likeness*, though one that is indistinct and difficult to discern. Thus Paul's *speculum aenigmate* becomes shorthand for the soul's recognition of its innate dignity as an image-bearer (see *De Trinitate* 15.9). This interior image becomes discernable only by withdrawing from the physical senses and engaging the interior senses, which are capable of interpreting the interior text of memory and its narrative of salvation. Augustine claims that "whoever then can understand the [inner] word [of thought], not only before it sounds, but even before the images of its sound are contemplated in thought […] whoever, I say, can understand this, can already see through the mirror and in this enigma some likeness of that [divine] Word."[12] As we shall see, *The Second Anniversarie*'s speaker never fully engages the interior senses, thus rendering the perception of his own interior sacredness blurred and occluded.

2. Donne's Appropriation: Distracted Dialogue, Skepticism, and Spiritual Anxiety

Donne's *The Second Anniversarie* shares with Augustine's works a desire to explore the soul's interior capacities, but because it lacks the latter's epistemological and spiritual certainty, the poem offers a blurred and conflicted vision of the interior self. The poem's internalized imperatives, exhortations, and questions represent recognizable variations of Augustine's dialectical techniques of inner scrutiny. Donne's speaker engages his soul in conversation: posing epistemological questions about the soul's capacity for knowledge (see 254, 279-80), exhorting his soul to forget the world (see 49), to desire heaven (see 43, 45), to fix its attention on spiritual themes (see 321-22), and to persist in pursuit of them (see 325).[13] Though summoning the resources of the Augustinian tradition, the speaker hesitates to embrace its radical interiority, since to do so would necessitate a dramatic detachment from the pleasures and public accomplishments

that entice the embodied soul in its lived experience. With the speaker being unable or unwilling to release the desire for external goals, his colloquy does not disclose interior wisdom but rather his interior conflict between sacred and secular aspirations; such a conflict is not irrelevant to Donne's own historical circumstances, as he weighs the possibility of abandoning secular achievement to seek ordination.[14] As Richard Jordan and Ramie Targoff have each argued, *The Second Anniversarie*'s speaker cannot sustain the visionary experience to which the poem aspires.[15] The poem's meditative focus on the spiritual interior dissipates to follow tangential threads of temporal concern, thereby frustrating the possibility of spiritual progress.

The first hundred lines of the poem recount the speaker's initial attempts to replicate the Augustinian exercise of detachment by disregarding temporal concerns and attending to the soul's interior life. The speaker exhorts his soul to "thirst" (45, 47) and to "forget" (49, 61). Through the former imperative, the speaker seeks to stir within his soul a desire for the Last Judgment, when "man doe but vanish, and not die" (42). The desire to incite "thirst" for mortality motivates the imagined death-bed scene (see 85-120), which represents the soul as emancipated from the weight of bodily impurity and "exalted" (116) in "happiest Harmonee" (92). Through the latter imperative, the speaker directs himself to "Forget" (49), that is, to abandon temporal attachments, including both his autobiographical identity ("Let thine owne times as an old story be" [50]) and the "fragmentary rubbidge" (82) of human affairs. The speaker's exercise in detachment assumes an anti-intellectual quality, as he disparages the sense-based knowledge of culture and science: "study not why, nor whan; [...] For though to erre, be worst, to try truths forth, / is far more busines, then this world is worth" (51, 53-54). The records of human and natural history serve only to explicate the corrupt "Carkas" (55) of the mutable world and so they offer contingent forms of knowledge, which the soul must ultimately abandon when it departs from the body. Hence, the speaker directs his soul to engage the interior sight of "Memory" (64) and to "Looke vpward" (65)

toward the heavenly beatitude exemplified in the soul of Elizabeth Drury.[16] Borrowing Augustine's technique of interior exhortation, the speaker instructs his soul to forget the changeable, material world and desire the permanence of heavenly joy.

Despite his efforts to forget the world, the speaker clearly remains drawn to it, since his attempts "T' aduance these [heavenly] thoughts" (220) are undone by relapsing preoccupations with temporal concerns. Continuing his efforts to stir the soul's desire for the end of its mortal life, the speaker imagines the peace enjoyed by the heavenly communion of blessed souls.[17] Yet, the reflection on eternity appears to stir feelings of dissatisfaction and indifference, since the speaker redirects his focus away from the city of God to engage with the city of man. Abandoning spiritual reflections to muse contemptuously upon human failings, the speaker considers how the social fabric of church and court are corroded by vanity: parasitic, catechism-spewing theologians infect the former; slandering gossips poison the latter.[18] His attention to social corruption has the effect of obscuring the more significant interior vision of human harmony and reveals that his desire for secular success is stronger than his spiritual yearnings. A further example of disrupted interior focus occurs when the speaker considers the soul's "Ioye […] essentiall" (470) in paradise. The theme of the Lord's gift of grace to the heavenly righteous has the perverse effect of triggering associations with the public honours bestowed by royalty. While divine honor magnifies the soul, royal favor insidiously "swell[s]" (475) human pride, causing it to resemble an abscess about to burst its messy puss.[19]

Once again, the earth-bound glance at worldly achievement eclipses the speaker's interior vision of the soul's happiness, revealing his persistent attraction to public recognition even while aware of its vanity. The recurrent exhortations to the soul to "Returne not […] / To earthly thoughts" (321-23) but rather to ascend "up" (325, 339, 347, 351, 353, 356) testify to the speaker's struggle to maintain interior focus and sustain spiritual desire, since his thoughts more easily turn to regard exterior ambitions. Years later, Donne the preacher would

describe this same conflict between interior presence and external distraction in Augustinian terms: "The art of *salvation* is but the art of *memory* […] There may be enough in *remembring our selves*; but sometimes, that's the hardest of all; many times we are farthest off from our selves; most forgetfull of our selves" (*Sermons* 2: 73-74). The speaker's persistent attraction to human affairs reveals a resistance to engage the soul's interior sacredness, thus undermining the *Second Anniversarie*'s "art of salvation."

The speaker's resistance to engage in a sustained interior reflection is likewise evident when the poem turns to questions of the soul's knowledge. Like Augustine's works, the *Second Anniversarie* demonstrates a clear fascination with epistemology: the verb "to think" appears thirty times in the space of a hundred lines (85-185), and the verb "to know" appears thirteen times over the course of twenty-six (254-80).[20] Even so, the poem actually gives surprisingly little attention to the process of knowledge acquisition. Unlike Augustine's work, which meticulously records the coordination of affective and rational powers in the soul, Donne's poem rather abruptly overlooks or dismisses the potential of these interior powers. When the speaker asks himself, "Poore soule in this thy flesh what do'st thou know?" (254), he quickly succumbs to skepticism, offering a discouraged response: "Thou know'st thy selfe so little, as thou know'st not […]" (255). Donne's speaker does not register awareness of his own capacity to reason and to desire; nor does he recognize that this self-conscious awareness of his cognitive capacities could offer a basis for certain knowledge, as Augustine did. Instead he disregards his interior powers, which could be known with certainty and observes natural particulars beyond the soul, which cannot be reliably known because of their mutability.[21] He initially puzzles over the soul's relation to the body ("Thou art to narrow, wretch, to comprehend / Euen thy selfe: yea though thou wouldst but bend / To know thy body" [261-63]); then muses on the body's composition ("Haue not all soules thought / For many ages, that our body'is wrought / Of Ayre, and Fire, and other Elements? / And now they thinke of new ingredi-

ents" [263-66]); and finally speculates on the causes of bodily ailments and growths: gallstones (see 269-70), the "putrid stuffe" (273) of phlegm, as well as "Nailes and Haires" (278). His attention veers beyond the soul-body problem to consider quandaries vexing various disciplines. He notes the way in which minds puzzle over "Catechismes and Alphabets" (284), the histories of Caesar and Cicero (287), and natural causes ("Why grasse is greene, or why our blood is red" [288]). The speaker seems to conclude that ignorance is humanity's only certainty: "What hope haue we to know our selues, when wee / Know not the least things, which for our vse bee?" (279-80). Agonizing over what he does not know about the material world, the speaker becomes ever further removed from the interior cognitive acts that would grant him epistemological certainty. Though expressing a desire to "straight know […] all" (299) and comprehend "th'Art of knowing Heauen" (311), the speaker in fact aggravates his skeptical uncertainties by disregarding the interior truths that Augustinian dialectic reveals; namely, that he exists, that he has the capacity to understand, and that he has the desire to understand.

Recognizing the dissipation of his inner focus into the realm of physical phenomena, the speaker seeks to reclaim his inner attention by shaking off sense and fantasy and by mounting a metaphorical watchtower to see all things "despoyld of fallacies" (295). This much-discussed passage has been interpreted as expressing a desire for complete, unmediated understanding, such as Paul describes and Elizabeth Drury exemplifies.[22] If so, then the "watch-towre" (294) is an unusual choice of image. If the speaker did indeed desire to detach himself from the bodily senses (from the "spectacles" [293] and "lattices" [296] of sight), then why mount a watchtower, which would in fact heighten, enlarge, and intensify one's external perception? If the speaker wanted to remove himself from the physical senses and engage the inward sight of Augustinian meditation, then would he not invoke the Pauline *speculum* of inner scrutiny that forms the gateway toward the face-to-face encounter? This unexpected image offers the most complex example of the recurrent tension between

interior focus and external distraction evidenced throughout the poem. The image invokes, mistranslates, and subverts one of the most important symbols of Augustine's thought, and consequently it offers a potent illustration of the poem's unorthodox appropriation of Augustinian interiority.

As explained earlier, the term *speculum* in Augustine's lexicon is shorthand for Paul's enigmatic vision found in Corinthians and the soul's reflection on its spiritual dignity as an image-bearer (see *De Trinitate* 15.9). Similarly, in the *Confessions*, Augustine invokes the *speculum* to describe the perfection of the soul's knowledge.[23] There is one image or analogy for spiritual enlightenment that Augustine explicitly rejects, and that is the image of a watchtower. He needs to do so because, in Latin, the terms for watchtower and mirror are easily confused. In Latin, the word *mirror* appears as *speculum* in the singular form (in the nominative and accusative cases) and as *specula* in the plural form (in nominative and accusative cases). The Latin word for *watchtower* appears as *specula* (in the nominative singular), and so is easily confused with the plural form of *mirrors*. Given this potential for misinterpretation, Augustine takes pains to clarify that both he and Paul are referring to mirrors and not to watchtowers:

> He [Paul] uses the word *speculantes*, that is, beholding through a mirror, not looking out from a watch-tower. There is no ambiguity here in the Greek language, from which the Epistles of the Apostle were translated into Latin. For there the word for mirror, in which images of things appear, and the word for watch-tower, from the height of which we see something at a greater distance, are entirely different even in sound; and it is quite clear that the Apostle was referring to a mirror and not to a watchtower.[24]

It is more typical for Augustine to play with etymological similarities as a way to reinforce his argument, and so his insistence upon a single interpretative possibility in this passage is all the more striking. Clarifying that the *speculum* signifies an interior reflective turn, whereby the soul perceives the interior language of thought, Augustine rejects the watchtower analogy, since the outward-gazing focus

implied in the image contradicts his exhortations to engage the interior self.

It is unusual, and perhaps even perverse, that Donne would place the image of a watchtower in the midst of his reflection on the soul's knowledge, since it seems to defy Augustine's exhortations. Nonetheless, the image's external orientation accurately captures the speaker's recurrent preoccupation with the world's curiosities and attractions. Resisting the inward speculative dialectic that is so necessary to the poem's spiritual progress, the speaker blurs his interior focus, and so, to paraphrase Donne's own sermon, he resists the "interior art of memory," thereby becoming "farthest off from [himself] and most forgetful of [himself]" (*Sermons* 2: 73-74). His professed desire for perfected understanding is at odds with his digressive preoccupation with external goals, revealing the inner conflict between spiritual and secular aspirations.

A similar staging of vexed impulses occurs in Donne's poem "Good-friday, 1613. Riding Westward," written within a few years of the *Anniversaries*. In this poem, the rider's goals are likewise conflicted. Having turned away from the east, and thus implicitly from the devotional image of Christ, the speaker travels westward pursuing "Pleasure or businesse" (7). The geographic opposition between the spiritual east and secular west corresponds to the psychological conflict between the speaker's interior sight and his secular preoccupations, between the weighty spectacle (16-17) of the crucified Christ present to memory (34) and the business that both occupies his field of vision and ultimately directs his itinerary.[25] Either fearful of divine punishment, or unwilling to relinquish worldly pleasures, the speaker disregards the image of the Trinity within to gaze upon the secular western horizon beyond.[26] With his back turned to Christ, the speaker asks "Restore thine Image, so much, by thy grace, / That thou may'st know mee, and I'll turne my face" (41-42). Yet, his prayer for spiritual restoration contradicts his posture of defiance.[27] Unlike Paul and Augustine, Donne's speaker resists the possibility of a face-to-face encounter, even in the midst of praying for its transformative graces.

The conflict between internal and external focal points reveals a psychology vexed by opposing desires for enlightenment and for secular pleasures.[28]

Likewise, Donne's speaker in *The Second Anniversarie* recurrently turns his attention away from interior reflection to fix his vision on the external horizon made visible by the watchtower. Rather than representing a mirror or *speculum*, which would capture the soul's reflection on its divine likeness, Donne inserts a deliberately mistranslated glass: a *specula* (watchtower), which is more opaque and enigmatic than any *speculum*. The speaker does not self-consciously reflect upon his own cognitive powers, nor recognize their triune patterns, and so he disregards the basis for both epistemic certainty and his soul's sacred interiority; in other words, he disregards the *speculum* within. Though articulating a desire to "see all things despoyld of fallacies" (295), the speaker's attention more eagerly attends to the world's corruption (see 325-37) and vanity (see 474-79). His disingenuous expression of desire for spiritual illumination is no less daring or conflicted than that of the Westward Rider, who, while turning his back to God, prays for the gift of grace.

It is telling that Donne the preacher does not invoke the image of a watchtower to express the cognitive immediacy of revealed wisdom. Sensitive to the logic of the image, Donne represents the watchtower in his sermons as an externally directed vantage point exposing the sins of society. In a Lenten sermon of 1618 preached on Ezekiel 33:32, Donne explains that the prophet, looking from the watchtower, views the city's transgressions and calls for repentance (see *Sermons* 2: 164-65). Thus the view from the tower discloses the fallibilities of a fallen world, not the clarity of heavenly revelation. When Donne wishes to represent the perfection of the intelligible faculties, he follows Augustine by invoking the Pauline mirror as a symbol of the face-to-face encounter.[29]

Given the intertextual resonances of this image in Donne's sermons and Augustine's theology, the watchtower seems to complicate, rather than to clarify, the speaker's intentions by pointing to conflicts

between secular and spiritual aspirations, between the horizon of business and that of Christian devotion, between the art of salvation and poetic artistry.[30]

In his reappraisal of the *Anniversaries*, Louis Martz observed "that a failure in meditation may become a success in poetry" ("Donne's *Anniversaries* Revisited" 38). Had Donne fashioned a successful progress of the soul, with a narrating voice not only oblivious to the vanities and curiosities of sense experience, but also attentive to the hidden truths and divine image of the interior self, then the poem would arguably have been less allusively complex or psychologically fascinating. Indeed, for *The Second Anniversarie* to follow faithfully the principles of Augustinian meditation, it would need to renounce its own rhetorical artistry, since the interior text of wisdom is written in the wordless language of the soul's inner thought (see Stock, *Inner Dialogue* 4-5). Though failing to access these inexpressible mysteries, the poem nonetheless successfully renders the creative inconsistencies of human desire, with its capacity to subvert the very ideals to which it aspires. By recognizing the poem's renegotiation of Augustinian interiority through its digressive and evasive movements, we are brought to a richer appreciation of Donne's art of pious defiance, in which the journey to the heavenly city is ever distracted by the "business and [verbal] pleasure" expressed in the city of man.

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NOTES

[1]As Sicherman notes, in *The First Anniversarie* the pronoun "thou" refers to the external audience of the world; in *The Second Anniversarie*, the pronoun refers to the soul (see 130).—All references to the *Anniversaries* cite *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, vol. 6.

[2]These dialogues include, among others, Augustine's *Soliloquia*, *De Quantitate Animae*, *De Immortalitate Animae*, and *De Magistro*.

[3]For Augustinian readings of the *Anniversaries*, see Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*; Tayler; and Guibbory. For Donne's Augustinian debts more generally, see Friedman 437; Johnson 28-29, 36; Sherwood 112; Brooks; Ettenhuber; Masselink; Papazian; and Vessey.

[4]See Stock, *Inner Dialogue* 1-17.

[5]Most scholars interpret Augustine as using the term *anamnesis* metaphorically to describe memory's capaciousness. Memory not only functions as the basis of identity (see O'Daly 148-51) but also forms the introspective space of divine encounter (see Stock, *Augustine* 212-32, esp. 226). Borrowing the term from Augustine, Donne refers to *anamnesis* in an early sermon, describing the intellectual and spiritual powers of memory: "Plato plac'd *all learning* in the memory; wee may place *all Religion* in the memory too: All knowledge, that seems new to day, says *Plato*, is but a remembering *that*, which your soul knew before" (*Sermons* 2: 74).

[6]"Within ancient philosophy, which provides Augustine with his point of departure in the genre, the paternity for the soliloquy belongs to the Platonic dialogues […]. The presumption of this [dialectical] questioning is that the required knowledge is present but hidden in memory; its expression requires an interior dialogue in order to become apparent to the subject" (Stock, *Inner Dialogue* 67).

[7]Augustine distinguishes between *scientia*, which offers knowledge of temporal and mutable things necessary to live in the world, and *sapientia*, which pertains to immutable truth (see *De Trinitate* 12.17).

[8]See *Soliloquies* I.12; cf. Stock, *Inner Dialogue* 76-78.

[9]The imperative "Ascende" is repeated throughout the final chapters of *On the Magnitude of the Soul* (*De Quantitate Animae*). For a more detailed account of this influential passage, see my "Nicholas of Cusa's Dialogue with Augustine."

[10]See O'Daly 162-63; Stock, *Inner Dialogue* 43-47.

[11]See *Civitas Dei* 11.26; *De Trinitate* 15.12. For a fuller account of the *cogito* argument in Augustine, see Matthews 29-38; O'Daly 169-71; Stock, *Augustine* 259-73; and Stock, *Inner Dialogue* 90-120.

[12]*De Trinitate* 15.10: "quisquis igitur potest intellegere uerbum non solum antequam sonet, uerum etiam antequam sonorum eius imagines cogitatione uoluantur [...] quisquis, inquam, hoc intellegere potest iam potest uidere per hoc speculum atque in hoc aenigmate aliquam uerbi illius similitudinem de quo dictum est: in principio erat uerbum, et uerbum erat apud deum, et deus erat uerbum."

[13]Sicherman (see 128-30), Schwarz (see 61-62), and more recently Targoff (see 90-105) discuss *The Second Anniversarie*'s dialectical quality; however, these discussions overlook the technique's Augustinian origins.

[14]Evetts-Secker notes that the *Anniversaries* emerge from a pivotal period in Donne's professional life, during which he weighs the possibility of a religious vocation (see 51). Despite the importance of these personal circumstances, it

nonetheless seems unwise to interpret the *Anniversaries* as purely confessional, since their ultimate purpose is to commemorate the deceased daughter of a powerful patron. Throughout this essay, I adopt Strier's critical approach to the *Holy Sonnets*; that is, I interpret *The Second Anniversarie* as offering occasional glances into the poet's thoughts.

[15]See Jordan 107; Ramie Targoff argues that the soul's desire for the body engenders this reluctance (see 88-105).

[16]The poem transforms Elizabeth Drury into the fullest realization of humanity's image-bearing sacredness, and so those passages describing her celestial state represent the poem's most sustained expressions of contemplative focus. See Netzley's essay in this volume, which interprets the refrain commemorating Elizabeth's death as part of the poem's progressing strategy of "symbolic reanimation" (39).

[17]"Returne not, my soule, from this extasee,
And meditation of what thou shalt bee […]
With whom thy conuersation must be there [in heaven].
With whom wilt thou Conuerse?" (321-22, 24-25)

[18]"Shalt thou not finde a spungy slack Diuine
Drinke and suck in th'Instructions of Great men,
And for the word of God, vent them agen?
Are there not some Courts, (And then, no things bee
So like as Courts) which, in this let vs see,
That wits and tongues of Libellars are weake,
Because they doe more ill, then these can speake?
The poyson'is gone through all" (328-35).

[19]"If thy Prince will his subiects to call thee
My Lord, and this doe swell thee, thou art than,
By being a greater, growen to be lesse Man,
When no Physician of redresse can speake,
A joyfull casuall violence may breake
A dangerous Apostem in thy brest;
And whilst thou ioyest in this, the dangerous rest,
The bag may rise vp, and so strangle thee" (474-81).

Marotti sees in these lines Donne's resentment and disappointment in having failed to achieve the political success to which he had aspired (see 244).

[20]Sicherman records the recurrence of "think" from lines 85 to 185 (see 136).

[21]While my reading implies a mind-matter dualism, Ursell's essay in this volume, by contrast, reads the poem as collapsing such dichotomies through the cohesive energy of poetic breath.

[22]See, eg., Ettenhuber 217; Harvey and Harrison 984; Lewalski 292 and Tayler 20-67.

[23]Cf. *Confessions* 12.13 and 13.15.

[24]*De Trinitate* 15.8: "*Speculantes*, dixit, per speculum videntes, non de specula prospicientes. Quod in graeca lingua non est ambiguum unde in latinam translatae sunt apostolicae litterae. Ibi quippe speculum ubi apparent imagines rerum ab specula de cuius altitudine longius aliquid intuemur etiam sono uerbi distat omnino. Satisque apparet apostolum ab speculo, non ab specula."

[25]Friedman explains the conflict by invoking the terms of *The Second Anniversarie*: "the point […] is to remind us that what most men call seeing is but to 'peepe through lattice of eyes' while true vision is the work of a faculty that lies much closer to man's spiritual essence—memory" (435).

[26]Helen B. Brooks reads the "Spheare" of the first line as a symbol of geometric equality and thus synonymous with the Trinity (see 291). While the speaker recognizes the importance of spiritual practice, his eyes aim at goals beyond the inner self.

[27]Schoenfeldt points out that this posture is "a profound violation of social decorum" (569). Sherwood notes the posture recalls that of the unconverted soul, who is turned toward earthly matters and away from God (see 107).

[28]For Friedman, the conflict of the poem represents "the spiritual power of memory attacking the defenses of articulate imagination" (442).

[29]In a Sermon of 1628, Donne interprets Paul's face-to-face encounter as expressing the perfection of the soul's heavenly understanding. While the dark glass signifies the partial, fragmented, and mediated nature of human knowledge, the latter denotes its completion and "perfection" (*Sermons* 8: 219). In earthly life, we see "obscurely in respect of that knowledge of God, which we shall have in heaven" (*Sermons* 8: 229). In heaven, "[w]e shall see all that concernes us, and see it alwayes" (*Sermons* 7: 348). For the Augustinian resonances of this sermon, see Ettenhuber 206-07.

[30]No work has done more to entrench an uncritical reading of the watchtower image than Edward W. Tayler's *Donne's Idea of a Woman*. Tayler devotes two chapters to elucidate the connotations of Donne's "watch-tow'r." While insisting on the formative influence of Augustine's *De Trinitate* to the poem's meditative exercise, Tayler avoids *De Trinitate* 15.8 in which Augustine clarifies that his use of "speculantes" refers to "looking through a mirror" and not a "watchtower." Tayler only addresses this passage in the last footnote of the last chapter titled "Watch-tow'r," saying: "Augustine's careful distinctions do not, of course, prevent him from making etymological connections" (167n26). Here Tayler asks the reader to disregard Augustine's own painstaking clarification; the result can only be a misreading of Augustine's text.

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Learning from Anniversaries: Progress, Particularity, and Radical Empiricism in John Donne's *The Second Anniversarie*[*]

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John Donne's *Anniversaries* commemorate the death of Elizabeth Drury, a young woman whom Donne never met. Although Robert Drury, Elizabeth's father, likely commissioned the poems, they appear, nonetheless, to be textbook examples of exploitative abstraction. Donne uses Drury's death to meditate on broader issues about the sinfulness of the world, the new science, and the possibilities for renovation in this life.[1] This essay argues, however, that *The Second Anniversarie* evades the charge of exploitation by advancing a radical empiricism in which particularity is not subject to an abstract universal conceived as its governor. In other words, the poem does not leave the process of abstraction alone to do its dirty work, running roughshod over Elizabeth Drury's life to make a more important point. Donne's attention to particularity challenges the notion that specific instances act as examples (or counter examples) for a larger rule. And, in turn, that challenge alters how readers should conceive of repetition, and, thus, the very temporal phenomenon that the poems commemorate—an anniversary. After all, these poems, like all poems of commemoration, are not just reminders of something that happened in the past but are also spurs and exhortations to change in the present. In that sense, they are decidedly pedagogical poems, teaching readers to learn from events by attending to the particularities of an occasion, not to the ways in which it is similar to some other happen-

[*]See the parallel articles on Donne's *The Second Anniversarie* in this issue, as well as the response by Judith Anderson.

For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debanniversaries0251.htm>.

ing or phenomenon. This essay, then, teases out the radically empirical and particular understanding of learning that these poems present, one that ends up being decidedly antinomian in its refusal to subject singularities to universal laws.

1. Universality, Particularity, and Time

Donne's *Anniversaries* are meditations on the nature of commemorative events, but they also explore the nature of temporal progress, conceived either as degeneration or renovation.[2] These poems, and *The Second Anniversarie* in particular, do not merely imagine time as a general structure that organizes experience; instead, they explore how it is that we perceive movement into the future, as opposed to recognizing its past occurrence. In *The Second Anniversarie* such perception is very much a matter of attending to concrete particularities, not so that we might treat them as examples of a universal rule, but rather so as to orient our meditations toward the future. After all, that is the nature and the promise of anniversaries: the first one always implies a second, but does so only via the repetition of specific events. That is, anniversaries are a predictable sequence of commemorative instances, but one whose connections are merely chronological and numerical. The links between moments are entirely extraneous to the particular character of both the commemorating and commemorated occasions. As such, they refuse to present their own perpetuation as the expression of a universal law that governs their development in time. In the end, these poems challenge the notion that thought (and poetry) always arrogates to itself the aim of permanence and thus necessarily includes a denigration of individual transience. In that respect, the *Anniversaries* are very much a set of poems about the futural and temporal possibilities of thinking.[3] *The Second Anniversarie* only highlights this concern when the speaker repeatedly enjoins his own soul (and sometimes, perhaps, the reader's) to "think" (85-185), in effect counseling us on how we should perceive and interpret the world, as well as on the meaning of Elizabeth Drury's exemplarity.

The poems' central conceit, of course, is that Elizabeth Drury matters, that she is more than a mere example, more than an illustration of a general truth: she acts as an epitome of or catalyst for the dilated temporal processes described, both anatomy and progress. *The First Anniversarie* insists that the world is Drury's own microcosm: "She to whom this world must it selfe refer, / As Suburbs, or the Microcosme of her" (235-36).[4] This reversal is more than wit: it reveals these poems' central preoccupation with the difficulties inherent in any relationship between particular instances and universal rules—especially within a poetics motored by metaphorical comparison. This concern is even more pressing in the second poem, which closes by describing Drury as a pattern for both life and death (see 524). Donne does more than exaggerate a young woman's significance and, thus, appropriate her real, lived experience for a larger philosophical, pedagogical, or poetic aim, an accusation lodged against the poem at least since Jonson's famous quip: "if it had been written of ye Virgin Marie it had been something" (133). Donne's use of hyperbole is figurative but does not reduce his subject to a mere figure. Drury's life and death are a particular pattern that acts as if it were an unreachable universal rule:

> Shee whose example they must all implore,
> Who would or doe, or thinke well, and confesse
> That aie the vertuous Actions they expresse,
> Are but a new, and worse edition,
> Of her some one thought, or one action […] (306-10)

Significantly, those souls who seek salvation must implore the example, not the rule or its creator. And, in turn, Drury acts as the wellspring of virtuous action, but not because she represents a governing order or possesses some divine authority. Rather, one can emulate her precisely because she does not have such authority.[5]

The concluding lines of *The Second Anniversarie* admit as much, when they describe Jesus (or, less likely, God the Father) as the ultimate authority:

> […] nor wouldst thou be content,
> To take this, for my second yeeres true Rent,
> Did this Coine beare any other stampe, then his,
> That gaue thee power to do, me to say this.
> Since his will is, that to posteritee,
> Thou shouldest for life, and death, a patterne bee,
> And that the world should notice haue of this,
> The purpose, and th'Autority is his;
> Thou art the Proclamation; and I ame
> The Trumpet, at whose voice the people came. (519-28)

Drury is an announcement that one imitates in order to be virtuous, a mediator or metaphor that one nonetheless emulates. What is striking about the second poem then, given this late appearance of a divine authority, is the extent to which Donne risks placing a reified idolatry—Jonson's quip comes to mind again—at the center of the poem's pedagogy. By doing so, however, he solves the very specific pedagogical problem of how universal ideals can act within an increasingly degenerating and atomized world. The difficulty is not simply that fallen human beings always fall short of the moral law, but that conforming oneself to a law is not the same thing as salvation. What one learns inside the poem is how to conform to an example or a metaphor and not a law—or rather how one might conform one's will to another's. And that process is one that must always take place inside of a particular time without a juridical appeal to a transcendent standard or code.

It is because the poem's pedagogical action occurs in and through a fallen world that *The Second Anniversarie* is so often concerned with the effects of time's passing, its speed, and its effects on empirical perception. The poem insists that speed fundamentally alters what it is that we perceive, in the process challenging the distinctions that would ground our temporal distinctions between past and future. It evokes an "undistinguished" speed that contracts all sequence into a single entity: "[…] speed vndistinguish'd leades / Her through those spheares, as through the beades, a string, / Whose quicke succession makes it still one thing" (208-10). If speed undistinguished makes everything one thing, does this then mean that there is no such thing

as a singular, pivotal occasion, like Drury's death or its anniversary? And is this what the progress of a soul looks like, the transition into indistinguishability? *The Second Anniversarie* exhibits an obsession with such questions. It characterizes heavenly knowing as intuitive and immediate—"In Heauen thou straight know'st all, concerning it" (299). But it also insists that the reader's soul has, or at least should have, no interest in scientific or empirical astronomical investigations—"Shee carries no desire to know, nor sense, / Whether th'Ayrs middle Region be intense" (191-92). The speaker also counsels his own soul to abandon the lessons of sensation and imagination: "When wilt thou shake of this Pedantery, / Of being taught by sense, and Fantasy?" (291-92). Yet this is also a poem that presents the perception of heaven as decidedly similar to quotidian empirical perception—"Heauen is as neare, and present to her face, / As colours are" (216-17). Thus, in shaking off sense, *The Second Anniversarie* does not counsel us to retreat from the world of degenerating particular representations depicted in *The First Anniversarie* and place our faith and hope in a future heaven of universality, in which particularity has been eliminated; rather, it offers a redeemed and, frankly, more radical empiricism in its place, one that acknowledges the central role of time in the process of knowing particular things.

The Second Anniversarie depicts universals as immediately apprehensible in their temporal arrival and departure. Drury is not a specific instance of temporal alteration within a general architecture or teleological plan because universality does not amount to an immutable rule outside of time. Instead, time appears inside of both poems as a crucial element of our empirical perception—of what and how we know—and not merely as a threat to the security of our immutable knowledge. This poem insists, then, that one does not learn against or athwart time but rather with time and its passage as a valuable positive component—and that precisely because a universal reaffirmed by examples is not really learning, so much as it is a mere recollection or recognition of the truth that was always there. Such a conceptual architecture essentially reduces an individual soul's

progress and learning to little more than an already illustrated path and, in so doing, denies the gravity of the specific perils that each soul is seeking to escape.[6] To put it another way, if there is a general providential plan at work guiding human beings toward a harmonious end, then the goal of learning is recognizing and having faith in the broader plan—and subsequently organizing particulars inside of this schematic. For Donne and his poems that is a recipe for denying the significance of singular events and individuals, the very particularities that the poems seek to remember. These poems treat anniversaries as something more than mere chronological reminders of a more important power gurgling beneath the surface of phenomena—the universal rules, plans, or rulers of which these singular instances are only imperfect instantiations.

Thus, when *The First Anniversarie* laments lost correspondences between heaven and earth, it does so not in order to condemn the new science, but rather to preserve the value and pedagogical effectiveness of particular instances:

> What Artist now dares boast that he can bring
> Heauen hither, or constellate any thing,
> So as the influence of those starres may bee
> Imprisond in an Herbe, or Charme, or Tree,
> And doe by touch, all which those starres could do?
> The art is lost, and correspondence too. (391-96)

The loss that Donne describes here is not a banal reaffirmation of chaos's reign or a general assertion about how the center cannot hold. The loss mourned in this moment is that of the power of particular instances—herbs, charms, and trees. As such, these lines conceive of particularity as something more than an illustration—after all, there are multiple mere illustrations of regeneration and degeneration in even a fallen universe. Correspondence and art mean something extremely specific in this passage: not merely an argumentative structure of exemplary instances, alongside various similarities and analogies, but the imprisonment—the capturing and holding but not the governing—of universality and its capacities inside of particularity. As such, they set out to reaffirm a radical empirical particularity in

their presentation of the importance of singular temporal instances. That matters, of course, because the afterlife portrayed in the second poem will look very different if one conceives of it not as reentering into an abstract system of correspondence already prepared, but rather as recapturing or re-embodying universals as particulars.

Given the poems' suspicion of a transcendent universality that could provide a measure for our educational progress, how do we know when we are learning? The second poem's two epistemological positions—the impulse to transcend the empirical world and its epistemologies and the drive to render this soul's progress within sensuous metaphors—are decidedly at odds and make it difficult to discern how it is one could recognize progress, development, or really any movement, in the present. Is recognizing a progress toward heaven decidedly different than the worldly, empirical seeing or knowing that the poem, sometimes, condemns? Does sense only provide particular, metaphorical approximations of the really important things, general concepts and rules? These are especially pressing questions for any examination of the nature of events and their commemoration. If particular happenings merely serve as pedagogical examples of more general truths (about the decline of the world through sin or the possibilities for redemption), then time appears as little more than a blank uniform field. *The Second Anniversarie*, I argue, considers time to be a much more transformative factor than that.

2. Radical Empiricism

As Marshall Grossman notes, the macrocosm-microcosm analogy that appears so often in Donne's verse is evidence of his obsession with the epistemological and ontological relationship between particular and universal, "one of the crucial philosophical problems of the Renaissance":

> How to relate the particular to the universal so as to produce an intelligible world by uniting appearance, which is understood to be time-bound, and thought, which seeks the stability of a truth outside time. The intelligibility

> of a world still understood according to an idealist principle, and thus conceiving of truth as a verisimilar reproduction of an ideal that remains always self-identical and comprehensive, resides in the ability of the subject to locate each particular that it encounters within the concept proper to it. Particular individuals appear as unintelligible *things* until they are subsumed under concepts. (155)

Grossman describes these poems as a lament for a lost conceptual homogeny, the identity of, and not just the analogy between, the macrocosm and microcosm (178). Donne, however, does not go gently into the good night of such a riven epistemological landscape, but rather attempts to produce a new aesthetic relationship between particular and universal, one that would not reduce the former to nothing more than a piece of evidence in a broader argument. In contrast to *The First Anniversarie*, the second poem offers a more optimistic portrait of the power of metaphor, and temporal metaphors in particular, to bridge this chasm. Donne attempts to rethink the relationship between particularity and universality so that the former is not always a resented deviation from or approximation of the latter. Such a revision also allows for the possibility of perceiving emergence and arrival even in a decaying world. As a result, we are able to do more with this world than lament its inevitable decline and postulate its ineradicable difference from the heavenly. In this respect, *The Second Anniversarie* also depicts temporality as something strikingly different than the sequential historical specificities that dominate modern criticism. It is not just that there is a contradiction between the universal injunction to "always historicize" and the examination of historical particularities. Even the notion of contradiction, dialectical or otherwise, assumes a tendency toward general harmony that remains at odds with any persistent attention to particularities: i.e., an attention to particularities that does not have an ulterior aim, taxonomic, pedagogical, or moral.

So how does one perceive, simultaneously, progress and its symbolic conclusion or condensation, especially given our flawed perception of a flawed and decaying world? If worldly particularity—the controversies of ants and matters of fact—are as irrelevant as *The*

Second Anniversarie maintains, then what makes Drury's particularity different and significant? It does seem difficult to square Drury's singular importance with the denigration of irrelevant particularities within the poem:

> What hope haue we to know our selues, when wee
> Know not the least things, which for our vse bee?
> We see in Authors, too stiffe to recant,
> A hundred controuersies of an Ant.
> And yet one watches, starues, freeses, and sweats,
> To know but Catechismes and Alphabets
> Of vnconcerning things, matters of fact […] (279-85)

In turn, how would one prevent Drury's exploitation as a mere example, as an inconsequential brick in a much larger edifice? At root, Donne's epistemological meditations here reveal an abiding concern with the essentially domineering structure of all universals; that despite the imperative to focus on the truly important objects of knowledge, doing so always risks sublating all singular happenings—like the progress of a singular, individual soul, not to mention the resurrection of its particular body—under general categories that degrade the very thing purportedly worthy of praise.

In presenting Drury's death as a contingent event that provokes more important contemplations, the subtitle to *The Second Anniversarie* only highlights Donne's obsessive concern with this problem: "Of the Progres of the Soule. Wherein: By Occasion of the Religious Death of Mistris Elizabeth Drury, the incommodities of the Soule in this life and her exaltation in the next, are Contemplated" (p. 22). This event of exaltation is simultaneously futural and finished, as "next" and the passive construction, "are [c]ontemplated," imply. And the phrase "by occasion" ambiguously designates her death as both a pivotal event and an insignificant happening.[7] The subtitle describes the event as an excuse and prompt for the mulling over of abstract lessons, but the event is not itself part of a larger argumentative whole, an instance that supports a general rule. Donne's pedagogical *précis*, accordingly,

highlights the poem's concern with that most paradoxical of epistemological ventures, a science of the concrete.

Unlike *The First Anniversarie*, which, as Catherine Gimelli Martin claims, challenges Baconian empiricism (see 169-74), *The Second Anniversarie* asks us to adopt a more radical empiricism, one that would take seriously the notion that universals are more apprehensible than particulars. That is the point of a speed that makes everything one thing: as opposed to the slow progress toward the teleological aim of universal rules (either their building or uncovering), this poem presents the accelerated, temporal perception of particulars as itself a type of knowledge. Martin's reading of *The First Anniversarie* locates Donne within a scholastic and patristic tradition at odds with the developments of the new science:

> The likelihood of an attack on Bacon becomes stronger still once the reader realizes that in order to "see" Elizabeth Drury as she really is, "no longer occluded from ou[r] view by the individuating properties of matter, which are unintelligible," one must accept the "consequences of hylomorphic theories of 'substance'" that make universals more easily perceptible than particulars in Donne's essentially scholastic system of thought […] they ["Ideas"] signified "species" or kinds in the Aristotelian/Thomistic sense of intelligible ideas or defining essences: patterns or plans that make the thing what it essentially is. In the process of anatomizing these essences or epitomes of created things, Donne is thus reaffirming the idea that scholastic universals rather than Baconian particulars are truly and enduringly "knowable." (174-75)[8]

In this reading, abstract ideas are not the exclusive province of a governing, conditioning, and categorizing mind, but rather occur at the level of material sensation. Yet instead of opting for an Aristotelian or patristic perception of a timeless universal category, *The Second Anniversarie* insists that we know only through (not despite) the temporal passing of events. The universal is not a buttress against the ravages of decay; and neither is a sense datum the rock of the real from which one might erect an epistemological edifice. Such induction dreams of the same escape from temporal disturbance that one sees in a transcendent rationalism. In this poem, sense, imagination, and even reason do not gesture beyond time or fight against its depredations in

the name of permanence. We know moments, occasions like Drury's death, which require that we reconceive temporal progress as the universal that we know and not as a threat to a static notion of eternity. Such a seemingly subtle alteration, though, has important consequences for how we conceive the process of learning, as well as the error or inadequacy it seeks to remedy.

Donne's *Second Anniversarie* suggests that we are learning neither from sense nor from imagination, but rather that we learn directly—without a governing intermediary—from time, especially the experience of temporal arrivals. The poem shows us an alternative vision of how we might contemplate and conceive time, as something other than a meaningless substrate populated occasionally by important moments, which always only fall back into and confirm the tyranny of time's universal conditioning structure. Donne's poem rejects this model because the world does not conform to the structure of logical argumentation, with supporting examples leading to general truths: the world is not a problem to be solved or an argument to be won. This is especially so given the fallen nature not only of the world itself but also of the epistemological tools used to comprehend it. In other words, *The Second Anniversarie* does not just pose the question of whether we experience individual elements or the broader patterns of which they form a part; it also offers an alternative notion of what knowledge about the world entails, rejecting the spatial, architectural model of category recognition in favor of one keyed to the repetition and modification of particular instances. Such an understanding requires that universals be something more than the additive product of particular parts or the imposition of a governing structure onto disorderly phenomena. Instead, if we are going to learn from a poem or an occasion, that means perceiving its pattern of regularity (not rule) as an event in the present, as opposed to recognizing it after the fact, as a result of various deductive procedures. In this respect, Donne attempts to take seriously both the identity of microcosm and macrocosm in the world as we experience it and the possibility of real epistemological epiphanies.

The Second Anniversarie shares with its predecessor a suspicion of analytic partition, but it does not merely trumpet the value of universal categories at the expense of atomized "matters of fact" (285). As we have seen, both poems ask us to reimagine the relationship between universal and particular. But just as important is the rationale for this reimagining. *The Second Anniversarie* directs this suspicion not toward skepticism and the limits of knowledge but rather toward the threat to harmony that any brand of governance implies:

> But as in Mithridate, or iust perfumes,
> Where all good things being met, no one presumes
> To gouerne, or to triumph on the rest,
> Onely because all were, no part was best.
> And as, though all doe know, that quantities
> Are made of lines, and lines from Points arise,
> None can these lines or quantities vnioynt,
> And say this is a line, or this a point,
> So though the Elements and Humors were
> In her, one could not say, this gouernes there. (127-36)

These lines insist that extracting a governing principle from the welter of empirical quantities and elements is not only a mistakenly prideful epistemological quest; doing so also misunderstands the nature of a redeemed soul and world. The poem certainly condemns skepticism for mistakenly giving value to the world's decaying carcass: "For though to erre, be worst, to try truths forth, / Is far more busines, then this world is worth. / […] He honors it too much that thinks it nought" (53-54, 84). However, skepticism alone does not account for the errors in this line of inquiry. By insisting that all elements and humors are contained within the microcosm of Elizabeth Drury, these lines reveal not just the impossibility but also the irrelevance of locating a governing authority. One cannot say which element governs inside of Drury because answering such a question is pointless, not just impossible: either we already know this authority or its identity is irrelevant. In effect, this passage shows that behind analysis always lurks the desire to determine who governs, thus transforming knowledge of the world into control of that world. Donne suggests, in

contrast, that universals are not laws that rule particulars; and he does so in order to wrest our knowledge of the world away from a system fundamentally contaminated by questions of authority and power.[9]

In this sense, Donne's *Second Anniversarie* grapples with and, ultimately, rejects the ideological blueprint of royal progresses, designed as they are to demonstrate and display rule. The *Anniversaries* do not affirm recollection and recognition as the primary aims of poetry (or education), and neither do they support an epistemology in which universals govern particulars. As such, the poems' use of repetition does not signal the authoritative drumbeat of spectacular power but rather a refusal to allow the easy leap from signs in their immediate presentation to more mystical sources of authority (whether universal categories or the body of the monarch) that undergird them. In fact, *The Second Anniversarie* implies that we misread a progress when we imagine it as a representation of something else, whether the cyclical display of royal authority or the unfolding of a developmental plan. For Donne, such an interpretive gesture always presumes precisely what is at issue: how to perceive and learn from the temporal movement that occurs right in front of our eyes.[10]

Donne's poem attempts to thwart an empiricism that always knows where it is headed—toward governing resemblances and overarching regulations, the timeless understanding that Grossman anatomizes. Thus, it replicates a philosophical controversy about the nature of perception and virtuous action that extends back at least to Aquinas. Terry Eagleton describes this debate as a search for a "science of the concrete," a science that ultimately becomes intimately bound up with the aesthetic:

> For Aquinas, this [an understanding of individual things] is the function of *phronesis*, which involves a non-intellectual knowledge of concrete particulars, and which is the lynchpin of all the virtues. It is a kind of sensory or somatic interpretation of reality, a point relevant to what I shall have to say later of Aquinas's reflections on the body. Much later, at the heart of the European Enlightenment, a science of the sensory particular will be born to counter an abstract universalism, and its name is aesthetics. Aesthetics be-

> gins life as that oxymoronic animal, a science of the concrete, investigating the logical inner structure of our corporeal life. (3)

This science of the concrete has an equally apt formulation in the "radical empiricism" of Gilles Deleuze, which opposes empiricism to a rationalist attachment to final ends.[11] For Deleuze, rationalism carries with it an impulse to finality, of being done with history before it has even begun (see *Expressionism in Philosophy* 149). Neither Donne's anatomy of degeneration nor his model of the soul's progress submits to such final confidence.

These are poems that treat process in its particularity, without a guiding telos, either immanent or imminent. For Deleuze, it is the function of final causes within time that fundamentally distinguishes the radical empiricism of Spinoza from its other variants, in the work of Leibniz, for example:

> As opposed to that of Leibniz, Spinoza's dynamism and "essentialism" deliberately excludes all finality. Spinoza's theory of *conatus* has no other function than to present dynamism for what it is by stripping it of any finalist significance. If Nature is expressive, it is not so in the sense that its different levels symbolize one another; sign, symbol and harmony are excluded from the true powers of Nature. (*Expressionism in Philosophy* 233)

Finality gives a governing order to the world and, in so doing, allows for the transformation of particularity into exemplarity. It is precisely this movement, the movement of an empiricism securely purposive and, ultimately, self-annihilating in its quest for generality, that Donne's poems attempt to evade. The anniversaries of Elizabeth Drury's death matter because they are repetition without significance, because they allow for a focus on the abstract processes of degeneration and progress without the purportedly necessary oscillation between particular and general, means and ends, material sign and its correspondent ideational meaning. It is in this sense, then, that Donne attempts a radical empiricism: by turning the perception of abstractions themselves into particularities, not the reduction of these particularities to inconsequential steps or illustrations—i.e., examples.

In Virginia Woolf's estimation, Donne's penchant for particularity challenges the Elizabethan drive toward a seemly, if nonetheless baroque general order—metaphor conceived as a series of harmonious correspondences:

> The typical Elizabethan with his love of eloquence, with his longing for brave new words, tended to enlarge and generalize. He loved wide landscapes, heroic virtues, and figures seen sublimely in outline or in heroic conflict […] Donne's genius was precisely the opposite of this. He diminished; he particularized. Not only did he see each spot and wrinkle which defaced the fair outline; but he noted with the utmost curiosity his own reaction to such contrasts and was eager to lay side by side the two conflicting views and to let them make their own dissonance. It is this desire for nakedness in an age that was florid, this determination to record not the likenesses which go to compose a rounded and seemly whole, but the inconsistencies that break up semblances, the power to make us feel the different emotions of love and hate and laughter at the same time, that separate Donne from his contemporaries. (28-29)

Woolf here highlights Donne's disavowal of the very unifying finality that Deleuze describes. It is not that metaphor and resemblance no longer occur in Donne's work but that their governing aim no longer prescribes their future. Instead of subordinating particularity to such a categorical master, always working in the subterranean depths, Donne treats it as a temporal event with an open future. Particularity is not the repetition, with a difference, of a more general rule or resemblance; neither does it accumulate and allow for later deductions. As such, this poem imagines learning's epiphanies as something more than the revelation that everything novel or surprising has always already occurred, *in potentia*, that what looks like change and progress is really only the adumbration of a plan to which one was not privy. Despite Donne's penchant for thinking of the world through and in metaphor, these poems do not treat metaphor, or art in general, as a mechanism for conditioning phenomena into submission.[12] Figures themselves occur within this world, and not simply as levers for the opportunistic exercise of our own governing power.

3. Repetition, Singularity, and Rule

Repetition is pivotal to Donne's pedagogical aims, a fact that we often mistake insofar as we conceive of it as little more than an unfortunate means to an end: e.g., a sop to human intellectual weaknesses or a reaction against loss. *The Second Anniversarie* undoubtedly repeats and modifies the first: that is the point of an annual commemoration. However, the refrains within each poem also attempt something more ambitious than reminding us of something we might happen to have forgotten. They return readers, yet once more, to the central facilitating role that time has in Donne's conception of learning and knowledge.

Joseph Hall's dedicatory poem to *The Second Anniversarie*, "The Harbinger to the Progres," insists that Donne achieves his own progress by repeating and remembering Drury's. More importantly, he characterizes this achievement as a type of immanent wandering that also, simultaneously, issues in elevation, a mounting upwards:

> So while thou mak'st her soules Hy progresse knowne
> Thou mak'st a noble progresse of thine owne,
> From this worlds carcasse hauing mounted hie
> To that pure life of Immortalitie;
> Since thine aspiring thoughts themselues so raise
> That more may not beseeme a creatures praise,
> Yet still thou vow'st her more; and euery yeare
> Mak'st a new progresse, while thou wandrest here;
> Still vpwards mount; and let thy makers praise
> Honor thy Laura, and adorne thy laies. (27-36)

The dedicatory poem echoes the evocation of itinerant royal progresses early in *The First Anniversarie*: "When that Queene ended here her progresse time, / And, as t'her standing house, to heauen did clymbe" (7-8). In both of these cases, the royal progress is something more complicated than the repetitive demonstration of power. "Progress" in each case connotes a wandering, repetitive movement, certainly, but it also issues in an elevating change: climbing to her heavenly house in the case of the first poem; mounting upwards in the case of "The Harbinger to the Progres." "Progress," in this instance, does not mean

the inexorable improvement of later centuries. The second poem in particular insists on a repetitive learning that is more than a mere reminder of the same universal laws or a revelation of the momentarily hidden. Repetition does not promise us access to a universal, governing category but rather affirms the importance of temporal reoccurrence (and not just commemoration) for any notion of learning that is not going to run roughshod over particularity.

The refrains in these poems, "Shee, shee is dead, shee's dead" (183, 238, 326) in *The First Anniversarie* and "Shee, shee is gone; shee is gone" (81) in *The Second Anniversarie*, emphasize Drury's absence, but in so doing work against the entropic decline or renovating progress that each poem charts. Yet the refrains differ in important respects. In the first poem, the repetition is almost identically stated throughout: "Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou knowest this, / Thou knowest […]" (183-84). The only change is the contraction of "knowest" to "knowst" (238-39, 325-26). *The Second Anniversarie* is a much more multifarious affair. The first instance of the refrain resembles the format of the first poem: "Shee, shee is gone; shee is gone; when thou knowest this […]" (81). Subsequent iterations, however, dilate this compact formula:

> Shee, shee, thus richly, and largely hous'd, is gone […] (247)
>
> Shee, shee, not satisfied with all this waite,
> (For so much knowledge, as would ouer-fraite
> Another, did but Ballast her) is gone […] (315-17)
>
> Shee whom we celebrate, is gone before.
> Shee, who had Here so much essentiall ioye,
> As no chance could distract, much lesse destroy […]
> […] shee to Heauen is gone […] (448-50, 467)
>
> Shee, who by making full perfection grow,
> Peeces a Circle, and still keepes it so,
> Long'd for, and longing for'it, to heauen is gone […] (507-09)

On the one hand, these refrains occur with increasing frequency in *The Second Anniversarie*, implying acceleration, Drury's or our ever-

quickening approach to heaven. On the other hand, the expansion of apposite modifications between "shee" and "is gone" implies deferral. Together, these elements—the increasing frequency of an ever-expanding refrain—appear less like a static bulwark against decay than as an attempt to incorporate, inside of repetition itself, precisely these moments of expansive subordination.

As Sarah Powrie maintains, Donne uses the new science within his poetry as a way to expand the parameters of a static Neoplatonic world, not merely as a means of critiquing or overturning it:

> Donne's world harmony abandons moderated restraint in favor of unceasing growth and ever augmenting intensity […]. Rather than refer to the perimeter of a circle to illustrate nature's designs, Donne describes how the central point of concentrated intensity unfolds outward into an image of rounded fullness. His celestial, seasonal, and elemental world music is represented in growing patterns of circles. (233)

However, in contrast to her reading of the watchtower image in *The Second Anniversarie*, in her essay in this volume, I suggest that Donne does not use the distractions of empiricism to avoid a more important internal spiritual reflection. That is, I tend not to consider the poem as marked by a series of digressions, errors, or failures. *The Second Anniversarie* here too is interested in a type of expansion, in this case expanding the parameters of what can be seen:

> Thou look'st through spectacles; small things seeme great,
> Below; But vp vnto the watch-towre get,
> And see all things despoyld of fallacies:
> Thou shalt not peepe through lattices of eies,
> Nor heare through Laberinths of eares, nor learne
> By circuit, or collections to discerne. (293-98)

In this case, the watchtower rectifies the lack of proportion inherent in the inductive reasoning that attends empirical perception, not any fundamental weakness in empiricism itself. That is, it is the circuitousness of the collections that Donne here seeks to remedy, insisting that what one sees from the watchtower is a whole entity, in proper

proportion. However, just as importantly, this perception occurs as a single, instantaneous particularity.

The poem, then, does not just offer us a self-reflexive formalist paradox, a digressive and expansive form jarring against a content interested in speed. By co-opting expansion, the refrain, as a formal element, allows us to treat a universal as a particularity, one apprehensible within the formal repetitions that characterize our immanent, routine experiences. The poem treats the apprehension of events as something that occurs within poems, in the present, as we read them. It rejects the notion that literature is primarily the representation of an exterior world of really important occasions and happenings, of things and their qualities. It thus also rejects the notion that we should be looking for verification of our empirical perceptions in another realm of abstract likeness or authoritative power. After all, poems are not mere windows onto more basic empirical stimuli, but contain and are empirical stimuli themselves. Events, then, are alike in the temporal aspect of their occurrence, their adverbs, not in the represented qualities that their components possess upon arrival, their adjectives.

The Second Anniversarie does delay a complete, holistic perception into the future. Thus, the poem maintains that it is in heaven that we know immediately: "In Heauen thou straight know'st all, concerning it, / And what concerns it not, shall straight forget" (299-300). But this heavenly knowing is also a live possibility in the present, in part as a consequence of the poem's decidedly quotidian metaphorical depiction of it. The speaker describes a "long-short Progresse" (219) and a third birth that revolves around a face-to-face perception or even revelation. Significantly, this immediate experience is also very much like everyday empirical perception:

> So by the soule doth death string Heauen and Earth,
> For when our soule enioyes this her third birth,
> (Creation gaue her one, a second, grace,)
> Heauen is as neare, and present to her face,
> As colours are, and obiects, in a roome
> Where darknesse was before, when Tapers come. (213-18)

Donne does not make things easy for us here. The second simile explaining heaven's proximity is temporal: it is as near as objects that appear when light enters a dark room. The first is probably spatial: heaven is as near as colors to our immediate perception. The temporal simile negates what the spatial one initially offered: immediacy as spatially present transparency. The second, temporal simile makes nearness or proximity a matter of arrival, not a matter of presence or experiential readiness-to-hand. And it is this innovation—the rendering of proximity as a matter of temporal expectation as opposed to sensory presence—that enables the apprehension of universals in the present, and not just in a postmortem future of intuitive immediacy.

Once an entity comes into being, it locates itself within an entire qualitative taxonomy. Donne's poem suggests, however, that arrivals themselves are universal. Human beings can perceive the event of arrival, when an entity emerges or reveals itself. When they do so, they are not recognizing a universal concept, but perceiving and apprehending it. It is not just that all being is really becoming, but that becoming is an apprehensible, abstract development that is also perceivable as a particularity. Such a perception of development as it occurs, in the present, is the ultimate effect of the dilated refrains in *The Second Anniversarie*: they reoccur, but without numerical regularity, either in their size or in their frequency. As such, they insist that general patterns themselves are not the endgame of knowledge but rather a way station that requires its own particular attention. The simile on heavenly knowing's temporal arrival also emphasizes this phenomenon: even if universals are always already there, hiding in the dark, it is their temporal appearance, an anticipated illumination or even epiphany, that we know. In this poem, that anticipatory gesture prevents such knowledge from being confined only to a life after death.[13]

Donne, then, presents two apparently different accounts of the human perception of knowledge, salvation, and joy's arrival. It is either right there at hand, immediate like colors; or it is right there at hand, only in need of an enlightening to make it apparent. He initially

insists that arrival itself connotes impermanence: "All casuall ioye doth loud and plainly say, / Onely by comming, that it can away" (485-86). Yet *The Second Anniversarie* also holds out the possibility of a permanent, present arrival of joy: "Ioy of a soules arriuall neere decaies; / For that soule euer ioyes and euer staies" (489-90). These lines do not merely maintain that, once a soul arrives in heaven, its joy is permanent; it is the celebration of arrival that never decays, the very event that Donne's *Second Anniversarie* purportedly commemorates. Moreover, this joy is not statically repeated: "This kind of ioy doth euery day admit / Degrees of grouth, but none of loosing it" (495-96).[14] Just as importantly, this growth is not mere proliferation or addition for "No Ioye enioyes that man, that many makes" (434). Through this simile about coinage, Donne shows that the expansion of which the poem speaks is not merely the colonization of the world via a multiplication of metaphors, analogies, or examples—i.e., the expansion of the domain in which a general rule governs. Instead, expansion connotes an increase in amplitude or intensity, the significance and power of a particular instance.

What would it mean to celebrate an arrival that also constantly expands in this fashion? An arrival, of course, would seem to be punctual, an event that can only be anticipated or lamented after the fact, never experienced. Yet in this poem, it is also an occasion endlessly repeated and capable not only of commemoration but even of symbolic reanimation in the present. That figurative repetition is how we perceive universality in an infinite universe: generalities are not there to act as moderating restraints on particulars, precisely because they would have to anticipate and cover that very spatial and temporal infinity. They are, in sum, neither legislators nor laws. Donne's *Second Anniversarie* asks us to conceive of universals as a species of expansive repetition, as very much like commemorating an anniversary again, for the second time. Similarity and likeness occur in these poems, but such occurrences do not rely on a fixed table of unreachable, timeless resemblances. In this respect, this second poem ceases to resent the world of which it is a part, relentlessly pawing

after the subterranean truth that would explain, and thus stop, all of this repetition. It also conceives an empiricism that would not be mired in a mere probabilistic particularity, trying to outwit, gamble on, or otherwise lord it over the future.

The radicality of Donne's empiricism resides in his refusal to accept the notion that universals rule particulars, that we should imagine the world and its regulation as analogous to a political model of sovereignty. Moreover, he refuses to treat universality as the telos of particularity. Here too is a radical empiricism in that it refuses to subsume itself under generality, dynamic or static, in the future. The *Anniversaries* do not present phenomena as in need of abstract conditions for their explanation and sorting. A real and radical empiricism would look at the world and observe its universal regulations. It would not look at the world and assume that it lacks rule. Donne's verse, then, imagines universals as abstractions that operate alongside their particular instantiations. Instead of crisis and its ultimate heavenly solution, *The Second Anniversarie* offers an immanent vision of the world's reproduction and regeneration. The result is an empiricism that considers the repeated rearticulation of regularity as part of its ambit, that we reanimate even the laws of nature over the course of their purported discovery.

The poems' refrains and repetitions reaffirm this position by insisting that one is not trying to locate a reassuring series of similarities in order to buttress or form a universal. That is, one honors and seeks to reproduce Drury's virtue only by refusing to chalk it up to a rule. In this respect, the second poem's pedagogy amounts to what Deleuze calls a "true repetition":

> For exchange implies only resemblance, even if the resemblance is extreme. Exactness is its criterion, along with the equivalence of exchanged products. This is the false repetition which causes our illness. True repetition, on the other hand, appears as a singular behavior that we display in relation to that which cannot be exchanged, replaced, or substituted—like a poem that is repeated on the condition that no word may be changed. It is no longer a matter of equivalence between similar things, it is not even a matter of an

> identity of the Same. True repetition addresses something singular, unchangeable, and different, without "identity." (*Logic of Sense* 287)

The danger that Deleuze describes here is not that of uniformity, but rather of a world in which truly valuable events never really reoccur. *The Second Anniversarie* offers a similar portrait of governing universals: they amount to little more than convenient taxonomic fictions of power, reducing us all to nominalists and authoritarians. Anniversaries ask us to repeat, not merely to commemorate, and in so doing they demand a respect for the singular instance that Donne finds at the heart of both learning and salvation.

In this poem, the refrains work to repeat and rearticulate singular and universal rules. They are not then an insertion of hypotactic order into an otherwise endless paratactic sequence of couplets. Donne's use of the refrain doubles the process of annual commemoration: significant and arbitrary simultaneously, an anniversary gives to empirical perception a dignity founded on the conflation of particular and universal, or rather the treating of universals as particulars. The result is the conception of anniversaries as creative and worthy of attention, precisely insofar as they eliminate the distinction between *chronos* and *kairos*—the postulation of a meaningless slate of quantity over which quality might be overlain. In this respect, *The Second Anniversarie* allows us to imagine empiricism as something other than a system of governance or a mechanism of expropriation: that is, as politics or economics. The poem asks us to stop imagining transformation, renovation, and creation as the imposition of a law or the exercise of a power. In Donne's hands, the perception of progress requires an almost antinomian empiricism, one that might finally allow us to treat a repeated event as something other than an example.

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NOTES

[1]For a strong condemnation of Donne's abstracting tendencies, see Docherty 227: "Donne's remark here indicates the admission of a guilt: the poem pretends to be about Elizabeth Drury, a commemoration of that person; but in fact it is about an idealized notion of woman and has worked to commemorate the name of Donne rather than that of Drury." For Donne's own retort to Ben Jonson on this matter, recounted in Jonson's conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden, see Jonson 133: "he [Jonson] told Mr Donne, if it had been written of ye Virgin Marie it had been something to which he had answered that he described the Idea of a Woman and not as she was."

[2]For the argument that the *Anniversaries* exhibit structural similarities to Ignatian meditative practices, see Martz 218-48.

[3]For the argument that criticism of *The Second Anniversarie* has not attended adequately to its futural orientation, see Targoff 1494.

[4]All references to the *Anniversaries* cite *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, vol. 6. Unless otherwise noted, all parenthetical references are to line numbers.

[5]In this respect, my argument echoes Jeanne Shami's contention that Elizabeth Drury's ordinariness contrasts with the poems' tendencies toward hyperbole (see 224). Shami, though, also characterizes Donne's practice in both the *Anniversaries* and the sermons as one of looking for ordinary and accessible examples (see 221). I argue here that these poems exhibit a much more extensive critique of exemplarity than Shami's argument allows.

[6]For the argument that all theodicy is a cruelly immoral denial of the suffering of others, see Levinas 96: "This is pain henceforth meaningful, subordinated in one way or another to the metaphysical finality glimpsed by faith or belief in progress. Beliefs presupposed by theodicy!"

[7]For an account of these conflicting notions of occasion in Margaret Cavendish's verse, see Rogers 190-92, 205. For a discussion of the concept of occasion in *Lycidas*, see Netzley 131-35.

[8]In this passage, Martin is quoting Tayler 30-31.

[9]My argument here has been influenced by Heather Dubrow's recent contention that Donne advances narratives that are not interested in the assertion of power. She bases this claim on the prevalence of conditionals and an indeterminate futurity in Donne (see 66, 68-69).

[10]For an historical account of royal progresses in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, see Bergeron 9-104. For the contention that Elizabethan progresses were occasions for dialogue with the queen, as well as reaffirmations of her authority, see Cole 29, 40-43.

[11]For a succinct critical account of Deleuze's radical empiricism that focuses on his contention that conditions (universals) cannot be bigger than what they condition (particulars), see Smith 240: "[…] to be a condition of real experience,

the condition can be no broader than what it conditions—otherwise it would not be a condition of real experience, capable of accounting for the genesis of the real. It is for this reason that there can be no categories (at least in the Aristotelian or Kantian sense) in Deleuze's philosophy, since, as Deleuze puts it, the categories cast a net so wide that they let all the fish (the real) swim through it. But this requirement—that the conditions not be broader than the conditioned—means that the conditions must be determined along with what they condition, and thus must change as the conditioned changes."

[12]I am indebted to an email exchange with Jason Kerr for this formulation.

[13]For the related argument that *The Second Anniversarie* postulates a continuity between heaven and earth, see Shami 227-28.

[14]DiPasquale argues that these lines imply that "human beings can enter into a mode of existence in which both they and time are transformed, a state in which 'accidentall things,' such as the duration of an event, 'are permanent'" (236). She also maintains that Donne's verse consistently depicts the Thomistic notion of aeviternity—a dynamic permanence, characteristic of angels, midway between an eternity outside of time and temporality's constant substantial turmoil (see 227-29). My argument echoes hers in suggesting that Donne does not seek a transcendent universality or eternity outside of immanent temporal changes.

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The Pneumatics of Inspiration in the *Anniversary* Poems*

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1. Wind Instruments

Are John Donne's *Anniversary* poems part of a visionary, prophetic tradition? Barbara Lewalski suggests this when she interprets the last lines of *The Second Anniversarie* as a moment in which Donne seriously sees himself as the poet-prophet: "The purpose, and th'Authority is his; / Thou art the Proclamation; and I ame / The Trumpet, at whose voice the people came" (526-28).[1] For Lewalski, the speaker at the end of the two *Anniversary* poems "is the trumpet (the poet-prophet/priest/preacher) calling the people to hear the proclamation. His meditative progress becomes the means for transforming him into a fit and worthy instrument" (Lewalski 280).[2]

The Second Anniversarie's final example of triumphant *afflatus*, in which the poet-as-trumpet channels a breath of inspiration, closes a set of elegiac poems that seem to renounce the physical world. I am going to argue, however, that, despite the soul's seemingly irrepressible lift away from that decomposing, "Carkas" world (*The Second Anniversarie* 55), the *Anniversary* poems actually ground inspiration in the material realm by the end of *The Second Anniversarie*. In his poems for Elizabeth Drury, Donne ultimately describes inspiration as a reaction involving spiritual and material substances, without subordinating matter to immateriality. Drury, a vulnerable, decaying body,

*See the parallel articles on Donne's *The Second Anniversarie* in this issue, as well as the response by Judith Anderson.

For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debanniversaries0251.htm>.

becomes a permanent, inspiring force for poetry: "Onely in Heauen ioies strength is neuer spent; / And accidentall things are permanent" (*The Second Anniversarie* 487-88). But this beatific vision, I will illustrate, does not strip Drury of her materiality: the breath of inspiration itself is material.

The *Anniversary* poems thus show that Donne's vision—like the divine breath that flows through him as an instrument of God—comes from an attachment to a natural, physical world, rather than a *contemptus mundi* impulse that would turn him away from "this rotten world" (*The Second Anniversarie* 49; cf. Targoff, *John Donne, Body and Soul* 103).

I am going to shine a light on the *Anniversary* poems' specific version of poetic inspiration through the lens of Stoic physics—without suggesting that Donne himself was a thoroughgoing Stoic physicist or that the poems are primarily Stoic documents. By foregrounding a Stoic sense of *pneuma*, the poet filled with the breath of divine "Proclamation" can remain anchored in a physical realm. The *Anniversary* poems invite this Stoic reading through a constellation of themes. Firstly, Drury embodies an indeterminate, non-Aristotelean connection between spirit and matter, especially in *The First Anniversarie*, when, for example, "the worlds subtilst immateriall parts" (247) are said to be disordered by her death. Secondly, at key moments, the poem describes the soul's attachment to matter; Drury's soul is not imprisoned in her body (*The Second Anniversarie* 221), and her body has such an affinity with her soul that the speaker says "Shee, who left such a body, […] shee rather was two soules" (501, 503), so that her material body appears soul-like. Further, both poems fixate on cosmic coherence in the face of disorder, which was a central problem Stoic physics sought to resolve, precisely through a connection between spirit and matter. Donne knew about Stoic ethics, which show up in his verse epistles to Rowland Woodward and his Lenten sermon for 1628, and which implicitly relied on Stoic physics (see Barbour). Moreover, Stoic physics were "in the air" through Justus Lipsius's 1605 edition of Seneca (see Barker and Goldstein).

Donne, I argue, had his own working sense of *pneuma,* a substance conceived in Aristotelean thought and then reshaped in Stoic philosophy, which straddles the conceptual boundary between material and immaterial. Donne's *pneuma* shows up in his poems and sermons in the Latinate form "spirit," as in "A Fvnerall Elegie," a poem that describes itself as an "Organ" played by "spirits": "But those fine spirits, which doe tune and set / This Organ, are those peeces which beget / Wonder and loue" (27-29). Here again, the poet is an instrument animated by the air. This version of *pneuma* leads back to the most literal, physiological sense of inspiration: the poet's innate heat and breath, which become the building blocks for visionary poems like the *Anniversaries*. The poet's most primary biological instinct—to breathe—establishes a continuum between material and immaterial, between the physics of respiration and the "fine spirits" that appear to lift away from the physical realm with each exhalation. This continuum between material and immaterial, importantly, also holds together *The First Anniversarie* and *The Second Anniversarie*, which are, in many ways, very different poems. *The First Anniversarie*, as Harold Love argues, sets out to prove "the innate corruptness of all matter" (129) while the *Second Anniversarie* (on the surface) celebrates the soul's release from the prison-like body. But an animating current of *pneuma* or spirits, revealed fully in the final image of the poet turned divine instrument, carries through both poems, weaving itself between supposedly opposed substances.

2. *Pneuma*, Prime Matter, and Prophecy

The Stoic sense of *pneuma*, in particular, established a "dynamic continuum" between material and spiritual realms (see Sambursky). Stoic physics are based in biology, starting with the concept of a breath that holds together the living body and also sustains the entire cosmos. In his work *Stanzas*, contemporary philosopher Giorgio Agamben describes the physiological roots of this *pneuma*:

> It is plausibly from this medical doctrine [a pneumatology first proposed by Diocles of Caristo the third century BCE] that the notion of *pneuma* was derived by the Stoic thinkers, who made it the central principle of their cosmology and their psychology. In the thought of Zeno and Chrysippus the *pneuma* is a corporeal principle, a subtle and luminous body (*leptoteronn soma*), identical to fire, which pervades the universe and penetrates every living thing, in some places more and in some less: it is the principle of growth and sensation. This 'artisanal' (*technikon*) and divine fire is also the substance of the sun and of other celestial bodies, such that it can be said that the vital principle in plants and animals has the same nature as the celestial bodies and that a single principle vivifies the universe. (92)

The poet who can invoke this *pneuma* can see into a shared animating force all around him, from vegetable life to the stars. In this model, matter is the source of divinely inspired poetry, conducted through a vital spirit of *pneuma*.

From a Stoic perspective, when the poet turns himself into a holy trumpet at the end of *The Second Anniversarie*, he is a conduit for generative fire and a nourishing breath of air. This mix of air and fire may seem strange, especially since *The First Anniversarie* famously presents a world where "[t]he Element of fire is quite put out" (206), staging a collapse of an ancient elemental materialist system. And the soul (a feminized "shee" to recall Drury herself) flies past these elements in *The Second Anniversarie*:

> Shee carries no desire to know, nor sense,
> Whether th'Ayrs middle Region be intense,
> For th'Element of fire, shee doth not know,
> Whether shee past by such a place or no; (191-94)

Drury's voyage to the stars begins and ends with breath: Donne closes *The Second Anniversarie* with a divinity breathing through him while the words of the poem literally originate from the poet's breath. While Drury's death leaves the "strongest vitall spirits" (13) drawn out of the world in *The First Anniversarie*, the poet turned trumpet recomposes them as poetry and blows them back into the world by the end of the *The Second Anniversarie*. Donne's poem is itself like the pneumatic

substance that makes the soul's journey from earth to stars possible in Stoic accounts.

Before a reinfusion of vital spirit can happen, *The First Anniversarie* sets up this problem: how does a poet compose poetry when the world is decomposing around him? And how could a poet have an authentic, inspired vision when the correspondence between the matter of poetry and the material world has broken apart? As the poem says: "The art is lost, and correspondence too" (396). Stoic physics offers one possible answer—and a counterpoint to the dissolution imagined in *The First Anniversarie.* A summary description of Stoic *pneuma* explains how disintegration could lead to a return to coherence:

> The most comprehensive answer to the problem of cohesion in antiquity had been given by the Stoics. The Stoics postulated a continuous material medium, the tension and activity of which molded the cosmos into a living whole and the various parts of the cosmic animal into coherent bodies as well. Compounded of air and a creative fire, the Stoic *pneuma* was related to the concept of the "breath of life" that was thought to escape from a living body at the time of death and allow the formerly coherent body to disintegrate into its disparate parts. (Dobbs 224)[3]

Drury's death, from a Stoic perspective, would be precisely a kind of expiration that then leads from decomposition to recomposition. *The First Anniversarie* is about decay and an elemental collapse, leaving the speaker to observe: "So did the world from the first houre decay" (201). But the poet's labor transforms expiration back into inspiration, the creative energy to make a poem, which turns out to be *The Second Anniversarie* itself. Near the ending of *The Second Anniversarie*, the speaker finds a counterpoint to the decay emphasized in *The First Anniversarie*: "Ioy of a soules arriuall neere decaies" (489). The seeming opposition between an impermanent decaying world and a permanent heaven does not hold together in the poet's vision; instead, a non-dualist perspective allows matter to recompose itself in heaven.

Stoic monist physics dovetail with Neoplatonic accounts of divine, "frenzied" thought, like that of the poet-prophet. Again, Agamben weaves together the philosophical strands:

> If in Neoplatonic and Stoic pneumatology *pneuma* and phantasy frequently appear assimilated in a singular convergence, in the *De insomniis* of Synesius they are fused without residue in the idea of a 'phantastic spirit' (*phantastikon pneuma*), the subject of sensation, dreams, divination, and divine influences, in whose sign the exaltation of the phantasy as mediator between corporeal and incorporeal, rational and irrational, human and divine, is accomplished. (93)

Pneuma—here connected to divination—is a breathing space where the material world and the poet's visionary world coincide. Walter Pagel, in his history of Paracelsian physiology and alchemy, points to Stoicism as a philosophical current that emphasized matter's "ambivalent" nature: "In Stoicism also emphasis had been laid on the ambivalent—neither corporeal nor spiritual—character of 'Prime Matter'" (Pagel 84).[4] Elizabeth Drury, who was matter perfected when alive, herself embodies this ambivalence. Stoic materialism's ambivalence, again, allows for spiritual and corporeal to coincide without opposition.[5] The difference between body and soul becomes vapor thin in "The Funerall Elegie":

> One, whose cleare body was so pure, and thin,
> Because it neede disguise no thought within.
> T'was but a through-light scarfe, her minde t'enroule,
> Or exhalation breath'd out from her soule. (59-62)[6]

When Donne writes of Drury's death in *The First Anniversarie* that "the worlds subtilst immateriall parts / Feele this consuming wound" (247-48), he describes a global soul-sickness that cuts across the material and immaterial divide: "immateriall parts" behave like matter, susceptible to corruption. These moments run against the grain that superficially opposes body and soul in the *Anniversary* poems.

Further, in the *Anniversary* poems, matter's ambivalent nature is expressed through poetry itself. At the end of *The First Anniversarie*, Donne claims that poetry has a "middle nature," neither body nor soul:

> Nor could incomprehensiblenesse deterre
> Me, from thus trying to emprison her.

> Which when I saw that a strict graue could do,
> I saw not why verse might not doe so too.
> Verse hath a middle nature: heauen keepes soules,
> The graue keeps bodies, verse the fame enroules. (469-74)

Both *Anniversary* poems end with the poet commenting on his own work as a poetic maker. *The First Anniversarie* establishes poetry as a special kind of matter that cannot be equated entirely with either bodies or souls. The closing "Proclamation" lines of *The Second Anniversarie* recast both poems as the work of a poet-prophet. Inspired, poetic praise thus inhabits a pneumatic in-between space, restricted neither to the raw matter of a grave nor the wholly spiritual. The poet-prophet praises "Shee, of whom th'Auncients seem'd to prophesie" (175) with this intermediary poetic matter.

3. Fire in the Lungs

The pneumatics I am proposing for the *Anniversary* poems also evolve out of the multiple meanings of *pneuma* or *spiritus* in the early modern period, including its Christian theological versions centered on the Holy Spirit. Stoic *pneuma* could be coupled with the idea of a Holy Spirit or *spiritus*, which again appeared as a mix of air and fire in prophetic speech. Donne could think between the classical material substance of *pneuma* and the New Testament event of glossolalia. In a sermon given on Whitsunday (Acts 10:44, "While Peter yet spake these words the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word"), the anniversary of Pentecost, Donne explains the significance of the Spirit that falls: "But Cecidit, He fell, so, as that he possessed them, enwrapped them, invested them with a penetrating, with a powerfull force; And so, he fell upon them All" (*Sermons* 5: 53). The falling Spirit here sounds like a Platonic theory of *furor poeticus*, and the scene alludes to a Biblical passage that emphasizes fire and air (Acts 2).[7]

Donne's vision needs this version of air and fire, even if his hyperbolic praise describes the elements as raw, disordered matter in *The*

First Anniversarie's anatomy: "For Ayre, and Fire but thicke grosse bodies were, / And liueliest stones but drowsie, and pale to her" (367-68). Air and fire appear again as the poet reckons with the suddenly unbalanced elements in *The Second Anniversarie*:

> Haue not all soules thought
> For many ages, that our body'is wrought
> Of Ayre, and Fire, and other Elements?
> And now they thinke of new ingredients. (263-66)

Considering the competing materialisms available in Donne's cultural moment, these "ingredients" could be Paracelsian salt, sulphur, or mercury; they could also be Epicurean atoms. Pneumatic inspiration, however, mixing monism with glossolalia, was one way to reconcile this collapse of elemental materialism's coherence and affirm a unified creative energy to which visionary poetry could be attuned.

In *The Second Anniversarie*, the speaker detours from hyperbolic praise to contemplate infected lungs. In this moment, before Donne becomes a trumpet blowing *pneuma,* he imagines a coughing fit: "And for the putrid stuffe, which thou dost spit, / Knowst thou how thy lungs have attracted it?" (273-74). Donne emphasizes the materiality of air in the lungs through this vivid, if gross, physiological mystery. The mystery is how "stuffe" could come out of the lungs without an obvious way for it to get into them in the first place. Although this mystery is supposed to be irrelevant and blindly worldly, the fact that the mystery is biological and focused on the lungs makes it stand out in a poem about the physical world and a divinely inspired creation (both Drury and the poem itself about her). Donne uses the infected lungs as an example of the "piercing of substances" (276), where matter collides and substances mix. This line is the most Stoic moment in the poem, as Herbert Grierson notes: "this actual penetration of one substance by another was the Stoic as opposed to the Aristotelian doctrine of mixture of substance" (273). Lungs, then, are a place where Stoic concepts, like monism, are tested.

In the process, a constellation forms out of literal breath, inspired poetry, and contested materialisms. Lungs are physical: they emit

"stuff" and they draw together language and air, intellect, and element. Helkiah Crooke's physiology offers an etymology connecting the term *pneuma* to the body: "The Lungs which are the instruments both of the voice and also of respiration, the Grecians cal *Pneumones*, because of the reception of the ayre which they call *pneuma*, or from a word which signifieth breath, for by breathing inward they drawe ayre, and by breathing outward doe put it foorth againe" (Crooke 384). In Crooke's physiological definition, *pneuma* is about air, breath, and language. Lungs are the poet's instruments and the literal conduits of inspiration.

In *The Second Anniversarie*, Donne asks his readers to meditate on their own last breaths: "Thinke thy selfe laboring now with broken breath, / And thinke those broken and soft Notes to bee / Diuision, and thy happiest Harmonee" (90-92). Thus, in the *Anniversary* poems, poetic creativity emerges out of decomposition or entropy at death; the broken breath alternates with harmonious exhalation, like the "exhalation breath'd out from her soule" (62) in "A Funerall Elegie." Drury's body made of breath here fits the *Anniversaries*' pattern of undoing strict divisions between body and soul, while reinforcing matter's fundamental ambivalence.

4. Donne's Trumpet and Orpheus's Lute

The poem that ends with the poet turned into an instrument of God begins with another instrument played by the air. This version of *afflatus* appears at the beginning of *The Second Anniversarie*, when a lute plays itself as its strings crack:

> Or as a Lute, which in moist weather, rings
> Her knell alone, by cracking of her strings.
> So strugles this dead world, now shee is gone;
> For there is motion in corruption. (19-22)

These lines' harmony is uncanny, sounding out of thin air as they describe decay. Donne here evokes, if indirectly, the lute-playing

archetypal inspired poet Orpheus, who travels to the land of the dead and who continues to sing after his own death. The Orphic emblem recalls Sidney's association of Orpheus with devotional poetry: "the learned Emanuel Tremellius and Franciscus Junius do entitle the poetical part of the Scripture. Against these none will speak that hath the Holy Ghost in due holy reverence. In this kind, though in a full wrong divinity, were Orpheus, Amphion, Homer in his Hymns, and many other, both Greeks and Romans" (86). Of course, "corruption" seems to be the antithesis of praise and permanence. But the lute's chord is struck by the atmosphere, by air, which allows the instrument to be played without a human actor in the scene. The atmospheric *pneuma* that surrounds and inhabits everything—in Cicero's summary of *pneuma*, it is connected to meteorology (*On the Nature of Gods* 2.19)—strikes the chord. *Pneuma* is atmospheric; it is inhaled, it passes through things, animates them, like air blown through a trumpet. Drury, who confounds the difference between material and immaterial, is the same force as the atmosphere that hauntingly plays a lute.

The poet too can be something like the lute played by the atmosphere. Drury is the divinely inspired speech that runs through the poet-prophet: "Thou art the Proclamation; and I ame / The Trumpet, at whose voice the people came" (527-28). Certainly, at one level of interpretation, Donne asks readers to recognize the difference between the worldly lute and the heavenly *afflatus* of the trumpet. But these two figures of inspiration still harmonize with each other, and readers can also learn to sense the affinity between them. The physical phenomena that seem corrupt and affect the lute are not of an entirely different order to the spiritual vision of Drury as trumpeted proclamation. The "accident" that makes sounds becomes a "permanent" thing: a prophetic proclamation. Like the lute, the poet is played by an inhuman force, and the poem that results continues to sound without him. The divinity was (and is) in the air all along. Similarly, the anatomy of the world and the progress of the soul harmonize with each other. Although matter is explicitly corruptible in *The First Anniversarie* and abandoned in *The Second Anniversarie*, the two poems' shared

poetic matter is an incorruptible, material substance. And in both poems, Donne is the visionary poet-prophet, arriving at this persona by embracing poetic matter.

At the conclusion of *The First Anniversarie*, Donne answers his own question: "What Artist now dares boast that he can bring / Heauen hither, or constellate any thing[?]" (391-92). Donne, who understood rarified air to become fire, was the artist who could recognize the heat of the stars within his own lungs, and who could reignite the element of fire that had been "quite put out" (206). A modern commentator on Stoicism explains: "This identification of the creative fire of the aether with the creative heat of animate bodies was a Stoic concept (adapted from Aristotle)" (Lapidge 108).[8] The *Anniversary* poems bring the creative heat of the stars back to earth, balancing the potentially destructive force that had burned itself out. Reigniting the element of fire—in a way that does not oppose it to spirit—becomes a path toward visionary poetics.

Adding another context to this concept of celestial fire, Charles Webster explains Paracelsus' intellectual background: "One of the central ideas of the German mystics was the existence of a glimmer of fire (*seelenfunke, seelenfunklein*) in the soul, which was ignited by genuine religious experience" (137). This is a physicist's explanation of spiritual insight: divine illumination throws heat. To feel inspired is to be ignited but also to become sensitized to the body's innate heat. Again, Stoic *pneuma* could be aligned with Christian devotion in a mingling of the spiritual and the material that was available to Donne. And, for a poet, the glimmer of fire that comes with religious experience also recalls the line from Ovid's *Fasti* that Spenser quotes in his mini-treatise on inspired poetics in "October" from *The Shepheardes Calender*: "There is a god within us. It is when he stirs us that our bosom warms; it is his impulse that sows the seeds of inspiration" (96).

In the *Anniversary* Poems, Donne is as visionary as a poet like Edmund Spenser. Donne's path to what *The Shepherdes Calendar* calls "celestiall inspiration," and to a hyperbolic vision of Elizabeth Drury,

starts with the matter of breath, a pneumatics that holds together air and fire, the stuff of lungs and stars. This seventeenth-century devotional vision draws on ancient Stoicism's monism, and illustrates how Donne's prophetic poetics evoked an old strand of fundamentally biological, materialist thought, while also intersecting with the latest debates in the natural sciences.

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NOTES

[1]All references to the *Anniversaries* cite *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, vol. 6.

[2]Lewalski elaborates: "The speaker's characterization of himself as Trumpet calling the people to hear the Lord's proclamation, Elizabeth, alludes generally to the biblical metaphor of the prophet as trumpet of the Lord, blasted by inspiration and proclaiming God's will to the people (Judges 6:34, Ezekiel 33:3-5, 32). It alludes more specifically to the special responsibility and privilege of the priests under the Law to blow trumpets to assemble the congregation for war and for various civic functions, and also to solemnize feasts and celebrations" (277-78).

[3]This version of *pneuma* can be traced back to fragments from Chryssipius and other early Stoics and circulated in part through Cicero's *De natura deorum*. Importantly, it was also made available in the early seventeenth century through Justus Lipsius's translations of Seneca, including his *Physiologia Stoicorum* (1604). See Barker and Goldstein, Cooper; and Toulmin and Goodfield.

[4]Paracelsian materialism was one of the systems that disrupted traditional fourfold elemental materialism by substituting a triad of salt, sulphur, and mercury—the latter identified with *pneuma*—as the building blocks of the physical world. For a detailed account of Donne's relationship to Paracelsian physiology, see Fletcher.

[5]For an account of Donne's non-dualist approach to the body and soul, see Targoff, *John Donne: Body and Soul*.

[6]The reference is to the edition by Shawcross.

[7]Jean Calvin's commentary on Acts 2 further explains the interaction of fire and air: "The doctrine of the gospel did not only sound in the air, but pierce into the minds of men, and did fill them with an heavenly heat (and burning)" (76).

[8]He elaborates: "For the earliest Stoics (Zeno and Cleanthes) the godhead was regarded as equivalent to the fiery aether, the creative fire which is the substance

of the sun and stars (in distinction to terrestial fire, which is destructive)" (Lapidge 100).

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Matter and Spirit, Body and Soul, Time and Eternity in Donne's *Anniversaries*: A Response*

JUDITH H. ANDERSON

The essays by Ryan Netzley, Sarah Powrie, and Michael Ursell to which this one responds variously address the relation of matter to spirit, body to soul, time to eternity. Concentrating primarily on *The Second Anniversarie*, Netzley's and Powrie's essays disagree about the Donnean speaker's commitment to relating, escaping, or overcoming these traditional binaries, as well as about his success in doing so. Ursell, like Netzley, but not exactly so, argues for Donne's creative commitment to the material world and for its continuity with a spiritual one; he treats relevant passages from both *Anniversaries*, as does Netzley to an extent. Beyond these qualified likenesses and differences, each of the three essays employs an interpretive lens that separates it from the others, offering readers, if not three different poems, three markedly varied ways of understanding them. Conspicuously and focally, each uses a different aspect of intellectual history: Netzley focuses on universals/particulars, Powrie on Augustinian inwardness, Ursell on Stoic/Christian *pneuma* (Greek for "breath," "wind," "vital spirit," "soul"). Each of the essays has value; each makes a point well worth pondering.[1] It is also a pleasure to read three essays that, when they turn to Donne's text for evidence, attend to his words

*References: Ryan Netzley, "Learning from Anniversaries: Progress, Particularity, and Radical Empiricism in John Donne's *The Second Anniversarie*," *Connotations* 25.1 (2015/2016): 19-45; Sarah Powrie, "Speculative Tensions: The Blurring of Augustinian Interiority in *The Second Anniversarie*," *Connotations* 25.1 (2015/2016): 1-18; Michael Ursell, "The Pneumatics of Inspiration in the *Anniversary* Poems," *Connotations* 25.1 (2015/2016): 46-59. For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debanniversaries0251.htm>.

closely and skillfully. Yet a further result of seeing the three essays together is a heightened awareness of the relativizing function of interpretive lenses. A possible response to this awareness is a skeptical shrug; another, which I prefer, is serious, respectful engagement.

* * *

Netzley's essay, the longest and most abstract of the three, finds in *The Second Anniversarie* what he terms, after Gilles Deleuze, "radical empiricism." In it, a particularity is not *governed* by an abstract universal. The qualifying condition of government or control is important to Netzley's argument, which by its end acknowledges the function of universals for Donne's thinking, first allowing that they might be "already there" (in things, thought, whatever), then asserting their presence "alongside their particular instantiations," and finally defining and accepting them as "a species [form?] of expansive repetition" (38-40). Expansive repetition is what Netzley crucially locates in the refrains of *The Second Anniversarie* and thence in the nature of anniversaries themselves—in this poem, the annual commemoration of a particular young woman's death. That this expansion is temporal is crucial to his view.

Netzley wants to free Donne's universals in the poem from stasis, as opposed to change; from commonality, as opposed to individuality; from teleology, as opposed to progress; and indeed from potentiality (Greek *dynamis*, Latin *potentia*) if it is conceived in conjunction with a *telos*, or an ultimate end. He considers such an end controlling and authoritarian. His emphasis on each of the second terms in the series (change, individuality, progress) is admirable and persuasive, as is his enlightened defense of particularity and temporality, even as the stability of any civilized order hangs fire. A large question regarding Netzley's essay concerns the way he uses the term "universals" throughout, and whether the descriptions of this term at the end, which I have cited in the preceding paragraph, are consistent with his earlier uses or truly inconsistent with more traditional conceptions, such as those of Aristotle and Aquinas, to the latter of whom Netzley refers favorably. To what extent do Netzley's offending universals

correspond to the theories that historically propose them? And how are they related to conceptualization itself, which is necessary for abstract thinking, indeed for any serious thought?

The universals Netzley seeks to counter seem closest to Plato's Ideas, at least in dialogues like the *Republic*, and a major subtext for his argument would appear to be Donne's *Idea of a Woman*, by Edward W. Tayler.[2] Netzley refers to "a static Neoplaton[ism]" (36) in passing, which does not sound much like the Florentine kind, let alone like the dynamic eros of Plato's *Symposium*. He also refers to Aquinas' concepts of hylomorphism (see 28) and *phronesis* ("prudence" 31) with apparent approval but without considering their participation in the larger contours of Thomist thought, which includes both pairs of terms mentioned at the outset (teleology, potentiality, etc.) and, like Aristotle, endeavors to contain them: for Aquinas, however, hylomorphism, a combination of animating form and matter, has its origin and end in a Christian God; *phronesis*, the universalized concept deriving over time from many experiences of many things, complements wisdom, a biblically attuned virtue enlightened by faith. Reconciled as far as possible with reason—and herein lies a catch—faith is neither neutral nor merely supplementary in Thomism or in Donne's poems. Faith informs and modifies the registers of meaning. It does so in Tayler's book, which aligns Mistress Drury with the *species intelligibilis expressa*, an *intelligible* universal, or intelligible essence, and more exactly the image of the Trinitarian God. This is not merely the abstraction, or product of abstracting reason, that Netzley seems to intend in the earlier stages of his essay when, for example, he refers to "a future heaven of universality, in which particularity has been eliminated" (23), and not to the heaven of personal immortality that Christianity typically embraces. In other words, in the course of Netzley's essay, a shift occurs in his basic terminology as he gets down to the business of more fully engaging with the words of Donne's poems. For me, the shift is highly desirable, but I wish it had been addressed directly, with adjustment present from the start.

Tayler's book refers in particular to the psychology found in Lodowick Bryskett's *Discourse of Civill Life* (pub. 1606), which aims to reconcile the divinely inspired, intuitive ideas in the mind with the evidence of the senses, and thus attempts to reconcile Plato with Aristotle, the latter of whom embedded universals in things—*universalia in rebus*, or Netzley's "universals […] always already there, hiding in the dark" (38).[3] Netzley's readings are usually perceptive, and his comments on the refrains of both *Anniversaries* are especially interesting: for example, the refrains of *The Second Annivarsarie*, while reiterative, are also increasingly expansive, incorporating progress "inside of repetition itself" (36). But early on, under the influence of the merely abstract universals, a dubious reading worth mention occurs, since it further indicates that these universals are getting in the way. This reading pertains to one of the most celebrated passages in the poems, the ascent of the soul and, more exactly, the "speed vndistinguish'd" that leads the soul "through those spheares, as through the beades, a string, / Whose quicke succession makes it still one thing" (*The Second Anniversarie* [SA] 208-10).[4] Netzley asks rhetorically whether "this is what the progress of a soul looks like, the transition into indistinguishability?" He then adds, "*The Second Anniversarie* exhibits an obsession with such questions" (23). Despite the hedged rhetorical question, this reading is misleading. The point of the passage is not that the soul is moving into a situation in which it is indistinguishable from everything else or in which nothing is distinguishable. The striking phrase "speed vndistinguish'd" indicates an unearthly, unworldly speed because it is unmeasured and immeasurable by points of reference, in this instance the astral bodies and spheres. Like Keplerian light, the ascent of the disembodied soul is instantaneous.[5] Its ascent suggests Augustine's three-fold comprehension of time, of past and future held together in the attentive present, and therefore offers an insight into timelessness, as well.[6] It also recalls Zeno's related paradox in which the linear trajectory of an arrow at any given moment consists of still points, in which case the arrow is motionless while moving, and it therefore combines movement and

rest, speed and stillness. The speaker's puns, first "quicke,"—speedy, living—and then "still"—always, motionlessly, immutably—and their combination at once with "succession" and "one thing," the many and the one, movement and stasis, join together to straddle time and eternity, containing them both in a single line of verse, a continuity of words and rhythmic stresses within a single unit.[7]

* * *

Switching for contrast to Powrie's "Speculative Tensions," I find her focus on Augustinian inner dialogue valuable and her original gloss on Donne's watchtower illuminating. But I would make the ambivalence she discovers in the word "watch-tower" a Derridean trace, rather than clinching evidence of the Donnean speaker's failed vision in *The Second Anniversarie*. A trace does not overwhelm a larger—in fact, a dominant—context. This context becomes the crucial issue, and the trace a sign of the complexity and imperfection of human language, implicitly of anything it fashions on its own. After all, it is *to ward off* ambiguity that Augustine distinguishes between the Latin for "watchtower" and for "mirror" in discussing 1 Corinthians 13:12 in *De Trinitate*, a text Donne knew well. Could it be this gesture that is relevant, along with biblical texts in which use of a watchtower is urged, even by divine inspiration?[8] Accordingly, I would further complicate the leap from the general influence of Augustine's interior dialogics to the specific interpretation of the watchtower in *The Second Anniversarie* by turning to the larger context in which Donne's watchtower occurs: namely, to the latter half of *The Second Anniversarie*, following the ascent of the soul.

Powrie, like Ramie Targoff, finds Donne's speaker incapable of sustaining to the end of *The Second Anniversarie* the visionary experience in its middle and, as evidence, points to passages in which he speaks disparagingly of worldly affairs and the soul's cognitive powers (see Targoff 100-03). She argues that the speaker, although scornful of worldly business and pleasures, is nonetheless both distracted from an exclusive interiority and even attracted by them. In addition, al-

though the cognition he disparages is not fundamental to faith, his soul is slighted, its true redemptive power ignored. Both specific readings and an overall sense of the second half of the poem are at issue.

In contrast, I would argue that the conclusion of the soul's ascent leaves the speaker to make something of it in the time that remains.[9] He is back in the body, though addressing his soul, and the grieving parents are still there to be comforted. The first thing he does is to praise Mistress Drury's body at length, finding it so fair, so rich, and so nearly unified that "one might almost say, her bodie thought" (SA 246). The narrative progress of the poem from vision back to earth is precisely what has enabled this perception "almost" of unity, which will return elaborately and consummately near the poem's end. The postlapsarian body, even the purest, was not seen this way before. In other words, progress counts, as does narrative.

The praise of Mistress Drury next gives way to reflection on the soul's lack of knowledge not only of itself but also of the body or of anything else that is useful. Anything originating in sense-data is brushed aside. Instead, all knowledge and libraries are to be found in Mistress Drury's soul, now in heaven, which is "our best, and worthiest booke" (SA 320). Perhaps surprisingly, when the speaker next addresses his soul imperatively, it is to urge her not to return "from this extasee, / And meditation of what thou shalt bee, / To earthly thoughts" (SA 321-23). A modern reader might suppose that the ecstasy had ended with the visionary ascent of the soul, but apparently not. The condition of return to earthly concerns that the speaker now imposes on his soul is a general reform of society, in lieu of which, he turns with reawakened energy to an unearthly state: "Vp, vp, my drowsie soule, Where thy new eare / Shall in the Angels songs no discord heare" (339-40). Having earlier been uplifted by the imagined vision of his ascending soul, the speaker newly listens with an Augustinian's inner ear, and his thoughts are directed to higher things: he would hear "Angels songs" and the music of the spheres, which is inaudible to ears of flesh.[10]

I want to emphasize that the ascent of the soul has made a real difference—that it effects a kind of sea change. Consider this brief example, complementary in the poem to the imagined possibility of an inner ear: after the soul's ascent, the word *joy* appears no less than twenty times. In neither *Anniversarie* does it appear earlier, save the exception of one compromised instance in *The First Anniversarie* (FA 20). The reverberation of joy in the latter half of *The Second Anniversarie* is a transformation in tone and perspective. Words have an enhanced status in this *Anniversarie*, and their enhancement is a virtual signature of Donne's faith, as it is later found in *Devotions* and the sermons.

Meditation on the inconstancy of earthly beauty and honor follows the reenergizing of the speaker's soul until he exhorts her to make an even greater effort to sustain higher thoughts and to recover true vision (SA 435). To object that the speaker has to exhort his soul is to overlook the volition, the effort, faith asks on the part of the believer, ever allowing for prevenient and sustaining grace, as well as to overlook the traditional renunciation of worldly goods and concerns as part of the commitment to a religious calling. It is also to forget Donne's immediate audience, the grieving parents, and the difference between a public poem, an anniversary (that is, the occasion, the temporal memory) of a loved one's death, and a purely interiorized meditation. At this point in the poem, the speaker relates diametrical lines within a circle to thoughts of heaven:

> Know that all lines which circles doe containe,
> For once that they the center touch, do touch
> Twice the circumference; and be thou such.
> Double on Heauen, thy thoughts on Earth emploid. (SA 436-39)

"For once" means "for a single time" and "for every time." It embraces the former ascent of the speaker's soul and ascents still to come. A circle, recurrently the form of perfection and completion in Donne's writing, traditionally represents the movement of the soul, eternity, or God himself. Its center rests on a stable point equidistant

from all points on its circumference; this is the center that was lacking in *The First Anniversarie*, where, since the center did not hold, coherence was gone. All diametrical lines cross this central point in the circle, and all radial lines spread out from and return to it. It represents origin and return and the centrality of meaning and being. The circumference, another figure of divine perfection, since it has neither beginning nor end, is also the expansion, expression, and in some sense the completion of the central, stable point: as there is no circle without a center, so there is none without a circumference. As lines that touch the center touch the circumference twice as often and twice as much, thus evoking both a memory of time and number and a promissory intimation of these in the very symbol of eternity, so the speaker urges his thoughts while on earth, which have once ascended in soul-flight, to redouble their efforts to reach heavenward again and again. It is hardly a coincidence that this speaker is heard next instructing his soul about the "essentiall ioye" of beatific vision, in which the sight of God is the unity of object and intellect. Instead of merely talking about the image of God in the soul, Donne's speaker once again gives voice to the vision it enables.

* * *

Ursell's essay, by detailing the tradition concerning *pneuma* and its relevance to the *Anniversaries*, makes another notable contribution to existing scholarship on them. Ursell seeks to show in both *Anniversaries* that the material, the immaterial, and the spiritual are continuous without the subordination of any one of them. He further aligns *pneuma* as the single principle that "vivifies the universe" both with Stoic fire and with the inspiration—the breath—of the Holy Spirit (Ursell 48).[11] Ursell is particularly invested in the material grounding of *pneuma* and twice quotes passages from Agamben's *Stanzas* in order to establish its physiological basis and its assimilation in Stoicism and Neoplatonism to the phantasy, a sensitive faculty but one which, under divine influences, can mediate between the corporeal and incorporeal, the human and divine, and, I trust, also the material,

immaterial, and spiritual (Ursell 48, 50).[12] The meaning of these last three terms, which is unstable in Donne's time—perhaps in any time—is clearly something to watch, especially in view of the collapse of coherence and stability lamented so vociferously in *The First Anniversarie*.

In response to Ursell's two quotations of Agamben's *Stanzas*, I will briefly quote yet a third, in which *pneuma* becomes what Agamben calls "pneumophantasmology," namely,

> The breath that animates the universe, circulates in the arteries, and fertilizes the sperm is the same one that, in the brain and in the heart, receives and forms the phantasms of the things we see, imagine, dream, and love. Insofar as it is the subtle body of the soul, it is in addition the intermediary between the soul and matter, the divine and the human, and, as such, allows the explanation of all the influxes between corporeal and incorporeal. (94)

As cited here, *pneuma* is clearly corporeal, material, sensitive, and, as intermediary, something more. It is animating breath like that of the creative God in Genesis, a divine influx. But is God's a material breath? As "the subtle body of the soul" and the mediator between the soul and matter, what is *pneuma*? It has to be other and more than air or a gas, since these, however rare (not dense), are still material. If *pneuma* really is the sign of synthesis between God and (fallen?) humanity, its efficacy appears to require mysticism, magic, or belief—as incidentally, does Paracelsus, whose work Donne knew. While I accept that *pneuma* is revealing with respect to Donne's thinking in the *Anniversaries*, as it is in his erotic lyric "The Extasie," it is not the end of this matter, so to speak.[13]

Many of Ursell's pneumatic readings, from the "putrid stuff" (phlegm?) in the lungs to trumpet and voice (endings respectively of first and second *Anniversaries*) are inspired, as is his illuminating discussion of Donne's pneumatic poetics (see 53). In this poetics, verse "hath a middle nature," which Ursell explains "as a special kind of matter that cannot be equated entirely with either bodies or souls" (51).[14] At the same time, however, the two *Anniversaries* neither mention *pneuma* nor make the explicit reference to spirit(s), the most familiar substitute in English for *pneuma*, that we might expect.[15] It is hard

not to conclude that something else in the poem is more important to the resolution of grief and its accompanying doubt. Since the length of the present essay begins to push that of a proper response even to three essays, I will only gesture at my own answer, which is developed at further length in *Light and Death*. It shares with Ursell's readings a hospitality to voice, but it radically prioritizes verbal language, the redemptive word/Word, not over matter, since words are simultaneously concept and sound—the graphic image of sound, if written—but over fallen flesh.

Near the end of *The Second Anniversarie*, a contested analogy occurs, focused on the person of Mistress Drury:

> for shee rather was two soules,
> Or like to full, on both sides written Rols,
> Where eies might read vpon the outward skin,
> As strong Records for God, as mindes within;
> Shee, who by making full perfection grow,
> Peeces a Circle, and still keepes it so [...] SA 503-08)

The word "rather" in the first line means "more accurately," "more properly," and also "earlier, before the present time," and so when she was living. The second line qualifies the previous assertion of dual souls: when living, her skin, figuratively the outer soul, is then analogized to her intellect, figuratively the inner one, and the result is analogized to a parchment roll with writing on both its sides. Unlike the analogy of the woman's living body to a transparent scarf or to the soul's exhalation in Donne's *Fvneral Elegie*, here the body has equal substance and, more broadly, has equality with the mind. Moreover, the juncture, the near-unity, of body and soul is as striking in Donne's image as in Saussure's modern analogy of signified and signifier to the recto and verso of a single page.[16] Yet the analogy at hand is also subject to interpretation in line three, and it involves writing, both as the surface of the present poem and as part of its content, the "written Rols."[17] The antiquity of parchment rolls enforces the special biblical, sacred context of Donne's allusion, perhaps to Revelation 5:1. These rolls also recollect the earlier imagery of words, writing, books, and libraries in this *Anniversarie* but do so with a difference: unlike paper,

parchment is made from the skin of a dead animal. Like the earlier image of the exposed vertebrae in the ascent of the soul, it has a connection to life (Drury's) but only through death.[18] Yet "only" is misleading here, since the parchment in the image has writing, words, on it, and these are specifically designated "Records for God." They figure forth the expressions (evidence) of faith.[19] Records are also reminders of what is written on the heart, Latin *recordari*, "to remember," from *cor/cordis*, "heart." Memory and the heart are earlier much present in both *Anniversaries*. This image of written rolls is a recollection, a mnemonic gathering, and also a further reverberation.

The last two lines in the passage return to the perfection of a circle, since *She* makes perfection itself fuller and "Peeces," improves, even a circle, thus recalling and bettering the earlier comparison of her embodied proportions to the detriment of abstract, circular perfection. With the verb "Peeces," reinforced in the same line by the phrase "still keepes it so," Donne's speaker also moves from the past, Mistress Drury alive, to the present. What then follows is "Long'd for, and longing for" heavenly perfection, she "to heauen is gone" (507-08). In the end, not only the body but even desire is back as the erotic, Christian-Neoplatonic connector between heaven and earth, between the soul's longing for God and God's for the soul, and implicitly the mutual longing for reunion of the Drurys on earth and their daughter Elizabeth, their treasure, their *drury*, in heaven.[20] Memory itself is redeemed by this eros.

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NOTES

[1]In the interest of disclosure, I should note that all three essays in an earlier form were presented in a panel of the John Donne Society, which I organized for the MLA meeting in 2015. I should also mention that I have an investment in Donne's *Anniversaries*, having devoted a chapter to them in my forthcoming book, *Light and Death*. I read a short paper based on this chapter at the Donne Society conference in 2015, to which Theresa M. DiPasquale, who has published on the *Anniversaries*, was the assigned responder. My investment will be flagged in what follows.

[2]Tayler's book is the source of a quotation in another of Netzley's sources, namely Martin (11), who asserts that *The First Anniversarie* is an assault on Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* (1605). I am not convinced by the evidence Martin offers for this narrow interpretation.

[3]Tayler uses Bryskett's *Discourse* extensively to exemplify the kind of thought evident in the *Anniversaries*. He focuses on synthesis, however, and does not engage the problems in Bryskett's efforts to bridge Plato and Aristotle or, put otherwise, immateriality and materiality.

[4]For Donne's *Anniversaries* and *Fvnerall Elegie*, I use volume 6 of *The Variorum Edition*.

[5]See Kepler, *Optics* 21.

[6]On Augustinian time, see Ricoeur 1: 5-30, esp. 16-22.

[7]The latter half of this paragraph draws on my chapter treating Donne's *Anniversaries* in *Light and Death*.

[8]Powrie's discussion of Donne's watchtower references, in addition to her primary concern, namely, Augustine's gloss on 1 Corinthians 13:12 in *De Trinitate*, includes a reference to a watchtower in a sermon by Donne in which he refers to ministers as *speculatores* ("look-outs," "watchers"), in accord with Ezekiel 33:7 (13). She does not mention other relevant biblical possibilities, such as Isaiah 21:5-6, 8, and Habbakuk 2:1, which, along with the passage in Ezekiel that I cite (different from Powrie's), support interpretation of the watchtower as a place above and apart from the world yet still in it, as is Donne's speaker at this point. If with Powrie we see a resemblance between this speaker and the historical Donne in *The Second Anniversarie*, it might be recalled that a monastery was not a viable option for him, a man—by this time, likely an apostate from Catholicism—with a wife and young children. Even Augustine returned, if reluctantly, to more worldly affairs when summoned to be Bishop of Hippo. Powrie mentions Tayler's two learned chapters on Donne's watchtower but rejects his argument (cf. esp. Tayler 166-67n26). For Tayler, the watchtower is a "mediating term," "the tripartite [Trinitarian] 'watch-tower' of the mind," and "the type of the identity of knower and known that foreshadows in this life [...] the Beatific Vision" (66).

[9]My phrasing recalls both 1 Corinthians 7:29 and the title of Agamben's *Time That Remains*, a commentary on Romans. For discussion of the second half of *The*

Second Anniversarie that follows, I draw again on my chapter treating the *Anniversaries* in *Light and Death*.

[10]Language itself has a material dimension as sound and script, however, and it is *sensed* as such. It also has an affective dimension. Data received by the imagination/phantasy, as thence by the memory, are at once "sensorily derived and emotionally charged"; necessarily, they are perceptual—mediated and filtered by the senses of the perceiving subject; see Carruthers 54, 59 and also Schofield; Wedin.

[11]See Agamben, *Stanzas* 92. Agamben's relevant chapter focuses on the Middle Ages, a focus that is surely relevant to the seventeenth century, yet still worth noting. In the period that witnessed development of the new science, not to mention the continuing impact of the Reformation, there were additional reasons for gnawing doubt and heightened anxiety, which the speaker of *The First Anniversarie*, in an understatement, reflects.

[12]See Agamben, *Stanzas* 92-93.

[13]Even in "The Extasie," in which "our blood labours to beget / Spirits, as like soules as it can" (61-62), because something is needed to hold human being together in this life, the phrasing "as like […] as it can" hedges. In "The Extasie," the spirits seem to be the best we can do, but how good is that? How verifiable in the age of a new science? In Donne's time, "spirit" was a richly overdetermined word—and concept—as Ursell's citations suggest.

[14]Pertinently, Ursell also invokes the singing of Orpheus (10-11). Traditionally, Orpheus played a lyre, but Renaissance illustrations sometimes gave him a lute or other instrument. Ficino's interest in the magic of song might also be invoked; e.g., see my *Words That Matter* 137-46.

[15]See FA 13, 150; SA 139 (reference to an angel). Lines in Donne's "Fvnerall Elegie," considered his earliest elegy on Mistress Drury's death, have most relevance, since they suggest music: "*But those fine spirits, which doe tune and set / This Organ*" (27-28). The same elegy also refers to "spiritual mirth" in heaven (l. 105), which seems less to the point.

[16]See Saussure 113: "Language can be compared with a sheet of paper: thought is the front and the sound the back."

[17]Grossman 189-91 identifies Donne's "written Rols" with Augustine's depiction of the firmament in his interpretation of Genesis in the *Confessions*. Proleptically, Augustine's meditation includes references to the Fall, to the deaths of the ancient biblical writers, and to the abiding w/Word of God. It also glances at Revelation 6:14, a back reference to the scroll of Revelation 5:1 and related biblical passages: see *Confessions* 299; cf. 300 (XIII.xv.16, 18). Cf. n18 below.

[18]Interpreters of the Bible have suggested that a Hebrew Torah scroll, which must be made of parchment, is intended in Revelation 5:1, where the image of a double-sided roll (Greek *biblion*, "scroll") occurs, as it does in Ezekiel 2:9 and Zechariah 5:1-3; see "sealed scroll" in <answersintheendtimes.com> and <oncedelivered.net>. Two-sided scrolls are unusual, and the three in the Bible are associ-

ated with vision and prophecy. Torahs are one-sided, however, and so only a Torah-type scroll with two lateral rollers, rather than precisely a Torah, would qualify for Donne's graphic image. The two-sidedness of Donne's image is conceivably an adaptation of a Torah-scroll to the recto-verso relationship of the Old and New Testaments and thus also to the dominant emphases at the end of *The First* and *Second Anniversaries*, respectively.

[19]"For God" can variously be taken as "for God to read"; "on behalf of God," "concerning God," and so effectually "of God," and perhaps even as "for God's immanence" or providential presence; cf. *OED* "For" II.4, III.7, V.16, 17; IX.26, 27.

[20]In *Light and Death*, I argue that the word *d/Drury* means "treasure," as it does in the Middle Ages: e.g., Langland, Bi^{v}: "Whan al treasures are tried [...] truth is best [...] It is as dere worth a drury, as deare God him selfe." This meaning was available in the early modern period in popular printed editions. (The *OED* gives only the first record of a word in a given text and therefore lacks the currency of this meaning in the period.) The medieval meaning (sexual) "love" was similarly available in Donne's time. *Eros*, the word I use, in the Renaissance—well into the seventeenth century—encompasses love more broadly and inclusively than at present.

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Melville's *Pierre* and the "Church of the Bohemians"[1*]

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> These are the glorious paupers, from whom I learn the profoundest mysteries of things.
> (*Pierre* 267)

Like its predecessor, *Moby Dick*, *Pierre* (published in 1852) has been characterized as a mixed genre novel or novel of "bi-partite form" (see Crimmins). Indeed, *Pierre*'s themes and narrative style change remarkably from the opening sentimental scenes in the country to the gothic scenes in New York City, many of which were added at a later date. Most importantly, in the Pierre-as-author sections, in which Pierre lives with Isabel (and later Lucy) in the "Church of the Apostles," Melville goes beyond a traditional gothic representation to introduce what I argue are the earliest sustained depictions of bohemian lifestyle in American literature, figured in part by a conflation of Pierre with Edgar Allan Poe, although the extent to which Melville knew of Poe's work or reputation and thus could have intended this correspondence is a matter of some dispute and controversy.

Contemporary reviewers of *Pierre* almost universally condemned the novel as immoral, anti-Christian, and even as evidence that Melville was suffering from insanity[2]. Even for those reviewers who failed to dismiss the novel on moral or ethical grounds, it was regarded as a tremendous artistic failure, proof that Melville was unable to write a land-based book without romantic evocations of primitive cannibals

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*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debmcadams0251.htm>.

or the mysteries of seafaring and cetology. As cited by Jonathan Crimmins:

> Early in his introduction to the 1949 Hendricks House edition of *Pierre*, Henry A. Murray ends three successive paragraphs with three summary assessments: "*Pierre* is the burning out of Melville's volcano"; "*Pierre* is Melville's battle with the Kraken"; and "*Pierre* is the burning out of a depleted puppeteer." (438)

As we can see, these perceptions of *Pierre* as both a moral and aesthetic failure were perpetuated from its publication up through the Melville Renaissance, until the publication of the Northwestern-Newberry Edition, released with Historical Notes in 1971. Using archival evidence, Herschel Parker succeeded in re-formulating the academic debate regarding *Pierre* by demonstrating that the Pierre-as-Author sections had been added after the initial contract with Harper had been signed. These sections, in his view, were incompatible with the original version, described by Melville as a "360-page romance," and owed their inclusion to negative experiences Melville endured with the publishing and magazine industry in early 1852 (see Parker). Based on these considerations, Parker, writing mainly of the "Young Literature in America" polemic and Pierre's dealing with his publishers, concludes that:

> after reading reviews [of *Moby Dick*], agreeing to the punitive contract, and then brooding further on both reviews and contract, Melville changed his conception of the work in progress; he would write into the manuscript his embittering frustration at trying to make a living as a novelist in the United States. In this recasting of the ending he surely introduced the satirical books on the American publishing scene [...] and very likely decided at this late stage to make his young hero into an author. (32)

Since Parker's discovery, scholars have shifted their focus onto these later inclusions, some concurring with Parker's assessment that the authorial additions ruined the novel, with others interpreting them in more nuanced, often multi-disciplinary ways: Melville struggling with the problem of linguistic representation (see Nina Baym); a successful,

proto-post-structural experimental narrative (see Priscilla Wald); a critique of emergent publishing conventions and authorial labor (see John Evelev; and Michael Everton, esp. his chapter on "Melville and the Antebellum Publishing Maelstrom"); and even as the staging of a failed *Bildungsroman* (see Sacvan Berkovitch).[3] While many of these interpretations succeed in portraying the complexity and multivalent properties of the novel, in my opinion there currently exists a lacuna in *Pierre's* critical bibliography and scholarship—that is, Pierre's figuration as an American Bohemian, a starving artist writing his "comprehensive compacted work" in the garret of an abandoned church whose other tenants offers a varied portrait of a nascent, and previously unexplored, American Bohemia. This trope of "The Bohemian" was, as the name implies, certainly a European convention, one that this paper argues Melville introduced into American literature following his travels throughout France in 1849.

1. Bohemianism before "The Bohemian"

> "The Land of Bohemia is a sad country, bounded on the North by Need, on the South by Poverty, on the East by Illusion, and on the west by the Hospital. It is irrigated by two inexhaustible streams: impudence and shame." (Calonne)[4]

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "Bohemian" was first used in English to denote "a gipsy [sic] of society" in 1848, when Thackeray described Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* as "of a wild and roving nature, inherited from her father and mother, who were both Bohemians, by taste and nature" (OED "Bohemian").[5] However, before its importation into English, the term had been prevalently employed by French artists and philosophers for decades to denote the emerging lifestyle of the Left Bank, where writers, painters and

musicians were adopting new ways of life as a reaction to the change from the patronage to market economy, as well as associated upheavals in social organization, familial structures, and political theory, leading to the continent-wide revolutions of 1848.[6]

The most influential depiction of Bohemianism in early French literature occurs in Henri Murger's *Scènes de la vie de Bohème*.[7] Collected from a series of magazine articles he had written commencing in 1845, the novel was published to tremendous acclaim in 1852, three years after the play *La Bohème*, co-written by Murger and Theodore Barriere, premiered on French stages with fantastic success.[8] So popular was the play that it is distinctly probable that Henry Clapp Jr., "The King of the Bohemians," was in the audience, soaking up *la vie Bohème* he had come to love in Paris and would soon transplant to New York. He returned there between 1853-1854 and soon thereafter established Pfaff's Saloon and, in 1858, *The Saturday Press*, for whom one of his major correspondents was Fitz-James O'Brien. The latter's short story "The Bohemian" is frequently regarded as the first American literary expression of Bohemianism.[9]

"The Bohemian" was published in 1855 in the July issue of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. Just as Henry Clapp Jr. imported Bohemian lifestyle to America, O'Brien imported the literature of Bohemia in this story, where a self-styled "Bohemian" refers at length to the influence Murger's *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* had on his life and art. Furthermore, O'Brien was to continue to exercise a dramatic influence on the Bohemian movement in America through his network of fellow writers, artists, and socialites at Pfaff's Saloon.

If such scholars of the American Renaissance as above have concurred in identifying "The Bohemian" as the origination of American Bohemia literature, why am I suggesting that *Pierre*, published three years earlier, should be viewed as the primary expression of Bohemian tropes and themes that would flourish over the next two decades? In the following sections I will argue how strongly the city sections of *Pierre* anticipate the conventions and history of Bohemian literature, from which tradition Melville has been too often excluded.[10]

2. "Church of the Apostles": The Boardinghouse for Bohemians

> A mysterious professor of the flute was perched in one of the upper stories of the tower; and often, of silent, moonlight nights, his lofty, melodious notes would be warbled forth over the roofs of the ten thousand warehouses around him—as of yore, the bell had pealed over the domestic gables of a long departed generation. (*Pierre* 270)

When Pierre and Isabel arrive in New York City in Book XIX of *Pierre*, their initial plans for residence are disappointed, leaving them no choice but to take refuge in the upper story of what the narrator describes as "The Church of the Apostles."[11] This building, Melville's loquacious narrator explains, "stood at this period a rather singular and ancient edifice" and at least externally appeared to function as a church (265). However, "the tide of change and progress had rolled clean through its broad-aisles and side-aisles, and swept by far the greater part of the congregation two or three miles up town" (266), and the former church had henceforth been replaced on the lower floors by offices and merchants' stands, while its upper stories were inhabited by "poor, penniless devils [who] strive to make amends for their physical forlornness, by resolutely reveling in the regions of blissful ideals" (267). The novel's description of these "devils" predicts later descriptions of Bohemia:

> They are mostly artists of various sorts; painters, or sculptors, or indigent students, or teachers of languages, or poets, or fugitive French politicians, or German philosophers. Their mental tendencies, however heterodox at times, are still very fine and spiritual upon the whole [...]. These are the glorious paupers, from whom I learn the profoundest mysteries of things [...] the strange nondescript adventurers and artists, and indigent philosophers of all sorts, crowded in as the others left; therefore, in reference to the metaphysical strangeness of these curious inhabitants, and owing in some sort to the circumstance, that several of them were well known Teleological Theorists and Social Reformers, and political propagandists of all manner of heterodoxical tenets. (267-68)

A remarkably similar description of such a boardinghouse appears in Balzac's encyclopedic *Le Comedie Humaine*, a work John Haycock conjectures Melville may have been introduced to during his visit to Paris in 1849 (see 71). Describing the six-story Hotel Corneille (where Henry Clapp Jr. lived during his years in Paris), Balzac writes that the building was "dingy, mean-looking, and dirty, inside and out," inhabited by

> "a noisy crew" of students who lived in rooms a little over seven feet high [...] hung with a vile cheap paper sprigged with blue. The floor was painted, and knew nothing of the polish given by the frotteur's brush. By [the] beds there was only a scrap of thin carpet. The chimney opened immediately to the roof, and smoked so abominably that [they] were obliged to provide a stove [...].The beds were mere painted wooden cribs like those in schools; on the chimney shelf there were but two brass candlesticks, with or without tallow candles in them, and [their] two pipes with some tobacco in a pouch or strewn abroad. (qtd. in Hahn 90)

These two fictional portrayals are duplicated in an 1870 article in *Appleton's Journals*, which Joanna Levin writes "provide[d] an index to changing attitudes toward Bohemianism" (125). *In Bohemia in America*, she cites an article entitled "Good Bohemians" from 1977, authored by Charles Carroll, who, discussing the popularity of a recent translation of Murger's *Scènes de la vie de Bohème*, states "the term Bohemianism has come to have a pretty definite meaning. In the broader sense it takes in all restless, unsettled, unthrifty, who live from hand to mouth, with no definite source of income or place in society" (125-26).

In *The Antebellum Crisis: America's First Bohemians*, Mark Lause connects the emergence of the Bohemian lifestyle in France and America to the recessions both economies suffered in the 1830s, decreasing opportunities for young intellectuals on the job market and leading to the social and political unrest described in the *Appleton* article. Like the social reformers and artists in "The Church of the Apostles" and the impoverished students in Balzac's Hotel Corneille, French and American Bohemians were attracted to theories of social transforma-

tion and experimented with novel living arrangements and communal economies. Lause writes:

> Many bohemians shared a special affinity with the most radical "Red Republican" associations of European émigrés in the city, including revolutionary societies fostering new ideas, such as those of Karl Marx and his European rivals [including] Charles Fourier and other socialists. (ix)[12]

Yet another Bohemian feature of the Church of the Apostles consists in the shabby attics and garrets on the upper stories. As the narrator describes, the lawyers and other businessmen avoided the upper stories because they were bad for business, and thus these were inhabited by the writers, painters, and philosophers described in the passage at the head of this section. Pierre's residence in the three-chambered, poorly furnished, cold garret signals a certain attitude towards cultural production that was later to become a common trope in Bohemian writings and Bohemian life. "The garret life," observes Michael Kearns, "connotes a different type of class distinction, based not on money but on the pursuit of truth and aesthetic perfection. Melville's most complete description of that life is to be found in *Pierre; or the Ambiguities*" (34).[13] This distinction between money, implying the conventions of the publishing industry at the time, and aesthetic perfection, or the truth at which authentic art aims, is a major factor in the series of tragedies that end the novel, including Pierre's failure to publish his novel, the lawsuit brought against him by his publishers (and the concomitant lack of monetary resources causing poverty and his resulting mental instability), and even the series of lovelorn deaths in the prison dungeon. The narrator, according to Parker expressing Melville's biographical dissatisfaction with the publishing industry, indicts the economic model that prevents true art; he describes Pierre's initial difficulty with the novel, as compared to his juvenilia writings:

> Renouncing all his foregone self, Pierre was now engaged in a comprehensive compacted work, to whose speedy completion two tremendous motives unitedly impelled;—the burning desire to deliver what he thought to be new, or at least miserably neglected Truth to the world; and the prospective

> menace of being absolutely penniless, unless by the sale of the book, he could realize money. (283)

The "Church of the Apostles" Book section depicts a nascent Bohemianism from a number of perspectives. In the description of its inhabitants, Melville recalls Balzac's students at the Hotel Corneille. By noting the political and social reform tendencies associated with these cohorts, he also reflects upon, or anticipates, such socialist-anarchist communes like "Modern Times," which operated on Long Island from 1851-1854. Finally, by portraying Pierre as an author trying to write a masterpiece for which the public was unprepared, starving and freezing in his garret, trembling from visions and passing out in gutters, he creates, I believe, the first literary representation of a Bohemian writer (as distinct from the gothic writers we can see in E. T. A. Hoffmann, Poe, or even early Dostoevsky). Despite this, Pierre is not the first Bohemian writer: there was a real-world model for his character, whose death, we can presume, was fresh in the mind of every contemporary reader of *Pierre.*

3. Pierre's Bad Romance: The Influence of Poe

> Could [Pierre] have carried about with him in his mind the thorough understanding of the book, and yet not be aware that he so understood it? I think that—regarded in one light—the final career of Pierre will seem to show that he did understand it. And here it may be randomly suggested, by way of bagatelle, whether some things that men think they do not know, are not for all that thoroughly comprehended by them; and yet, so to speak, though contained in themselves, are kept a secret from themselves? The idea of Death seems such a thing. (*Pierre* 294)

Edgar Allan Poe's impact on the development of American Bohemianism is difficult to overstate. Although later authors, such as Bret Harte

(who called himself "The Bohemian"), Walt Whitman, and the Pfaff Saloon correspondents, embodied the ideals of Bohemianism more completely, the "Myth of Poe," as it were, especially in the years immediately after his death, was nearly universal in the Northern literary community. Emily Hahn discusses this phenomenon early in *Romantic Rebels*, where she comments that

> after Poe died in 1849 and a new generation grew up reading Murger's book, the fashion among young artists was to speak of him as a typical example of how badly Americans treat genius. Poe, they said, was a martyr, *a Bohemian before his time*, crushed by stupidity and provincialism just as they themselves were being crushed. Poe was their great man, the first American Bohemian. (11-12; italics added)

Albert Parry opens up his study of Bohemianism in America with a chapter on Poe, the first sentence of which is just as unequivocal and historically confident as the last line of Hahn's quote above: "American Bohemianism," Parry writes, "began with tragedy. It began with Edgar Allan Poe" (3).

While the issue that contemporary writers looked either up or down at Poe as Bohemian is a relatively safe argument, to establish Melville was influenced by him is much more hazardous, making the argument that Poe's myth hovers over the latter sections of the novel, and Pierre's character and attitude in particular, extremely complicated. On the one hand, there is little evidence that Melville ever even read Poe, even though he did receive *The Collected Tales and Poems* as a Christmas present and purchased a volume as a present for his wife in 1861 (see Sealts 205). On the other hand, Melville was certainly aware of the presence of Poe, who worked in New York City often in the late 1840s. Melville's friend Evert Duyckink published Poe's *Collected Tales* for Wiley and Putnam (perhaps the very volume Melville had received). While Poe's writing output certainly put him on the radar of many writers of the time, his unstable behavior following Virginia's death in 1847 and his own scandalous death in October of 1849 also helped to make him a famous author, known for dissolute living,

Bohemianism, and tales of gothic and terror (even though the vast majority of his published writings consisted of witty sketches, detective fiction, or funny "hoaxes," his reputation turned contemporary attention towards his darker works). The variety of Poe doubles, echoes, and references in the "Pierre-as-Author" sections are numerous and, I believe, deeply revealing of Poe's status as an exemplar of Bohemianism in mid-century America. Indeed, Burton Pollin devotes over three pages to documenting what he argues are over 70 direct references to Poe and Poe's writings in the novel.[14] While it is impossible to accord unequivocal agency to Melville's authorial decisions, arguing here and there that he directly references or alludes to Poe, it is difficult to read these sections without thinking that Melville must have been aware of Poe, even if the latter was not a direct influence on him as a writer.

The most significant symbolism going back to Poe, of course, consists in the city sections, where Melville introduces the "Church of Apostles," with its roster of melancholic loners, its dark, cold, terrifying structure, and its fragmented rooms in which Pierre lives in a vaguely incestuous state with Isabel. Michael Davitt Bell reads this topographical movement as important to the maturation and enervation of Pierre, positing, "one might say, then, that in moving from the country to the city Pierre is moving from the calm, submissive romanticism of Wordsworth to the dark, defiant romanticism of Byron" (753-54).[15] A variety of factors are complicit in what I have called Pierre's enervation, most obviously the realization of his father's falseness and his mother's disavowal. A third occurrence involves Pierre's status as an author and the narrator's prediction that, in attempting to write a mature book (as opposed to his magazine articles and scrapbook signings),

> Pierre [...] is now soon to appear in a different guise. He shall now learn, and very bitterly learn, that though the world worships *Mediocrity and Common Place, yet hath it fire and sword for all contemporary grandeur; that though it swears that it fiercely assails all Hypocrisy*, yet hath it not always an ear for Earnestness. (264; italics added)

Such a conviction was common to many writers of the American antebellum period, of course, and Edgar Allan Poe was no exception. As Baudelaire, who was so influential in crafting Poe's image in France and America, described it thus: "Poe's Bohemian life indicted American civilization, that 'rabble of buyers and sellers' and 'bourgeois mediocrity.' Moreover, 'Americomania' (or bourgeois capitalist society) had become a 'transatlantic ideal,' one that Bohemia needed to guard against" (qtd. in Levin 53).[16]

The movement from the country to the city, from the sentimental to the gothic, is not simply aesthetic but also societal and familial. By the time he has taken up with Isabel in the "Church of the Apostles," Pierre has realized that the aristocratic aura he had grown up within was a lie, and by the time of Lucy's arrival, he realizes that his mother had neglected to bequeath any of what he had assumed was a massive estate to him, leaving it instead to his former friend and cousin Glen. This theme of the aristocratic decline (and correlated incestual themes) recalls the fate of the siblings in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" and, according to Albert Parry, is central to the self-image of Bohemians. As he writes, bridging familial unrest with the economic and political unrest discussed earlier, "the desire to escape from the painful reality of an uncertain social position has been, in all lands and times, one of chief distinguishing reasons for Bohemianism" (Parry 5).

Along with the similarities to "The Fall of the House of Usher," the second most vivid portrayal of Pierre as Poe appears after the former has begun to suffer from exhaustion and self-doubt following from the physical labor of writing his masterpiece. In the section before his vision of Enceladus and the defeated, imprisoned Titans, Pierre goes out for his nightly half-pint of ale, but on this night

> a sudden, unwonted, and all-pervading sensation seized him. He knew not where he was; he did not have any ordinary life-feeling at all. He could not see; though instinctively putting his hands to his eyes, he seemed to feel that the lids were still open. Then he was sensible of a combined blindness, and vertigo, and staggering; before his eyes a million green meteors danced; he felt his foot tottering upon the curb, he put out his hands, and knew no more

> for the time. When he came to himself he found that he was lying crosswise in the gutter, dabbled with mud and slime. (341)

As Michael Davitt Bell observes, the date of Poe's death was October 7, 1849, just four days before Melville sailed to Paris (and perhaps saw *La Bohème*). Thus, Melville, we may imagine, would have read Rufus Griswold's (or "Ludwig's") famous obituary, which starts

> EDGAR ALLAN POE is dead. He died in Baltimore the day before yesterday. This announcement will startle many, but few will be grieved by it. The poet was well known, personally or by reputation, in all this country; he had readers in England, and in several of the states of Continental Europe; but he had few or no friends; and the regrets for his death will be suggested principally by the consideration that in him literary art has lost one of its most brilliant but erratic stars.[17]

Melville would have learned of the, probably apocryphal, details shortly thereafter; again, while we now suspect that Poe's reputation as a monomaniacal, dissolute drunkard is probably incorrect, at the time, Melville would have read more specific accounts of Poe's death that credited it to drinking and passing out in a gutter, like the passage in the novel.

Bell has also drawn attention to the origin for the character of Vivia in Pierre's unfinished novel. Once again drawing from the "Ludwig" obituary, Bell notes that the reporter describes Poe as in many respects like Francis Vivian [character] in Bulwer's *The Craxtons*. Based on this resemblance, Bell speculates that Melville's decision to name the hero of Pierre's book Vivia is a direct reference to Poe. Close reading of these passages, of which there are only four, taking up less than a page, shows that at least in some places they do seem to echo Poe's effulgent, romantic diction and syntax. For instance, Pierre describes Vivia as follows: "A deep-down, unutterable mournfulness is in me. Now I drop all humorous or indifferent disguises, and all philosophical pretensions. I own myself a brother of the clod, a child of Primeval Gloom. Hopelessness and despair are over me, as pall on pall" (302). The last clause's repetition is a classic example of Poe's writing. The

narrator also uses this section to inform the reader that Pierre's attempt to "write a Kraken book" is doomed to failure:

> From these random slips [of paper], it would seem, Pierre is quite conscious of much that is anomalously hard and bitter in his lot, of much that is not black and terrific in his soul. Yet that knowing his fatal condition does not one whit enable him to change or better his condition. Conclusive proof that he has no power over his condition. For in tremendous extremities human souls are like drowning men; well enough they know they are in peril; well enough they know the causes of that peril;—nevertheless, the sea is the sea, and these drowning men do drown. (303)

For over a century, Henri Murger's 1852 publication *Scenes de la vie de Bohème* has been granted status as the first literary imagination of the titular subject, especially in America, where it was serialized in *The Knickerbocker* in 1853. However, in actuality, *Pierre*, also published in 1852, has far more merit to be nominated as the origination of the Bohemian imagination, at least in America, occurring three years before the appearance of Fitz-James O'Brien's "The Bohemian" and Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* in 1855. The similarities between Poe and Pierre are, while debatable, worth considering, and, given Poe's reputation as "the first Bohemian" may transform our appreciation of the novel's subject and scope. As noted, both *Moby Dick* and *Pierre* employ characteristic diptych forms, but in *Pierre*, as I have framed my argument, there is a thematic diptych contained within the narrative diptych. While various narrative dichotomies emerge in *Pierre*—city versus country, gentility versus poverty, young love versus tragic death—the thematic concentration that emerges in the city sections abounds with references and descriptions of a new form of American life characterized by communal living, poverty, and dedication to the arts, philosophy, and subversive political movements.

In this way, we can leave textual analysis and consider the issue of Pierre's Bohemianism from a more cultural and historic standpoint. The "Church of the Apostles" figures a group of bohemians living in a formerly religious environment de-sanctified by American commodification and the changing capitalist model that they cannot succeed in.

Likewise, Pierre's failure to publish his novel is, at least in part, blamed on the practices of antebellum print culture and the effect that poverty, as an aspect of familial strife, had on his health and home. Whether motivated by literary or dramatic predecessors, like Balzac or *La Bohème*, Melville, in *Pierre*, creates a powerful portrayal of the Bohemian lifestyle, situated within the economic and social tumult of mid-19th-century America that would become dominant in American life and art over the next decade, and continues to this day.

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NOTES

[1]I am indebted to Dr. Edward Whitley of Lehigh University for helpful criticism of an earlier draft of this essay.

[2]The New York *Albion* declared it a "dead failure," (qtd. Howard and Parker 381) while the New York *American Whig Review* shrieked that it was "A bad book!" (qtd. 382) Philadelphia's *Graham's* journal conjectured its failures were a result of Melville's attempt at combining "the peculiarities of Poe and Hawthorne" (qtd. 384), and the *Literary World* censured its style and language, citing "such infelicities of expression, such unknown words as these, to wit: 'human*ness*,' 'heroic*ness*,' patriarchal*ness*, […]" (qtd. 388).

[3]Crimmins 439-40n10.

[4]Cited in Seigel 3.

[5]The citation reads: "3. A gipsy of society; one who either cuts himself off, or is by his habits cut off, from society for which he is otherwise fitted; especially an artist, literary man, or actor, who leads a free, vagabond, or irregular life, not being particular as to the society he frequents, and despising conventionalities generally. (Used with considerable latitude, with or without reference to morals.)"

[6]As Seigel notes, "written references to Bohemia as a special, identifiable kind of life appear only in the nineteenth century. It was in the 1830s and 1840s, to begin with in France, that the terms 'Bohemia,' '*la Bohème,*' and 'Bohemian' first appeared in this sense" (5).

[7]Balzac's "The Prince of Bohemia," despite its customary Balzacian range and sociological pursuits, exists somewhat tangentially to what might be called the "Literature of Bohemia" because of his different, far more positive, appraisal of the lifestyle. Emily Hahn quotes Balzac as writing: "Bohemia I made up of young

people, all of whom are between twenty and thirty, all men of genius in their own line, as yet unknown but with the ability to become known one day, when they will achieve real distinction" (qtd. Hahn 6).

[8]We know from Melville's journals that he was in Paris in 1849, so it is certainly possible he attended the play, although it appears unmentioned in his collected journals.

[9]See <https://pfaffs.web.lehigh.edu/node/38096>. A search for "bohemian" at *The Vault at Pfaff's*, a resource on Bohemianism hosted by Lehigh University and curated by Dr. Ed Whitley, reveals that Fitz-James O'Brien's "The Bohemian (1855)" is the first acknowledged and archived appearance of the term (in its modern sense), and that the term really did not become a general identifier of this group of people until the early 1860s.

[10]Indeed, an MLA Bibliography search, conducted on Nov. 20, 2015, on "Melville" and "Bohemian" yields exactly one reference, where Bohemian is used as a synonym for "Beatnik."

[11]For the sake of convenience and ease, I am including "The Church of the Apostles" in the "Pierre-as-Author" sections, although it appears, in attenuated form, in the first version of *Pierre*. The additions and changes, obviously, reflect Pierre's changing vocation, and therefore I believe it is legitimate to subsume this section under what Parker has shown was added later.

[12]It is possible to speculate that Melville may have had Fourier specifically in mind when he described some of the Apostles as "suspected [...] in [advancing] some unknown religious and political Millennium (269)," for, as Lause indicates, "Fourier nested [his] social program in a millenarian worldview" (5).

[13]Likewise, Joanna Levin notes that "in most Bohemian plots, artists' studios provide a variant of what Philip Fisher has termed 'privileged settings'" (128).

[14]See Pollin 14-17. Affinities between Poe and Melville have been seen throughout the latter's work; see, for example, Hayford's discussion of *The Confidence Man*, and Ljunquist's comparison of *Pierre* and *Pym.*

[15]Bell also makes an astute connection between Wordsworth's pastoral "Lucy" and Pierre's Lucy.

[16]See Avallone for a stimulating discussion of another connection between Poe and Melville, this being that "Melville's literary satire in 'Young America in Literature'" (especially the parts about readers seeking Pierre's autograph) responds or adverts to a similar satire Poe had published in *Holden's Dollar Magazine* in 1848 entitled "Autobiography of an Autograph Hunter" (108).

[17]Griswold aka "Ludwig" also provides a character sketch of Poe, describing his behavior, state of dress, and thinking, that strongly resembles Pierre near the novel's end: "He was at all times a dreamer—dwelling in ideal realms—in heaven or hell—peopled with creatures and the accidents of his brain. He walked the streets, in madness or melancholy, with lips moving in indistinct curses, or with eyes upturned in passionate prayers, (never for himself, for he felt, or professed to feel, that he was already damned), but for their happiness who at the moment

were objects of his idolatry—or, with his glances introverted to a heart gnawed with anguish, and with a face shrouded in gloom, he would brave the wildest storms; and all night, with drenched garments and arms wildly beating the winds and rains, he would speak as if to spirits that at such times only could be evoked by him from the Aidenn close by whose portals his disturbed soul sought to forget the ills to which his constitution subjugated him—close by that Aidenn where were those he loved—the Aidenn which he might never see, but in fitful glimpses, as its gates opened to receive the less fiery and more happy natures whose destiny to sin did not involve the doom of death."

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"Hey dol, merry dol": Tom Bombadil's Nonsense, or Tolkien's Creative Uncertainty? A Response to Thomas Kullmann*

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Studies of Tolkien's poetry always have been rare. The recent collection of essays entitled *Tolkien's Poetry*, edited by Julian Eilmann and Allan Turner, is one of the few of book-length that address the diversity and significance of the topic. Furthermore, as Thomas Kullmann has recently pointed out in "Poetic Insertions in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*," there is "little input from contemporary English scholarship, linguistics, as well as literary and cultural studies" (304n37) in existing critiques of Tolkien's poetry. This is a sadly correct assessment, and in part is a reflection of the nature and function of that poetry. Although the poetic content in Tolkien's prose works constantly adds new dimensions to characters, positioning them within the aesthetic of their race, and in relation to the history of Middle-earth, his poetry remains predominantly situational and occasional, belonging within the mythology and the aesthetic that governs and defines his creative work. Therefore, because of the nature of his poetry, there has been an involuted quality to Tolkien criticism which keeps it circulating around a limited range of approaches.[1]

In this essay I set out to respond to Kullmann's observations by examining one example of Tolkien's poetry in order to show that, when approached from those theories of poetry that were contemporary with Tolkien's work as well as from the perspectives of later

*Reference: Thomas Kullmann, "Poetic Insertions in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*," *Connotations* 23.2 (2013/14): 283-309. For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.uni-tuebingen.de/kullmann0232.htm>.

literary theory, the apparent strangeness and whimsicality of the verses that are characteristic of Tom Bombadil in *The Lord of the Rings* reveal new dimensions to Tolkien's own theories of creativity.

Strangeness and Nonsense

The significance of "strangeness" as an essential quality in poetry had been a matter for scholarly investigation from the second decade of the twentieth century and continued throughout the years when Tolkien was most active as a writer and scholar. Early twentieth-century Russian Formalism, together with the theories of poetry advanced by Tolkien's friend and colleague at Pembroke College, the polymath philosopher Robin G. Collingwood, and by his fellow-Inkling Owen Barfield, offer new ways of approaching his embedded poetry, even though the application of these theories to the lively simplicity and unsophisticated lexis characteristic of Tom's songs and speech may initially seem incongruous.

Barfield, in his 1927 book *Poetic Diction*, cited Aristotle's appreciation of the aesthetic value of "unfamiliar words" and included in this archaism and incongruity (169). During the 1930s Collingwood engaged in research into fairy tales and the magic that characterises them, as well as in lecturing on aesthetics and art. In both areas, his theories illuminate the functionality of (what appears to be) strangeness in comparison to familiarity and empirical science. He notes in "Fairy Tales" that "the peculiar effect which [...] magical themes produce in us is due to the fact that in hearing such stories we are liberated, by a temporary make-believe, from our normal scientific conception of nature" (126). In his essay "Aesthetic Theory and Artistic Practice," he contrasts this liberation to the making of meaning in art, complaining that this "became atrophied in the naturalistic artists of the nineteenth century" (95; see also 97). The perceived importance of various techniques of "defamiliarising" in order to alert the reader or spectator to meanings beyond those that had become

conventional had already been set out by the Russian Formalist Victor Shklovsky in 1914. In his article "The Resurrection of the Word" he had proposed the importance of poetry in defamiliarising or making strange "the habitual by presenting it in a novel light, by placing it in an unexpected context" (Shklovsky 41).[2] Shklovsky's comment may have been unknown to Tolkien, but it illuminates for us the significance of an aesthetic dependent on strangeness that was part of the cultural environment in which Tolkien lived and wrote. Later developments of the theory of making strange usefully illuminate the circumstances, the style, and the effect of Tom Bombadil's first song in *The Lord of the Rings* (*LotR*):

> Hey dol! merry dol! ring a ding dillo!
> Ring a dong! hop along! fa la the willow!
> Tom Bom, jolly Tom, Tom Bombadillo! (*LotR* "The Old Forest" 116)

This song, which the hobbits first hear an unseen Tom singing, initially seems to echo the informal "decorations" and repetitions familiar in folksong and might also be compared to the sounds used in Celtic "mouth music" or "lilting" in which meaning is subordinated to rhythm.[3] The song has a childish whimsicality in the nonce words and the rhyming and chiming vocabulary that is ostensibly humorously entertaining and becomes part of Tom's characteristic lexis. Tolkien, through the voice of the narrator, teases the reader with comments on the song, referring to it as "nonsense" and then as "a long string of nonsense-words (or so they seemed)" (*LotR*, "The Old Forest" 116). The parenthetical qualification immediately questions any hasty assumption that the song is indeed mere "nonsense." It is, in fact, no more "nonsense" than Sam's later "Troll Song"—which is also described in this way—as both judgements are revealed, in different ways, to be self-deprecating remarks referring to the humility or creative insecurity of those who utter them.[4]

When considered more closely, the "Hey dol, merry dol!" song, its singer, and the rhetorical remark referring to it may be understood as important signposts to Tolkien's engagement with literary theory. His

most famous statements of his own theories are usually derived from his poem "Mythopeoia," from his essay "On Fairy Stories," and from his *Letters*, together with some parts of his lecture and essay *Beowulf, the Monsters and the Critics*. Further expressions of his theory appear to be embedded within his longer works, as for example when he seems to deplore the process of criticism in Gandalf's pithy observation to Saruman that "he that breaks a thing to find out what it is has left the path of wisdom" (*LotR*, "The Council of Elrond" 252). Narratorial remarks such as that associated with Tom's song are, then, worthy of closer attention.

The philosopher and literary theorist Herbert Grabes in *Making Strange* has recently written of the aesthetic of Modernism which replaced the older ideas of "the beautiful." Grabes defines the new form as an "apparently lawless freedom of the imagination" but he asserts that

> […] this does not create "nonsense," but is, rather, a challenge to the recipient's ability to synthesize. In contrast to beautiful art, with Modernist [...] art the harmony of the imagination and understanding is not immediately apparent or "given," but is put at first in question and assigned to the recipient. (140)

Grabes's remarks illuminate the use of whatever seems strange or incongruous to provoke the reader's engagement with the text. They thus offer an effective tool for exposing the potential role of "nonsense" in Tolkien's work, where it contributes to conveying the mood and the characterisation of Tom while at the same time questioning the apparent free play of language, rhythm, and rhyme at two levels: Are they simple expressions of Tom Bombadil's freedom from constraint? And are they also an expression of Tolkien's own assertion of the freedom of his imagination to subvert traditional connections between language, meaning, and authority?

When Tom comes to the aid of Merry and Pippin, who are trapped inside Old Man Willow, his lively and apparently unsophisticated vocalising, by its very strangeness, might alert the reader to the

subversive power of playful simplicity that underpins his language—songs and speech. We are not told what he initially sings to the malicious tree as he makes it release the hobbits. But Tom then speaks aloud rhythmically expressed (or chanted) commands to the tree to return to its strictly arboreal state. Hushed or aloud, his language clearly takes effect. We are later given the song he sings to the Barrow Wight in full and are again told its effect. The simple but commanding vernacular of "Get out, you old Wight! Vanish in the sunlight! / Shrivel in the cold mist, like the winds go wailing," controls events as well as actions: "At these words there was a cry and part of the inner end of the chamber fell in with a crash. Then there was a long trailing shriek, fading away into an unguessable distance" (*LotR*, "Fog on the Barrow Downs" 139). The simple vocabulary of the six-line stanza creates rhythm through stress and is unrhymed, but its effect may be compared to a later episode when another chamber is destroyed. In the Mines of Moria, Gandalf confronts the unseen Balrog behind the door of the Chamber of Mazarbul and is forced to pronounce a "shutting-spell" followed by a "word of Command" to prevent the Balrog from pursuing the Company, at which point: "The door burst in pieces [...]. All the wall gave way, and the roof of the chamber as well" (*LotR*, "The Bridge of Khazad Dûm" 319). Tom's song to the Wight, like his song to the Willow, might be understood simply as a "spell," although it is not named as such, implying a conscious differentiation by Tolkien.

In modern terms, Tom's songs to the Willow and the Wight are unquestionably examples of performative utterances of the kind described by Pierre Bourdieu in *Language and Symbolic Power* as "a particular class of symbolic expressions, of which the discourse of authority is the only paradigmatic form, and whose specific efficacy stems from the fact that they seem to possess *in themselves* the source of the power which in reality resides in the institutional conditions of their production and reception" (111). While it is easy to see how the wizard's "word of Command" can be understood, within the framework of Tolkien's entire *legendarium*, to be legitimated and empow-

ered by the Valar whom he serves, Bourdieu's careful definition of the circumstances in which the "magic of performative utterances" becomes effective (75) helps to illuminate Goldberry's enigmatic answer to Frodo's question: "who is Tom Bombadil?" Goldberry replies: "He is, as you have seen him" (*LotR*, "The House of Tom Bombadil" 122).

Within the compass of the fiction, Tom's language has nothing apparently in common with the arcane, high-status language of the Elves, nor with Gandalf's command of language; it suggests, therefore, that power resides in the person, not in the form of language used nor its historical status. However, although Tom is not apparently contextualised in relation to, nor empowered or legitimated by, anything external to himself, a possible reason for the effect of his language, but one that requires knowledge of the background to *The Lord of the Rings*, is that, *pace* Verlyn Flieger, his songs are fragments of the Originary Song of creation sung by the Valar.[5] Flieger develops Tolkien's own statement in his early poem "Mythopoeia" that all temporal creativity is "refracted light [...] splintered from a single White" and that "[w]e still make by the law by which we're made" (87). Tolkien argued that all acts of artistic endeavour in the temporal realm are necessarily acts of "sub-creation" devolved from, and crucially, permitted by the Creator God.[6] This notion is fundamental to his own creative work and informs the cosmology he created in his *legendarium*; so the Music of the Valar, by which the cosmos including Middle-earth was made, *might* be understood as providing the ultimate power by which Tom's songs take effect. However, these songs do not in themselves bring anything into existence; rather, as Tom uses them they are songs which exert power and control over many aspects of what has already been created and the strangeness and simplicity of their form—language and rhythm—seem to be part of their effectiveness.

If the "magic" of Tom's performative utterances is not institutionally legitimated but does indeed possess in itself its effective power, the form and function of those utterances depend upon a simple lexis,

frequently including his name, combined with a distinctive rhythm. Even when someone else sings Tom's words they are effective. In the Barrow, when Frodo remembers and sings the song Tom had taught the hobbits, he finds that with singing just Tom's name "his voice seemed to grow strong: it had a full and lively sound" (*LotR*, "Fog on the Barrow Downs" 138), and it brings Tom to their rescue. In contrast to the malign stasis of the Willow, and the marginal presence of the undead Wights and Black Riders, his ability to control his surroundings through apparently meaningless sounds and trivial rhyming signals the subversive challenge that the irrational, characteristic of the carnivalesque, poses to these representatives of the negative power of the past (see Bahktin 50). Furthermore, Tom's power is such that his song enables the hobbits to emerge from the Barrow as if reborn. He is therefore clearly a carnivalesque presence in the story, a celebratory, uncontrolled counterbalance to the fear that surrounds and follows the hobbits and might be capable of penetrating the boundaries of Tom's authority—hence his warning to "heed no nightly noise!" (*LotR*, "In the House of Tom Bombadil" 125).[7] His songs are "stronger songs" (*LotR*, "Fog on the Barrow Downs" 139) in so far as their power lies precisely in his carnivalesque identity, which is a denial of death consistently expressed in his ebullient use of simple vernacular language accompanied by his characteristic entertaining, illogical, rhythmic lexis, as this combination, evident in both his speech and his songs, asserts and defines his identity.

In the initial "Hey dol! merry dol!" song, the shaping force of the vocabulary on the metre is deceptively entertaining but this is nevertheless a song of power in its own right, perhaps *because* it lacks meaning, or because we are to understand that it signifies beyond our expectation and comprehension. "Hey dol," and its subsequent echoes, express Tom's presence as he moves around the Forest and the Downs—like a herald's trumpet or a bird's song. It is loud enough and distinctive enough to announce the presence of a different life form, one not tied to the earth, nor under the pernicious influence of the static malice of Old Man Willow or the ancient evil of the Black

Riders. It furthermore defines that difference as belonging to "Tom Bombadillo"—a form of his name demanded by the song's rhyming, but this (apparently) playful adaptation does not change the identity of the singer any more than changing his clothes alters who he is in essence. When he is on his own passing through the Forest or over the Downs, he expresses the unrepressed joy that continually identifies him as well as his authority. It is only in direct communication with other sentient beings that he organises his speech—more or less—to suit their different ontological states. We may conclude, then, that Tom himself at all times defines the meaning and function of the language he uses, in whatever form it is presented, either as poetry or prose, in the specific environment which he inhabits and controls.

Poetry or Prose

It is a feature of Tom Bombadil's characterisation that his speech is differentiated from his songs only by the form in which Tolkien sets them out on the page, following the convention in which prose denotes speech while songs are organised into the lineation recognisable as verse. In Tom's case the same rhythm and occasional rhymes are common to both. Tolkien's inclusion of poetry throughout *The Lord of the Rings* may, for some critics, have echoes of the construction of texts as disparate as Icelandic sagas and nineteenth-century fantasy, but as Tom Shippey has briefly noted in T*he Road to Middle-earth* (81), Tolkien differentiates the relationship between Tom Bombadil's songs and his speech from all other instances of poetic insertions into the prose narrative and dialogues of *The Lord of the Rings*.

In the early twentieth century the Russian Formalists investigated what they perceived as the dichotomy between poetry and prose, but Collingwood challenged the concept of a dichotomy and in the process provided a possible theoretical foundation for the distinctive

relationship between Tom's speech and songs when he wrote in "Words and Tune" (*c*. 1918):

> Song could not have grown out of speech unless it was always *in* speech. [...] All speech contains those elements, intonation, pitch and stress, out of which music is composed: all speech *is* already song, more or less highly organised. (16)

In 1927 Barfield too was considering the relationship between poetry and prose, asserting that while the earliest verse-rhythms were "'given' by Nature" because "Nature herself is perpetually rhythmic,"

> [i]t is only at a later stage that prose (=not-verse) comes naturally into being out of the growth of that rational principle which, with its sense-bound, abstract thoughts, divorces man's consciousness from the life of Nature. (144)

With Tom's speech, which so closely resembles his songs in its perceptible rhythms and occasional rhymes,[8] Tolkien appears to associate the musicality of both with an undivided, and thus earlier, form of language and a mode of life that was ancient and once close to Nature, and anachronistically continues to be so.

Barfield in his statement of 1927 proposed an evolutionary model in which prose developed out of poetry. That poetry, he asserts, had been expressed in "the old single, living meanings" (100) which were experiential and in no way metaphorical (see 97). Nor was this poetry necessarily perceived as such by its makers (cf. 41). It is a feature of Tom's songs that they are devoid of poetic imagery and metaphorical constructions. They may be strings of sounds at times, or simple words logically arranged according to recognisable syntax, but whether they are playful, narrative, commanding, or calls for aid, those *words* of which they are constructed are closer to what Barfield referred to as "symbols of consciousness" (180), having "older single meanings" (108). These Barfield opposed to poetic metaphors which he defined as "logically disconnected but poetically connected ideas" (84) that accrue complex meanings through the passage of time and social interactions.[9] By 1924, however, Collingwood had already

challenged what was then the familiar evolutionary theory of the development of poetry. He noted in various essays, including "The Philosophy of Art" that before the earliest human beings developed religion or science they already "had an art of extraordinary richness and power" and were "by nature sublime poets" (75). Barfield does not challenge this notion of ancient excellence, even when he refers to the "infancy of society" (16), and Collingwood's observations shed additional light on Tom's songs when read in the context of his assertion that he was "Eldest, that's what I am" (*LotR*, "In the House of Tom Bombadil" 129). His songs should not, therefore, be dismissed on account of being unsophisticated, but may be considered from Shklovsky's perspective when he declares that "[p]eople [...] all too flippantly contrast the old with the new without thinking whether the old is alive or has vanished [...] as everything familiar, too well known, disappears from our consciousness" (43). Through the performative nature of Tom's songs, which contrasts sharply with their simple, often familiar lexis and rhythms, Tolkien exposes the potential value of older, apparently unsophisticated forms of language, and as he sets up the relationship between Tom's speech and songs and their effect, he defamiliarises and problematises both the forms and the functions of poetry.

Through his careful choice of the language and versification that Tom uses so effectively when confronting danger on his own behalf, or on behalf of the hobbits, Tolkien interrogates theories of his own time such as those of Barfield, who reconsidered the idea that language evolved from simple to complex by means of poetic metaphors when he asked: "How is it then that we find this almost universal consciousness that the golden age of poetry is in the infancy of society?" (69). Tolkien might be seen to take the notion of "infancy" in relation to the individual and to push this to challenging extremes in Tom's first song, where, in this as in others, his frequent use of nonce words and repetitions *appears* to replicate a childlike delight in playing with sound. Tom's strange yet familiar lexis implies a characterisation that is belied by his effectiveness against both occult and natural

forces—as his waving away of the rain demonstrates (see *LotR*, "In the House of Tom Bombadil" 127).

In this way, Tolkien seems to question how readers judge the value of language, the "meaning" of metre, and of form on the page; and the way sounds accrue meaning through use in specific contexts.[10] The distinctive "dancing" rhythm of Tom's songs and speech may seem light-hearted to our ears and may well influence their reception. Nevertheless, his vocalising in its simple and rhythmic form is revealed to be consistently a species of "performative utterance," questioning the connection between power, seriousness, and both poetic form and rhythm, and contesting the convention in poetry that some forms are to be equated with what is serious and important while other forms are equated with light-heartedness and nonsense. What Tom's songs show is that form is not an *essential* conveyor of meaning. Their association with meaning may have altered in significance over time, or they may be mistaken by those who encounter them for the first time, as the narrator's "nonsense" comments seem to imply. Tom's linguistic style, complete with nonce words, and particularly in association with his characteristic poetic mode, at times takes readers beyond the limits of intelligibility to a place where meaning and form are *apparently* in conflict but only from the reader's, or the hobbits', initially limited perspective. In the way he makes language "strange" through the tension between the forms and the effects of Tom's language, Tolkien questions assumptions made about language, and particularly about poetry and its relationship to prose.

Narrator and Author

At this point it is useful to distinguish between Tom Bombadil's first and his subsequent songs. The difference lies in the relative semantic intelligibility of words and syntagmatic forms in all his songs after the first, features they share with his speech. This important difference implies that the narrator's "nonsense" comment only creates tension

once Tom's strange lexis can be seen to take effect. However, echoes of that lexis are also used in songs with a logical narrative function, such as "Hey! Come merry dol! derry dol! My darling!" (*LotR*, "The Old Forest" 117), where they contribute sound and rhythm without *apparent* meaning. Here we must observe the obscure onomastics of *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien the author is acting out a fiction of being merely the translator of a work, *The Red Book of Westmarch*, originally written by Bilbo. When the narrator questions whether the first song is nonsense, Tolkien punctures the convention of the omniscient narrator, drawing attention to the limitations of the translator's craft. As he draws in the reader by posing the question about "nonsense," he opens up the possibility that not knowing what—or how—the song signifies may lead to hasty conclusions about it and its singer. The "nonsense" comment may equally reveal an apparent mismatch between perceptions of language and its ability to convey meaning, and thus may assert the limitations of the translator's knowledge or the reader's perception.

In Tom Bombadil, Tolkien develops a character whose vocalisations, strange and simple though they seem, are matched to the contexts of their use. When he communicates with Old Man Willow, we do not hear Tom's initial communication with the tree, only a subsequent series of short declarations and commands, rhythmic though not in verse form, but resonant with the stasis of the tree, as opposed to the fluency of independent movement. But when addressing the Barrow Wight—formerly an adult male mortal—Tom uses more syntactically developed commands in unrhymed verse, deploying the delightfully colloquial disrespect of "Get out, you old Wight!" to subvert the awe and fear potential in the encounter. Although Tolkien as narrator refers to Tom's initial song as "nonsense" twice, emphasising this possible interpretation, Tom's particular formulaic style, which is often repetitive and reliant on rhythm rather than meaning, defines his control over the natural threats of the Forest and the unnatural threats of the Barrow. His songs are performative utterances expressed in a rhythmical form, which, like his cavorting, celebrate his

freedom to move in contrast to the trees, in contrast to the spectral existence of the Barrow Wight, and in contrast to the socially-acquired restraint of hobbits and readers alike. As his cavorting expresses freedom of movement, so Tom's "nonsense" is a lively demonstration of his unrestrained ability to vocalise his presence for all to hear. It does not need at all times to take recognisable syntagmatic form because it does not need at all times to convey the kinds of complex logical meaning that Barfield associated with the development of the rational in society at the expense of Nature. What to the rational, acculturated hearer or reader appears to be childish nonsense, in fact identifies Tom for who he is, and, through its oppositional liveliness, declares his power whenever it is uttered.

Tolkien's characterisation of Tom's lexis reflects Barfield's theory of the primacy of poetry and Collingwood's theory of the original musicality of speech. This lends consistency to Tom's claim to be "Eldest" and defines his simple vocalising as the primal form of language.[11] As the narrator's "nonsense" comment challenges the ability of that primal form to signify and is subverted by the effectiveness of the lexis, Tolkien appears to suggest that meaning coalesces around what seems to be meaningless vocalising when that vocalising has an effect, even though this may be initially only the declaration of identity. When such a declaration has an effect, both identity and vocalisation accrue power as well as meaning. *Pace* Barfield, the logic of syntactical organisation follows this stage, hence Tom's ontological sensitivity.

However, Tom's lexis is specific to him and the environment in which he exists, prompting consideration of Tolkien's relationship to his more developed created languages. Because the power and effect of Tom's language appear to be geographically limited when he refuses to cross the borders of the lands he controls, Tolkien seems to imply that his created languages, including both forms of Elvish, can only signify and function within the limits *he* controls—Middle-earth and its cosmology. The subsequent conclusion must be that he acknowledged the possibility that they would be regarded as "non-

sense," having little effect, and thus scant meaning outside the limits of the world for which they were made.[12]

Unfortunately, the *apparently* childish, unsophisticated, or folksong familiarity of Tom's use of language and its delightfully entertaining simplicity together with the fascination of his mythic resonance are apt to divert attention from Tolkien's metalinguistic questioning of its significance. Moreover, when prompted by readers, Tolkien gave various opinions concerning Tom Bombadil, none of which entirely explain the forms or origins of his rhythmic language, and Tolkien stated in a letter: "I do not think Tom needs philosophising about, and is not improved by it" (*Letters* 192). But this disguises and even subverts the importance of the character by ignoring the strange playfulness of his use of language in which poetry and prose are barely distinguished and meaning is put into question. However, Tolkien had a long and profound interest in "play" of various kinds,[13] and his twice-repeated assertion that Tom's initial "Hey dol" song was "nonsense" cannot be anything other than a cue to the reader to interrogate the characterisation of this intentional "enigma" and his command of language for yet deeper insights into Tolkien's own theories of creativity, identity, and meaning.[14]

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NOTES

[1]For examples of comparisons made between the inclusion of poetry in the works of William Morris and Tolkien, see Burns, and Perry. For comparisons between Icelandic saga style and Tolkien's use of poetry see Phelpstead. Frequently cited paradigms of poetic form are those associated with Old English, Middle English, and the Romantics. On Old English, see for example Cunningham, and Shippey, *Author of the Century* 97. On Middle English, see for example Pridmore 219. On the Romantics, see Honegger 124.

[2]See also Erlich 1101.

[3]See "Puirt à beul."

[4]After the attack on Weathertop, Sam offers the jolly but highly complex "Troll" song to cheer his companions saying "It ain't what I call proper poetry [...] just a bit of nonsense" (*LotR*, "The Flight to the Ford" 201). It is Frodo who explains admiringly, "It's out of his own head, of course" (203).

[5]Although Flieger focuses on the splintering of language in Tolkien's *legendarium*, the same principle applies to song because it precedes both light and language as the creative power by which the entire cosmology of Middle-earth is brought into being, and thus in effect gives rise to them, but like them is gradually diminished in power; see Flieger.

[6]On the topic of sub-creation Tolkien was following Coleridge's theory of the relationship between imagination and the "infinite I AM." See Jackson 313. See also Weinreich.

[7]This warning takes on significance when read against Tolkien's 1934 poem "The Adventures of Tom Bombadil," and Tom's obvious prior knowledge of the Willow and the Wight, but remains allusive for the novice reader.

[8]On rhyme in Tom's prose see Milbank 134.

[9]Illustrating single meanings, Barfield quotes Spenser's *Faerie Queene* where in "The ruin of proud Marinell" ruin refers metaphorically to Marinell's defeat in battle. Barfield traces the origin of the metaphor back to verbs such as Latin *ruo* "rush" or "fall," and Greek ῥέω "to flow," to show that all the original meanings refer to natural processes, having no *logical* connection with human activity (see 107-12). Barfield provides a clearer example of logically disconnected but poetically connected ideas, without etymological analysis, when he quotes Shelley's line from *Prometheus Unbound*: "My soul is an enchanted boat" (Act II.v.72; Barfield 57).

[10]On language and aesthetic, see also Smith.

[11]On the basis of poetic style Tom may indeed be older than Treebeard.

[12]Dimitra Fimi does not address the possibility that Tom's characteristic lexis had special significance for Tolkien in her book on his interest in the creation of languages and "linguistic aesthetic."

[13]See for example his story *The Cottage of Lost Play*, as well as the poems "You and Me and the Cottage of Lost Play," and "The Little House of Lost Play" in *The Book of Lost Tales, Part 1* 13-32.

[14]Tolkien describes Tom as an intentional enigma in *Letters* 174.

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On Poets, Poets' Critics, and Critics' Critics: A Response to Maurice Charney and Thomas Kullmann*

BEATRIX HESSE

Maurice Charney's "Adopting Styles, Inserting Selves: Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*" discusses Nabokov's intriguing book in a very stimulating manner, raising numerous questions some of which have already elicited lively critical debate. Pekka Tammi in *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov* even calls *Pale Fire* "the most thoroughly explicated of all Nabokov's works" (571). A glance at NABOKV-L (Vladimir Nabokov Forum)[1], a website devoted to the discussion of Nabokov's works, confirms this impression. Since the present contribution is intended to be a response to Charney's article, however, I will focus largely on the critics consulted by Charney and also consider a previous response to this article by Thomas Kullmann. Concerning the title of Nabokov's work, the following note may be helpful: his novel *Pale Fire* consists of four parts, a foreword, a poem, a commentary, and an index. The poem is also called "Pale Fire"; hence, in the following, *Pale Fire* (in italics) will refer to the entire novel, while "Pale Fire" (in quotation marks) will refer to the poem. The ostensible author of the poem is John Shade, the author of the *apparatus criticus* Charles Kinbote.

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*References: Maurice Charney, "Adopting Styles, Inserting Selves: Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*," *Connotations* 24.1 (2014/2015): 27-40. Thomas Kullmann, "Some Moondrop Title: A Response to Maurice Charney," *Connotations* 24.2 (2014/2015): 217-30.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at http://www.connotations.de/debcharney0241.htm>.

1. Why *Timon*?

The first issue Charney addresses is why Nabokov chose a quotation from one of Shakespeare's lesser known plays, *Timon of Athens*, for his title: "How can we explain Nabokov's preoccupation with *Timon of Athens*? It is certainly not one of Shakespeare's major works" (Charney 29). This question has already troubled various critics; Priscilla Meyer even goes so far as to suggest that the main reference is not to *Timon of Athens* at all but to *Hamlet*, a play of considerably higher standing within the Shakespeare canon. The relevant passage in *Hamlet* reads:

> Fare thee well at once:
> The glow-worm shows the matin to be near
> And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire.
> Adieu, adieu, adieu, remember me. (*Hamlet* I.v.88-91)

This parallel (first suggested by Carol T. Williams) suffers from the flaw that "pale" and "fire" do not appear immediately after one another but are separated by two words. Meyer, however, builds a convincing case from the context of this passage. It belongs to the Ghost's farewell speech to his son and makes sense as a private reference to the death of Nabokov's father, who—like John Shade in *Pale Fire*—had been killed by a bullet intended for another man. Nabokov indeed included a reference to his father's death in the text of his novel by using his father's birthday (21 July) for the date of Shade's death (see Boyd, *American Years* 456). Charney also engages with the question of whether Nabokov incorporated autobiographical elements in his fiction, and he does so by quoting a passage from *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, in which the narrator suspects that Knight uses a kind of "code" in the finished novel to express his private feelings for his lover in "real life," Clare Bishop (see Charney 32). What is noteworthy within the context of *Pale Fire*, however, is the manner in which Nabokov includes these private feelings. Instead of publicly mourning his dead father in the manner of John Shade, who makes the death of his daughter the central theme of his poem, Nabokov confines himself to a single reference[2] that will only be

meaningful to readers well acquainted with his personal life. Accordingly, it is debatable if Kullmann's optimistic reading of Shade's treatment of his daughter's death as an "active work of mourning" (Kullmann 218) is adequate—Nabokov himself certainly performed his own process of mourning in a radically different manner.

The *Hamlet* allusion, though valid, certainly is a more submerged theme in *Pale Fire* than the *Timon* reference, which has led Meyer to suggest that the latter is no more than a false bottom under which the true meaning remains hidden, except for a chosen few discerning readers. Meyer's hypothesis is somewhat symptomatic of the critical approach of Nabokov specialists who tend to assume that the most obvious reading must be a red herring, since they pride themselves on being members of an intellectual élite. While it is true that there is often a second hidden meaning this does not necessarily mean that the more obvious one can simply be disregarded.

Rather than considering the *Timon* reference as a mere red herring, I would argue that Nabokov takes great pains to make sure that no reader, however lazy, will miss it. There is no plot synopsis of *Timon* in *Pale Fire*, and a reader will not necessarily be familiar with it since it is one of Shakespeare's lesser known plays. As I will therefore suggest in the following, it is likely that the quoted passage is more relevant than the play as a whole. In this, I follow Thomas Kullmann's suggestion "that Nabokov, rather than finding *Timon of Athens* 'particularly attractive' (Charney 29), hit upon the 'pale fire' image as a metaphor which encapsulates both his novel as a whole and Shade's poem in particular" (Kullmann 218).

Thomas Kullmann, like Meyer, proposes an alternative source for the title:

> Over hill, over dale,
> Thorough bush, thorough briar,
> Over park, over pale,
> Thorough flood, thorough fire,
> I do wander everywhere,
> Swifter than the moon's sphere;

> And I serve the Fairy Queen,
> To dew her orbs upon the green. (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* II.i.2-9)

This is from the speech (or song) of the fairy at the beginning of II.i of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and again the correspondence is somewhat flawed by the fact that several words come between the terms "pale" and "fire." Moreover, as Kullmann himself points out, this is a different kind of "pale," meaning not "pallid" but "enclosure" (see Kullmann 227). This moonlit enclosed space, according to Kullmann, is the world of the fairies or the world of literary imagination—if applied to *Pale Fire*, the imagination of John Shade.

Neither Meyer nor Kullmann comment on another rather obvious parallel between both *Hamlet* as well as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Pale Fire*. Within Shakespeare's oeuvre, *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are the two most conspicuous cases of plays-within-plays, *Hamlet* containing "The Murder of Gonzago" and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "Pyramus and Thisbe." As in the case of "Pale Fire" and *Pale Fire*, the relationship between the embedded text and its frame is dubious. John Dover Wilson's *What Happens in* Hamlet was triggered by the seemingly innocent question of whether the King did not see the dumb show preceding the presentation of "The Murder of Gonzago"—why did a central character in the frame play miss the obvious correspondences between the frame and the embedded text? The same applies to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where we can never be quite sure if Hermia and Lysander recognize their own plight in the play of Pyramus and Thisbe. The correspondence (or lack thereof) between the embedded poem "Pale Fire" and the novel that frames it has also become a major issue for debate in Nabokov criticism[3] and is a topic to which we will return.

As far as the correspondences between *Pale Fire* and its primary reference to *Timon* is concerned, Charney quotes from an article by Márta Pellérdi, but he seems unconvinced by the parallels she suggests because he only quotes her first (stylistic) observation stating that *Timon* is incomplete and perhaps botched up by a later hand. The additional correspondences Pellérdi observes are that both *Timon* and

Pale Fire belong to the genre of biography, they are both centrally concerned with friendship, and that perhaps *Timon* found his way into *Pale Fire* via Tennyson's "New Timon." Since Charney does not discuss any of these propositions in detail, it may be assumed that he does not think any of them particularly appropriate. Instead, he detects as the central parallel that both Kinbote and Shade are misanthropic: "I think Nabokov was so strongly attracted to Shakespeare's play because he imagined Kinbote as a Timonist, a creature who deals in excess, and who, in his eccentricity and whimsicality, hates all of mankind except a chosen few; both Kinbote and Shade are misanthropic" (Charney 29). In the conclusion to his article, Charney returns to this point: "I think that Nabokov establishes a strong sense that Kinbote, especially, is a Timonist. Shakespeare's Timon is alienated from mankind and speaks, particularly in the second part of the play, with excessive invective and extravagant passion" (38). While this diagnosis applies primarily to Kinbote, Charney also considers Shade a man "carried away by the misfortunes in his life, especially the death of his daughter" (38).

This reading does not entirely convince me. As far as Shade is concerned, he seems to have come to terms with his daughter's suicide by composing his poem, and he is obviously looking forward to the coming day (he will not live to see). This point has already been made in Kullmann's response: "Shade, on the other hand, overcomes 'the misfortunes in his life, especially the death of his daughter' (Charney 38) by an active work of mourning, recorded in the poem, and the strengthening love of his wife" (218).

Thomas Kullmann has also already taken issue with Charney's diagnosis of Kinbote as a misanthrope: "I cannot see that Kinbote is a 'Timonist,' who 'hates all of mankind except a chosen few,' or that either Kinbote or Shade are 'misanthropic' (Charney 29; cf. Schuman 96-98)" (217). For the diagnosis of Kinbote's misanthropy, Charney refers his readers to Gretchen Minton, whose article indeed has a subsection entitled "The Misanthrope." What this part of the article proves, however, is not Kinbote's hostility to men but to women;

Minton proceeds to demonstrate his "flamboyant homosexuality, coupled with a persistent misogyny" (n.p.) and continues by addressing homosocial bonding in *Timon* and *Coriolanus*, another key reference in *Pale Fire*. To my mind, Kinbote is not a real misanthrope, because he does not withdraw from company—like Timon—but on the contrary makes "it a point of attending all the social functions available to [him]" (*Pale Fire* 80). He desperately longs to be invited to Shade's birthday party and mentions in passing that the night before he has attended two parties with people he hardly knew (cf. *Pale Fire* 127-30). In the case of the birthday party, his supposed "misanthropy" is dictated by his environment, more particularly, by Sybil Shade: "We did not ask you because we knew how tedious you find such affairs" (*Pale Fire* 130). He is a difficult guest for a hostess on account of his sexual and dietary habits (a homosexual vegetarian who will upset any seating arrangement and menu) and his conversation (he is an incessant talker suffering from halitosis). His fear of being alone in the house at night prompts him to let one of his rooms and bring home one-night stands. This is clearly a far cry from Timon's self-willed isolation in his cave.

Following Phyllis Roth's argument, I would argue that Kinbote is not a misanthrope but a paranoid: "Kinbote is narcissistic and paranoid" (Roth 226). According to common consent in psychiatry at the time of publication, Kinbote's mental state conforms to the type of "schizophrenic reaction, paranoid type" described as follows in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association (later referred to as *DSM*-1):

> This type of reaction is characterized by autistic, unrealistic thinking, with mental content composed chiefly of delusions of persecution, and/or of grandeur, ideas of reference, and often hallucinations. It is often characterized by unpredictable behaviour, with a fairly constant attitude of hostility and aggression. Excessive religiosity may be present with or without delusions of persecution. There may be an expansive delusional system of omnipotence, genius, or special ability. (*DSM*-1 26-27)

These symptoms, however, are closely related to 000-x31 ("Paranoia"), which is defined as follows:

> This type of psychotic disorder is extremely rare. It is characterized by an intricate, complex, and slowly developing paranoid system, often logically elaborated after a false interpretation of an actual occurrence. Frequently, the patient considers himself endowed with superior or unique ability. The paranoid system is particularly isolated from much of the normal stream of consciousness, without hallucinations and with relative intactness and preservation of the remainder of the personality, in spite of a chronic and prolonged course. (*DSM*-1 28)

Since the main distinctive criterion is the presence or absence of hallucinations, it may be interesting to ponder on the question whether Kinbote is actually suffering from them. At one point, he inadvertently admits to this by misreading an anonymous letter alluding to his halitosis as referring to hallucinations instead. Besides, the second diagnosis, paranoia, is explained as a result of a false interpretation of an actual occurrence—in this case, that would be the murder of Shade, misinterpreted as a murder attempt directed at Kinbote. If Kinbote is suffering from paranoia, this means that he must have invented the entire Zembla myth after Shade was shot. Consequently, it also means that he never gave the supposed source material to Shade but only imagined he had done so afterwards. As Boyd quite persuasively explains in "Shade and Shape," Kinbote must have invented the Gradus theme after speaking to Jack Grey in prison.[4] And if the Gradus theme, why not the rest of Zembla and Kinbote's spectacular escape? If we choose to subscribe to this interpretation, the surprising resonances between the poem and the commentary are due to the fact that the entire commentary is indeed inspired by the poem.

If we consider the passage from *Timon* from which the title "Pale Fire" is derived, we may find a mental process that also strongly suggests delusions of grandeur aligned with persecution mania:

> I'll example you with thievery:
> The sun's a thief and with his great attraction
> Robs the vast sea; the moon's an arrant thief
> And her pale fire she snatches from the sun;
> The sea's a thief whose liquid surge resolves

> The moon into salt tears; the earth's a thief
> That feeds and breeds by a composture stol'n
> From general excrement. Each thing's a thief. (*Timon of Athens* IV.iii.430-37)

Timon projects his personal anguish onto the universe and extrapolates an entire cosmology from a recent disappointment and the presence of three banditti. As a rereading of IV.iii suggests, Shakespeare is indeed interested in showing us how this conceit is being fabricated. In a previous exchange with Alcibiades, Timon has already identified himself as the moon who, in the absence of sunlight (read funds), lacks the ability to show his bounty.

> ALCIBIADES
> How came the noble Timon to this change?
> TIMON
> As the moon does, by wanting light to give;
> But then renew I could not like the moon—
> There were no suns to borrow of. (*Timon of Athens* IV.iii.67-70)

The focus is not on Timon's cosmology itself or the correspondence between micro- and macrocosm but on the diseased mental processes that produce such an interpretation. Besides, the fact that Timon identifies himself as the moon (of all celestial bodies) may carry a secondary allusion to lunacy. I therefore disagree with Kullmann's judgment that Timon perceives reality "all too acutely" (218), because the quoted passage from *Timon* clearly also shows a mind maladjusted to reality.

Timon's mental operation of projecting his personal experiences and emotions onto the universe strangely resembles Ruskin's concept of "pathetic fallacy" described in *Modern Painters*:

> [I]n this chapter, I want to examine the nature of the other error, that which the mind admits when affected strongly by emotion. Thus, for instance, in *Alton Locke*,—
> "They rowed her in across the rolling foam—
> The cruel, crawling foam."
> The foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl. The state of mind which attributes to it these characters of a living creature is one in which the reason is

> unhinged by grief. All violent feelings have the same effect. They produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things, which I would generally characterize as the "pathetic fallacy." (363-64)

As I have pointed out elsewhere, Nabokov had already invented a psychiatric diagnosis indebted both to *DSM*-1's "paranoia" or "schizophrenic reaction, paranoid type" and Ruskin's "pathetic fallacy" in his 1948 short story "Signs and Symbols" which he summed up in its planning stage as a "book of a lunatic who constantly felt that all the parts of a landscape and movements of inanimate objects were a complex code of allusions to his own being, so that the whole universe seemed to be conversing about him by means of signs" (qtd. Boyd, *American Years* 117).

In the finished version, this disease is called "referential mania," a term equally applicable to a mental illness and to an aesthetic principle like Ruskin's. Nabokov's narrator explains:

> In these very rare cases, the patient imagines that everything happening around him is a veiled reference to his personality and existence. [...] Phenomenal nature shadows him wherever he goes. Clouds in the staring sky transmit to one another, by means of slow signs, incredibly detailed information regarding him. His inmost thoughts are discussed at nightfall, in manual alphabet, by darkly gesticulating trees. Pebbles or stains or sun flecks form patterns representing in some awful way messages that he must intercept. Everything is a cipher and of everything he is the theme. [...] With distance the torrents of wild scandal increase in volume and volubility. The silhouettes of his blood corpuscles, magnified a million times, flit over vast plains; and still farther, great mountains of unbearable solidity and height sum up in terms of granite and groaning firs the ultimate truth of his being. ("Signs and Symbols" 599)

In a passage from *Pale Fire* that is also quoted by Charney, Kinbote clearly echoes the description of referential mania from "Signs and Symbols": "for a moment I found myself enriched with an indescribable amazement as if informed that fireflies were making decodable signals on behalf of stranded spirits, or that a bat was writing a legible tale of torture in the bruised and branded sky" (*Pale Fire* 227). When he describes his persecution mania, Kinbote likewise illustrates it by

an image that shows his mind and body miraculously expanded: "At times I thought that only by self-destruction could I hope to cheat the relentlessly advancing assassins who were in me, in my eardrums, in my pulse, in my skull, rather than on that constant highway looping up over me and around my heart" (*Pale Fire* 79). These passages also recall Timon's enlargement of his personal anguish on a monumental scale; significantly, however, it is not only Kinbote who is experiencing an expansion of self comparable to Timon's but also the (supposedly) sane Shade:

> I felt distributed through space and time:
> One foot upon a mountaintop, one hand
> Under the pebbles of a panting strand,
> One ear in Italy, one eye in Spain,
> In caves, my blood, and in the stars my brain. ("Pale Fire" ll. 148-53)

A similar example of delusions of grandeur[5] occurs towards the end of the poem: "And if my private universe scans right / So does the verse of galaxies divine / Which I believe is an iambic line" ("Pale Fire" ll. 974-75). I would therefore argue that what Nabokov found in the passage from *Timon* which provided the title for his novel was a habit of thought that he had already sketched in "Signs and Symbols" and called "referential mania," but which is of special interest not as a psychiatric diagnosis but as an aesthetic principle already pointed out by Ruskin, who called it "pathetic fallacy."

As pointed out earlier, Kullmann believes that it is not *Timon of Athens* as a whole that attracted Nabokov, but the specific passage from the text in which the term "pale fire" occurs; however, he suggests that the main connecting point is the allusion to theft. The novel is called *Pale Fire*, because Kinbote commits this act of theft by physically stealing the poem and by borrowing from the greater poet's light as the moon steals its pale fire from the sun. This is the interpretation suggested by a remark made by Kinbote immediately following his paraphrase of the passage in *Timon*: "I have reread, not without pleasure, my comments to his lines, and in many cases have caught myself borrowing a kind of opalescent light from my poet's fiery orb, and unconsciously aping the prose style of his own critical

essays" (*Pale Fire* 67). Like Timon in IV.iii, Kinbote instantly identifies with the Moon, with a similar accompanying allusion to lunacy. However, at a later stage of the Commentary, Kinbote suggests the opposite relationship between poem and commentary: "My commentary to this poem, now in the hands of my readers, represents an attempt to sort out those echoes and wavelets of fire and pale phosphorescent hints, and all the many subliminal debts to me" (*Pale Fire* 233). In this passage, Kinbote is the sun from which Shade's poem derives its pale fire. Accordingly, Roth asks: "which part of the novel is the moon whose pale fire is stolen from the sun, and which is the sun?" (211). The question of what may be called the "primary text" of *Pale Fire* and what may be called the "secondary text" has proved rather intricate and been debated in various contexts within the large corpus of criticism *Pale Fire* has provoked.[6]

While the motif of theft provides a suitable explanation for the choice of *Pale Fire* as the title of the entire novel, it still does not explain why Shade decides to call his poem "Pale Fire." The most likely explanation is that "pale fire" is a variation of the "faint hope" ("Pale Fire" l. 834) Shade eventually expresses towards Sybil concerning life after death. The connection between a faint light and the afterlife is established in the episode of the haunted barn narrated in the commentary, in which a will-o'-the-wisp is identified as the spirit of Shade's deceased Aunt Maud. And again, a comparison to Nabokov's short fiction may prove instructive: in "The Vane Sisters," incidentally also in an embedded poem, the apparition of a ghost is referred to as "a flawy but genuine gleam" (627) while the actual indubitable manifestation of the ghost occurs on the level of style: as an acrostic in the final paragraph.

2. Poetry in Fiction: How Close Are Poem and Commentary?

Charney's article was first triggered by a conference on "Poetry in Fiction," and, accordingly, his article investigates the relationship between the poem and the prose of its commentary. In this context, it may be useful to remember that Nabokov famously claimed the

inability "to see any generic difference between poetry and artistic prose" (*Strong Opinions* 44). Charney comes to a similar conclusion—at least, as far as Nabokov's poetry in *Pale Fire* is concerned—using the terms "merging" (32) and "mingling"(34) to describe the relationship between poetry and prose, and remarking that "[Kinbote's] style in his commentary matches that of Shade in his poem" (34). As shall become apparent later on, I share this impression but believe that one needs a more detailed examination in order to tell if a prose style "matches" a verse style. While Charney notes that Shade and Kinbote are two radically different personalities, he still comes to the somewhat paradoxical conclusion: "The more one rereads *Pale Fire*, however, the more one is caught up in the seemingly absurd idea that the relationship of the poem and the commentary is quite close" (34).

Since the two main parts of *Pale Fire*, the poem and the commentary, were ostensibly produced by two different authors, Shade and Kinbote, in secondary criticism, the issue of the relationship between poetry and fiction in *Pale Fire* has frequently taken the specific form of the question of authorship. A minor question of authorship concerns the variants of "Pale Fire" that Kinbote presents in his Commentary: Are they authentic, or has Kinbote made them up in order to reinforce the link between the poem and his Zemblan saga? Charney does not seem to have made up his mind whether Kinbote has composed the variants himself: "Kinbote is encouraged by the variants to think that Shade is irresistibly recounting his own story of the exiled king, complete with children's games and secret passages. Of course, our intuition tells us that all the variants and notes have been written by Kinbote himself" (37). I fail to follow the logic of this paragraph: if Kinbote has indeed written the variants himself, how can he be encouraged by them (unless he has forgotten that he wrote them himself)?

Brian Boyd has attempted to resolve the question of their authorship by pointing out that "the variants are labelled 'K's contribution' in the index and are risibly flat in their versification" (Boyd, *American Years* 710). However, only three of the variants are marked "K's contribu-

tion"—eight lines following line 70 of the poem (*Pale Fire* 81), one line following line 79 (*Pale Fire* 88), and four lines following line 130 (*Pale Fire* 96). If the other variants, altogether 14, were forged by Kinbote, at least they remain unacknowledged by their author—and besides, even "K's contribution" may mean merely that Kinbote claims that these lines were inspired by his stories, not that he actually composed the lines themselves. In the course of the Commentary, Kinbote confesses to having invented one of the variants (for line 12: "Ah, I must not forget to say something / That my friend told me of a certain king"; *Pale Fire* 62) but insists: "It is the only time in the course of the writing of these difficult comments, that I have tarried, in my distress and disappointment, on the brink of falsification" (*Pale Fire* 180). While this statement is unreliable since in the earlier example he clearly did a bit more than "tarry on the brink" of forgery, the line which he confesses to having forged scans so lamentably (which even Kinbote himself notes but perhaps was unable to remedy) that one would hesitate to ascribe the other, far more competent variants to such a "miserable rhymester" (as Kinbote calls himself; *Pale Fire* 227).

Another, also somewhat minor, authorship debate concerns the identification of Kinbote with the character of "Botkin, V., American scholar of Russian descent" (*Pale Fire* 240) listed in the index. Charney disapproves of this identification:[7] "In relation to the novel itself, there seems to be no point at all in equating Kinbote and Botkin" (36).

I would argue that the point of the identification of Kinbote as Botkin is that Botkin has reinvented himself as the more flamboyant and adventurous character of Kinbote, who is really Charles II of Zembla. Since the entire Zembla narrative with its echoes of Ruritanian *coups d'état* seems to belong to an entirely different literary genre from Shade's life in a small American university town, we would be inclined to believe that, on the level of reality of the story, the Zembla saga is completely invented; the commentary does not contain a biography but an elaborate fantasy. While Shade transforms biographical material ("Life") into poetry ("Art"), Kinbote/Botkin transforms fiction ("Art") into "Life" by believing in his own fabrica-

tion. Recognizing Kinbote's creative achievement even in his delusional state, Shade welcomes Kinbote as a fellow artist by describing him as "a person who deliberately peels off a drab and unhappy past and replaces it by a brilliant invention"[8] (*Pale Fire* 188). Incidentally, Charney's observation that Zemblan resembles Russian (31) also supports the assumption that Kinbote is Botkin, a Russian expatriate who would have invented an artificial language closely related to his native tongue.

While Charney intuitively proposes that somehow poem and commentary are quite close, Kullmann disagrees: "the more I reread Shade's poem, the less I am inclined to believe that Kinbote's commentary has anything to do with it, or that Shade is 'indebted' (Charney 34) to Kinbote in any way" (221). In this case, Kullmann obviously voices a minority opinion, since numerous critics have shared Charney's impression that there exist abundant parallels and correspondences between the poem and the commentary. This observation has given rise to theories of single authorship, concisely summed up by Boyd: "Although several critics have proposed Shade as the sole author of poem and commentary, one or two others have instead proposed Kinbote as the person responsible for the swarm of echoes between the two parts" (*American Years* 444). Group 1, the Shadeans, consists of Andrew Field, Julia Bader (Boyd, *American Years* 710n12), and Boyd himself (based on additional manuscript evidence; *American Years* 445)[9]; group 2, the Kinbotians, of Page Stegner, Herbert Grabes, and Pekka Tammi (Boyd, *American Years* 710n13). Alvin Kernan and Brian McHale have argued that, while there is indubitably only one single author to both poem and commentary, just who this author is—Kinbote or Shade—is kept permanently undecidable. These hypotheses are supported, among other things, by the fact that Shade and Kinbote share the same birthday, 5 July. So, incidentally, does Gradus (see Boyd, "Shade and Shape" 185). Single-authorship theories have been opposed, for example by Robert Alter, Ellen Pifer, David Lodge, and Dmitri Nabokov (see Boyd, "Shade and Shape" 176).

Like Charney in the case of the identification of Kinbote as Botkin, I do not see the point of these theories of single authorship. They may be partly inspired by a passage towards the end of *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, in which the narrator and his dead brother seem to merge, as well as by a practical joke Nabokov played on a hostile émigré critic in Berlin.[10] Of course single-authorship theories have the virtue of accounting for the baffling correspondences between poem and commentary that Charney has noted. But both Shade and Kinbote would have to be entirely different characters from the ones described in the text if either of them was capable of writing the entirety of *Pale Fire*. Kinbote as sole author of poem and commentary would no longer be a madman incapable of composing poetry. And if Shade is the person described to us, he would not fake his own death, even fictionally and playfully. After all, an author is also a private person, so we should wonder if Shade would do this to Sybil. David Lodge, who, as a writer, is clearly more aware of the author's existence as a private person, accordingly argues:

> [A]s a practising writer, I cannot conceive of myself doing what Shade, according to this interpretation, is supposed to have done: that is, written a transparently autobiographical poem about coming to terms with one of the most painful and tragic events that can happen to a man, the suicide of his own child, and then attached to it a comic, ironic and satirical fiction, in the form of a commentary on his own poem, about a deranged émigré scholar, which entails a description of Shade himself being murdered just after he has completed the poem. Surely Shade himself would have to be deranged to use his own daughter's suicide in this way, as a means of showing up the vanity and self-deception of a fictitious lunatic? (Kinbote must be a fictional creation of Shade's under this interpretation, because Shade could not, for legal reasons, attribute to a real person the actions and motives her attributes to Kinbote.) (Lodge 163)

I must confess, I have never understood what exactly Shade is supposed to have done—has he actually faked his own death, or has he merely imagined his own death in his poem? And if so, what philosophical or artistic purpose would have been fulfilled by such an act? To me, the "web of sense" that forms the centre of Shade's

philosophy of life is created by the *unintended* echoes between two radically diverse texts that create the impression of independent corroboration. One example of such an independent corroboration may suffice: Shade's near-death experiences in adolescence are announced by a clockwork toy, a black man pushing a wheelbarrow. A real black gardener appears later in the poem as a harbinger of Shade's actual death. However, since Shade is squeamish concerning the use of racist language, it is only in Kinbote's notes that we realize that these two images are related: the significance is really created by taking the two separate texts together. It is certainly true that, when Shade begins to look for external corroboration of his near-death experience of Life Everlasting, his hopes are deflated by a misprint. However, he manages to integrate even this experience into his concept of a "web of sense." In the poem "Pale Fire," the necessity of external corroboration of evidence reads as follows:

> If on some nameless island Captain Schmidt
> Sees a new animal and captures it,
> And if, a little later, Captain Smith
> Brings back a skin, that island is no myth. ("Pale Fire" ll. 758-61)

This passage slyly suggests that, once again, the apparent independent corroboration may have been produced by a mere trick of language: are Schmidt and Smith the same person whose name was translated in one of the sources? In spite of the somewhat contradictory evidence, I would argue that *Pale Fire* only achieves its full effect if poem and commentary are composed by two separate authors and read together—I therefore also disapprove of Boyd's recent publication of a "facsimile" of the poem on its own (*Pale Fire: A Poem in Four Cantos by John Shade*, 2011), which Kullmann praises as an attempt to "treat the poem as a literary work in its own right" (229).

Kullmann's key text of reference, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, also provides a model for the discussion of proof by independent corroboration:

> But all the story of the night told over,
> And all their minds transfigur'd so together,
> More witnesseth than fancy's images
> And grows to something of great constancy;
> But howsoever, strange and admirable. (V.i.23-27)

This additional correspondence supports Kullmann's theory that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* certainly was in some way at the back of Nabokov's mind when he composed *Pale Fire*.

3. Is "Pale Fire" a Good Poem?

In a footnote, Charney raises the question of the literary merit of "Pale Fire," quoting Paul D. Morris (who calls it Nabokov's finest achievement, see *Poetry and the Lyric Voice*, esp. ch. 7) and Lyndy Abraham (who considers it a bad poem) without expressly committing himself to either position. We may suppose, however, that Charney himself also considers "Pale Fire" a rather poor specimen, since he calls Morris's praise "surprising" (Charney 39n9). Judgments of literary value are of course a delicate matter. In this case, however, I believe a judgment of the poem's literary value is relevant. It makes a substantial difference to our interpretation of *Pale Fire* whether we believe that Shade's poem is a masterpiece in danger of becoming distorted and overgrown beyond recognition through a madman's editing and commentary, or whether we consider "Pale Fire" a somewhat mediocre poem saved from insignificance by being framed by the vivid colourful fantasy of Zembla Kinbote has concocted. Like the previous section of this article, the question of the poem's literary merit also relates to the larger issue of the relationship between poetry and fiction. How "poetic" is the poem, and is it in any way substantially different from the prose that frames it?

As also mentioned in the previous chapter, Brian Boyd has attempted to draw attention to the poem's artistic value by publishing it on its own. It is therefore not surprising that he, like Morris, considers "Pale Fire" "a brilliant achievement in its own right" (*American Years* 439). In "'Pale Fire'—Poem and Pattern," he points out why he

considers "Pale Fire" a great poem, in his view, Shade's main accomplishments are his use of internal rhyme and his sustained imagery—Boyd traces the motif of transformation and metamorphosis through the entire poem. The standard of great poetry proposed by Boyd is Shakespeare's sonnet, in particular sonnet 30, which is compared to the initial 14 lines of "Pale Fire," even though only the first twelve lines of Shade's poem may with some justification be called "great" poetry, and conveniently, Boyd stops quoting here, leaving out the following two lines that would have formed the sonnet's couplet. These two lines, however, do not in any way fittingly sum up the previous passage, nor are they complete in themselves, since they introduce a new train of thought.

Lyndy Abraham's contrary opinion, which Charney quotes (see 39), is that "Pale Fire" is "a bad poem [...] Nabokov's parody of incompetent academic poems by writers like Shade who eclectically imitate the poetry they have read or misread. Shade has obviously misread Pope" (Abraham 245). Abraham begins by listing critics who have commented favourably on "Pale Fire," including Andrew Field and Julia Bader, but continues:

> Slightly more subtle critics have argued that "Pale Fire" is a parody by Shade of the worst moments of Wordsworth, Eliot, Tennyson, Goethe, and Cowley. But "Pale Fire" is a bad poem. It is a *clever* bad poem, it is true, with Nabokov executing his balancing act of writing a knowingly incompetent poem with a certain amount of grace and panache—and even sympathy. (245)

She does not specify who these "slightly more subtle" critics may be. In the following, Abraham compares Shade to the species of flying fishes in Pope's *The Art of Sinking*: "Flying fishes are 'the writers who may now and then rise up upon their fins and fly out of the Profound; but their wings are soon dry and they droop down to the bottom'" (250). This image of rising and falling, particularly when associated with water, recalls the image of parody as a "springboard" employed in *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*: "As often was the way with Sebastian Knight he used parody as a kind of springboard for leaping

into the highest region of serious emotion. J. L. Coleman has called it 'a clown developing wings, an angel mimicking a tumbler pigeon'" (*Sebastian Knight* 91). This quotation may direct our attention to the changed status of pastiche and parody in Postmodernism, and indeed already in the period of classical Modernism. While the fact that "Pale Fire" is largely imitative automatically seems to discredit it in Abraham's view, a postmodernist aesthetics no longer considers parody a genre to be despised. The same objection may be raised to Alvin Kernan's negative judgment on "Pale Fire":

> Shade is almost a parody version of what Harold Bloom has called the "weak" poet, the belated writer who has no authentic voice of his own but merely echoes earlier stronger writers, and "Pale Fire" can be read as an extended and amusing spoof on romantic and modern poetry, particularly on Frost. ("Reading Zemblan" 103)

Like Abraham, Kernan considers the main flaw of the poem that it is imitative, thus subscribing to a somewhat outdated Romantic concept of the poet as original creative genius.

Though certain passages of "Pale Fire" are certainly parodic, the entire poem is not a deliberately poor poem or a mere parody. In spite of Nabokov's professed indifference to reader reception, he was by no means unaware of what he might inflict on his readers and what not, and 1000 lines of poor poetry would have exasperated even a very patient reader. It is difficult to estimate to how many lines of bad poetry a reader may safely be subjected. At this point it may be useful to return to the two plays mentioned above as possible intertexts for *Pale Fire*. When Shakespeare uses poor poetry for parodic purposes in *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he inflicts fewer than 100 lines of "The Murder of Gonzago" and fewer than 150 of "Pyramus and Thisbe" on his audiences and, besides, in "Pyramus and Thisbe" the lines are shorter than the standard iambic pentameter. This seems a rather accurate estimate of what audiences are ready to put up with.

The question of whether "Pale Fire" is a deliberate parody may be approached by yet another route. After having studied Nabokov's

Russian and English poetry extensively, Paul D. Morris comes to the conclusion that "Pale Fire" is an excellent example of Nabokov's poetic oeuvre and in no way falls short of the standard established by the author's other poems; hence it is definitely *not* parodic (though, depending on your standards in judging poetic quality, it may still be a poor poem). To Morris, the central point of Nabokov's poetics is his insistence on the "quiddity" (*Lyric Voice* 354) of individual experience; a principle also in evidence in Shade's writing: "Characteristic of Nabokov's poetry and lyric identity is acute attention to the trifling specifics of the natural world" (351) as well as an "emphasis on the bounty of nature" (353). Shade's aesthetic ideals correspond to Nabokov's.

Since "Pale Fire" is a typical example of Nabokov's poetic style, it may be useful to consider the critical reception of his other poetry. In his entry on "Poetry" in *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, Scherr has pointed out the comparatively low critical appreciation of Nabokov's poetry: "Symptomatic of the relative standing of his prose and poetry, neither of the collections of verse (1959 and 1970) that he published when he had already gained fame for *Lolita* inspired scholarly publications" (608); and: "The critical literature that does exist is in near-unanimous agreement that Nabokov's poetry does not stand comparison with his prose in terms of artistic accomplishment" (609). Nabokov wrote over 500 poems in Russian (mostly juvenilia) but only some twenty in English. They often have a plot ("narrative line") and are formally conventional, favouring iambic tetrameter and exact rhyme, which in his English verse is fairly predictable. A theme particularly conspicuous in the poetry (more so than in his prose) is the "otherworld" or the "hereafter." In this respect, "Pale Fire" indeed closely conforms to the standard of his other poetry.

Morris has also discussed the reception of Nabokov's poetry in an article in an earlier issue of *Connotations*:

> Although an author amply admired for his ability to stylise and shape to formal perfection his every expression in prose—and thus fully deserving of the epithet 'poetic'—Nabokov is but infrequently identified as a poet, de-

> spite an impressive body of poetic writing. [...] As a result, neither Nabokov's numerous Russian lyrics nor his relatively few English poems have garnered either the quantity or quality of critical response otherwise devoted to his writing. ("Surprise" 31)

Gleb Struve's 1956 verdict on Nabokov's poetry in Russian sums up various critics' judgment of "Pale Fire":

> Nabokov moved from verse to prose, although it would be wrong to say of his prose [...], that it is the prose of a poet. It would be perhaps more accurate to say that his poems are the poems of a prose writer. Some of his poems are wonderful (even amongst those he himself would now probably repudiate); they are capable of seizing and hypnotising one, though in the final analysis there is something lacking in them, some element of final music. (Struve 170-71; qtd. Morris, "Surprise" 34)

Since general critical opinion on Nabokov's poetry is somewhat condescending, we may wonder what prompted Morris's enthusiastic praise. In his 2005 article, Morris implicitly defined his standards in judging poetic quality. While Boyd's ideal poem apparently was the Shakespearean sonnet, Morris's poetics seems more closely related to the ideals of the Metaphysical poets, since he mainly singles out the psychological dynamics of surprise as "the quintessence of [Nabokov's] poetry" ("Surprise" 32), arguing that "[p]oetry, with its surprising, even irrational leaps of association, takes consciousness to dimensions closed to 'plain prose'" (54). In his 2010 analysis, however, he finds yet another set of points of praise for the poem "Pale Fire." To begin with, it is "a masterpiece of structural symmetry" (329) made up of two short cantos (1 and 4) of 166 lines each embracing two longer cantos (2 and 3) of 334 lines each, all constructed of heroic couplets. Secondly, Morris praises the complex pattern of internal rhyme, for example in lines 17-18 of the poem: "And then the gradual and dual blue / As night unites the viewer and the view" with its variation of gradual—dual, night—unites and viewer—view. And, finally, he directs attention to the technique of synchronizing Hazel's suicide and her parents' watching TV. This is remarkable since even Kinbote in his commentary is allowed to criticize this effect as outdated, even though

he employs it himself when synchronizing Gradus's approach and Shade's composition of the poem.

Since, earlier in this response, I criticized that Charney avoids committing himself expressly on the question of "Pale Fire"'s poetic quality, I am obviously obliged to pronounce some opinion myself. My personal answer to the question of whether "Pale Fire" is a good poem would be that it is good writing but poor poetry, offering the same kind of pleasures as Nabokov's prose: a colourful scenery meticulously realized in sensuous detail, interesting scenes and a playful, punning language offering numerous surprising metamorphoses. This judgment closely resembles Scherr's: "Nabokov's poetic talent, beyond the formal virtuosity, comes out largely through his evocative descriptions, his gift for parody, and the imaginative situations, which often veer on to the surreal and the grotesque" (623). For some reason, however, Nabokov's language in "Pale Fire" seems to have been forced into the corset of the heroic couplet. It is entirely competent verse, neither scanning nor rhyming poorly, but the rhythm and sound do not seem to provide any exceptional additional pleasure. This conforms to the hierarchy of values also in evidence in Nabokov's translation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, in which he favoured literal translation over attempts to imitate metrical or sound properties of Pushkin's verse. In "Pale Fire" as in *Onegin*, the *mot juste* is more important than the musical quality of the verse—the mind's eye is favoured over the mind's ear.

Considering the relationship between grammar and meaning on the one hand and metre and rhythm on the other, we will notice Nabokov's striking use of enjambment. Metre and grammar hardly ever coincide, so that if "Pale Fire" was printed successively, we would not hear the rhyme and probably not recognize this as poetry in the first place but merely as something sounding strangely forced. One such instance of Nabokov's language sounding forced in order to accommodate the rhyme occurs in lines 334-36 of the poem: "[S]he'd never go, / A dream of gauze and jasmine, to that dance. / We sent her, though, to a château in France." Here, the idea of a French castle

seems positively produced by the need of finding a rhyming word for the couplet. Occasionally, he also resorts to an inversion of adjective and noun (e.g. "with eyes / Expressionless," "Pale Fire" 352-53) in order to fit his narrative into the premeditated pattern of the heroic couplet.

The fact that, at least in parts, the poetry of "Pale Fire" is rather weak raises the question of why Nabokov felt that the embedded text of *Pale Fire* had to be a poem and, more specifically, a poem composed in heroic couplets. I think that this decision is meant to contribute to the characterization of Shade. He believes in order and control and considers the iambic rhythm a token of universal harmony, as in the previously quoted lines: "And if my private universe scans right / So does the verse of galaxies divine / Which I believe is an iambic line." Both the strict adherence to a metrical pattern and the beautifully symmetrical construction of the four cantos testify to his belief.

The poem "Pale Fire" itself suggests an "instant poetry test" (which Shade has borrowed, however, from Housman) of whether "inspiration and its icy blaze, / The sudden image, the immediate phrase / Over the skin a triple ripple send / Making the little hairs all stand on end" (918-20). On this purely visceral level of poetry appreciation, "Pale Fire" in its entirety is less poetic than, for instance, the final passage of *Lolita*: "I am thinking of aurochs and angels, the secret of durable pigments, prophetic sonnets, the refuge of art. And this is the only immortality you and I may share, my Lolita" (307).

A number of questions raised in this article—whether concerning single authorship theories, the quality of "Pale Fire" as a poem, or the relationship between poem and commentary—may be answered by the following conclusion: poem and commentary differ strongly on the level of plot; the poem is realistic, autobiographical and restrained, while the commentary is fantastic, exaggerated, excessive (and this in some way perhaps reverses our assumptions concerning the characteristic properties of poetry and prose). As an example, one may compare the treatment of suicide in the two texts: Hazel Shade's suicide is rendered in the poem at one remove, via her parents' quiet

evening at home in front of the TV. Kinbote considers suicide in a far more flamboyant manner, planning to jump from a plane discarding his parachute. On the level of style, however, poem and commentary are indeed "quite close," as Charney suggested, since they share the following virtues: vividly imagined scenes described in sensuous detail, an interest in the quiddity of the natural world and a fondness for puns and word games (particularly insofar as they illustrate the possibility of transformation Nabokov was also interested in as a lepidopterist). As a comparison with the narrative voices of his first-person narrators Humbert and Hermann (in *Despair*) also suggests, perhaps Nabokov was incapable of writing in any other style.

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NOTES

[1]The forum can be accessed here: https://listserv.ucsb.edu/lsv-cgi-bin/wa?AO=NABOKV-L

[2]While he did not explicitly and openly mourn his father's death in his fiction, Nabokov did commemorate his life in his 1963 novel *The Gift*.

[3]Of the critics quoted below, Bader, Boyd, Field, Grabes, Stegner, and Tammi have addressed this topic.

[4]See above, n2.

[5]This diagnosis may strike some readers as rather extreme; however, Shade's statement that universal cosmic order may be concluded from the fact that he personally happens to be rather content is hardly less extreme than Kinbote's delusion that he is the King of Zembla. As Ruskin argues in the passage from *Modern Painters* quoted above, readers are strangely prepared to accept as a literary trope in poetry what they would judge a severely distorted perception of reality if paraphrased in prose.

[6]Critics that have engaged in this debate include Bader, Boyd, Field, Grabes, Roth, Stegner, and Tammi.

[7]This theory was first proposed by Mary McCarthy in her seminal critical essay on *Pale Fire*, "A Bolt from the Blue," and has since attained the status of critical orthodoxy.

[8]It should be noted, however, that Shade and Mrs Hurley, on being overheard by Kinbote, claim that they were actually talking about someone else—a railway porter who believed he was god and began redirecting the trains. Among critics,

e.g. Paul D. Morris was taken in by this subterfuge (see *Lyric Voice* 346), while Pifer (117) realizes that they were in fact talking about Kinbote.

[9]Boyd has since recanted: in a paper of 1997, he qualified his previous Shadean stance by proposing that Shade shaped part of the commentary by inspiring Kinbote from beyond the grave. To my mind, while it seems that characters in Nabokov sometimes continue to interfere with the lives of the living, those who do invariably belong to the type of the virgin suicide: Lucette, Hazel Shade, and Sybil Vane. However, Boyd's most recent theory raises the intriguing question of just when Kinbote begins to invent the Zembla myth. Boyd convincingly argues that he can only invent the Gradus plot after the assassination of Shade and his visit in prison to talk to Jack Grey.

[10]He had published a poem under the pen name of Vasiliy Shishkov that had been praised by the said critic, and later wrote a short story entitled "Vasiliy Shishkov" that revealed this poet as a fictional character invented by himself.

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