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Ways of Reading Donne's St. Paul's Epitaph: Close, Comparative, Contextu[r]al, Concrete
THERESA M. DIPASQUALE

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Self-Imposed Fetters:
The Productivity of Formal and Thematic Restrictions*

MATTHIAS BAUER

From July 30 to August 3, 2017, the 14th International *Connotations* Symposium took place at Mülheim an der Ruhr in Germany. Its topic, "Self-Imposed Fetters: The Productivity of Formal and Thematic Restrictions," will now become the theme of a special section in the journal. Beginning with this issue, a selection of essays based on the talks given at the conference, as well as responses and other contributions to the subject, will be published in our peer-reviewed, open-access format.

The theme is typical of the *Connotations* agenda in that it combines a specific theoretical or poetological concept with aspects of style and form. As distinct from a number of earlier topics,[1] however, it focuses on the field of poetic production. In the following, I will explain what has given rise to discussing "Self-Imposed Fetters" by considering three sonnets that reflect on the restriction imposed by their own form. I will then distinguish three areas in which restrictions deliberately chosen by writers become productive, a process that will be explored in greater detail by the articles and responses to be published in this special section. As a last step, the most tentative of the three, I will consider what sort of literary production is paradoxically unleashed by the imposition of fetters and if there are any rules governing this process.

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

1. Approaches to the Paradox

As to the starting point for raising the issue of productive restrictions, there are actually two. The first was our symposium in 2011, which was dedicated to the issue of "Poetic Economy: Ellipsis and Redundancy in Literature" (see Bauer, "Poetic Economy"). The topic went back to an idea developed by Inge Leimberg, our founding editor, many years ago, when she wrote a seminal essay on the theme of "one word cannot be lost" in Renaissance poetics (the phrase is from Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* 101).[2] One of the *Connotations* essays resulting from that symposium is Sven Wagner's article on "Figurativity and the Economy of Means in Contemporary Haiku." The title shows the relationship to "Self-Imposed Fetters" since the Haiku is one of the most restricting forms imaginable. But there is also a fundamental difference: whereas *poetic economy* means making every single element of a work fulfil its function in such a way that nothing can be either left out or added, *self-imposed fetters* means choosing restrictions that will challenge and set free the writer's creativity and inventiveness as well as help uncover the full potential of a poetic idea. As regards both subjects, we are concerned with an underexplored field of literary studies, namely the investigation into processes of production (underexplored at least when compared to scholarship about the author, about textuality and reader reception). While *poetic economy* is about finding the best possible form for what one has to say, *self-imposed fetters* are about finding what one has to say by defining (restricting) the dimension of saying it (which comprises both formal and thematic restrictions).

The second starting point was a class I took with John Hollander, also many years ago, in which he introduced us to the topic of self-imposed fetters by drawing our attention to Wordsworth's sonnet "Nuns fret not at their Convent's narrow room."[3]

> Nuns fret not at their Convent's narrow room;
> And Hermits are contented with their cells;
> And Students with their pensive Citadels:
> Maids at the Wheel, the Weaver at his Loom,

> Sit blithe and happy; Bees that soar for bloom,
> High as the highest Peak of Furness Fells,
> Will murmur by the hour in Foxglove bells:
> In truth, the prison, unto which we doom
> Ourselves, no prison is: and hence to me,
> In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
> Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground:
> Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)
> Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
> Should find short solace there, as I have found. (Wordsworth 199)

This classic example of a sonnet about sonnet-writing negates the restricting quality of restrictions chosen voluntarily: "In truth, the prison, unto which we doom / Ourselves, no prison is." The poet who deliberately chooses to be limited by the formal requirements of a sonnet does not regard those requirements as limitations. I have always wondered how seriously the attitude expressed by the poem is to be taken. Wordsworth seems to be saying that, after ranging through the expanses of philosophical blank verse, he relishes the narrow room of the sonnet as welcome if temporary resting place.

My sceptical response is, in particular, based on the second part of the sonnet, the sestet that begins with "and hence to me": the choice of the "scanty plot of ground" of the sonnet is expressly called a "pastime," a mildly masochistic game of bondage the poet is willing to play when he is in "sundry moods." Fetters are fine when you have been too much at liberty, when this liberty even becomes a "weight": readers, like the writer, in that case will find solace in the restriction. What bothers me is that the sonnet is (seriously or not) merely regarded as a toy providing "short solace," a welcome relief of the burden of freedom. The form and its restrictions are not said to provide anything else. For nuns and hermits it is okay to live in a narrow space; they don't find it unnerving, but that's it. There is no suggestion that they might have chosen the restriction of outward space in order to enhance, for example, their meditative experience. Or that they perhaps *do* fret at their self-imposed restrictions but turn them into an advantage. That is to say, we only find the first part of our symposium title represented by Wordsworth's poem, the self-

imposed fetters, but not the second, as the restrictions themselves are never said to contribute to productivity. (With the exception, perhaps, of the students' "pensive" citadels, where the limited space seems to be conducive to thought.)

If we regard liberty as coeval with poetic inventiveness, any kind of restriction is simply a curtailment of that inventiveness. Implicitly, I think, this notion contributes to historicizing our topic, for it seems to me that the romantic rejection of formal restriction, even though it may, as in Wordsworth's poem, perversely appear in the guise of its willing acceptance, marks one strand of thought on poetic freedom and productivity that has had its periods of strength, whereas at other times the value of restrictions has been appreciated more strongly. An example of the latter is T. S. Eliot's statement (in "Reflections on *Vers Libre*") that "there is no freedom in art. And as the so-called *vers libre* which is good is anything but free, it can better be defended under some other label" (32). Similarly, William Carlos Williams confessed in his autobiography: "Free verse wasn't verse at all to me. All art is orderly" (65). These statements do not expressly tell us that the imposition of order contributes to the poet's creativity, but implicitly, e.g. by Eliot's epithet "good," they take us nearer to our paradox: what is good is "anything but free," and if we do not take this statement as a praise of restrictions for their own sake we must see it as advocating restrictions as a source of something else, poetic quality. This quality is a mark of what is "good," of what is really "art."

Still, we have not yet fully grasped our paradox. We see, in Eliot's and Williams's statements, that structure or order, i.e. something imposed upon total freedom, is claimed to be a requirement of verse and art. But this could be merely regarded as a definition of the work itself, X is only X if it has the feature Y, verse is only verse if there is some restriction. From Eliot's statement we may infer that the restrictions may be different from what we are used to, such as metre and rhyme, but that they are nevertheless there, for instance in the form of quite subtle but distinctive rhythmical patterns. We may think of the German expression for verse, *gebundene Rede*, literally "bound" (or

fettered) speech, which is simply a descriptive term and does not tell us anything about productive forces.

In order to arrive at our paradoxical notion of productivity made possible by restrictions it is worth considering the notion of resistance, which is a key to the idea of productive force. Thus, on a large scale, from a sociological point of view, Adorno claimed that aesthetic productive force and art itself come to life by social resistance.[4] On a more specific, poetological level, this can be seen in another self-reflexive sonnet, Keats's poem "If by dull rhymes our english must be chaind."

> Incipit altera Sonneta
>
> I have been endeavouring to discover a better Sonnet Stanza than we have. The legitimate does not suit the language over-well from the pouncing rhymes—the other kind appears too elegiac—and the couplet at the end of it has seldom a pleasing effect—I do not pretend to have succeeded—it will explain itself—
>
> If by dull rhymes our english must be chaind,
> And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet
> Fetterd, in spite of pained Loveliness
> Let us find out, if we must be constrain'd,
> Sandals more interwoven and complete
> To fit the naked foot of Poesy—
> Let us inspect the Lyre, and weigh the stress
> Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd
> By ear industrious, and attention meet.
> Misers of sound and syllable, no less
> Than Midas of his coinage, let us be
> Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath crown;
> So, if we may not let the muse be free,
> She will be bound with Garlands of her own. (Keats 254-55)

In this sonnet, the poet clearly stresses the resistance to formal restrictions, in this case the "dull rhymes" required by the sonnet form. These restrictions provoke in him the desire to do something, to make it better, in line 4: "Let us find out, if we must be constrained […]." This is a call for poetic invention because *finding out* not only means finding e.g. the reason for something but is also the equivalent of *invenire*.[5] The ambiguity continues, for while the line at first seems to

question the need for constraint ("Let us find out, if we must be constrain'd"), it then goes on to treat the constraint as a necessary condition which has the effect of enhancing perfection ("Let us find out […] / Sandals more interwoven and complete"). This is in fact what we can see in the poem itself, as it replaces an established sonnet form by something "more interwoven" in an abca bdca bcd ede rhyme scheme. The ambiguity is of the *apo koinou* kind, of the "sense variously drawn out from one verse into another," as Milton puts it,[6] a choice which in itself reflects the breaking up of a fixed pattern, in this case a syntactic one. Invention and poetic creativity, in this sonnet, are clearly shown to be the result of and response to a binding restriction.

There is something about the restriction in Keats's sonnet, however, that deserves further attention. In contradistinction to Wordsworth, Keats does not compare the poet's creativity or genius to a figure that is chained but, curiously, the sonnet itself. "And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet / Fetterd, in spite of pained Loveliness." The concept of restriction and resistance is thus moved to the realm of genre and form itself. The beautiful nature of a genre, in this case the sonnet, should come into its own not by doing away with the fetters but by making them better and more appropriate. The fetters are productive in that they challenge the poet to adapt and improve them so that the restricting form becomes a fitting and beautiful garment. With the evocation of Midas, the theme of poetic economy is integrated into the argument: what the resistance to the fetters brings about is a more economical use of poetic form in the sense of avoiding superfluous "sound[s] and syllable[s]," i.e. avoiding "dead leaves," elements of poetic language that do not really contribute to the "interwoven and complete" form. Here we see that the two principles, finding the least redundant (most restricted) form for what one has to say and finding what one has to say through the restriction of form, interact with each other.

There is still a problem with regard to the paradox that forms our subject. Whereas in Wordsworth's sonnet the second part of the subject seemed absent, as the fetters were just accepted for a while with-

out being any special cause of productivity, in Keats the first part of the proposition seems absent. The chains provoke resistance and lead to productivity, but are they self-imposed? The expressions "must be chained" and "must be constrain'd," for example, do not point in the direction of a prison unto which we voluntarily doom ourselves. Apart from the fact, however, that since no one has forced Keats to write sonnets we may assume he chooses the form deliberately (in fact, Wolfson's note [254] says that Keats "had written about 60 sonnets by spring 1819 but would write very few after this"), we should register that the whole poem begins with a conditional clause, "If by dull rhymes our English must be chaind," followed by another one, "Let us find out, if we must be constrain'd." The two *ifs* clearly state that dull rhyming etc. is by no means a necessity, but if there must be such constraints, then we had better do something about them, turn them into the most meaningful and appropriate ones. Thus, the very fact that the chains are only imposed as a possible condition shows that Keats's poetic "we" actually chooses the challenge of this poetic form with the aim of liberating it through turning the fetters into garlands.

Still, the mythological comparison shows us that the fetters themselves are part and parcel of the poetic statement. A brief look at (for example) Rubens's painting of Andromeda (c. 1638)[7] serves to make this evident:

The fetters are needed to identify the mythological subject; they establish the most substantial difference between the portrayal of an ambiguously weeping woman and a version of the mythological story. Analogously, some basic pattern of the sonnet is needed (in Keats's case, eight and six iambic pentameter lines) in order to mark the presence of the form and to make it possible to comment on it and transform it. It is in keeping with this attitude that at the end of Keats's sonnet the strict "must" of the beginning has been toned down to a milder "may": "So, if we may not let the muse be free, / She will be bound with Garlands of her own." The fetters have shifted from the personified "Sonnet sweet" to another female personage, the Muse, and by this shift we have actually made a step from the condition of the text and genre (compare Eliot and Williams on free verse that is not free) to the conditions of the poetic creation. In spite of the "if," the whole action is now much more about the author's will—we authorial selves may not let the muse be free, or perhaps we may. If the poet chooses not to let her go free, or if it is impossible to let her go

free, the fetters imposed will not be fetters at all but "garlands" of her own making, i.e. the fetters themselves become products of the poetic creativity.

Even though we have noticed a much more productive effect of fetters in Keats when compared to Wordsworth, we still have not yet found a full expression of the notion we wish to pursue in this special section of *Connotations,* the productivity of self-chosen restrictions, mainly because Keats is, as we have seen, primarily concerned with the nature of the fetters themselves. We can go a step further by considering a third poetological sonnet, Goethe's "Nature and Art":

Natur und Kunst, sie scheinen sich zu fliehen
Und haben sich, eh' man es denkt, gefunden;
Der Widerwille ist auch mir verschwunden,
Und beide scheinen gleich mich anzuziehen.
Es gilt wohl nur ein redliches Bemühen!
Und wenn wir erst in abgemeßnen Stunden
Mit Geist und Fleiß uns an die Kunst gebunden,
Mag frei Natur im Herzen wieder glühen.
So ist's mit aller Bildung auch beschaffen:
Vergebens werden ungebundne Geister
Nach der Vollendung reiner Höhe streben.
Wer Großes will, muß sich zusammenraffen.
In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister,
Und das Gesetz nur kann uns Freiheit geben. (Goethe 245)

Nature and Art, they go their separate ways,
It seems; yet all at once they find each other.
Even I no longer am a foe to either;
Both equally attract me nowadays.
Some honest toil's required; then, phase by phase,
When diligence and wit have worked together
To tie us fast to Art with their good tether,
Nature again may set our hearts ablaze.
All culture is like this; the unfettered mind,
The boundless spirit's mere imagination,
For pure perfection's heights will strive in vain.
To achieve great things, we must be self-confined:
Mastery is revealed in limitation
And law alone can set us free again. (Trans. David Luke)

In the octave, the poem is concerned with the relationship of nature and art, their apparent divergence and actual convergence. Tying ourselves with "diligence and wit" to art may make it possible for nature to glow in the heart again. This paper is not the place to discuss Goethe's understanding of art and nature but it seems clear that the notion of restriction goes together with art, as the expressions "in abgemeßnen Stunden" (l. 6, in measured hours; not translated in David Luke's version) and "gebunden" (l. 7, cf. "tie us") suggest. This deliberate fettering is then further generalized in the sestet, where Goethe speaks of "aller Bildung" (l. 9), translated by Luke as "all culture," which is not wrong but the German may also have the specific sense of artistic creation.[8] Any greatness and perfection attempted in the process of creation presuppose, as the aphorism-like lines claim, restriction. "[U]ngebundne Geister," unbound spirits or minds (a more precise rendering than Luke's "boundless spirit[s]") will fail; self-restriction (or self-confinement) is needed if such an ambition is to be fulfilled. Restriction thus appears quite clearly as the *condition* of a production (poetic and otherwise) that is in any sense to become first-rate. Less obvious is the way in which such restrictions actually translate into the quality of artistic creation. Goethe's focus is on the person of the artist rather than on the production process itself: "In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister"; the translation "Mastery is revealed in limitation" is not quite exact in that it is the master, not mastery, which is revealed. Still, the expression "zeigt sich," "shows himself/herself," indicates that the restriction itself is where the master unfolds his or her productive power.

Goethe's emphasis on the master artist shows that our subject participates in both psychology and aesthetics (or, more specifically, poetics). Actually, contemporary psychological research in creativity (a notoriously elusive subject) has emphasized that constraints are conducive to it; as Johnson-Laird points out: "for what is not constrained is not creative" (202), and as Biskjaer and Halskov stress as recently as in 2014: "Rather than seeing constraints as problems or obstacles that a creative agent […] must work against or work around,

we argue that the enabling property of constraints in creative practice be studied more in depth" (27). This encouragement from the field of psychological research shows how timely our enterprise is but it also raises the question of the specific role to be played by literary studies in the investigation of the subject. My suggestion is to play to our strengths and learn more about it by textual analysis, i.e. to find out what kinds of restrictions are visible (or audible) in a literary text and, if possible, what the effect of those restrictions is. This approach should go beyond the defining textual and generic qualities mentioned earlier, i.e. X is only X if it has the feature Y, a sonnet is only a sonnet if there are 14 lines, and arrive at a description of what is actually gained by the restrictions. To reach this aim will be one of the challenges of our work in this special section of *Connotations* and beyond.

2. Kinds of Restrictions

If we look at the nature of the restrictions to be found in literary production, we should try and go beyond the most obvious cases. This is why I suggest to consider at least three kinds or groups of restrictions, which are not without overlap but which nevertheless help us, I hope, arrive at an idea of the range of the processes involved. The first group may be called formal restrictions, the second thematic and plot-related restrictions (the *mythos* in an Aristotelian sense), and the third restrictions of scope.

Formal restrictions not only comprise the metrical and rhyming rules connected to specific genres but also deliberate and sometimes arbitrary restrictions of the language and semiotic system employed. Well-known examples of rather severe restrictions of the first kind are the limerick and the villanelle and of the second kind are experiments associated with the French Oulipo, *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*, and the work of John Cage (see Baetens). (The very name *potential literature* suggests the productivity of self-chosen restrictions.) Frequently, there

is something playful about these constraints, especially when they are not yet conventionalized (as opposed to established genres such as the villanelle) but are entirely arbitrary in a singular way. The case of the lipogram, a "text in which a given letter or set of letters is deliberately left out" (Poucel), shows that the experimental (becoming manifest in George Perec's *La Disparition* of 1969 [English *A Void*, translated by Gilbert Adair in 1995] with its omission of the letter *e*) is frequently both new and old. More recent examples include Mark Dunn's novel *Ella Minnow Pea* (2001), which in the hardcover version has the subtitle *A Progressively Lipogrammatic Epistolary Fable* and in the softcover version of 2002 is more succinctly called *A Novel in Letters*. In the course of events, more and more letters of the alphabet are forbidden, and the book accordingly becomes more and more lipogrammatic. This is a case where the productivity of the restriction can easily be seen since the formal limitation becomes the source of a political dystopia and a reflection on knowledge and human communication.

I would like to mention just two further examples in order to show how far the range of self-imposed fetters may be in the area of form and semiotic systems. The first is from Patience Agbabi's rap-inspired poetic retelling of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, called *Telling Tales* (2014). The Monk's Tale here takes the form of a text message, inspired, as the spurious biographical note claims, by Chaucer's introduction, "tragedies wol I telle, / of which I have an hundred in my celle" (118). It is called "100 chars," the first stanza of which runs:

> wen a mn opN fires hs wa 2 d top thN
> loses all overnyt blatN has 3rd eye W a
> fulstop dat's nt tragDy (88)

In this case, the productivity of the restriction results from the relation between the abbreviated code and the intertextual reference. My second example shows that focusing on a particular kind of verbal expression can also be a restriction from which a whole story may develop. I am thinking of the focus on idiomatic expressions in Peggy Parish's delightful *Amelia Bedilia* of 1963, a restriction which then

becomes productive in the story of the literal-minded housemaid, who carries out her instructions to the letter. My favourite is "'The chicken—you dressed the chicken?' asked Mrs. Rogers. 'Yes, and I found the nicest box to put him in,' said Amelia Bedilia" (n.p.).

We see from this example that frequently the creative potential of self-imposed formal and linguistic restrictions lies in the invitation to transcend them, a process which would be impossible without the fetters being there in the first place. Examples are variations on the sonnet, such as Gerard Manley Hopkins's curtail sonnets or John Hollander's *Powers of Thirteen* (13 times 13 13-line "sonnets"), and in the case of *Amelia Bedilia* it is the transcendence of the idiomatic meaning itself which is invited by the restriction.

The second group of restrictions, theme and plot-related ones, run the risk of becoming so general that they are meaningless. Any choice of subject by an author is a self-imposed restriction in so far as she or he is bound to write about it. The *topoi* or search formulae of classical rhetoric belong here, by which *inventio* is produced. Nevertheless, we should not drop this group, especially when we consider it in a slightly more specific sense. When a story or theme is established through history or intertextual discourse, binding oneself to it may either result in a mere repetition of what has been told a hundred times before, or it may trigger the author's inventiveness by turning a story into a means of communication for a new idea. We will learn

more about this in Susanne Riecker's and Angelika Zirker's forthcoming paper on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* where both the chosen form (the genre of tragedy) and a specific historical event provide rather strict fetters that give rise to creating a unique play.

My example for now is Gerard Manley Hopkins's sonnet "Andromeda," in which he takes up the well-known myth of the daughter of Cassiopeia, who is chained to a rock as a sacrifice to Poseidon as she has to atone for her mother's hubris. In Ovid and other accounts, she is saved by Perseus from the monster that is about to devour her. In Hopkins's poem, as Inge Leimberg has pointed out ("'Time's Andromeda'"), the myth is not only used typologically to allude to Jesus's act of redemption but also to change the established roles. In stressing Andromeda's "patience," who/which "alight[s] disarming," Hopkins has her participate in defeating the Monster. "The patience of suffering which has been increased *in extremis* 'alight[s]' weaponless and is, precisely because of that, 'disarming'" (Leimberg, "'Time's Andromeda,'" n.p.). The myth in this case becomes a framework for communicating (quite economically) a story of imprisonment and liberation, which is then transformed into a complex reflection on the nature of suffering and redemption.

The third group of restrictions, labelled "scope," takes its cue from Wordsworth's poem, in particular from the spatial image in "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room." While, in Wordsworth, this is a metaphor for the space of the poem itself (alluding to "stanza" meaning "room"), we are also aware of the fact that space is a dimension of the mimesis, of the represented world. Temporal, spatial, and social limitation of that world (one day, one place, only one small group of people) is a frequent self-imposed restriction. Jane Austen's "little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work" (323)[9] is perhaps the best-known statement about this sort of constraint; it implies the claim that this is a kind of limitation that comes with a huge gain, as it suggests the idea of a gem or precious work of art. The value comes with the restriction, and what at first appears to be simply an expression of modesty is in fact a quite lofty claim. Even though this

kind of self-reflexive insight by writers may be rare, the practice of self-imposed limitations of scope is a common one, ranging (in English literature alone) from Prospero's island to the 24 hours of Bloomsday. And if we may widen this group a little and include the deliberate choice of the insignificant, like John Donne's flea or the fly that Dickinson's speaker hears when she dies ("I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—"; Johnson ed. no. 465), we immediately see the power of this restriction of scope. It becomes a device for increasing intensity, for making us see much in little, or, from the perspective of production, to unleash the writer's power of conception, imagination and verbal inventiveness by narrowing the focus. Donne's "The Flea" is a case in point, for it is a challenge to the speaker's (or poet's) ingenuity to provide the insect with significance and make it become a trigger of wit.

3. Kinds of Effects

When it comes to my last step, the sort of production paradoxically unleashed by the imposition of fetters, it seems to me that there are at least two different kinds. On the one hand, the self-imposed restriction has the effect of causing some sort of resistance, as we have seen in the case of Keats's poem. Accordingly, productivity is brought about by an obstacle that is to be overcome. On the other hand, the restriction may lead to a focussing of attention, and, as a consequence, to an unfolding of what is contained within the chosen limitations. The literal meaning of idioms in the case of *Amelia Bedilia* serves as an example of this kind of restriction-induced productivity. As to any general rules, it is much too early to draw them up but hypothetically I would like to suggest that there is an optimal effect of restriction: neither very little nor very much restriction will trigger the highest productiveness. What makes me think so is a comparison between games and works of literature. Whereas the former are marked by a strict imposition of rules—they are, in fact, entirely dependent on

restrictions—and enable us to show only a limited degree of creativity (even chess being no exception),[10] the latter are marked by a high degree of freedom—we may say that freedom is a condition of art to most people and in most conceptions—but need some self-imposed constraints in order to exploit their (and their authors') potential. The sonnet, which is characterized by its formal regularity, has, historically speaking, been remarkable for much greater poetic inventiveness than the villanelle, whose rules are stricter. What is needed is exactly the right kind and degree of restriction so as to prevent literature from becoming a mere mechanical game on the one hand and a mere will-o'-the-wisp on the other. Let us try and find out more about this optimal effect.[11]

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NOTES

[1]See the list at http://www.connotations.de/special-issues/.

[2]For a recent study of versions of *Hamlet* based on this poetological notion, see Bross.

[3]Cf. Hollander's statement in Baer, *Fourteen on Form* 227-28: "JOHN HOLLANDER: […] having some kind of structural agenda is the means for conjuring up all the other stuff. The silly notion that 'If I just let it all hang out, then I'll be able to get at the deepest things within myself,' is quite ridiculous. It's just a bit of romantic mythology—the near-romanticism of high modernism—that by throwing away certain formal conventions, writers will have greater access to themselves. Such people always forget Wordsworth's great sonnet. '*Nuns Fret Not …*' JOHN HOLLANDER: Yes, that's right. Sure the sonnet's a small space that you lock yourself into, but it's not a prison. It's a cell, and it's liberating."

[4]"A pure productive force such as that of the aesthetic, once freed from heteronomous control, is objectively the counterimage of enchained forces, but it is also the paradigm of fateful, self-interested doings. Art keeps itself alive through its social force of resistance […]" (308).

[5]See *OED* 2.ta. *trans*. "To discover by attention, scrutiny, study, etc.; to solve, explain. Also: to devise, invent. *Obs.*"

[6]In his note on "The Verse" of *Paradise Lost* (55).

[7]Gemäldegalerie Berlin;
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peter_Paul_Rubens_-_Andromeda_-_WGA20316.jpg

[8]Cf. Adelung (1811) "bilden"
http://lexika.digitale-sammlungen.de/adelung//lemma/bsb00009131_4_2_2565

[9]Austen in a letter to her nephew James Edward Austen, 16-17 December, 1816.

[10]It stands to reason that even within the sphere of games there is an optimal degree of rule-governed restriction with respect to creativity.

[11]I am grateful to Lena Linne, Burkhard Niederhoff, and Angelika Zirker for their feedback and valuable suggestions.

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"[M]emories and similes laid side by side": The Paratactic Poetics of Alice Oswald's *Memorial*[1*]

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1. Introduction

In 2011, the English poet Alice Oswald published *Memorial*: *An Excavation of the Iliad*. As the subtitle indicates, the poem is an adaptation of Homer's epic. However, it is a very selective one: *Memorial* comprises about 1,500 verses, a mere tenth of the more than 15,000 verses of the *Iliad*. What Oswald leaves underground in her excavation of the *Iliad* is what many would consider its most essential feature: the plot. Achilles' argument with Agamemnon, his wrath and withdrawal from the fighting, the tide of war turning in favour of the Trojans, Patroclus' return to the battlefield and his death at the hands of Hector, Achilles' revenge for his friend's death, and the eventual subsiding of his wrath when he releases Hector's corpse to Priam—no reader would be able to reconstruct this chain of events from Oswald's adaptation. *Memorial* "is a translation of the *Iliad*'s atmosphere, not its story" (1), as the poet states in her preface.

What Oswald does excavate are two components of the *Iliad*. When a warrior is killed, Homer often stops the narrative to give a brief portrait of the victim, providing information about his family, place of origin, occupation, and character traits. Oswald focuses on these passages, which we will refer to as "obituaries," in keeping with the title *Memorial* and her suggestion that the poem is "a kind of oral cemetery—in the aftermath of the Trojan War, an attempt to remem-

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debate/the-poetics-alice-oswalds-memorial/>.

ber people's names and lives without the use of writing" (2). The second element that Oswald takes from the *Iliad* is the so-called epic or extended simile. From the roughly 200 similes of this type in the *Iliad*,[2] she selects 76; she places these after the obituaries and repeats them, as in the following passage, chosen for its brevity:

> DEICOON the Trojan
> Was too eager too heroic
> He found praise yes
> But also death
>
> Like snow falls quickly from god to the ground
> When the north wind blows down the heavens
>
> Like snow falls quickly from god to the ground
> When the north wind blows down the heavens (23)

The main part of the poem (13-72) follows this pattern; it consists of a series of obituaries, each of which is accompanied by a repeated simile. In the opening pages that precede the main part (5-12), Oswald lists the names of the warriors who die in the *Iliad*, from Protesilaus, who is killed as he leaps from his ship, to Hector, who loses his life in single combat with Achilles. This enumeration is reminiscent of the war memorials that list the soldiers fallen in the two world wars of the twentieth century. The final section (73-84) contains a sequence of eleven similes which are not interrupted by any further obituaries and of which only the very last is repeated. Thus, the overall structure of *Memorial* resembles a triptych; the initial list of the fallen warriors and the final group of independent similes flank the central section consisting of obituaries followed by repeated similes.

As pointed out, Oswald's version of the *Iliad* is highly selective. But how closely does she follow the original in the passages that she selects? We have referred to *Memorial* as an "adaptation"; Oswald herself uses the term "translation" in her preface. She qualifies this term, however, by saying that only the similes are translations, while the obituaries are "paraphrases." Moreover, she admits that her approach to translation is "irreverent" and describes it as follows: "I

work closely with the Greek, but instead of carrying the words over into English, I use them as openings through which to see what Homer was looking at. I write through the Greek, not from it—aiming for translucence rather than translation" (2). This translucent rendering of Homer's text results in a version of the *Iliad* which is halfway between a free translation and a close adaptation. *Memorial* eludes a terminological label; the examples analysed in the third part of our essay will give the reader a more precise sense of how close Oswald's text is to the original.

Perhaps the most challenging and puzzling feature of Oswald's rewriting of the *Iliad* is the decontextualisation of its similes. In the *Iliad*, the similes illustrate a particular point in the narrative, and the reader is given signposts that clarify their import, as in the following passage that describes the Greek army leaving their camp and entering the battlefield:

> As when the snowflakes fly *thick* from Zeus, driven cold under the blast of the north wind, child of the clear air, *so thick* was the mass of the bright-shining helmets moving out from the ships then […]. (19.357-60; emphasis added)[3]

The simile marker at the end of the vehicle, the word *so*, and the repetition of "thick" help the reader identify the ground or *tertium comparationis* that connects vehicle and tenor; it is the profusion of snowflakes that Homer attributes to the Greek army.[4] As seen above, Oswald transplants this simile from its original context in Book 19 to the obituary of Deicoon, who dies in Book 5 of the *Iliad*, and she does not give the reader much help in finding a link between tenor and vehicle. The simile marker at the end of the vehicle is conspicuous by its absence; the simile marker at the beginning, the word *like*, is used in a puzzling manner, leaving the connection between tenor and vehicle unexplained.

The example of Deicoon and the snowflakes is representative. With one exception, the similes in *Memorial* are lifted from their original context and placed in the new context of an obituary,[5] where their

meaning remains, at least at first sight, opaque. In which way does the snow driven down from the sky by the north wind resemble Deicoon? More generally, in which way do the transplanted similes cohere with their new contexts in *Memorial*? This is the question we will discuss in the present essay. It is apposite at this point to invoke the topic of the conference at which our reading was first presented: "Self-Imposed Fetters: The Productivity of Formal and Thematic Restrictions." *Memorial* provides a good example of this topic in that Oswald imposes some formidable fetters or difficulty on herself. By omitting Homer's plot, she decontextualises the obituaries and the similes which lose the coherence that they have in the *Iliad*. She is thus faced with the task of producing a new kind of coherence, of connecting obituaries and similes that are not at all related in the original—a task not rendered any easier by her commitment to translating or paraphrasing the original, i.e. by staying close to its text. Nevertheless, we think that she masters this task, forging new connections between similes and obituaries which are a crucial feature of her challenging and fascinating poem. The difficulty proves productive; the disruption of the old coherence engenders a new one. Carolin Hahnemann, one of the few critics who have written on *Memorial* so far,[6] states that it "constitutes an act of creation by reduction" (28). More precisely, it constitutes an act of creation by decontextualisation and recontextualisation.

2. Oswald's Paratactic Poetics

In the opening chapter of *Mimesis*, Erich Auerbach remarks that there is no background in Homer's narrative. To illustrate his point, Auerbach discusses the boar hunt in which Odysseus is injured when, as a young man, he pays a visit to his grandfather Autolycus. The episode is told in Book 19 of the *Odyssey*, to explain the scar by which Eurycleia recognises the hero after his return to Ithaca. Other storytellers would background this episode, subordinating it to the principal plot-line by summarising it briefly or by justifying it as a memory of Odysseus. Homer does not. All the parts of his story are treated in

the same fashion; they are placed in the foreground, dwelt upon with equal care and attention, and presented with the same amount of detail (see *Mimesis* 5-9).

In an interview given in 2013, Oswald argues in a similar vein. She points out that the syntax and the structure of Homer's narrative are paratactic; clauses and larger narrative units are placed side by side instead of being arranged in a hierarchical order:

> I respond very much to Homer's syntax, which seems to me unlike a complicated English sentence which will have a kind of hierarchy of sub-clauses and main clause. With Homer, every clause feels equally placed, connected by "ands" and "buts," all kind of equal. And I wanted to represent in the form of the poem something of that "side-by-side-ness" that Homer creates in the way his language moves. So rather than have a whole shape spread over the whole poem, I wanted it to have these kind of chopped, side-by-side things. (Jaffa 19)

For Oswald, the structural principle of parataxis is connected with an egalitarian or democratic stance, a stance that explains her omission of the story centred around the hero Achilles and her focus on the obituaries of minor warriors (Oswald 8-9). Oswald also touches upon her paratactic poetics in the preface to *Memorial*. She describes it as a "bipolar poem made of similes and short biographies" and as "a series of memories and similes laid *side by side*: an antiphonal account of man in his world" (1-2; emphasis added).[7] The notion of antiphony is derived from the tradition of lament, which Oswald considers the source of the obituaries in the *Iliad*: "There are accounts of Greek lament in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. When a corpse was laid out, a professional poet (someone like Homer) led the mourning and was antiphonally answered by women offering personal accounts of the deceased" (1).[8] An obituary and its simile would thus form an antiphonal unit, a bipolar and balanced pattern of statement and response.

In an article titled "Parataxis in Homer," James Notopoulos argues along similar lines as Auerbach and Oswald do. He contrasts the paratactic poetics of Homer with the later, Aristotelean poetics governed by the principles of unity, consistency and completeness, which

requires that a part is never dispensable and always subordinated to the whole. Notopoulos explains the paratactic structure of Homer's epics with their closeness to oral poetry, which is indeed the most likely explanation. Oral poets will be more prone to dwell on the parts and endow them with a life of their own. Likewise, consistency is not to be expected to the same degree as in a written work. Oral poets can never go back and revise a passage; nor do they have time to return to a section to make sure that what they are saying now is in complete harmony with what they said earlier. Another factor that works against artistic control and unity is the audience. Unlike writers who compose their work in isolation, oral poets compose and perform at the same time; they contract, expand or digress depending on the responses of their listeners. Moreover, writers have a much greater liberty to fashion their material according to their own intentions. Oral poets, on the other hand, are more traditional. They have to rely on pre-existing building blocks, on verbal formulas and thematic patterns that may not always be consistent with one another.[9] Oswald does not explicitly draw a connection between parataxis and orality, but she does emphasise and cherish the oral nature of Homer's epics. Her preface to *Memorial* expresses the hope that her methods are "compatible with the spirit of oral poetry, which was never stable but always adapting itself to a new audience, as if its language, unlike written language, was still alive and kicking" (2). She has also attempted to breathe the spirit of oral poetry into *Memorial* by reciting it instead of reading it at public literary events.[10]

The paratactic poetics favoured by Oswald presents a problem. The simile as such is not a paratactic device; instead of juxtaposing two phenomena, it subordinates one of them to the other. This is also suggested by the traditional terminology of tenor and vehicle. A vehicle is a means to an end; it serves to characterise the tenor, not vice versa (a similar directionality is implied by Lakoff's terminology of *source* domain and *target* domain). When Homer compares the warriors to snowflakes, he does not juxtapose two phenomena, placing equal emphasis on both of them. He is only interested in the as-

pect of the snowflakes that may be attributed to the warriors, i.e. their profusion. That snowflakes are cold, soft to the touch, that they melt when they fall on human skin—all of these and other features are irrelevant. Thus there is clearly a tension between the device of the simile and Oswald's paratactic poetics, a tension that we will have to keep in mind in the following analysis of the connections between obituaries and similes.

3. Obituaries and Similes in *Memorial*

In Book 2 of the *Iliad*, Agamemnon addresses his troops, and his words have a powerful effect:

> [T]he assembly was stirred like the great waves of the sea, in the deep water by Ikaria, when the east wind and the south wind rush down from father Zeus' stormclouds and raise them high. As when the west wind stirs a deep cornfield with its coming, and the standing crop bows its ears in the fury of the blast, so the whole assembly was stirred to movement. The men swarmed cheering to the ships […]. (2.144-50)

The effect of Agamemnon's speech is illustrated with two related similes. It resembles the effect that wind has on the sea, raising huge waves, and the effect that it has on a cornfield, creating wave-like movements. While the waves express the sheer energy and power of the speech, the cornfield suggests the huge number of the listeners. This double simile, which is the second that we encounter in the *Iliad*, becomes the first in *Memorial*, following the opening obituary:

> The first to die was PROTESILAUS
> A focused man who hurried to darkness
> With forty black ships leaving the land behind
> Men sailed with him from those flower-lit cliffs
> Where the grass gives growth to everything
> Pyrasus Iton Pteleus Antron
> He died in mid-air jumping to be first ashore
> There was his house half-built
> His wife rushed out clawing her face

Podarcus his altogether less impressive brother
Took over command but that was long ago
He's been in the black earth now for thousands of years

Like a wind-murmur
Begins a rumour of waves
One long note getting louder
The water breathes a deep sigh
Like a land-ripple
When the west wind runs through a field
Wishing and searching
Nothing to be found
The corn-stalks shake their green heads (13-14)

As in the example of Deicoon and the snowflakes, the connection between the simile and the obituary is neither obvious nor highlighted by the simile marker. Instead of clarifying the meaning of the simile, the word *like* complicates it by its own ambiguity. It can be read as the equivalent of the introductory marker of a Homeric simile, often rendered with 'as when' in English translations. In this reading, "like" functions as a conjunction that links the final sentence of the obituary with the opening sentence of the simile; "wind-murmur" is the subject, "Begins" a transitive verb, and "a rumour of waves" the direct object. However, another reading is also possible if we consider the passage in its own right, disregarding the conventions of the epic simile. In this reading, "a rumour of waves" becomes the subject, "Begins" an intransitive verb, and "like a wind-murmur" an adverbial expression, with "like" as a preposition. This second reading avoids the subordination of the simile to the obituary, in line with Oswald's paratactic poetics, her description of obituary and simile as a bipolar and balanced structure.

This does not mean, however, that simile and obituary are not at all related. There is a *tertium comparationis* of sorts, the idea of a commencement: "The *first* to die"; "*Begins* a rumour of waves." What also begins at this point is the "wind-murmur" of the poem itself, which comes alive after the inert list of names in the opening pages. The simile thus acquires a self-reflexive dimension. In its original context

in the *Iliad*, it stresses, after all, the power of words, and Oswald keeps this reference alive by describing the wind and its effect in terms of human speech: "wind-*murmur*," "*rumour* of waves," "breathes a deep *sigh*." There is also a kind of dialogue between the wind on the one hand and the sea and the cornfield on the other—as if the wind is saying, "What about Protesilaus?", to which the waves respond with a deep sigh, and the cornstalks by shaking their heads, indicating that the wind is searching for a man who can no longer be found. This dialogue is almost like the lament that Oswald evokes in her preface, the pattern of statement and response shared by the poet and the women in their joint commemoration of a man fallen in battle. Thus the double simile is self-reflexive in a very specific sense. It suggests how we should read this very simile and those that follow in *Memorial*: not as subordinated passages, as vehicles illustrating a tenor, but as responses in a balanced, antiphonal pattern.

In the introduction, we touched upon the question whether *Memorial* is a translation or an adaptation. The obituary of Protesilaus and the ensuing simile provide characteristic examples of the liberties that Oswald takes in rendering the *Iliad*, especially when it comes to endowing a simile with meaning in the new context to which it is transplanted. In Homer's version of the wind simile, for instance, the idea of a commencement is absent; Oswald adds this idea to establish the *tertium comparationis* with the obituary of Protesilaus, the first of the Greek warriors to land and to die on the shores of Troy. Likewise, the "wind-*murmur*" and the other metaphors related to human speech are lacking in Homer's text; Oswald inserts them to emphasise the self-reflexive dimension of the simile. Another obvious addition concerns the time that has gone by since the burial of Protesilaus. Homer mentions him in the so-called catalogue of ships in Book 2: "Those who held Phylake and Pyrasos full of flowers, the precinct of Demeter, and Iton the mother of flocks, and Antron by the sea and the deep meadows of Pteleos, these were led by the warrior Protesilaos, while he lived: but by then the black earth held him under" (2.695-99). In *Memorial*, "[h]e's been in the black earth now for thousands of years,"

which changes the point of view from the time of the action, in which Protesilaus has only been buried for nine years, to the twenty-first century. A similar note is struck in the final obituary. Hector leaves the battlefield for a brief visit to his family "[t]o stand in full armour in the doorway / Like a man rushing in leaving his motorbike running" (72). However, such anachronisms are few and far between. Despite the evident liberties that Oswald takes with Homer's text, one does not get the sense that she considers it as mere raw material to be used and shaped *ad libitum*. She seems to be pulled in different directions by two forces that are equally strong: on the one hand, a commitment to Homer's text and to a faithful rendering of its details; on the other hand, the need to refashion the decontextualised passages so as to provide them with meaning and coherence in their new contexts.

In our introductory example, the snowflakes driven by the north wind, Oswald moves a simile from an army marching into battle to a warrior killed in action. This is a frequent pattern: similes are transferred from the beginning or the middle of the fighting to its end, from a victorious or successful warrior to a defeated victim. This shift affects not only the direction of the transfer and the choice of the tenor, i.e. the new context to which a simile is transplanted. It sometimes also affects the vehicle, the way it is rewritten to respond to the new tenor. Consider the following example, which revolves around a hunting scene and features both a predator (the equivalent of a victorious warrior) and its prey (the equivalent of a victim). It is taken from the encounter between Achilles and Hector in Book 22 of the *Iliad*:

> And swift Achilleus kept driving Hektor on with his relentless pursuit. As when a dog has started the fawn of a deer from its lair in the mountains, and chases it on through the hollows and the glens: even if it takes to cover and crouches hidden under a bush, the dog smells out its track and runs on unerringly until he finds it. So Hektor could not throw off the swift-footed son of Peleus. (22.188-93)

Clearly, the predator corresponds to Achilles and the prey to Hector. The beginning of the vehicle zooms in on the predator and, hence, on Achilles: "As when a dog [...]." The beginning of the tenor, however,

comes as a surprise because it shifts the focus to Hector and, hence, to the prey. The simile is of a special type, which has been described as "multiplied" or "double-headed"; the two simile markers do not work in unison but highlight different aspects of a complex analogy.[11] The shift of focus, in this case from predator to prey, serves Oswald as a springboard for her adaptation of the simile. She transplants it to the deaths of Diores and Pirous, which occur in Book 4 of the *Iliad*, and emphasises the prey:

> Like through the jointed grass
> The long-stemmed deer
> Almost vanishes
> But a hound has already found her flattened tracks
> And he's running through the fields towards her (17)

Not only does Oswald detach the simile from a combat scene and move it to a double obituary, she also alters its focus in that she begins with the prey: "Like […] / The long-stemmed deer" replaces "As when a dog." While the simile in the *Iliad* focuses our attention on the attacker and his unflagging pursuit, the simile in *Memorial* puts the emphasis on the victim.[12]

In Book 16 of the *Iliad*, Patroclus is shedding tears because his comrades are losing their lives, while Achilles, who is still smouldering with resentment at his treatment by Agamemnon, persists in staying away from the battle. Adding insult to inaction, he compares his friend to a little girl:

> "Why are you all in tears, Patroklos, like a little girl running along by her mother and demanding to be carried, pulling at her dress and holding her back as she tries to hurry on, and looking up at her tearfully until she picks her up? That is what you look like, Patroklos, with these soft tears falling." (16.7-11)

The simile follows the typical pattern of Homer's similes. After describing the little girl's behaviour in detail, it ends with a line that reinforces the connection between tenor and vehicle: Patroclus and the girl are both crying for reasons that seem trivial to Achilles. Oswald

seizes upon this simile and transfers it from a hero who is about to enter the fight to a minor warrior who will fight no more:

> SCAMANDRIUS the hunter
> Knew every deer in the woods
> He used to hear the voice of Artemis
> Calling out to him in the lunar
> No man's land of the mountains
> She taught him to track her animals
> But impartial death has killed the killer
> Now Artemis with all her arrows can't help him up
> His accurate firing arm is useless
> Menelaus stabbed him
> One spear-thrust through the shoulders
> And the point came out through the ribs
> His father was Strophius
>
> Like when a mother is rushing
> And a little girl clings to her clothes
> Wants help wants arms
> Won't let her walk
> Like staring up at that tower of adulthood
> Wanting to be light again
> Wanting this whole problem of living to be lifted
> And carried on a hip (18-19)

As usual, Oswald does not highlight the connection between obituary and simile. At first sight, the *tertium comparationis* is obscure: what does a hunter who is stabbed to death on a battlefield have in common with a little girl who wishes to be carried by her mother? However, a closer look reveals several connections. The relationship between Artemis and her protégé Scamandrius corresponds to the relationship between mother and daughter. Embedded in this basic analogy, there is a more precise similarity, the idea of the stronger partner in the relationship lifting the weaker from the ground.[13] In order to solve a serious "problem of living" and "to be light again," the weaker is dependent on the support of the stronger. Finally, obituary and simile are linked by verbal repetitions: Scamandrius needs Artemis to

"*help* him up" just as the little girl "[w]ants *help*" from her mother; and the mother's "arms" echo Scamandrius' "firing arm."

However, the relationship between obituary and simile is characterised not only by connections but also by contrasts. Some of these are hidden inside the very connections—in words or expressions that apply both to Scamandrius and to the girl but have very different meanings for the two. Take a phrase like "this whole problem of living." In Scamandrius' world, this refers to the problem of living or not living at all; in the world of the little girl, it is a comic exaggeration reflecting the girl's limited perspective—the problem is most likely nothing more than a bruise or a broken toy. "Wants help wants arms" is similarly ambiguous. For Scamandrius, "arms" are weapons, associated with injury and death; for the girl, they refer to her mother's limbs, associated with protection and life. Scamandrius "wants help" in the sense of *lacking* it, while the little girl *wishes for* help—and will presumably obtain it (in the *Iliad*, the girl is finally picked up by her mother). While Scamandrius is beyond anybody's—even a goddess's—help, the girl's problems can be solved, and her life, which has only just begun, will go on. The motifs of defeat and death in the obituary are thus contrasted with the motifs of success and survival in the simile. This is in keeping with Oswald's paratactic poetics: the similes do not illustrate the obituaries but respond to them.

Our next simile resembles the previous one in that it also evokes a feminine, domestic world. Its original context is the protracted fighting at the wall that surrounds the Greek camp. The battle is drawn: "[T]he sides held even like the scales a careful spinning-woman holds, lifting the beam with the weight and the wool on either side, so she can earn a meagre provision for her children. So the battle was strained taut and level between them" (12.433-36). Oswald transfers the simile to the obituary of Acamas, who dies in Book 6:

> ACAMAS a massive man best fighter in Thrace
> Came over the choppy tides of the Hellespont
> And almost instantly took a blow on his helmet
> The spear pressed through to his skull

Tipped with darkness
It was Ajax who stopped him

Like that slow-motion moment
When a woman weighs the wool
Her poor old spider hands
Work all night spinning a living for her children
And then she stops
She soothes the scales to a standstill (25-26)

The most obvious link between the simile and the obituary is indicated by the verb *stop*, which occurs in both. The woman's work ceases; Acamas' life comes to an end. Besides, the darkness of the night in which the woman sits up alone corresponds to the darkness that overwhelms the dying warrior. The simile also contains a mythological allusion that applies to the obituary. "[S]pinning a living" means earning a livelihood, but it also evokes the Three Fates, who are responsible for spinning and cutting the thread of a person's life. When the woman stops "spinning a *living*," Acamas' thread is cut. Perhaps there is even a causal connection. A woman working all night to support her family could be a widow who has lost her husband in a war.

As in the previous simile, however, contrasts are just as important as connections. The "massive man" on the battlefield is set in opposition to the woman's "spider hands," and the abrupt manner in which Ajax "stopped" his opponent contrasts with the careful way in which the woman "soothes the scales to a standstill." The extraordinary events on the battlefield are juxtaposed with a scene of daily routine, male destruction with female work, the aggression against the enemy with a mother's care for her children. Again, death is counterbalanced by survival. While Acamas' life is irrevocably lost, the woman will pick up her work on the next day. The spinning wheel will turn again, providing bread for the children, who, like the little girl in the previous simile, guarantee the continuation of life.

The following simile is not taken from the domestic but from the natural world. However, the contrast with the obituary is again striking:

> ILIONEUS an only child ran out of luck
> He always wore that well-off look
> His parents had a sheep farm
> They didn't think he would die
> But a spear stuck through his eye
> He sat down backwards
> Trying to snatch back the light
> With stretched out hands
>
> Like oak trees swerving out of the hills
> And setting their faces to the wind
> Day after day being practically lifted away
> They are lashed to the earth
> And never let go
> Gripping on darkness (52-53)

In its original context, the simile characterises the strength and resilience shown by Polypoites and Leonteus, who distinguish themselves in the defence of the wall around the Greek camp.

> These two took their stand in front of the tall gates like high-topped oak-trees in the mountains, which stand firm against wind and rain for all their days, fast-fixed by their great roots stretching down. So these two, confident in the strength of their hands, stood firm against the onrush of the huge Asios and would not turn to flight. (12.131-36)

The recontextualisation of the simile brings about the usual shifts: from the preparatory or middle stage of the fighting to its end, from the victorious or successful to the defeated warrior, and from an analogy that is clearly signposted by a simile marker to a much more tenuous link that the readers are left to discover by themselves. In this case, the link would appear to consist in the idea of grasping something intangible. The trees are "[g]ripping on darkness," which means that their roots are holding on to the lightless soil, "the *black* earth" in which Protesilaus and many another fighter have been buried. Ilioneus is "[t]rying to snatch back the light," i.e. the life that is flooding

from his body. Needless to say, this is a doomed endeavour. Instead of seizing light, Ilioneus will be "gripping on darkness" like the oaks.[14]

If Ilioneus and the oaks are both "gripping on darkness," they are doing so in very different ways. The phrase has two meanings that are diametrically opposed: death for the man, life for the trees. The resemblance that connects obituary and simile only serves to highlight the contrast between the two, a contrast that is further enhanced by other features of the two passages. Ilioneus comes from a pastoral world, in which death did not seem an option. As the only son of wealthy parents, he has enjoyed a privileged and protected existence, which leaves him completely unprepared for the clash of arms. He seems out of place on the battlefield: weak, ineffectual and with a touch of the ridiculous in the actions that he performs at the moment of his death. The oaks, on the other hand, are surrounded by a hostile mountain environment; their daily battle with the elements has made them sturdy and strong. This is emphasised by a telling ambiguity in the phrase "lashed to the ground": the trees are *beaten down* to the earth by the mountain storms, but they defy these storms because they are *tied down* to the earth by their strong roots.

The contrast between the themes of death and survival that we have found in a number of examples is underpinned by a grammatical contrast. The obituaries are constructed around a unique event, the killing of a warrior, which is narrated in the past tense: "It was Ajax who *stopped* him." The similes, on the contrary, revolve around recurrent events; they are written in a present tense which is essentially iterative. Routine and repetition rule the domestic, agricultural and natural worlds in which the similes are set. The spinning-wheels turn every night, little girls cling to their mothers' skirts on a regular basis, cornfields move like waves whenever there is a strong breeze, and the mountain oaks "set [...] their faces to the wind / day after day." This "day after day," this reliable recurrence of actions and events, is an essential feature of survival, of the strength and continuity of life that counterbalances the deaths narrated in the obituaries. Perhaps this

insistence on survival and continuity follows, in a paradoxical manner, from the central goal of *Memorial*, the project of commemorating the dead. Memorials are *about* the dead but *for* the living. The memory of the dead can only remain alive in the minds of the survivors.

The final obituary in *Memorial*, too long to be quoted in full, is about Hector. It is accompanied by the following simile:

> Like leaves who could write a history of leaves
> The wind blows their ghosts to the ground
> And the spring breathes new leaf into the woods
> Thousands of names thousands of leaves
> When you remember them remember this
> Dead bodies are their lineage
> Which matter no more than the leaves (73)

Like Hector, the leaves die. Their ghosts are blown "to the ground," following Hector's bones that were "returned to the ground" in the preceding obituary (72). However, the simile is less about one man, however exceptional he might be, than about all of the warriors who have lost their lives in the poem. The opening line of the obituary states that Hector "died *like everyone else*" (71; emphasis added), and the subject of the simile is in the plural, not in the singular: "Thousands of names thousands of leaves."

Like the "wind-murmur" simile, which follows the first obituary, the leaves simile, which follows the final one, has a self-reflexive dimension. Referring as it does to writing a history and remembering names, it has a bearing on the commemoration of the dead. The relevance of memory and history is also suggested by the original context of the simile, the dialogue between Diomedes and Glaucos in Book 6 of the *Iliad*. When they meet on the battlefield, Diomedes asks his opponent for an account of his ancestors, to make sure that he is not fighting the descendant of a god. Glaucos responds with the leaves simile to suggest the futility of remembering one's parentage:

> "Great-hearted son of Tydeus, why do you ask of my birth? The generation of men is just like that of leaves. The wind scatters one year's leaves on the ground, but the forest burgeons and puts out others, as the season of spring

> comes round. So it is with men: one generation grows on, and another is passing away." (6.145-49)

Somewhat surprisingly after this beginning, Glaucos proceeds to tell the story of his descent in great detail and with an unexpected result. The two warriors turn out to be guest-friends because of an amicable meeting between their grandfathers; they vow not to fight each other and exchange their armour in token of their friendship. The episode is strangely ambivalent in its attitude to commemorating the dead. In the introductory leaves simile, Glaucos strikes a sceptical note, but he immediately belies his scepticism with a detailed account of his ancestors, which, moreover, might be the means of saving his life—taking on Diomedes at this point would not be a good idea; in his *aristeia* in Book 5, which precedes the encounter, Diomedes has been invincible.

A similar ambivalence informs Oswald's version of the simile. On the one hand, it celebrates the idea of commemoration. Humans are "leaves who could write a history of leaves," i.e. mortal beings who transcend their mortality by recording their lives. In the context of writing, the word "leaves" evokes the pages of a book just as much as the foliage of a tree, and the "lineage" of the leaves in the penultimate line suggests the lines of the written or printed page. It may even contain a shadowy allusion to the "immortal lines" that keep alive the memory of the poet's friend after his death in Shakespeare's "Sonnet 18" (a poem that also shares the motif of breath as a source of life with Oswald's simile). On the other hand, Oswald's simile also casts doubt on the idea of commemoration, undermining the declared project of *Memorial* with a surprising scepticism. Given Oswald's views on orality and literacy, writing may not be the antidote against mortality and time that it is in some of Shakespeare's sonnets. The principal vehicle of scepticism is the image of the leaf, which runs counter to the idea of history. A history, especially a written one, is cultural, while Oswald's leaves belong to nature. A history is based on durable records and documents. Oswald's leaves are short-lived; they turn into ghosts almost immediately and are blown to, and merge with, the ground so that no trace of their existence remains behind. Perhaps the

meaning of "leave" as in "leave-taking" also comes into play here. Most importantly, a history is unique and specific, relating the facts of a particular person or period. Oswald's leaves are uniform. Significantly, she does not write that "spring breathes new *leaves* into the woods," as one might expect. She replaces the plural with the singular "leaf," suggesting the near-homophone "life" and transforming the leaves into a homogenous mass or force—a stage in a seasonal cycle, not an actor in a history. "[A] history of leaves," it would appear, is almost like an oxymoron. If this is the case, "who" in the first line should not be read as a relative pronoun but as an interrogative pronoun that introduces a rhetorical question. This question interrupts the simile right at the beginning in the manner of an anacoluthon: "Like leaves—who could write a history of leaves?" The implied answer would be "nobody."

"Like leaves" is followed by ten additional similes without any further obituaries. The very last simile reads as follows:

> Like when god throws a star
> And everyone looks up
> To see that whip of sparks
> And then it's gone (83-84)

In the *Iliad*, the simile occurs in Book 4, in which Zeus sends his daughter Athene to the Trojan battlefield. In her descent, she either transforms herself into a shooting star or looks like one to the assembled armies (4.73-80). The elements of the simile suggest a world beyond time and transience: two immortal gods as well as a star, a traditional image of permanence and constancy. But for all its beauty and brilliance, the simile describes something extremely short-lived. Like the simile of the leaves, which follows Hector's obituary, the simile of the shooting star contains a sceptical comment on the entire poem and on its attempt to create a memorial for the men fallen at Troy. In the cosmic scheme of things, the simile suggests, Hector is a mere "whip of sparks," just like Homer's and Oswald's attempt to

commemorate him in verse. The poem's final word about human life and human memory is: "And then it's gone."

4. Homer's Paratactic Poetics

In the preceding analysis, we have repeatedly compared the similes in *Memorial* with their original versions in the *Iliad*. We may thus have created the impression that the two are very different. Homer's similes, we may have implied, are unlike Oswald's in being hypotactic rather than paratactic; they subordinate the vehicle to the tenor by means of grounds that are clearly highlighted by simile markers. This conclusion, however, would be far from the truth. In the final section of this essay, we would like to argue that some of the paratactic features that we have found in Oswald's similes are already present in Homer's. After all, Oswald's paratactic poetics is not a modern concept that she brings to her adaptation of the *Iliad*; it is based on qualities that she discerns in Homer's text.

The first point to be made about Homer's similes is that the vehicle is subordinated to the tenor only to a limited extent. Admittedly, the simile markers usually highlight a point that connects the two, but the vehicle mostly develops and expands far beyond that point. Excess is an essential feature of Homer's similes. When Achilles sarcastically compares Patroclus to a little girl, the ground of the comparison is that both are shedding tears for trivial reasons. But he elaborates on the basic idea with a series of details that have no bearing on Patroclus whatsoever: that the girl is running after her mother, that the mother is hurrying on, that the girl pulls at her mother's dress, that she clamours to be picked up and carried etc. If all of these details had an equivalent in the situation of Patroclus, we would be in the realm of allegory, a "continua μεταφορὰ" in the concise definition given by Quintilian (9.2.46, see also 8.6.44). But the Homeric simile does not create a continuous parallel between vehicle and tenor; the former emancipates itself from the latter and develops a life of its own.[15] Arguably, Homer's similes agree with Oswald's in their essential

structure. The vehicles represent a complex event or situation with many details; only one or at best a few of these can be applied to the tenor. Homer's similes differ from Oswald's only in the way the structure is presented to the reader. While Homer emphasises the connections between vehicle and tenor by means of simile markers, Oswald prefers to hide or veil them, leaving the simile markers dangling in the air. She thus highlights a lack of connections which, however, is no less true of Homer's similes than of her own.

For a number of Oswald's similes we have claimed that contrast is just as important as connection and resemblance. Ilioneus' ineptness is juxtaposed with the tenacity of the oak trees, the massiveness of Ajax and Acamas with the "spider hands" of the spinning-woman. Again, Oswald builds on foundations laid by Homer. As Mark Edwards states in the instructive chapter on similes in his study of the *Iliad*, "occasionally it seems that a simile that does not parallel the narrative intentionally develops a strong contrast with it, attracting the audience's attention by a kind of shock effect" (106).[16] The extraordinary simile of the spinning-woman weighing her wool creates just as much of a contrast in the *Iliad* as it does in *Memorial*. Homer also uses it in a battle context, placing an image of delicacy and poise in the midst of clamour, destruction and violence.

While most of Homer's similes are excessive and some contrastive, a few are downright contradictory. A famous example is the simile of the wolves that describes the Myrmidons who, after their long absence from the fighting, are preparing to re-enter the battle with Patroclus. "They gathered like wolves, eaters of raw flesh, their hearts full of boundless fury" (16.156-55). So far, so fitting. But in the further development of the simile it emerges that the wolves have pulled down a stag, filled their bellies, and are belching blood. A glutted wolf seems a poor parallel for a war-hungry man, a problem that has been much debated in Homer scholarship. Critics have either condemned the simile or attempted to explain away the inconsistency. Stephen Nimis reviews these criticisms and explanations, and provides a sophisticated solution of the problem himself (23-42) which is based

on the observation that elsewhere in Homer warriors preparing for battle observe the ritual of a civilised meal including prayer and sacrifice. The effect of the wolf simile, Nimis argues, depends on this convention. The devouring of the stag is a grim parody of a civilised meal and thus furnishes an oblique comment on the situation, in particular on Achilles. Still in the grip of wrath and resentment, he is not yet in a state to rejoin his allies and to share in a civilised meal; thus the return of the Myrmidons to the Greek army is, for the time being, a doomed enterprise. Nimis's interpretation of the wolf simile is in the spirit of a paratactic poetics (although he does not use the term). He does not read the simile in terms of hierarchy, of a vehicle subordinated to a tenor, but in terms of balance, as an independent, complex poetic response to a situation described in the narrative.

In the second section of this essay, we argued, following Notopoulos, that the paratactic features of Homer's poems stem from their closeness to oral poetry. Whether this claim also applies to the paratactic features of his similes is a moot point. Some scholars argue that the language of the similes is less formulaic than that of other passages and that their content is highly original, grounded in personal experience. Edwards writes that "[i]t is hard not to think that in these long similes one can see the personal eye and thought of the poet" (103). Catherine Addison argues that an extended or expanded simile is much more likely in a written than in an oral poem (506-07). Other scholars, however, emphasise the conventional and formulaic elements in the similes that point towards orality. Scott, for instance, claims that the hundreds of similes in Homer are based on a limited set of so-called *similemes*, complex patterns of events or situations (a lion hunting its prey, wind blowing on land or sea, trees falling or standing firm), which the poet adapts, more or less rigorously (often less), to a moment in his narrative.[17] If this is true, Homer and Oswald are in a very similar position as far as their treatment of the similes is concerned. They do not compose the similes from scratch. Instead, they begin by choosing from a limited number of options (the similemes in the case of Homer, the roughly 200 similes of the *Iliad* in the

case of Oswald) and adapt these to the needs of their narrative. In doing so, however, they do not fully subordinate the vehicle to its tenor in the narrative context; the vehicle maintains a life of its own.

By way of conclusion to this essay, we would like to analyse a simile from the *Iliad* in some detail. Using the critical lenses developed in our reading of Oswald's poem, we will focus on its paratactic features. The simile describes a crucial moment in the final episode, which is about Hector's burial. Initially, Achilles refuses to grant this honour to his enemy. After killing Hector, he does not release his body. Instead he mutilates it and leaves it to dogs and birds. Eventually, Hector's father Priam decides to take the risk of appealing to Achilles in person. This appeal brings about the final peripety. Achilles gives up the wrath that has so disastrously determined his actions ever since the quarrel with Agamemnon and releases Hector's body. The moment described by the simile is Priam's entry into Achilles' tent:

> Huge Priam came in unseen, and moving close to him took Achilleus' knees in his arms and kissed his hands, those terrible, murderous hands, which had killed many of his sons. As when a man is held fast by blind folly—he kills a man in his own country, and then comes to another land, to a rich man's house, and amazement takes those who see his entry. So Achilleus was amazed when he saw godlike Priam, and the others too were amazed, and looked at each other. (24.477-84)

The simile gives a condensed version of a motif that recurs throughout the *Iliad*: a man kills a friend or relative in anger, leaves his home and travels to a foreign country, where he finds refuge in a new family. The most prominent and elaborate example of the motif is Patroclus (23.83-90), but he is by no means the only one.[18] Oswald places the simile after the obituary of Epigeus, another example of the motif (62-63). For once, the connection between vehicle and tenor is obvious in *Memorial*—in fact, far more obvious than in the *Iliad*. Admittedly, Homer follows his standard practice of using the simile marker to point out a connection, in this case the amazement caused by the entry of Priam and the homicide. However, other aspects of the simile seem irrelevant to Priam's mission or even at odds with it. A man who is

driven by a blind folly to kill a friend or relative does not provide a good parallel for a father who is risking his life to give a proper burial to his son. As in the simile of the glutted wolves, the vehicle seems to clash with the tenor. However, a closer scrutiny reveals that the simile provides a highly pertinent response to a crucial moment in the narrative.

Homer's commentators have pointed out that the simile of the expatriate homicide inverts the situation between Priam and Achilles. "[T]here is a reversal of roles here," writes M. Willcock, "for the man who has come is innocent of any violent deed; while the killer is the man sitting among his followers" (317). This is a point we would like to pursue. Achilles resembles the homicide in many ways. He is also driven by a "blind folly," the wrath or anger that seizes him during his quarrel with Agamemnon in Book 1. (Oswald sees this resemblance as well. In her version of the simile, she renders the homicide's ἄτη πυκινὴ [24.480], "blind folly" in Hammond's translation, as "anger" [63], thus drawing a link between Achilles and the homicide.[19]) Achilles does not literally kill a friend or a relative, but he is on the point of drawing his sword during his quarrel with Agamemnon and only kept from murder by the interference of Athene (1.188-218). After the quarrel, he begins a campaign against his allies, absenting himself from the battle and lobbying the gods through his mother Thetis to support the enemy. Thus he is responsible for the death of many of his comrades, including that of his closest companion Patroclus. The reversal of roles goes far beyond the mere fact that Achilles has recently killed a man, while Priam has not. The crucial point here is a murderous folly directed against one's own friends or allies.

The simile describes a man on a threshold. The narrative has also arrived at a threshold, at a moment of crisis or decision. Achilles will have to decide whether to grant Priam's request, just as the rich man will have to decide whether to welcome the homicide. The reversal of roles in the simile foreshadows the reversal in the action, the final peripety that is about to occur. The simile also foreshadows Achilles' change of mind. It displaces the role of Achilles, of the man ruled by

wrath, to another person; the simile thus frees him, as it were, from the passion that has kept him from releasing Hector's body. Most importantly, the reversal of roles in the simile implies that the man on the threshold is like Achilles himself. The amazement felt by Achilles is the amazement of a man who recognises the common ground between himself and his enemy. This common ground is also emphasised in the dialogue that follows the simile. Priam compares himself to Achilles' father Peleus, and Achilles affirms the parallel. He foresees that Peleus, too, will have to mourn the death of a son who will lose his life on the battlefield of Troy. The encounter between Achilles and Priam, which is perhaps the true climax of the *Iliad*, is very far from epic splendour and glory. Instead, it emphasises mortality, grief and loss. So does *Memorial*. In this respect, as in many others, Oswald's poem is faithful to the spirit of its great original.

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NOTES

[1]This essay is based on a talk we presented at the 14th International *Connotations* Symposium "Self-Imposed Fetters: The Productivity of Formal and Thematic Restrictions" in 2017. We would like to thank Matthias Bauer, who initially suggested the topic of the symposium (see Bauer), and the participants, who made helpful comments on our talk. Thanks are also due to Manuel Baumbach, Maik Goth, Frank Kearful, Anton Kurenbach, Theodor Lindken, Svenja Schürmann and the two anonymous *Connotations* readers for their criticisms of previous drafts of the essay.

[2]Edwards points out that there are about 200 epic or extended similes in the *Iliad*, as opposed to roughly 40 in the *Odyssey* (102). Edwards's numbers are based on a distinction between extended and short similes ("like a lion," "like a god," etc.), which is contested by other scholars. Scott argues that there is no clear-cut distinction between two types but a scale from basic to fully elaborated similes (18-31).

[3]References to the *Iliad* are to the prose translation by Hammond, references to the Greek original to the Oxford Classical Texts edition by Monro and Allen.

[4]Hammond's repetition of "thick" corresponds to the repetition of a form of ταρφύς in the Greek original. We owe the term *simile marker* to Ben-Porat, who provides a thorough structural analysis of the so-called "double-headed" or

"multiplied" epic simile, an example of which will be discussed below. We have decided to stick to the traditional terminology of tenor and vehicle, which was introduced by I. A. Richards in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (96). Admittedly, when it comes to analysing metaphors, these terms are problematic. In metaphors that do not take the form "a (tenor) is b (vehicle)," it is often difficult to identify the tenor. In such cases, terminological pairs like *source domain* and *target domain* (Lakoff) or the German *bildspendender Bereich* and *bildempfangender Bereich* (Weinrich) are more helpful. But in the analysis of similes, which usually take the form "a (tenor) is like b (vehicle)," the identification of the tenor does not pose a problem. In addition, Richards's pair is stylistically much less cumbersome than the alternatives.

[5]The exception is the death of Gorgythion, whose head drops like the calyx of a poppy weighed down by rain (*Iliad* 8.306-08, *Memorial* 32-33). In another case, Oswald attaches the simile to a different warrior but retains the original meaning of the simile. Homer's Imbrios, who sinks down when stabbed by Teukros, is compared to an ash-tree which falls to the ground when hewn by axes (13.177-81). Oswald transfers it to the obituary of Promachus, who, like Imbrios, drops to the ground at the moment of his death (52).

[6]Relating *Memorial* to contemporary war memorials, Hahnemann reads the poem as an egalitarian, feminist and pacifist approach to the *Iliad*. She also provides a useful appendix in which she identifies the passages in the *Iliad* from which the similes in *Memorial* are taken. Other critics who have discussed *Memorial* in some detail are Harrop; Farrier; and Pestell. Inspired by one of Oswald's public recitations, Harrop discusses the relation between *Memorial* and oral poetry as well as the related topics of speech and silence; Farrier links *Memorial* to the Anthropocene and to a "poetics of haunted time"; Pestell analyses the relationship between the natural, the human and the divine (219-20).

[7]See Thacker for a brief discussion of the "paratactic relationship between clauses" which Oswald discerns in Homer and uses as a model in her own poetry (105-04). The focus of Thacker's essay is on Oswald's earlier collections.

[8]Oswald here probably refers to the funerals of Hector and Achilles in the final books of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, respectively. In neither is the lament for the dead shared by a poet and women precisely as Oswald describes it; her account seems to be influenced by the antiphonal structure of her own poem. By the way, we do not wish to carry the idea of antiphony so far as to attribute the two components of *Memorial* to different voices, e.g. the obituaries to the women and the similes to the poet (or vice versa). Neither the preface nor the poem offers enough evidence for that.

[9]See also Lord's classical comparison of Homer with 20th-century oral poets, *The Singer of Tales*; Lord argues that the perception of inconsistency or, to use Horace's words, of "Homer nodding," results from applying literary standards to oral poetry (10-12, 94-98, 152).

[10]For instance at the Walberberg Conference 2012 in Berlin, where I (B. Niederhoff) was present. Admittedly, the recital of a work that is first written and then

learnt by heart is not the same thing as an oral poem. Oral poets do not recite a finished work because such a work does not exist. They compose as they perform, and the work, instead of being ever fixed or finished, changes with each new performance.

[11]See Ben-Porat on this type of simile.

[12]Other vehicles which rely on the same shift from predator to prey feature, for instance, a deer killed by dogs and eaten by a lion (*Memorial* 47-48, *Iliad* 11.473-84) and bird families attacked by an eagle (*Memorial* 55, *Iliad* 15.690-94).

[13]Oswald pointed out this connection to me (B. Niederhoff) when I talked to her after her recital of *Memorial* at the Walberberg Conference.

[14]The metaphorical link between Ilioneus and the trees is a good example of the two forces at work in *Memorial*, the fidelity to Homer's text and the need to refashion the recontextualised passages. Homer, of course, does not create any connections, metaphorical or otherwise, between the oak simile and the obituary of Ilioneus; after all, the two passages are about 1700 verses apart in the *Iliad*. The link is constructed by Oswald to endow the transplanted simile with meaning in its new context. However, the link is not gratuitous. In constructing it, Oswald seizes upon characteristic details in Homer's text: "Ilioneus sank down stretching out both his arms" (14.495-96); the oaks "are fast-fixed by their great roots stretching down" (12.134). It is a coincidence, by the way, that Hammond uses the same verb "stretching" in both passages. The Greek original, which Oswald uses, features different terms: a form of πετάννυμι for Ilioneus (14.495) and a form of διηνεκής for the trees (12.134).

[15]This excess has become a hallmark of the epic simile in general. It is pointed out, for instance, by Samuel Johnson in the following observation on John Milton: "But he does not confine himself within the limits of rigorous comparison: his great excellence is amplitude, and he expands the adventitious image beyond the dimension which the occasion required. Thus, comparing the shield of Satan to the orb of the moon, he crowds the imagination with the discovery of the telescope and all the wonders which the telescope discovers" (708). Leaving aside Satan and the telescope, the comment also applies to the author of the *Iliad* and many another epic poet. On the excessive or expansive quality of the epic simile, see Addison (498-504).

[16]Similar points about contrast or difference being an effect of Homer's similes are made by Minchin (41) and Scott (32-33).

[17]See Scott (14-41). Notopoulos, "Homeric Similes," and Ready also make a case for the oral nature of Homer's similes.

[18]Further instances are listed by Richardson (175). In his analysis of the simile, Buxton points out the connection to Patroclus and argues, as we also do below, that the simile suggests the common ground between Achilles and Priam (153-55).

[19]For an analysis of the central theme of Achilles' anger, see Latacz (89-101).

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Why Does Jig Smile?
Readings of "Hills Like White Elephants"*

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Hemingway's story "Hills Like White Elephants" is often included in curricula of literature and creative writing.[1] During the first half century after its publication in 1927, its readers had no doubt how it ended—the girl, Jig, succumbed to the man's wish that she terminate her pregnancy—and even denied the intensity of her initial resistance.[2] The volume of critical work on the story surged around 1980, however, with the emergence of new answers to the question "What happens at the end of the story?"[3] Hemingway's narrative technique of sharing a minimal amount of information with the reader is partly responsible for its multiple conflicting readings, but as we shall see below, it may not be the only reason for them.

These multiple readings make the story an interesting test case for questions about conflicting interpretations. Why does this story invite such a variety of readings? Which readings can appeal to large readerships? Which readings are only of interest to professionals?[4] How are readers influenced by exposure to other readers' readings?

This last question is of particular interest, since reading works of fiction—at least well-known and highly regarded ones—is not an individual but a collective endeavor. Readers are exposed to interpretations by the education system, by book reviews, adaptations to other media, interviews with authors, blurbs, and more. Much of a reader's impression of a work of fiction is not his or her own.

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*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debate/empirical-readings-of-hemingway-hills-like-white-elephants>.

In this article, I will consider all the published readings of the story, and consult the views of ordinary readers through questionnaires.[5] My interest in the readings will be restricted to their answers to a single question: "What happens at the end of the story?" To compare these readings, a general terminology of comparative traits of readings will be developed.

The story is very short, with few characters and events. A young couple, "the American" and "the girl with him," (50) are sitting outside a railway station café in the Ebro valley in Spain, waiting for a train that is due in forty minutes en route from Barcelona to Madrid. From their conversation, interspersed with drinks, the reader learns that they have been travelling together for a while, that the girl is pregnant, and that her partner is trying to convince her to terminate her pregnancy. He presents the abortion as a simple and reasonable solution to their predicament. At the same time, he repeatedly assures her that he does not want her to have an abortion if she does not want it. It seems, however, that the girl would rather keep her baby and raise it together with her partner.

The station is located between two tracks. It is usually assumed that one leads from Barcelona to Madrid—the couple's destination where one may arrange for a probably illegal abortion—and the other in the opposite direction. Thus, the two tracks are correlated with the dilemma facing the couple. The tracks pass through the Ebro valley. One side of the valley ("this side"; 50), which the couple can see from the café, is treeless and barren. It is bordered by the white hills that give the story its name.[6] When the girl gets up and walks to the end of the station, she can see the other side of the valley, with fields and a row of trees along the river. The two landscapes are commonly interpreted as connoting fertility and life vs. barrenness and death.

At some point in the conversation, the girl gets up, walks to the end of the station, and looks at the other side of the valley, which she could not see until now. When she returns, she expresses her feelings more emphatically. Her partner's answers frustrate her so much that she demands that he stop talking. When the arrival of the train in five

minutes is announced, the man gets up, saying he is going to move their luggage to the other side. The girl smiles at him. On the way back, he stops for a quick drink at the bar. He then returns to the girl, and the story ends with these words:

> She was sitting at the table and smiled at him.
> "Do you feel better?" he asked.
> "I feel fine," she said. "There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine." (55)

The words "pregnancy" and "abortion" do not appear in the text, but published criticism always assumes that the girl is pregnant and the topic of conversation is abortion. It seems that other assumptions, if ever contemplated, would be unable to survive the dialog between professional readers.

Not all ordinary readers, however, arrive by themselves at the conclusion that the story is about abortion. In preparation for the surveys described below, I asked six graduate cognitive psychology students to read the story and answer a single question: "At the end of the story, what are the woman's plans concerning her pregnancy?" Three of the respondents noted in their answers that they did not understand or were not sure that the story concerns pregnancy and abortion. The same question was posed to eighteen students in a prestigious international high school. Four admitted to not understanding that abortion is involved. Possibly, other students were embarrassed to make the same confession. One may assume that what made these students "fail" in reading the story was not lack of real-life knowledge but inexperience in reading literary fiction. They may not have recognized the way stories sometimes convey information implicitly, and that this is especially to be expected in matters related to sex or to parentage. Perhaps these students would not understand, for instance, that in Dostoyevsky's *The Karamazov Brothers*, old Karamazov is Smerdyakov's father.

In my experience, readers who did not understand that the story concerns pregnancy and abortion quickly accepted the usual interpretation. In that sense, their readings were not sustainable—they could

not persist in the inter-personal domain but only in the mind of a Robinson Crusoe.

As mentioned, for the first fifty years after the story's publication, a single reading was accepted. I will call this reading "Girl Surrenders." According to it, the story presents one episode in a static relationship, in which the man is dominant. The girl's verbal attempts to challenge his authority lead nowhere. She wants to please him and keep him, even at the cost of an abortion. Possibly this would not be enough. Her last words and her smile indicate that she submits to his will. They contain an apology for her outburst a few minutes ago, presented almost as a child's temper tantrum.

The new readings offer a different reconstruction of the plot, most importantly of the man and the girl's plans. These readings also offer a different understanding of the characters but not of the author's sympathy, which everyone agrees lies with the girl. The questions critics disagree about are: What is the state of affairs at the end of the story? Did any change take place during the short time of waiting for the train? Did the girl decide to keep her baby? If so, is the man aware of that decision? Is he resigned to it? Does the girl want to stay with him? Does he want to stay with her?

"Girl Surrenders" assumes that the girl would abort and stay with the man if he is still interested in her, while the man's plans are considered unknown. It seems he intends to stay with her in the near future, at least until the abortion, probably for a while after. It is less clear whether he would stay for a long time, as his words imply. On the contrary, it may be that the abortion would push him to end his relationship with the girl soon. If all he wants from her is to have a partner for travel, drinking and sex, their conversation makes it clear that she is no longer a pleasant one. Her talk, which perhaps he once found amusing, is becoming annoying. After he bluntly rejects the white elephant imagery by saying, "I've never seen one," their conversation becomes an open confrontation:

> "Yes," said the girl. "Everything tastes of liquorice. Especially all the things you've waited so long for, like absinthe."

"Oh, cut it out."

"You started it," the girl said. "I was being amused. I was having fine time."

"Well, let's try and have a fine time."

"All right. I was trying. I said the mountains looked like white elephants. Wasn't that bright?"

"That was bright."

"I wanted to try this new drink. That's all we do, isn't it—look at things and try new drinks?"

"I guess so." (51)

If that is what their conversation is like now, it should be clear to the man that in the future, with the memory of the abortion hanging as a shadow over their relationship, the girl would no longer serve as a means for "having a fine time." Thus, it is hard to believe the man when he says, "We'll be fine afterward. Just like we were before" (52). The last drink he takes by himself at the bar marks his preparation for life without the girl. Perhaps her last smile marks her resignation with the ending of this relationship. Accordingly, a modified variant of "Girl Surrenders" is that the man will definitely not stay with the girl after the abortion. I call this reading "Man Leaves after Abortion."

A more substantial opposition to the old reading attaches much importance to the word "other," which appears twice towards the end:

"I'd better take the bags over to the *other* side of the station," the man said. She smiled at him.

"All right. Then come back and we'll finish the beer."

He picked up the two heavy bags and carried them around the station to the *other* tracks. (54-55; italics mine)

Earlier, when the girl got up from the table and went to the end of the station, she saw the *other* side of the valley for the first time. If the two sides of the valley stand for fertility and life vs. barrenness and death, and the two tracks lead in opposite directions accordingly, it is significant that at the end of the story we are told about the *other* side of the station and the *other* track. It turns out, some readers contend, that the man agrees to cancel the plan of travelling to where an abortion is available (see Fletcher; Gilligan). In that case, it is possible that the girl

really feels fine, as she says, and her smile is sincere. I will call this reading "Man Surrenders."

To counter "Man Surrenders," one may ask: How do we know the other track leads in the opposite direction? Only one train has been mentioned, and the man moves the luggage a few minutes before its arrival. The value of such arguments in reading a work of fiction is questionable. Even more questionable is the value of the external information that in the real Ebro valley, the fertile fields and barren hills are both on the same side, northeast of the tracks (see Hannum). The rich metaphor of two tracks on two sides of the valley is more important than the real geography, which the author does not bother to describe fully and consistently (see Renner). The author need not shape his landscape according to the real map, and can simply err.[7]

Perhaps more importantly, one could wonder about the psychological plausibility of a sudden and unexplained change in the man's position. Presumably, the couple have been discussing the abortion for many days, and no new insight on the man's part is evident in the text (see Hashmi). There are good arguments against the old reading as well, however. The conversation between the partners does not necessarily portray the girl as weak and dependent, nor does it foreshadow her defeat. The man thinks he can control her. He speaks the local language, has money, and claims to have experience in the matter of abortion. Yet his attempts to convince the girl fail. He is no match to her in verbal struggle. He admits his weakness when he says, "I just can't think about it. You know how I get when I worry" (see Hannum).

The girl uses figurative language and the man cannot be sure when to take what she says at face value, especially when it comes to the crucial words, which most readers interpret as sarcastic and accusatory:

> "Then I'll do it. Because I don't care about me."
> "What do you mean?"
> "I don't care about me."
> "Well, I care about you."

> "Oh, yes. But I don't care about me. And I'll do it and then everything will be fine."
>
> "I don't want you to do it if you feel that way." (53)

Thus, the old reading of the girl as caving in at the end is problematic, lending some support to "Man Surrenders." To support "Man Surrenders" further, it may be helpful to divide the story into four sections, in which the girl experiences change (see Renner). In the first, she does not yet know clearly what she wants but is dissatisfied with her partner, a feeling she only hints at. This section ends with the words "Then I'll do it. Because I don't care about me" (53), and with the man's unsatisfactory answer. At this point, both realize the intensity of the conflict.

In the second section, the girl gets up, distances herself from the man's influence and looks for the first time at "the other side." She now attains a level of self-awareness that enables her to deal with the man as equal.

In the third, the girl comes back, does not sit at the table and confronts the man:

> "And we could have all this," she said. "And we could have everything and every day we make it more impossible."
>
> "What did you say?" (53)

He does not truly respond to her wish for his commitment. He tries to bring her back under his influence, but fails. "'Come on back in the shade,' he said. 'You mustn't feel that way'" (53). Their frustrating conversation leads to the girl's request that he stop talking and her threat of screaming if he went on.

Finally, in the fourth section, after the man has said no less than six times in the course of the story that the final decision is the girl's, he comes to acknowledge the strength of her will to keep the baby and surrenders. This he expresses by saying he will move the suitcases to "the other side" (54). On the way back, the man stops at the bar and has a drink by himself while watching the people sitting there. "They were all waiting reasonably for the train" (55). This sentence has

attracted the attention of many readers. According to "Girl Surrenders," the man thinks everyone behaves like a reasonable person while he alone has to carry the burden of an unreasonable partner (see Trilling). The same sentence may be used, however, to make a small but important revision in "Man Surrenders": he understands now that his worries about the continued pregnancy and birth are unreasonable and resigns himself to the birth and parenting (see Renner).[8] This reading provides a definite answer to the question of the man's plans: he intends to stay with the girl. I call this reading "Birth and Stay."

Support and more depth to this reading may be provided by a textual detail ignored by readers for many years. Our understanding of the physical movements in the station used to be as follows: the girl gets up, goes to the end of the station, sees the other side, comes back, stands near the table and talks while her partner barely listens, a fact that made readers accuse him of indifference and obtuseness:

> "And we could have all this," she said. "And we could have everything and every day we make it more impossible."
> "What did you say?"
> "I said we could have everything." (53)

The dialog that ensues shows that nothing has changed in the man's attitude. "Come on back in the shade, you mustn't feel that way". The girl stands outside the shade, and he invites her to sit in the shade with him, which she does only at the end of the frustrating conversation.

This understanding is challenged, however, by a single word: "*They* sat down at the table and the girl looked across at the hills on the dry side of the valley and the man looked at her and at the table" (italics mine). If two sit down then just before that, two were standing. So perhaps this is the correct description: the girl gets up and walks to the end of the station, sees the other side and makes this monologue:

> "And we could have all this," she said. "And we could have everything and every day we make it more impossible." (53)

Her partner gets up and follows her. He asks her what she said not because he is not listening, but because he was out of hearing range. They are both standing in the sun, and he asks her to go back to the shade with him. After some more exchanges, they go back and sit at the table together.

This new description of the couple's movements in the small station space gives more support to "Birth and Stay." The girl's crucial words, "Then I'll do it. Because I don't care about me" (53), and her leaving the table, make the man listen to her, understand her plight and finally agree to her wish to keep the baby. The rest of the dialog shows that he would still like her to have an abortion, but that it is important for him that she know that "I don't want anybody but you" (54; see Justice).

So far, we assumed that the girl wants to stay with the man. A very different reading assumes that during the story's short timespan the girl completes a probably long process of realizing the superficiality and egotism of her partner, and decides to leave him. When she returns from her short walk, she offers him one last chance to change. His disappointing response drives her to say the crucial words:

> "Would you do something for me now?"
> "I'd do anything for you."
> "Would you please please please please please please please stop talking?" (54)

She has made up her mind to leave the man and the smiles she gives him are no different from the polite smile to the waitress.[9]

This reading had two variants. According to one,—"Abortion and Breakup"—the girl will travel with her partner, benefit from his practical and financial help in arranging an abortion and leave him (see Hannum). According to another,—"Breakup and Birth"—she will leave and have the baby by herself (see Kozikowski). Her last words, "There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine" (55), may justify this last reading. The old reading saw them as an expression of submission, but we can read them as the expression of a clear and determined

position: My pregnancy is not a problem; I'm going to have this baby (see Kobler), or maybe even: The only problem is our relationship; I'd rather keep this baby than keep you. As far as I am concerned, *you* are a white elephant (see Gilmour). This reading has met with scoffing:

> Some starry-eyed readers believe Jig will leave him and live, with a child of course, happily ever after. Hemingway does nothing to encourage such a consolatory reading. Indeed, her final smile does not suggest rebellion but submission. (Portch 45)

Proponents of "Abortion and Breakup" or of "Breakup and Birth" see no need to justify their claim that the girl intends to abort or give birth. They see it as an obvious conclusion from her decision to part with the man. According to "Abortion and Breakup," once the girl has decided to leave her partner, she no longer wants to keep the baby, which used to be part of the future she planned to have with him and which will not materialize. Conversely, according to "Breakup and Birth," once the girl has decided to leave her partner, she no longer needs to have an abortion. At this junction, both readings rely on different implicit psychological or social reasoning that the readers have not taken the trouble to spell out and corroborate with textual evidence.

* * *

The large number of readings motivates systematic classification. Three questions about the end of the story are subjects to debate. Firstly, does the girl plan birth or abortion?[10] One may answer that she has not decided or that the text does not tell us, but critics did not find these possibilities interesting, and we will not consider them. Secondly, what are the girl's plans for the relationship? Here too, critics found only the two definite answers interesting: stay or leave. If the girl has decided to leave, most readers, adopting her point of view, are no longer interested in the man's plans. If she has decided to

stay, however, a third question arises: What does the man intend to do? Here three answers have been proposed: stay, leave, or "the text does not tell us."

Girl Plans to Leave	Girl Plans to Stay			
	Man Plans to Leave	Man's Plans Unknown	Man Plans to Stay	
Abortion and Breakup	Man Leaves after Abortion	Girl Surrenders	Abortion and Stay	Abortion
Breakup and Birth		Man Surrenders	Birth and Stay	Birth

Table 1

Table 1 presents the readings according to this analysis. The missing cell corresponds to a reading not encountered in published criticism.[11] The bold borders divide the readings into three groups or types. In the top right area of the table are "Weak Girl" readings: "Man Leaves after Abortion," "Girl Surrenders," and "Abortion and Stay." In the left column are "Strong Woman" readings: "Abortion and Breakup" and "Breakup and Birth." In the bottom right are "Reformed Man" readings: "Man Surrenders" and "Birth and Stay."

In trying to explain the variety of conflicting readings, we should give proper weight to the fact that the story enjoys a positive artistic appreciation, a large readership and extensive attention by professional readers who teach the story in literature and creative writing classes. Moreover, since the text is very short, much importance is attached to every small detail. Some of the readings rely on the precise meaning of single words in the text, a strategy that would make little sense in a longer text. Finally, and most importantly, the story is characterized by contradictions or tensions and by lack of information (ambiguities or gaps) which invite conflicting readings.[12]

One source of tension stems from the conflicting evidence the story provides concerning the balance of power between the man and the girl. She seems to be the weaker party; indeed, the first time she is

mentioned she is called "the girl with him." She is pregnant, unmarried,[13] with a partner who is not necessarily reliable, in a foreign country whose language she does not understand, where no legal abortions are available. He speaks the local language, knows exactly what he wants and has a clear plan, while she finds it difficult to express a position of her own. Her feelings toward him are not exactly clear but it seems she considers him a suitable long-term partner and wants to raise her child with him ("we could get along"; 53). His interest in her, it seems, is mainly as a companion for travelling in Spain, a temporary situation. Even when he makes an effort to present his best side, there is no hint of long-term commitment on his part.

Conversely, the girl does not have much esteem for her partner. She is smarter, and she knows it. Her sophisticated use of language challenges and threatens him, as we see right in the beginning of the story:

(1) "They look like white elephants," she said.
(2) "I've never seen one," the man drank his beer.
(3) "No, you wouldn't have."
(4) "I might have," the man said. "Just because you say I wouldn't have doesn't prove anything." (50-51; numbering mine)

The girl's first utterance (1) is both an invitation to intimacy and a challenging puzzle. The man, who wants to direct the conversation to the discussion of an abortion, rejects the invitation and deflects the challenge (2). The girl's answer (3) seems to take the man's answer at face value, thus signaling a retreat from (1). The reader understands, however, that (3) encodes a message of scorn, such as "unlike me, you are narrow minded and lacking in imagination." Whatever way the man understands (3), he clearly perceives the disrespectful undertone. His attempt to change the balance of power in his favor (4) is clumsy if not childish and reveals his lack of confidence. The girl comes out on top in this miniature verbal combat, and it is not the only one.[14] In the second part of the story (after she gets up), she speaks more explicitly, ending with her request that he shut up.

Another tension stems from the apparent contradiction between most of the story and its surprising ending. After we have made up our mind that this relationship has a grim future, we see the girl smiling at the man when he takes the suitcases and saying to him with unexpected warmth: "All right. Then come back and we'll finish the beer" (54). He receives another smile when he returns. Have we completely misunderstood the state of affairs between the partners?

* * *

If contradictions are a surplus of information, then underspecification, vagueness and gaps result in lack of information. Hemingway's style is generally characterized by action and dialogue without delving into the minds of his characters; direct speech without description of tone and without speech verbs, or with neutral non-informative verbs[15]; partial scene descriptions leaving much room for the reader's imagination; a small vocabulary; and minimal use of adjectives and adverbs (see Levin).

The reader is left without information, not only about feelings and intentions, but also regarding some basic facts: How old are the man and the girl? When and how did they meet? Where do they come from and what awaits them when they return? This lack of information invites readers to invest much interpretive energy in the physical details of the train station and its environment. By their nature, such details may support more than one reading.

The lack of details is motivated by an implicitly stated aesthetic principle: Hemingway favored omitting as many details as possible and leaving the reader with "the tip of the iceberg," as a way of making a story more effective.[16]

> If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer

> had stated them. The dignity of movement of an ice-berg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. (Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon* 132)

Another source of divergent interpretations, particularly important because of its privileged position in the narrative and the surprise it causes, is the girl's last words:"I feel fine [...]. There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine" (55). These words, usually understood as related to the girl's emotional rather than physical state, may be interpreted in opposite directions, depending on the degree of openness and cooperation one attributes to the girl at this point in the story.

The variety of readings also reflects differences of values, sensibilities and ideologies having to do with gender status and relationships. All readers sympathize with the girl, but this sympathy can be expressed in different ways. For proponents of "Girl Surrenders," the girl is helpless. Not only is she unable to be firm and obtain consideration for her needs and feelings; she also finds it hard to reach a clear understanding of these needs and feelings in the first place. At the end of the story, she not only reconciles herself to the man's plan, but she makes an effort to say and feel that everything is fine. One critic who agrees with this reading finds a universal message in the story having to do with the position of women in a male-dominated world:

> The smiling look she gives the waitress and the two times she smiles at the man in the very last stages of the story imply the male world closing around her, not the strengthening sense she has of her own independence and the man's stupidity. She looks only at him, not past him and toward the hills. In this way, the story functions not only as a powerful critique of the man's sexual politics, but also as a complex portrayal of woman's, not just Jig's, *final* compliance. (O'Brien 24, italics in original)

The critic's language bears traces of feminist discourse ("sexual politics"), but he supports the "Weak Girl" type of reading and explicitly rejects the "Strong Woman" readings ("not the strengthening sense she has of her own independence").

Another proponent of "Girl Surrenders" almost blames the girl for her fate:

> Her smiles give him one message, readers another. His insensitivity leads him to believe she smiles out of contentment. We suspect she first smiles to hide her discontentment. And from this suspicion we conclude there can be no hope for either positive verbal or non-verbal communication. People who hide behind false selves can rarely reach out to one another. (Portch 45)

In the new readings, one may perceive a tendency to "help" the girl and empower her. This is more extreme in "Strong Woman" readings than in "Reformed Man" readings. One critic who supports "Birth and Stay" claims that this reading is logically necessary: since the implied author sympathizes with the girl and is critical of the man, the story must end in a way that agrees with "current sympathies," ignoring the fact that stories often end in ways that would contradict their authors' wishes in real-life situations.

> So firmly does the story's sympathy side with the girl and her values, so strong is her repugnance toward the idea of abortion, and so critical is the story of the male's self-serving reluctance to shoulder the responsibility of the child he has begotten that the reading I have proposed [i.e. "Birth and Stay"] seems the most logical resolution to its conflict. […] [T]he story turns out to be even more rightminded, in terms of current sympathies, than has been generally perceived. Not only does it side with its female character's values, it also understands and sensitively dramatizes her struggle to take charge of her own arena, to have a say about the direction of her own life. (Renner 38)

The desire to empower the girl finds even bolder expression in readings claiming that the girl has decided to leave the man. She understands that he is not worthy of her and that she does not need him, so the question whether she can make him change his mind is no longer relevant. One critic supporting "Abortion and Breakup" calls for changing the image of the female protagonist from that of a helpless girl to that of a woman capable of evaluating her partner and drawing practical conclusions.

> Comment on the story to date has underestimated Jig's character considerably. She is not the "neurotic" slave Austin Wright saw or the "little girl" Virginia Woolf saw in her […] [T]his is not so much a question of her having the

> courage to leave him, after the abortion, as a clear case of her being unable to tolerate him—of her having left him in her wake. (Hannum 53)

The critic's language relates to the protagonist almost as if she were a real person—as do many other critics of the story—and blames the old reading for reproducing stereotypes of weak femininity.

* * *

In order to study the effect of exposure to others' readings on ordinary readers, I have conducted two surveys with two distinct respondent groups. In other words, no person has participated in both surveys. All participants have been asked to read the story and confirm that they are reading it for the first time.[17]

In the first survey, participants answered three questions: At the end of the story, what are the woman's plans concerning her pregnancy? What are the woman's plans concerning her relationship with the man? What are the man's plans concerning his relationship with the woman? The phrasing of the first question was designed to make sure that readers understood that pregnancy was at stake.[18] The first survey let participants express their views freely and did not expose them to readings different from their own. For quantitative analysis of the questionnaires, I assigned the answers to one of the readings discussed above.[19]

In a second survey, participants were presented with six readings, each phrased as concisely and as convincingly as possible. Participants were told that each reading was supported by some "Hemingway scholars" and were asked to select the "best" reading.

Reading	First Survey (open-ended)	Second Survey (multiple choice)
Breakup and Birth	1.5	5
Abortion and Breakup	0	3
Man Leaves after Abortion	3	1
Girl Surrenders	17	8
Birth and Stay	1.5	0
Man Surrenders	0	1
Total	23	18

Table 2

The results of both surveys are presented in Table 2. A clearer picture is obtained when we present the results according to the three reading types in Table 3.

Reading	First Survey (open-ended)	Second Survey (multiple choice)
Strong Woman	1.5	8
Weak Girl	20	9
Reformed Man	1.5	1
Total	23	18

Table 3

The vast majority of readers who interpreted the story by themselves (first survey) supported the "Weak Girl" type of reading.[20] By contrast, half of the readers who were exposed to different readings

(second survey) chose "Strong Woman." The difference is statistically significant.[21] For both surveys, the "Reformed Man" readings received very little support from the readers.

In order to discuss readers' choices, I will offer some criteria for comparing and rating readings. The criteria are subjective. In other words, different readers may grade readings differently using the same criterion. The first criterion is *simplicity*. It concerns the relationship between the text and the fictional world created by the reader. This criterion evaluates the complexity and arbitrariness of the processes used in order to construct that fictional world, and of the assumptions needed to fill in gaps in the story. Applying this criterion involves judgement on the part of the individual reader, but some agreement may be expected.[22]

A very simple reading of our story is probably impossible, since it has a surprising and enigmatic ending. Any reading must assume some invisible personal or interpersonal processes operating in the background, whose results the reader may only fully observe at the end, and uncertainly at that. All readings have difficulty finding textual evidence for those processes.

"Strong Woman" readings assume that the woman has decided unilaterally on a new plan in which the man has no place. "Reformed Man" readings assume a new understanding between the partners: no more talk of abortion. "Weak Girl" readings assume that the girl has decided to give up on both the baby and self-expression in favor of relationship harmony. When and how were these decisions and understandings reached? Why did we see no sign of them until the end of the story?

That being said, the level of simplicity of the different readings is not quite the same. The story starts with a conflict, which reaches a crisis, and ends with peace and quiet. Any reading must locate, within the short duration of the story, an internal change for either of the protagonists or both. The readings we saw offer three options for such a change: (1) The man decides that the girl is more important to him than a life of freedom without responsibility and commitment; (2) the

girl decides that the man is not a suitable partner and that she would be better off without him; and (3) the girl decides that the relationship is more important to her than the baby.

Selecting Option 1 is not easy, because the author has made every effort to make the man unlikeable. His presentation of abortion as easy, simple and inconsequential, and his repeated promises that he did not want the girl to do anything against her will seem insincere and manipulative. The readers' lack of sympathy for the man makes the assumption that he goes through a change of heart appear arbitrary. In other words, this would not be a simple reading to most readers.

Option 2 (the girl decides to leave) has no direct textual basis. It is, however, somewhat simpler than the first, because the girl's outbreak in the middle of the story shows how frustrated she is by the man and what little respect she has for him.

Option 3 may be the simplest. The relationship between the partners is a continuous compromise on the part of the girl. Her expressions of irony and intellectual superiority are easily interpreted as part of such a compromise: "You decide, I'll scoff and express dissatisfaction, then obey." This pattern prepares the reader for a final compromise on her part at the end of the story. The results of the first survey may indicate that this is indeed the simplest reading for many readers.

Another criterion may help explain the considerable support for "Strong Woman" in the second survey: *morality*, or the extent to which the reading makes the story one that is compatible with the reader's values. This is a problematic criterion in that it may lead readers with the same values in different directions, and our story provides an example of such a phenomenon. A reader dissatisfied with the current balance of power between men and women may tend to portray the girl as occupying a position of minimal power (as a characterization of reality) or maximal power (as a characterization of desirable ideal). Still, this criterion may explain how "Strong Woman" readings, not considered in the past and in the first survey, enjoy

wider support nowadays, especially if we combine it with the next one on the list.

This criterion, which I name *plausibility*, has to do with the verisimilitude of the fictional world created by the reader, as judged by the reader's extra-textual knowledge.[23] Plausibility is distinct from simplicity. The reading "Breakup and Birth" receives a fair amount of support in the second survey. The assumptions it relies on are as follows: the woman recognizes the man's shortcomings; she wants to keep the baby; and she feels confident in her ability to live as a single mother. These assumptions have not become simpler over the years, but changes in women's status in reality and in their fictional representations may have made them more plausible for many. Indeed, one may argue that the readers have "failed" in applying the plausibility criterion, not taking into account the place and especially the time in which the story unfolds, thereby imposing an anachronistic reading on it.

* * *

Professional readers have left no stone unturned and have found a variety of readings for the end of the story. They are aware of previous readings and are motivated to find new ones, since interpretive innovation plays an important role in justifying their occupation and professional advancement. A previous reading may even be perceived as a rival and object of critique on aesthetic or ideological grounds. Sometimes a professional reader perceives even the author as a rival and tries to challenge his or her authority and "hijack" the meaning of the story. In order to make a point, professional readers may even offer tongue-in-cheek readings they do not truly support.

The ordinary reader, who reads for enjoyment, wants to understand what "really" happens in the story (or what the author's intention is)[24] and find in it insights relevant to his or her own life. Thus, the old reading that excels in simplicity and plausibility ranks first in the first

survey. "Strong Woman" readings that have an advantage of morality are selected by many of the readers exposed to them, especially since they were told that each reading is supported by some "Hemingway scholars," giving legitimacy to any choice.

* * *

It is hard to avoid the temptation of ending this article by offering a new answer to the question why Jig smiles. So here it is: she is not pregnant at all. She has misled the man, telling him that she was pregnant, probably in order to assess his character and their relationship, perhaps to pressure him into marriage. By the end of the story, she knows all she needs to know about him. As she has suspected, he is not the kind of partner she wants, and she will leave him soon.

Unlike the idiosyncratic readings of those who have failed to understand what operation is being discussed, this reading recognizes that the story is indeed about pregnancy and abortion. This reading, "Girl Not Pregnant," may be compared with "Abortion and Breakup." In both, the woman reaches by the end of the story a new understanding of her needs and rejects her partner. In both, she seems to take a lighthearted attitude to parting with the man. This attitude is easier to understand if she is not pregnant, giving "Girl Not Pregnant" a plausibility advantage. This comes at a heavy cost of simplicity, however. Indeed, "Girl Not Pregnant" places the author in the position of a trickster, playing at riddles, hiding information and testing the ingenuity of readers.[25] As for the morality criterion, many contemporary readers would object to "Girl Not Pregnant," which attributes to the woman a stereotypically manipulative behavior. No wonder, then, that this reading has not been mentioned in published criticism of the story so far, nor is it likely to be mentioned again.

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APPENDIX

Open questionnaire

Q1: Dear participant, you are about to participate in a study that is conducted as part of a PhD thesis in the literature department in the Hebrew university. Participating in the study will take five to ten minutes and will include answering a few short questions about the story you just read. The questionnaire is anonymous. All of the data is confidential and is used only for the purpose of this study. You are allowed to stop answering the questionnaire at any stage. Do you agree to participate in the study?

Q2: Please answer the following questions briefly. Write one or two sentences for each question. If you would like to view the story again click here (the story will open in a separate tab).

- At the end of the story, what are the woman's plans regarding the pregnancy?
- At the end of the story, what are the woman's plans regarding her relationship with the man?
- At the end of the story, what are the man's plans regarding his relationship with the woman?

Q3: Thanks for answering our questions! Did you refrain from giving a definitive answer in response to one or more of the questions? (for example, did you write "I do not know" or "I am not sure" in any of your answers?). If you did, we would like to ask you to write a more definitive answer. Even if you are unsure of what happens at the end of the story, we would still like to hear what you think, or what you are leaning towards thinking regarding the ending. If all your answers were definitive, feel free to skip this question and go on to the next page.

Q4: What is your age?

Q5: What is your gender?

Q6: Have you read this story before today?

Q7: What language do you mainly speak at home?

Q8: If you have any other comments about the story or about the questionnaire you just filled out, you are welcome to write them here. If you'd like to get the results of the study you are also welcome to leave an e-mail address:

Closed questionnaire

Q1: Dear participant, you are about to participate in a study that is conducted as part of a PhD thesis in the literature department in the Hebrew university. Participating in the study will take five to ten minutes and will include answering a few short questions about the story you just read. The questionnaire is anonymous. All of the data is confidential and is used only for the purpose of this study. You are allowed to stop answering the questionnaire at any stage. Do you agree to participate in the study?
Q2: Hemingway scholars disagree about what happens at the end of the story. Some of them have proposed these alternative answers to this question:

1. The woman now realizes that the man is not a worthy partner for her. He is selfish and immature. She can see that he considers her as a pleasant partner for travel and sex, and is not committed to a lifelong relationship. She is determined to keep her baby and decides to leave the man. There is no a need for her to fight with the man anymore. Her final words express her good feeling about this decision and her confidence in being able to carry it out.
2. The woman now realizes that the man is not a worthy partner for her. He is selfish and immature. She can see that he considers her as a pleasant partner for travel and sex, and is not committed to a lifelong relationship. She has decided to end the relationship, and as part of this decision, to abort her baby. She needs the man's practical and financial help to get an abortion, but she will leave him soon after. There is no a need for her to

fight with the man anymore. Her final words express her feeling that she had found a good solution to her problem.

3. Despite some expressions of resentment and intellectual superiority, the woman is completely dependent on the man and wants to stay with him at any cost. She gives in to his (implicit) demand that she go through an abortion, as a condition for the continuation of their relationship. Her final words express her willingness to present her previous outbreak as a moment of feminine hysteria not to be taken seriously. Unbeknownst to her, the man has already made up his mind to leave the woman after the abortion.
4. Despite some expressions of resentment and intellectual superiority, the woman is completely dependent on the man and wants to stay with him at any cost. She gives in to his (implicit) demand that she go through an abortion, as a condition for the continuation of their relationship. Her final words express her willingness to present her previous outbreak as a moment of feminine hysteria not to be taken seriously. We do not know what the man plans to do.
5. The woman has convinced the man of her earnest desire to have the baby. The man now adapts himself to the idea of a long-term relationship. He will stay with her and assist her in her pregnancy. There is no longer any question of abortion. The woman's final words express her contentment. The couple will stay together and raise the child.
6. The woman has convinced the man of her earnest desire to have the baby. He will stay with her and assist her in her pregnancy. There is no longer any question of abortion. The woman's final words express her contentment. We do not, however, know what the man intends to do after the birth.

Now that you have seen all these different possible ways of interpreting the ending, which one seems to you the best? Please select your choice from the options above (You will not be asked to give reasons for your choice).

If you would like to view the story again click here (the story will open in a separate tab).
Q3: What is your age?
Q4: What is your gender?
Q5: Have you read this story before today?
Q6: What language do you mainly speak at home?
Q7: If you have any other comments about the story or about the questionnaire you just filled out, you are welcome to write them here. If you would like to get the results of the study you are also welcome to leave an e-mail address:

NOTES

[1]An early milestone in this direction is the inclusion of the story in a widely accepted anthology aimed at exposing young students to the best of world literature (Trilling). In the introduction to the story, the editor recounts that the young Hemingway had difficulty finding a magazine editor interested in it. The use of the story in education is evidenced by the fact that much of its criticism has been published by *Explicator*, a magazine dedicated to helping students and teachers understand literary works commonly used as learning material (see, apart from the *Explicator* articles cited elsewhere in this article, Consigny, Elliott, Passey, Rankin, Sipiora, Urgo). Another piece of evidence is the inclusion of the story in the popular literature guidance websites (Enotes, Sparknotes, Cliff's Notes, Shmoop, Gradesaver).

[2]Hemingway calls his female protagonist "girl," and that is how I refer to her when discussing the story and its readings. In the surveys, I called her "woman" in order not to bias the participants towards Weak Girl readings (see below).

[3]The MLA database includes 64 items related to the story. Since 1990, the rate of publications based on the story has been decreasing slowly. Nowadays, a new item is added about once a year. The publications differ in their approaches to interpretation. Some deal with the characters as if they were real people, while others are more interested in symbols or style. For the purpose of this article, these differences may be ignored. Not all publications deal even implicitly with my question: "What happens at the end of the story?"

[4]I use the term "professional readers" to refer to teachers, critics and scholars who publish their interpretations of works of fiction, as opposed to "ordinary readers" who at most discuss their interpretations within a small circle of friends. This is related but not identical to the distinction between "expert" and "novice" or "inexperienced readers" (Dorfman), based on their level of formal training in reading literary fiction.

[5]This is not an empirical study, informed by social psychology and cognitive science. Empirical literature research methods make objective measurements, sometimes using short artificial texts (see Bortolussi and Dixon; Miall). My interest here is in the macro level of meaning integration ("What happens in the story?"), and I cannot use such methods.

[6]Why are the hills like white elephants? Several non-mutually exclusive explanations have been offered. First, a "white elephant" is a gift that impoverishes its receiver who cannot afford the cost of its maintenance. According to the most common interpretation from this perspective, the fetus is a white elephant, a burden for the man. Similarly, the girl herself may be a white elephant for him, although, as seen below, for some readers, the man is a white elephant for the girl at this point. The white elephant may also be related to the shape of a pregnant woman's body (Hollander) or that of an aborted fetus (Abdoo).

[7]For example, the girl says that by calling the hills white she meant to describe "the colouring of their skin through the trees." But the trees are on the other side of the station, which she cannot even see!

[8]As for the more distant future, all readings share a measure of pessimism regarding the relationship (cf. Wyche).

[9]They are even less sincere, because she smiles *brightly* at the waitress—an adverb that stands out in the otherwise barren style of the story.

[10]The questions about the protagonists' intentions refer to the moment the story ends—five minutes before the arrival of the train. There is general agreement about their wishes at the beginning of the story: he wants an abortion, she wants to keep the baby.

[11]Such a reading may be labeled "Man Leaves after Birth": the man succumbs to the girl's wish to keep the baby. She thinks she is going to raise the baby with him, but he has already made up his mind to leave her after the birth. This article is devoted to published readings so we will ignore this one.

[12]Using different versions from the author's archives, an attempt was made to prove that Hemingway changed his mind about the ending and did not clean up the traces of previous endings (see Justice). This kind of consideration is beyond the scope of the present discussion, which deals with readers and treats the text as given.

[13]So assume all critics.

[14]For example: (Girl) "And you think then we'll be all right and be happy." (Man) "I know we will. You don't have to be afraid. I've known lots of people that have done it." (Girl) "So have I […]. And afterwards they were all so happy" (52).

[15]The speech verbs used in this story are *say* and *ask*, which provide a minimum amount of information on the emotions of the speaker and the dynamics of conversation. Even the verb *answer*, which implies cooperation between speakers, is not used.

[16]For this reason, I do not distinguish between readings based on explicit data in the text and those based on speculation.

[17]The surveys were performed using the SurveyMonkey.net engine. Participants were recruited through social media. They were aged 21-62 (median 31), half of them women. Most were native English speakers. See Appendix A for the full questionnaires. No correlation was found between respondents' answers and their age or gender.

[18]As mentioned above, we know from preliminary studies that some participants do not understand this by themselves. Analysis of idiosyncratic readings according to which the girl is not pregnant is beyond the scope of this article.

[19] Since published criticism does not make a clear distinction between "Abortion and Stay" and "Girl Surrenders," both were merged into one entry in Table 2. Responses implying idiosyncratic readings were discounted. When respondents

hesitated between two possibilities, their contribution was divided equally, which explains the presence of non-integers in Table 2.

[20]A Weak Girl reading is supported by two of the most popular readers' guide websites: Enotes and Cliff's Notes, which incorporate it in the plot summary. A student using these websites may remain under the impression that the story explicitly tells us that the girl surrenders and agrees to abortion in order to keep her partner.

[21]A chi-squared test reveals a significant (p=0.016) relationship between type of survey and choice of reading.

[22]For example, all readers would agree that interpreting each word in the story as an acronym is not a simple reading.

[23]Fishelov defines an economical interpretation as one that combines simplicity and plausibility. An economical interpretation makes a minimum number of assumptions and explains a maximum of textual details (it is simple). The assumptions it makes are consistent with extra-textual knowledge (it is plausible).

[24]Empirical reading studies show the importance of the author's intention for ordinary readers, contrary to its shaky status in literary theory (see Pfaff and Gibbs; Claassen).

[25]A reading of Nabokov's *Lolita* according to which the second half of the story takes place only in the narrator's imagination has met with this negative reaction: "It does not make sense that Nabokov would bury the clues to this reading so deeply that it would escape the attention of most readers." (Phelan 128).

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Irreconcilable (Dis)Continuity: *De Doctrina Christiana* and Milton[1*]

FILIPPO FALCONE

A definite reality presents itself to the Milton student as she/he turns to *De Doctrina Christiana*, a Latin treatise of divinity that has been largely attributed to Milton: the treatise includes distinctive heterodox elements in the areas of soteriology and theology proper which are not found in Milton's undisputed *corpus,* and the latter shows orthodox elements in those same areas that are not found in the Latin treatise. The vision of limited discontinuity—i.e. Milton's changing his mind about certain aspects of his theology—may account for some discrepancies, but its speculative nature is underscored both by the conspicuity of the discrepancies and by the fact that the discontinuity reaches backwards as well as forward. Alternatively, it can be argued that the Latin treatise is the work of more than one author (including Milton), or that it is the work of someone close to Milton's theological *milieu* and yet so far from it as to retain independent views in areas where Milton's undisputed works align themselves with mainstream views.

These pages address the question of authorship by bringing elements of continuity and discontinuity to light which call to task the ultimate bearing of *De Doctrina* on Milton's major poetry.

The Law[2]

De Doctrina goes to great lengths to make inward liberty dependent upon the termination of the law. To this end, it first intertwines the

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debate/de-doctrina-christiana-and-milton/>.

concept of the abrogation of the law with the emphasis on law as a unity. It was Calvin who had notably divided the law into moral, ceremonial and judicial, only to regard Christ as the end of its last two portions. The moral portion of the law, by contrast, subsisted as the expression of God's eternal character (*Institutes* 2: 4.663). Luther, for his part, argued that the law had been abrogated in its entirety by Christ and was only useful for self-examination (12: 233). The Latin treatise insists on regarding the law as a unity in its attempt to stress that the end of the law does not entail the termination of just one portion of it. It rather results in the cessation of the law as a whole to the effect that Christians are free from any external demands.

By putting forth this argument, the treatise fails to fully understand the position which finds its fountain-head in Calvin. So Polanus[3]: "the fact that one is not under the law does not mean that one does not owe obedience to the law, but that one is free from the curse and constraint of the law and from its provocation to sin" (*Syntagma* 6.10.351; Milton, *CPW* 6: 27.535). Here, the law metonymically stands for that which we may call the domain of the law, from which the gospel frees the believer. *De Doctrina*'s reply to this argument is revealing:

> But if this is so, what do believers gain from the gospel? For believers, even under the law, were exempt from its curse and its provocation to sin. Moreover what, I ask you, can it mean to be free from the constraint of the law, if not to be entirely exempt from the law, as I maintain we are? For so long as the law exists, it constrains, because it is a law of slavery. (*CPW* 6: 27.535)

From these words, one may infer that believers do not gain *from the gospel* exemption from the law's curse and provocation to sin, namely the very capacities the author has been arguing to be sources of slavery. What they do gain from it is the extinction of the law as a whole. Thus the treatise gets caught in a circular inconsistency as it maintains that freedom from the constraints of the law only comes by getting rid of the law altogether, while arguing that even under the law the believer was free from those constraints. Also, if that same law is what

produced curse and provocation to sin in the first place, how could believers under the law be exempt from them? Much to the contrary, Milton appears to argue in his undisputed works that the constraining power of the law, curse, and provocation to sin all vanish when the believer is clothed in Christ's righteousness.[4]

To be sure, after insisting on the abrogation of the law in its entirety, the treatise nevertheless specifies that "in reality the law, that is the substance of the law, is not broken by this abolition. On the contrary its purpose is attained in that love of God and of our neighbour which is born of faith, through the spirit" (*CPW* 6: 27.531). In his endnote, Maurice Kelley refers to A. S. P. Woodhouse, who points out that of this "substance of the Law" (*CPW* 6: 27.531) "indeed the Moral Law [which *De Doctrina* regards as abrogated] was itself a formulation" (Woodhouse 65). Granted the identity between that which *De Doctrina* refers to as the "substance of the Law" and the moral law, the lack of resort to the defining phrase "the moral law" in *De Doctrina* constitutes in and of itself a surprising omission. The phrase had a broad theological bearing for any divine, Milton included, and even so much so that Milton would resort to it frequently in both the antiprelatical and the divorce tracts and would not shy away from it even in his major poem, *Paradise Lost*. It goes without saying that to find such a phrase in a poem—but not in a system of divinity by the same author—simply makes no sense.

To be sure, *Paradise Lost* proves largely unconcerned with the emphasis on the law as a unity, while aligning itself with Calvin's tri-fold division of the Mosaic law as judicial/civil, ceremonial, and moral (see *PL* XII.230-35, 297-99). The first division is referred to in Book XII.230-31:

> Ordain them laws; part such as appertain
> To civil justice […]

The second part of the law is hinted at in the words that immediately follow (XII.231-32):

> […] part religious rites
> Of sacrifice […]

The ceremonial part of the law is then further acknowledged in the words,

> […] conscience, which the law by ceremonies
> Cannot appease […] (*PL* XII.297-98)

The third portion of the law is, in turn, set apart in Book XII, lines 298-99:

> […] nor man can the moral part
> Perform […]

While the ceremonial law is to be regarded as "types" and "shadows" (*PL* XII.232-33) pointing to the final reality, that is, Christ and his sacrifice, Michael's progressive account of salvation history seems to define the civil/judicial portion of the Mosaic law in dispensational terms. In other words, this part of the law seems to properly pertain to Israel as the civil extension of the moral law. As to the latter, for the poem to bring up this distinctive category is to set itself lexically and theologically in the company of the magisterial systems of divinity, e.g. by William Ames (see 111, 139, 269, 287, 291, 318). As in the mainstream theologies, in the poem, too, the substance of the moral law never appears to subside. Yet, the problem is not found in the subsistence of the moral law but in the human impossibility to perform it. While the moral law points man to the way of life whereby they may live and have peace of conscience, it cannot give them the power to meet its requirements. Neither a new law nor the termination of the existing one is needed but a new covenant that may give man life and peace, despite their inability to perform the law and thus provides inward freedom as the foundation to fulfill it:

> Some blood more precious must be paid for man,
> Just for the unjust, that in such righteousness

> To them by faith imputed, they may find
> Justification towards God, and peace
> Of conscience, which the law by ceremonies
> Cannot appease, nor the moral part
> Perform, and not performing cannot live.
> So law appears imperfect, and but giv'n
> With purpose to resign them in full time
> Up to a better cov'nant, disciplined
> From shadowy types to truth, from flesh to spirit,
> From imposition of strict laws to free
> Acceptance of large grace […] (*PL* XII.293-305)

It is plain from these lines that liberation from the rule of the law does not come by doing away with the law, as *De Doctrina* extensively argues, but through redemption from the slavery of sin. Redemption, in turn, is provided at the cross by Christ as a substitutionary sacrifice. David V. Urban persuasively argues that Milton follows in the orthodox Reformed strain in envisaging Christ's whole life as active righteousness—which even positively recapitulates Adam's fall—as an integral element of atonement's substitutionary consummation at the cross. This emphasis is especially evident in *Paradise Regained*.[5] The result of Christ's atonement is grace. Where grace rules, the law loses its constraining capacity because it is deprived of the principle upon which it operates. Much to this effect, emancipation from the slavery of sin does not result in freedom from the moral demands of the law but from the *rule* of the law. Likewise, in *Paradise Lost* the passage from the covenant of works to the covenant of grace is not a passage from law to antinomianism but from the "*imposition* of strict laws to free / Acceptance of large grace" (XII.304-05; my emphasis).

The continuity between *Paradise Lost* and Milton's undisputed prose is revealing when it comes to considering the law both in its divisions and in its theological bearing. In particular, the relationship between the civil law and the moral law is underscored in the divorce tracts as well as in the antiprelatical tracts. For Milton, the moral law is to maintain the prerogative to direct the civil and political course of a community and a nation under the new covenant, since the judicial branch of the law is "but the arme of the moral law" (*CPW* 2: 16.322).

Even so, as the expression of the inward microcosm of Christian liberty, it is bound to differentiate itself from the strictures of Israel's theonomic prescriptions:

> The whole Judaick law is [other than moral] politicall, and to take pattern by that, no Christian nation ever thought it selfe oblig'd in conscience […] (*CPW* 1: 764)

The civil and political precepts of the law of Moses, that is the second half of the Decalogue, are here said to be discarded by Christian nations. Milton is already pointing to a redefinition of the civil and political law based on the moral law as it is taught at the school of the gospel. This outlook will progressively lead to the rejection of the coalescence of church and state in ruling against the individual conscience, and to a more and more clean-cut separation of religious and civil matters in his writings, culminating in *A Treatise of Civil Power* (1659).[6]

Faith and Works

Fulfilled by Christ in man's place and its wages paid, the law loses its prerogative to condemn, constrain and stir man's enslaving affections. It no longer serves, as it did the child, as an external set of rules and prescriptions, but its moral essence can be discerned and observed by the free and adult individual through works of faith. The latter supplant works of law as deeds which are built upon man's reliance on (faith in) his pre-established inward liberty by the new light of the indwelling Spirit. Indeed, all factors which held reason captive appear to dissipate as man is pronounced free at the beginning of his walk and given over to "the Spirit of truth":

> The promise of his Father, who shall dwell
> His Spirit within them and the Law of Faith,
> Working through love, upon their hearts shall write
> To guide them in all truth […] (*PL* XII.487-90)

After Jesus' departure from earth, his disciples are promised not to be left orphans. A comforter, the Paraclete, will come from heaven to dwell within man. God's perpetual law of truth will no longer be encompassed in external formulaic prescriptions but will become part of man's inward essence. By engraving the law on the heart of man, the Spirit will provide the inward counterpart and synthesis of that truth which is only found in the "written records pure" (*PL* XII.513), in fact, those same records which are "but by [that] same Spirit understood" (*PL* XII.514). The new law will no longer be a law of works but a law of faith, as it is that which the Spirit fulfills in man on the basis of trust in the Son's imputed righteousness. This faith does not do away with works but expresses itself through works of love:

> […] the benefit [of his death for man] embrace
> By faith not void of works […] (*PL* XII.426-27)[7]

The reader will immediately recall the words of Paul in Romans 3:28, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." *De Doctrina* finds in the specification "of the law" the key to overcoming the alleged discrepancy between Paul and James in the New Testament: if for James "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (Jas 2:24), it is because he is referring to "works of faith" (*CPW* 6: 22.490). "Paul does not say that man is justified simply through faith, without works, but *without the works of the law*" (*CPW* 6: 22.490). As a result, *De Doctrina* goes so far as to argue, in Thomistic terms, that "if to believe is to act," as the examples show which the treatise draws from the Old Testament, "then faith is an action, or rather a habit acquired by frequent actions […]. Actions, however, are usually said to be effects rather than instruments; or perhaps they might better be called causes, though of less moment than principal causes" (*CPW* 6: 22.489).[8]

Yet, the Latin treatise here fails to account for something *Paradise Lost* seemingly indicates: faith has a very definite object under the full manifestation of the covenant of grace and its revelation to Adam. If the object is Jesus and his work on the cross, and if faith is "trust" (*PL*

XII.418), it follows that works of faith cannot be causes, even if secondary. The benefit of Christ is, on the contrary, embraced by that quality of faith in the Son which makes works good. While the likes of Ames get lost in defining internal-external dynamics (see Ames 234-36), Calvin puts it best in his commentary on James: "No faith, or only a dead faith, is without works" (22:314). That Milton is referring to true faith as opposed to dead faith without yielding ground to works of faith as a cause of justification is conclusively indicated by the assurance given to Adam that "This godlike act / Annuls thy doom" (*PL* XII.427-28), a *single* internal act of living faith delivering him from "the death" he "should have died / In sin for ever lost from life" (*PL* XII.428-29).[9]

Prevenient Grace

Whether prevenient grace is seen in Calvinistic terms as that grace which *comes prior to* human faith, irrespective of anything that comes from man, or, in accordance with Arminian theology, as grace that enables the human faculties to choose to come to Christ, either concept is foreign to *De Doctrina Christiana*.

Just as the "moral law," the expression "prevenient grace" (Latin *gratia praeveniens*) is not found in *De Doctrina*; another most peculiar omission in light of both the lexical and the theological distinctiveness and implications of the phrase. Once again, Milton is so confident in both the lexical and the theological importance of the technical expression as to seek no poetic way around it in his poem. After the fall and after the slavery of sin, in all its divisive power, has sunk in, Adam and Eve become reminiscent of God's gracious act of covering both their outward and inward nudity with his robe of righteousness (*PL* X.219-23), and they now manifest the reality of God's grace prevenient through their repentance and turning to God:

> Thus they in lowliest plight repentant stood
> Praying, for from the mercy-seat above

> Prevenient grace descending had removed
> The stony from their hearts, and made new flesh
> Regenerate grow instead […] (*PL* XI.1-5)

For all the lexical divergence, "previenient grace" appears to some as the same as *De Doctrina*'s "sufficient grace" (*satis gratia*, *CPW* 6: 4.192-94). Benjamin Myers assimilates the two by pointing out how in the treatise grace "restores man's natural faculties of faultless understanding and free will" (*CPW* 6: 18.461) and adding, "This is precisely the meaning of prevenient grace in *Paradise Lost*" (*Milton's Theology* 151-52). Myers, nevertheless, fails to ascribe to Milton's use of the highly distinctive terminology ("grace which comes prior to"—*prae-veniens*—as opposed to "grace sufficient"—*satis*) its proper significance. *De Doctrina* speaks of grace as universal in its extent and as a unit. Bestowed to all in different measure according to God's will, grace is sufficient for all to discern and choose and thus synergically cooperate with God in attaining to salvation.[10] By contrast, *Paradise Lost* points to a grace that induces capitulation only to direct man to God. To this effect, the poem is particular in distinguishing between God preemptively molding the heart of Adam and Eve so they can seek his face, and the Son pointing to his merit and to the price he will pay (i.e. his death) to obtain reconciliation. In the same way, in Book III, Milton understands God's prevenient grace as shedding light on man's frail condition so that he may fully place his trust in the deliverance provided at the cross:

> […] once more I will renew
> His lapsed powers, though forfeit and enthralled
> By sin to foul exorbitant desires;
> Upheld by me […]
> […]
> By me upheld, that he may know how frail
> His fall'n condition is, and to me owe
> All his deliv'rance, and to none but me. (*PL* III.175-82)

In lines 175-76, Milton's understanding apparently matches *De Doctrina* in that he refers to grace prevenient as that act which restores

man's fallen faculties. Even so, in the following lines, the renewal of man's fallen faculties is defined by the recurrence of the object pronoun "me." The circular motion of the chiasmus "Upheld by me […] / By me upheld" contrasts the person on whom the delivering initiative rests with man's enthralled and impotent self. The function of grace here is not to yield strength (in terms of judgment and free will) but weakness. It is to yield a heart that acknowledges the frailty of man's fallen condition and the impossibility for man to do anything other than reclining on the one who alone is their true source of deliverance.

De Doctrina's view on grace comes very close to the Quaker concept of the inner light and leads those who accept the treatise as Milton's to conclude that he "made little distinction between them [i.e. grace actual and habitual]" (Boswell 83). Whether Milton's understanding of prevenient grace is Calvinistic or Arminian, *Paradise Lost*'s concept of grace prevenient makes clear, to the contrary, that salvation is all of God and all of grace.

Agents of Creation and Regeneration[11]

Early Quakers notably identified the Son and the gospel of grace as the essence of inner light. Even so, both the Son and the Spirit were interchangeably referred to as its agents. Accordingly, in pointing to the Son as he who is and conveys the light of heaven, Milton intertwines his functions with those of the Spirit in the creation of the world, the spiritual re-creation of the poet and the resulting creation of the poem:

> Hail holy light, offspring of Heav'n first-born,
> Or of th'Eternal coeternal beam
> May I express thee unblamed? Since God is light,
> And never but in unapproachèd light
> Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee,
> Bright effluence of bright essence increate.
> Or hear'st thou rather pure ethereal stream,
> Whose fountain who shall tell? Before the sun,

> Before the heavens thou wert, and at the voice
> Of God, as with a mantle didst invest
> The rising world of waters dark and deep,
> Won from the void and formless infinite.
> […]
> […] on his right
> The radiant image of his glory sat,
> His only Son […] (III.1-12, 62-64)

While those reading the antitrinitarianism of *De Doctrina* into *Paradise Lost* are ready to dismiss the invocation to light as variously pointing to the personification of an attribute of God or to physical light,[12] the incipit of the *Book of the Son* (Book III) yields a clean-cut portrait of the latter's nature to those who acknowledge Genesis 1:1-3 and the prologue of the Gospel of John as its primary pre-text. In it, the same creating *Logos* (*PL* III.708, VII.163) who by the word of his mouth (VII.164, cf. III.9-10) "did[…] invest / The rising world of waters dark and deep"—even that which the Spirit "won from the void and formless infinite" or "vast abyss"(I.21-22, VII.234-37)—is the true light that is coming into the world to make a new *spiritual* creation (John 1:9, 1:13). The theological synthesis of the two Scriptural passages is ultimately afforded by Paul in what amounts to an all-encompassing backdrop for the Son's poetic role as *Logos*, wisdom and light in the two threshold moments of history:

> For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 4:6)

Just as light flowed from the command, in fact, from the Word of God at creation, so did the light the poet invokes at the beginning of Book III stream forth "at the voice / Of God." In the same way as the God who is light has shone "in our hearts," the poet calls on the light of heaven to shine inward. With light comes the knowledge of the glory of God, just as the inner light is to enable the poet to "see […] things invisible to mortal sight" (*PL* III.54-55). And if for Paul the knowledge of the glory of God shines in the face of Christ, in Milton the Son is

"the radiant image of his [God's] glory" (*PL* III.63) in whose countenance alone the poet is to see God "without cloud" (*PL* III.385).

To be sure, the overlapping of the Spirit and the Word at creation and in the work of illumination may sensibly lead to the conclusion that the light Milton revisits is identical with the Spirit of God in the initial invocation in Book I:

> And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
> Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,
> Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
> Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
> Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss
> And mad'st it pregnant […] (I.17-22)

Mindful of *De Doctrina*'s warning not to call upon the Spirit (see *CPW* 6: 6.295), Maurice Kelley, and a plethora of critics after him, regards the Spirit here as "a personification of the various attributes of God the Father" (see Kelley 106-18). Even so, in commenting on the presence of the Spirit at creation, *De Doctrina* refers to it as "the *spirit* of God […] a reference to the Son, through whom, as we are constantly told, the Father created all things" (*CPW* 6: 6.282; my emphasis). W. B. Hunter comes to this same conclusion by way of theological reasoning (Hunter et al. 149-56), so that in his reading the Spirit and the holy light of heaven end up being assimilated into the Son. While the solution offered by *De Doctrina* (and Hunter), if unsatisfying from a dramatic point of view, may seem to settle the discussion from a theoretical one, the problem of identification materializes again when, in turning to Book VII, the reader is faced with the simultaneous presence and involvement of both Son and Spirit in creation:

> My overshadowing Spirit and might with thee [the Son]
> I [the Father] send along […] (*PL* VII.165-66)

The reference to the gospel narrative of the Annunciation would have proven inescapable to the seventeenth-century Scripture-saturated mind in light of its definition of the Spirit as "overshadowing" and

"might": "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (Luke 1:35). Milton was thus associating the Spirit active in the first creation with the Spirit active in the new creation inaugurated by the coming of Jesus in the flesh. This same Spirit plainly matches the Spirit of the invocation in Book I. The identification occurs as Raphael's language in Book VII echoes I.20-21 as well as the pre-text of Genesis 1:2:

> […] on the wat'ry calm
> His brooding wings the Spirit of God outspread
> And vital virtue infused […]. (VII.234-36)

Granted the identity of the Spirit in Books I and VII, in the latter the Spirit appears to be conversant with one "*eternal* Wisdom" (VII.9-10; my emphasis). Book III, in turn, identifies God's wisdom as the "Son of my [the Father's] bosom," who "alone" is his "Word, [his] wisdom" (169-70), namely the light that streams forth "at the voice / Of God" (III.9-10).

The conclusion is inescapable: the Spirit involved in creation in *Paradise Lost* is *not* and *cannot* possibly be the Son, as *De Doctrina* would have it. The invocation to the Spirit at the outset of *Paradise Lost* does not therefore address the Son, contrary to the teachings of the Latin treatise. Also, the Spirit is defined in personal terms by the poem—see "His" with reference to the Spirit (VII.235)—whereas *De Doctrina* consistently refers to the Spirit as an impersonal force. The question remains: What are then the separate functions of Spirit and Son in creation and regeneration?

Albeit the Spirit is himself called to "Illumine" what in the poet is "dark" (*PL* I.23, 22) he is only able to inspire the poetical creation, just as he infused his virtue in the creation of the world, insofar as he exposes the poet's darkness and directs him to the source of creation and light. In the words of John, the Spirit will guide you in all truth for he "shall receive of mine [the Son's], and shall shew *it* unto you" (John 16:14). No less is signified by the Spirit being called "the Spirit of Grace" (XII.525). In fact, if the light of the knowledge of the glory of

God is in the gospel of the Son alone, it is for the Spirit to reveal one's spiritual darkness and convey the Son alongside his transforming life and vision on the grounds of grace. If right reason is twinned with liberty, it is given to the "Spirit of Grace" to be joined in indissoluble marriage with it, its "consort" (XII.526).

Theology Proper[13]

Kelley's *This Great Argument* (1941), Hunter et al.'s *Bright Essence* (1971), Bauman's *Milton's Arianism* (1987), and Campbell et al.'s *Milton and the Manuscript of* De Doctrina Christiana (2007) have shaped mainstream attitudes toward *De Doctrina* and *Paradise Lost* over the past decades. Kelley's reading of the Latin treatise as a theological gloss upon the poem, along with his masterful notes to Book 6 of the Yale edition of Milton's prose works, laid the foundations of critical orthodoxy. A stern reaction to Kelley's work would have to wait until the 1960s, when Patrides made his case for the alignment of Milton's theology with traditional Christian orthodoxy in *Milton and the Christian Tradition* (1966). A new critical standard was only provided a few years later by Hunter et al.'s revisiting of the theology of both treatise and poem. If throughout the 1970s and 1980s *Bright Essence*'s often recondite subordinationist attempt at disjoining or variously reconciling *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina* under the banner of orthodoxy was received by many Miltonists, it would not be long before the treatise's heterodoxy took over the scene again, notably through Bauman. He fundamentally moves from Kelley's premises to conclude that "if what was condemned at the Council of Nicea was Arianism, then John Milton was an Arian" (2). All attempts at defining the bearing of *De Doctrina* on *Paradise Lost* were to come to terms with a new challenge after 1992, when William Hunter first questioned Milton's authorship of *De Doctrina* ("The Provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*," published in *Studies in English Literature* and followed by a forum in the same issue of the journal testifying to the significance of the objec-

tions raised). The ensuing vibrant debate included, among staunch supporters of Milton's authorship, Barbara Lewalski (see esp. "Milton and *De Doctrina Christiana*: Evidences of Authorship," 1998), Christopher Hill (see esp. "Milton's Christian Doctrine: Professor William B. Hunter, Bishop Burgess and John Milton," 1994), and John P. Rumrich (see "Milton's Arianism: Why it Matters, " 1998, and "Stylometry and the Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*," 2002), and, among those entirely or partially rejecting the attribution of the treatise to Milton, Hunter himself (see esp. *Visitation Unimplor'd*, 1998), Paul R. Sellin (see esp. "John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina Christiana* on Predestination," 1996, and "Further Responses," 1999), and Michael Lieb (see esp. "*De Doctrina Christiana* and the Question of Authorship," 2002, where he argues that we cannot ultimately know which parts of the Latin treatise are Milton's and which are not). Arguments of provenance notwithstanding, those holding on to Milton's authorship of the treatise are at their best when pointing to the alleged continuity between *De Doctrina* and the Miltonic corpus in such areas as divorce, monism, and *creatio ex Deo*. To a reasonable degree, one may claim that the various arguments on either side have been addressed effectively, but the discussion has been, as it were, put to rest by Campbell et al.'s more recent effort. Though the latter is hailed by many as conclusive today, yet unaddressed or overlooked arguments of continuity and discontinuity and close theological comparison prove to be a stumbling block for it.[14] Arguments of continuity trace a most natural backdrop for the poem's theology proper to the words of *Of Reformation*'s invocation:

> Thou therefore that sit'st in light & glory unapproachable, *Parent* of *Angels* and *Men!* Next thee I implore omnipotent King, Redeemer of that lost remnant whose nature thou didst assume, ineffable and everlasting *Love!* And thou the third subsistence of Divine infinitude, *illumining Spirit*, the joy and solace of created *Things!* One *Tri-personall* GODHEAD!" (*CPW* 1: 613-14)[15]

Far from holding on to a tri-personal Godhead, it has been noted that *De Doctrina* maintains a strongly antitrinitarian stance (*CPW* 6: 5.218).

The Son is therein depicted as the recipient of the substance of God, yet as not sharing his very essence (*CPW* 6: 5.211), and as perpetual, yet not eternal (*CPW* 6: 5.211). On the contrary, the light of heaven in the poem is said to be "of th'Eternal coeternal beam" (*PL* III.2), the dwelling of God "from eternity" (III.5), and "Bright effluence of bright essence increate" (III.6). To view the light so portrayed as anything other than God himself is tantamount to creating an irreconcilable dualism between God and light: both are said to exist from eternity, and light is pronounced uncreated—as is assumed God alone is—as well as streaming from God's own essence. In other words, light is everything *De Doctrina* states only God can be. Even so, the light of heaven is significantly identified as "offspring of Heav'n first-born" (*PL* III.1), thus marking its otherness from God. Notice *De Doctrina* specifically mentions the Son's being the firstborn in Scripture as irrefutable evidence that he cannot be the coessential light (see *CPW* 6: 5.211).

In its hymn on the Son, Colossians 1:15-17 reads (my emphasis):

> [He] is the image of the invisible God, the *firstborn* of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

The Son is, in fact, heaven's firstborn throughout the New Testament. If the celestial light is the same as the "of all creation first / Begotten Son" (*PL* III.383-84), generation—contrary to *De Doctrina*—must be so interpreted as to signify the Son's position as pre-eminent life-giving αρχέ as well as his relationship of divine love with the Father (cf. *CPW* 6: 5.205-06, 6: 7.302-03). The image of the "invisible" God (cf. *PL* III.374) and "light" (cf. III.3), the Son is only rightfully identified with the holy light of heaven as the "radiant image of his [the Father's] glory" (III.63) in whom "th'Almighty Father" is "made visible" and "shines" (III.386; the possibility of the Father being "made visible" in the Son sharply contrasts with *CPW* 6: 5.237, 6: 6.297).

In the final analysis, no better description for the Son is found in *Paradise Lost* than that provided by the Nicene Creed: "light of light, very God of very God" (*Book of Common Prayer* 22). All in all, the Son in the poem is nothing short of the "ineffable and everlasting *Love*" (*CPW* 1: 614) of the prose. The effluence of God's very essence, whose piercing ray descends to man in his darkness and saturates him with the gospel, the Son is the light of the knowledge of the unknowable God communicated by the prevenient, concomitant and subservient agency of the "third subsistence of Divine Infinitude, [the] *illumining Spirit*" (*CPW* 1: 614). Like Augustine, Milton must resort to the term *person* (cf. "*Tri-personall* GODHEAD", *CPW* 1: 614) to not remain silent.

Discontinuity between Milton's *corpus* and *De Doctrina* is also evident when we assess what Milton made of Arianism in the early prose.[16] Milton's references in the antiprelatical tracts to Arians as "no true friends of *Christ*" (*CPW* 1: 534), to the "unsoundness in Religion" of Constantine, "favoring the *Arians*" (*CPW* 1: 555), and the ill effects of the emperor's policy with "his Son *Constantius*" proving "a flat *Arian*" (*CPW* 1: 557) do not merely testify to his own rejection of a particular strand of antitrinitarianism,[17] but they amount to an expression of his staunch trinitarianism. Hence his endorsement of the Nicen council as a source to "hearken" amongst the many flawed voices of tradition (*CPW* 1: 545, 555, 562) along with his positive as well as negative references to individuals respectively believing in the Trinity and denying it: among the former is "the faithfull and invincible Athanasius," one of the fiercest opponents of Arianism (*CPW* 1: 555, 563); among the latter are Origen and Tertullian. "The erroneous Origen," on the one hand, held the Father to have a place of prominence within the Trinity (*CPW* 1: 567). Tertullian, on the other hand, is thus quoted in *Of Prelaticall Episcopacy*: "The Father is the whole substance, but the Son a derivation, and portion of the whole as he himself professes because the Father is greater then me." "Beleeve him now," Milton goes on, "for a faithfull relater of tradition, whom you see such an unfaithfull expounder of Scripture" (*CPW* 1: 645). It is

highly significant that what Milton here labels an unfaithful expounding of Scripture closely parallels the standpoint of *De Doctrina Christiana*.

The argument is inevitable which questions the likelihood of the same person being the author of both the antiprelatical tracts of the early 1640s and the theological treatise possibly *in fieri* throughout the following decade. A reply comes from Campbell and Corns (273):

> Theology was a living discipline for Milton, and his opinions on many theological issues changed in the course of his life. *De Doctrina* affords a view of his theological thinking in the 1650s. His thinking is for the most part unexceptionable, but on some issues he adopts minority opinions which he defends vigorously.

Although it is fair to assume a change may have occurred in Milton's thinking, three aspects should be considered. First and foremost, the distinction Milton draws in the antiprelatical tracts between the "*purity* of *Doctrine*" in which "we agree with our Brethren [Protestants abroad]" and "Discipline," namely church government. "In this," adds Milton, "we are not better than a *Schisme*, from all the *Reformation*" (*CPW* 1: 526). While England already shares pure doctrine with her Brethren, reformation is still wanting as far as church government is concerned. One would expect future development to inform reflection upon church government, not theology proper.[18]

Secondly, if the envisioned change of mind did occur, evident signs of it should be detectable somewhere other than in the *De Doctrina*. But apart from *De Doctrina*, the Miltonic canon seems to show no clear indications of major shifts towards heterodoxy. Those who detect signs of heterodoxy in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* resort to circular arguments, that is they read the poems through the spectacles of the treatise or therein find a theological framework for their perception of God in the poem.[19]

Nonetheless, what is most puzzling is that *De Doctrina* never refers to such a shift. Not even in passing does it mention previous works in which a totally opposite position in theology proper was vigorously

held. On the contrary, its author lashes out against people holding to trinitarianism and disparages their arguments as one who has never been affected by them:

> If my opponents had paid attention to God's own words […]
> I say, if my opponents had paid attention to these words, they would not have found it necessary to fly in the face of reason or, indeed, of so much scriptural evidence. (*CPW* 6: 5.213)

> […] they have availed themselves of the specious assistance of certain strange terms and sophistries borrowed from the stupidity of the schools. (*CPW* 6: 5.218)

The question of whether Milton had any religious affiliations in the years prior to and concomitant with the composition of the major poems and late prose has been largely debated. Evidence points to more than the simplistic yet frequent answer, "He had none!"

The close parallel between Roger Williams's and Milton's own spiritual course strictly resembles a pattern.[20] Williams's ecclesiological stances significantly unfold in four stages: from his taking holy orders in the established church to separatism, from separatism to the Baptist persuasion, and from the latter to the seeker's apprehension of all forms of Christian churches as apostate. Williams's progressive shift testifies to a linear estrangement from the rule of men. Milton's course is described along the same lines by John Toland in his *Life of John Milton* (151-52):

> In his early days he was a Favorer of those *Protestants* then opprobriously cal'd by the name of *Puritans*: In his middle years he was best pleas'd with the *Independents* and *Anabaptists*, as allowing of more Liberty than others, and coming nearest in his opinion to the primitive practice: but in the latter part of his Life, he was not a profest Member of any particular Sect among Christians, he frequented none of their Assemblies, nor made use of their particular Rites in his Family. Whether this proceded from a dislike of their uncharitable and endless Disputes, and that Love of Dominion, or Inclination to Persecution, which, he said, was a piece of Popery inseparable from all Churches; or whether he thought one might be a good Man, without subscribing to any Party; and that they had all in som things corrupted the Institutions of Jesus Christ, I will by no means adventure to determin: for Conjec-

> tures on such occasions are very uncertain, and I never met with any of his Acquaintance who could be positive in assigning the true Reasons of his Conduct.

Toland clearly makes Milton's ideological turn to Independency and Anabaptism a matter of liberty. The notion itself finds further confirmation in the personal involvement which transpires from a letter Milton addressed to a minister on behalf of a French Protestant church of Independent leanings in 1659.[21] Toland's further unconfirmed suggestions about the latter part of Milton's life as free from any formal religious affiliation in turn present us with scenarios which seemingly match Williams's late persuasion. That which Samuel Johnson would portray as Milton's personal intolerance for any form of authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical,[22] is depicted by the deist Toland as the genuine result of a libertarian sentiment.

Milton's leaning towards the Baptist and Independent persuasion certainly speaks of his departure from mainstream orthodoxy, but only in terms of liberty from the rule of men, that is, with respect to freedom of conscience and ecclesiology. As for theology proper, both Independent and Baptist groups were trinitarian.

This understanding is further corroborated by Milton's association with Saumur and with Moyse Amyraut,[23] to whom the academy of Saumur inextricably binds its name. Amyraut's progressive reaction against post-Reformed Protestant Scholasticism constitutes a significant *trait d'union* between Calvinism and Independent, General Baptist and Quaker theology.[24]

One of Amyraut's notable pupils, the Quaker William Penn, entertained views on religious freedom and toleration variously reflective of Amyraut's own. Notable is also Amyraut's advocacy of fellowship among all Christian churches holding to the main tenets of the Reformation. This position closely aligns with Milton's understanding of freedom of conscience and toleration.

When it comes to divinity itself, although his distinctive trait of hypothetical universalism attracted widespread controversy,[25] Amyraut's theology was largely regarded as in line with the Re-

formed tradition. In expressing his disagreement with the Saumur divines, Francis Turretin consistently identified them as "our ministers" (4.17.4, 12.6.3, 14.14.6) on the ground of shared fundamentals. John Owen himself praised both Cameron and Amyraut's understanding of divine justice and the Trinity.[26]

Given *De Doctrina*'s emphasis on matters of theology proper and its vehemence in disparaging trinitarianism, a radical gap exists between *De Doctrina* and Milton's endorsement of trinitarian Saumur. Consideration of *Of True Religion* works to the effect of amplifying the gap. The 1673 pamphlet shares with Amyraut, Baptists and early Quakers a significant emphasis on toleration and freedom of conscience while taking on a largely mainstream standpoint in matters of theology. Striking though the parallelism is which aligns *Of True Religion* with both *De Doctrina*'s contempt for Scholasticism and with its referential hermeneutic of Scripture, the similarities between the two passages should not blind us to the essential discrepancy in the respective conclusions, which we portray here not with the intention of building a straw-man but as an exemplification of both a general parallelism and divergence:

> It is amazing what nauseating subtlety, not to say trickery, some people [in endorsing trinitarianism] have employed in their attempts to evade in the plain meaning of the scriptural texts. (*CPW* 6: 5.218)

> The Arian and Socinian are charg'd to dispute against the Trinity: they affirm to believe the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, according to Scripture, and the Apostolic Creed; as for the terms of Trinity, Triunity, Coessentiality, Tripersonality, and the like, they reject them as Scholastic notions, not to be found in Scripture, which by a general Protestant Maxim is plain and perspicuous abundantly to explain its own meaning in the properest words, belonging to so high a Matter and so necessary to be known; a mystery indeed in their Sophistic Subtilties, but in Scripture a plain Doctrin. Their other Opinions are of less Moment. (*CPW* 8: 424-25)

In interpreting the second passage, both Rumrich ("Milton's Arianism" 78) and Hunter ("The Provenance" 195) focus on the phrase "a mystery indeed in their Sophistic Subtilties" (425). If Rumrich were

right in asserting that "their" does not refer to Arians and Socinians, as Hunter on the contrary suggests, but to "Scholastic notions," the possessive adjective "Their" introducing the following sentence would be left completely wanting identification. However, both Hunter and Rumrich seem to neglect the closing phrase "but in Scripture a plain Doctrin," which is bound to shed light on the entire passage: whether the accusation of turning the doctrine of the Trinity into something obscure in the passage address one or the other party, the Bible is plain in its teaching thereof. In other words, the "high matter" of the Trinity, one of such necessary import, whether or not Scholastic terms do it justice, is plainly taught in the Scriptures. This interpretation finds a confirmation in the general thrust of the following argument. Milton makes a case for God not deserting "to damnable Errors & a Reprobate sense […] the Authors or late Revivers of all these Sects and Opinions" (*CPW* 8: 426) who have misconstrued the Scriptures despite making them their ultimate authority and approaching them in all sincerity. On the contrary, he envisions God's *pardon* for "their errors" (426). God's pardon, nevertheless, is needed where there is sin and error. Milton cannot possibly endorse either. He therefore did *not* subscribe to the faulty doctrinal positions of Arians and Socinians, but to the plain teaching of Scripture. Even so, toleration is to inform the attitude of those who retain the truth. Notice Milton does not refer to Calvin and Luther in the same terms as he appraises their doctrine and differentiates his position from theirs in certain respects. The difference can be appreciated between an attitude of toleration and one that considers the counterpart on equal terms (*CPW* 8: 424). *De Doctrina* itself decries Socinianism, though not Arianism, in the words, "he [the Son] must have existed before his incarnation, whatever subtleties have been invented to provide an escape from this conclusion, by those who argue that Christ was a mere man" (*CPW* 6: 14.419). However, *De Doctrina* proves here anti-Socinian with sole respect to Christ's pre-incarnate nature. In fact, parallels between *Of True Religion* and *De Doctrina* cannot be carried any further, as for the latter "there is […] not a single word in the Bible about the mystery of

the Trinity" (*CPW* 6: 14.420), while for the former that of the Trinity is "in Scripture a plain Doctrin" (*CPW* 8: 425). Ultimately, one may argue that "plain Doctrin" does not refer to the particular concept of the Trinity but implicitly, if loosely grammatically speaking, to the nature of God in general. Once again, the burden of proof rests solely on the proponent, as Milton's entire argument revolves around toleration for people known for their denial of the Trinity. On the other hand, it may be said that Milton's understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity as it is plainly taught in Scripture may vary from orthodoxy. Nevertheless, *De Doctrina*'s theology does not merely attempt a redefinition of the Trinity but proves strongly antitrinitarian in the immediate context of the words separately quoted above, "It is quite clear that the Father alone is a self-existent God: clear, too, that a being that is not self-existent cannot be God" (*CPW* 6: 5.218).

In the final analysis, if for Milton theology proper is "so high a Matter and so *necessary* to be known" (*CPW* 8: 424; my italics), his endorsement of Saumur in 1657 and his involvement, to whatever degree, in an Independent group in 1659 could not reasonably occur independently of shared stances in theology proper. For *De Doctrina*, that which Saumur believes in matters of theology proper and which Milton has always believed and been outspoken about, is plain sophistry. Whereas the tone of the Latin treatise towards believers in the Trinity and trinitarianism is highly intolerant, in *Of True Religion* Milton argues for toleration towards antitrinitarians.

Discontinuity between the Latin treatise and Milton's undisputed works in the areas of soteriology and theology proper as well as continuity between Milton's early prose and Milton's major poems and late prose in those same areas apparently refute Milton's authorship of the Latin treatise, in its entirety or in significant parts thereof—or, rather, make it an island in Milton's production. While the work of divinity remains an invaluable background source in Milton studies, the arguments are inconclusive which hold to *De Doctrina*'s heterodox stances as a backdrop for Milton's theological thought.

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NOTES

[1]This article variously rearranges, reformulates and expands on parts of the following published material by the author (cf. bibliography): *Milton's Inward Liberty* and "More Challenges to Milton's Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*."

[2]The ensuing discussion of law, faith and works, and grace prevenient variously reflects this author's germane arguments in *Milton's Inward Liberty*. Herein, I deal with law (see 13-21), with faith and works (68-70), and with prevenient grace (73-74, 153-54). While the book addresses these topics from the point of view of liberty, the present article revisits the respective arguments with respect to authorship.

[3]Amandus Polanus (1561-1610) was a German Reformed theologian, professor of Old Testament in Basel and rector of the University in the final part of his life. He authored *Partitiones theologicae* and *Syntagma theologiae christianae*. In 1603, he moved from Luther's translation to produce the first Calvinistic translation of the Bible into German.

[4]See numerous references and the respective analysis in Falcone, *Milton's Inward Liberty* 13-21. Esp. see *PL* X.220-23: "Nor he their outward only with the skins / Of beasts, but inward nakedness, much more / Opprobrious, with his robe of righteousness, / Arraying covered from his Father's sight." Also see XII.293-305.

[5]See Urban, esp. 820-26. Urban nevertheless envisions the orthodoxy of Milton's view of atonement as portrayed against the backdrop of *De Doctrina*'s heterodox view of the Son.

[6]See Campbell and Corns 282-83: "The central proposition, to be substantiated from scripture, is 'That for beleef or practise in religion according to this conscientious perswasion no man ought to be punishd or molested by any outward force on earth whatsoever.' […] The distinction between civil disorder, to be punished by the magistrate, and theological error, to be tolerated, is crucial."

[7]Also see *PL* XI.64: "faithful works."

[8]In arguing for *De Doctrina*'s *sola fide* justification, Campbell et. al. do not acknowledge the reference to works as secondary causes of justification (111).

[9]While the arrangement of the lines directly associates "this Godlike act" with the act of embracing the benefit of the cross by faith not void of works, the entire motion of the passage maintains a connection between "this Godlike act" and "His death for man" (425) which points to the other side of one and the same coin.

[10]See Myers, *Milton's Theology* 152 and 154-55n64. See also Myers' thesis, *The Theology of Freedom in* Paradise Lost 94.

[11]The ensuing discussion of the agents of creation and regeneration and of theology proper variously reflects this author's germane arguments in "More Challenges" (see 242-43).

[12]See Kelley 92; also see Bauman 220-22. Not so Hunter et al., who view the light in the passage as a reference to the Son (149-56).

[13]The following pages discussing Milton's affiliation rearrange, rephrase and expand on material that can be found in *Milton's Inward Liberty* (see 45-46, 71-72). Discussion of discontinuity with the early prose and of *Of True Religion* rearranges, rephrases and expands on "More Challenges" (243-47).

[14]Among dissenting voices, see Ernest W. Sullivan's review of *Milton and the Manuscript of* De Doctrina Christiana.

[15]Also cf. "trinal unity" ("On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," line 11).

[16]The ensuing discussion of Milton's religious affiliations and of discontinuity between *De Doctrina* and Milton's early and late prose in the area of theology proper variously reflects the author's germane arguments in "More Challenges to Milton's Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*."

[17]The author of *De Doctrina* is not a plain Arian, as Campbell and Corns point out: "[Milton's position] does not make Milton an Arian, because he believed that the Son, in the words of the Christmas carol, was 'begotten not created'" (273).

[18]This argument is Hunter's first objection in "The Provenance of *Christian Doctrine*."

[19]Kelley's *This Great Argument* and Bauman's *Milton's Arianism* set the stage for reading the treatise as a gloss upon the major poems. The vast majority of works on or references to *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* quite uncritically assume Milton's authorship of *De Doctrina* and thus inevitably read God, the Son, and the Spirit in the poems against the backdrop of the treatise's heterodoxy.

[20]Other notable examples of a similar pattern are John Saltmarsh (s.d.-1647), William Dell (1607-1669), and John Goodwin (1603-1674). Parish priests at the outset of their ministry, Saltmarsh and Dell ultimately appeared to embrace Seeker positions (Dell would be buried outside the church) while Goodwin turned to Independency.

[21]See Nuttall 227-31. In accounting for the document, Nuttall argues for the Independent leanings of the congregation and for Milton's involvement in it.

[22]E.g., "I know not any of the Articles [the 39 articles] which seem to thwart his opinions: but the thoughts of obedience, whether canonical or civil, raised his indignation" (Johnson 245).

[23]Moyse Amyraut (1596-1664) was a French Reformed theologian, who studied under James Cameron in Saumur, where he ended up teaching. He is best known for his redefinition of Calvinist theology. See notes 25-26.

[24]See also Falcone, *Milton's Inward Liberty* 72-73, for Milton's emphatical approval of the Saumur Academy.

[25]Amyraut held to a one-way predestinarian view of *universalismus hypoteticus*. Calvin's limited extent of atonement was replaced by the view of atonement as universal yet hypothetical. The sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction for all sinners was in fact juxtaposed to its limited efficacy. Whereas grace could be offered to

everyone, only individual faith could appropriate its salvific efficacy. To be sure, "Amyraut maintained the Calvinistic premises of an eternal foreordination and foreknowledge of God, whereby he caused all things inevitably to pass—the good efficiently, the bad permissively. […] But in addition to this he taught that God foreordained a *universal salvation* through the universal sacrifice of Christ offered to all alike (*également pour tous*), on condition of faith, so that on the part of God's will and desire (*voluntas, velleitas, affectus*) grace is universal, but as regards the condition it is particular, or only for those who do not reject it and thereby make it ineffective" (Schaff 1: 481). He reasoned from the standpoint of God's love towards his creatures; Calvinism reasoned "from the result, and made actual facts interpret the decrees" (Schaff 1: 481). "Amyraut also made a distinction between natural ability and moral ability, or the power to believe and the willingness to believe: due to intrinsic depravity man possessed the former, but not the latter" (Schaff 1: 483). A charge of heresy would not fail to rise which was addressed at the consecutive synods of Alençon (1637), Charenton (1644), and Loudun (1659). In all three instances Amyraut was acquitted of all charges.

[26]See Muller 1: 79-80; on Amyraut's view of the Trinity, see *De mysterio trinitatis*, part 1, 3-5. The main promoter of Amyraldian hypothetical universalism in England, and himself a pupil of John Cameron, was William Davenant. Davenant held to a general atonement in terms of intention and sufficiency. God's universal desire for the salvation of all men formed the basis for conditional salvation: "In the floor debate on redemption at the Westminster Assembly, Edmund Calamy of the Davenant School attempted to insert Amyraldism into the Catechism" (Blunt 5-10).

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Connotations
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Faulkner and Race*

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The following essay examines whether a Southern white writer like William Faulkner can portray the consciousness of a different race; the examination begins with stereotypes and moves beyond them.[1]

"*Tell about the South,*" the Canadian Shreve McCannon asks Quentin Compson, his Mississippian roommate at Harvard a little more than halfway through *Absalom, Absalom! "What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all"* (174; italics in original). His question echoes Faulkner's own mission that fettered all his novels—except for *Mosquitoes* and *A Fable*—for the rest of his writing life. Overpassing his model of Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio,* he later remarked, "I discovered that my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it, and that by sublimating the actual into the apocryphal I would have the complete liberty to use whatever talent I might have to its absolute top" (Stein 57). But as his most recent biographer points out, the relationship between fact and fiction would be a constant challenge, and the greatest challenge of all would be race (cf. Hamblin).

His first attempt to portray blacks had been Mammy Callie (Catoline) Nelson in his inaugural novel *Soldiers' Pay*. Set in "Gawgie," Callie is a stereotypical Southern mammy: "Donald, Mist' Donald honey […]," she tells the war-wounded protagonist, "here yo' mammy come ter you. […] Don't you know who dis is? Dis yo' Callie

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debate/faulkner-and-race>.

whut use ter put you ter bed, honey […]. Lawd, de white folks done ruint you" (168-69). That was written in New Orleans. Back home in Mississippi, he created Yoknapatawpha County based closely on the geography of his own residential Lafayette County. Here he wrote a novel tracking the life of his own great-grandfather, the Civil war hero, railroad builder and entrepreneur Col. W. C. Falkner as the head of the Sartoris family. A minor character, Elnora, a black kitchen servant who is entranced by the preposterous war stories of the young black Caspey, is omitted from the published family genealogies but she is clearly indicated by her position to be derived from Emmeline Falkner, John Sartoris' daughter, based on shadow family of the Old Colonel. She is Faulkner's first fiction of miscegenation, which was unrecognized by the general public but easily identified by Southern readers. Her song first gives her away:

> *Sinner riz fum de moaner's bench,*
> *Sinner jump to de penance bench;*
> *When de preacher ax'im whut de reason why,*
> *Says 'Preacher got de women jes' de same ez I'.*
> *Oh, Lawd, Oh Lawd!*
> *Dat's whut de matter wid de church today.* (*Flags in the Dust* 21; italics in original)

She thereby joins the "animal odor" (108) of blacks in *Flags in the Dust* and anticipates Faulkner's regrettable comparison to the mule: "the nigger who drives him […] whose impulses and mental processes most closely resemble his" (268) apparently thinking of blacks like Elnora as mulattoes before the word reached common usage among whites.

Barbara Ladd has written that "Perhaps the most fundamental insight of *[The Sound and the Fury] is white consciousness*" (208, emphasis added). Race relations in the novel are anachronistic since by the 1920s the number of black household servants was shrinking rapidly. In the novel, Quentin Compson realizes "that a nigger is not a person so much as a form of behavior; a sort of obverse reflection of the white people he lives among" (57). Faulkner tells us that a "rich and unmis-

takable smell of negroes" (189) pervaded the black section of Jefferson.

Quentin's consciousness is the most sensitive, at odds with the idiotic Benjy and the cynical Jason but Faulkner shies away from probing the consciousness of the black Dilsey Gibson, whom he would later call one of his favorite characters. To him she would seem the most impenetrable character in the book, seen by dress and action and occasional remark but never probed in *her* interior consciousness as he did with Benjy, Quentin, and Jason. She is limited to a stereotypical mammy whose primary concern is order and whose life is guided by a repetitive routine. She has been likened to Faulkner's own mammy, Caroline Barr, but she is nothing like her. Caroline Barr was tiny, sinewy, weighing less than 100 pounds; she insisted on wearing starched dresses and aprons and her decisive voice was never questioned; she often visited her own family, who lived across town, sometimes taking the Faulkner boys with her (cf. Parini 20; Sensibar 57-65). Dilsey, by contrast, is a heavy, slow-moving woman noting the rain with "a child's astonished disappointment" (173), lumbering up the stairs with a water bottle for Mrs. Compson, often behind in her duties, often disobeyed. She is introduced with used and faded clothing, even the purple for Easter Sunday, but the rain drives her back unto the house. Like Benjy, who is calmed on trips circling the town square, Dilsey also proceeds in circles—outdoors and back in, upstairs and down, out to church and back home. She is like Benjy largely inarticulate; her one insight, that those who died will rise again in the grace of the Lord—"I seed de beginnin, en now I sees de endin" (194)—is her version of Revered Shegog's sermon, the man Faulkner describes as looking like a monkey. Despite all this, Dilsey is Faulkner's first fully black character given special attention, and we can witness his struggle to appreciate her necessity and contribution to the Compson household, although he cannot bring his understanding of her past to the surface. Her concluding scenes suggest a desire to show her selfless contribution to the family but the author finally relies on exteriority. Unlike the earlier works, *The Sound and the Fury*

shows the need for portrayal of blacks alongside the inability to create a true individual rather than a type.

That Faulkner knew that race was central and unavoidable to his "own little postage stamp of native soil" (Stein 57) is confirmed by his next major novel. In *Light in August* he is aware of his own shortcomings in an accurately probing representation of Negroes. His attempt this time in his fettered need is to understand a person who is partially white. It may be no accident that this novel was begun in August of 1931 when in Harlem a number of stories and novels such as Nell Larson's *Passing*—in her case autobiographical—were about light-skinned blacks, whose aim was to join the white culture and who were more or less successful. And 1931 was also the centennial anniversary of the bloody rebellion of Nat Turner in Southampton, Virginia, when racism turned violent. "*Light in August,*" writes Jay Parini, "is a searing novel that meditates on racial hatred in the South" (178).

Joe Christmas suspects that he has mixed blood. In the South, where blood is the first designator of identity, Joe does not know who he is and does not know how to find out although it is essential that he know. We first meet Joe in an unnamed orphanage where as a baby he is left anonymously on the doorstep at Christmastime. He is subsequently closely and mysteriously observed by the janitor, who will much later be identified as the one who introduced him to his new home. Joe's lack of identity isolates him. His constant adoptions, only to be returned to the orphanage each time, confuse him. When he accidently sees the dietitian having intercourse and she calls him "nigger" (*Light in August* 114), he accepts this as his station in life. In time relief comes when he is adopted by the McEacherns, who have longed for a son. They are strong Calvinists who insist on ritual and prayer and immaculate behavior. Mrs McEachern sneaks him extra food but, on another level, the familial—Mr McEachern is a stern judge with physical punishment; Mrs McEachern is a motherly provider of food—rather than the individual confuses him. So he begins escaping from his room at nights, attending local dances, looking on, and eventually meeting and hoping to marry Bobbie Alien.

> She was a waitress in a small, dingy, back street restaurant in town. Even a casual adult glance could tell that she would never see thirty again. But to Joe she probably did not look more than seventeen […]. (161)

One visit she offers him free coffee with his pie, and his courtship begins. Soon he is walking or running the five miles to see her whenever he can escape the McEacherns. But it takes him some time to realize she is also a prostitute. To claim attention, he tells her "I think I got some nigger blood in me" (184), and she runs away screaming that she thought him white, respectable. So far, for a man seeking an authentic black character, nothing here guarantees such an insight which Joe so desperately needs.

> He was in the north now, in Chicago and then Detroit. He lived with negroes, shunning white people. He ate with them, slept with them, belligerent, unpredictable, uncommunicative. He now lived as man and wife with a woman who resembled an ebony carving. At night he would lie in bed beside her, sleepless, beginning to breathe deep and hard. He would do it deliberately, feeling, even watching, his white chest arch deeper and deeper within his ribcage, trying to breathe into himself the dark odor, the dark and inscrutable thinking and being of negroes, with each suspiration trying to expel from himself the white blood and the white thinking and being. (212)

Rather than characterize one blood from another, Faulkner once more withdraws from racial portraits. Instead, the mode is persistently existential. Discontented, disgusted, unsuccessful in finding a racial characteristic that is telling, he returns to Yoknapawpha where the necessity for food drives him into the house of Joanna Burden some distance from Jefferson. She is partial to blacks, recruiting for a Negro college. They have a torrid love affair but when she calls a halt to send him off to school after praying with him, confession is bound with contrition echoing the treatment of Mr McEachern, against which he rebels. Joe pulls a gun, a replica of the War of Northern Aggression; later her body is discovered, her throat slit. Just as Joe's race is unclear, bringing him closer to white people Faulkner knew better, so her murderer is unclear as well as the identity of that arso-

nist who set fire to Joanna's house. Joe runs around the countryside until he is exhausted. An old Negro gardener tells him "You dont know what you are. And more than that, you wont never know. You'll live and you'll die and you wont never know" (363). Joe runs through the countryside, through a black church. Finally, Joe seeks refuge in the kitchen of the defrocked Revered Gail Hightower where a crew of racists led by Percy Grimm run him down.

> He was not a member of the American Legion, but that was his parents' fault and not his. But when Christmas was fetched back from Mottstown on that Saturday afternoon, he had already been to the commander of the local Post. His idea, his words, were quite simple and direct. "We got to preserve order," he said. "We must let the law take its course. The law, the nation. It is the right of no civilian to sentence a man to death. And we, the soldiers in Jefferson, are the ones to see to that." (427)

Percy Grimm pulls a knife and emasculates Joe, holding his genitals high while Joe bleeds to death. At every point, then, this novel is poised on ambiguity; even Grimm's murder is not the lynching usually required of dangerous blacks but the punishment given to sexual predators of any race. Still uncertain of how to portray the black consciousness, Faulkner relies on the white consciousness he knows intimately to explore them both.

Faulkner's next novel takes up the issue of miscegenation directly. In *Absalom, Absalom!,* young Thomas Sutpen's life begins when he comes down from the hills of western Virginia to Virginia cotton plantations and is turned away by a black household servant:

> [H]e stood there before that white door with the monkey nigger barring it and looking down at him in his patched made-over jeans […] [T]he nigger told him, even before he had had time to say what he came for, never to come to that front door again but to go around to the back. (232)

In response, he is motivated to build his own mansion with black servants and establish his own aristocratic family line. He goes to Haiti during a civil war to raise money for his "design" (260). He marries Eulalia Bon, the daughter of a wealthy owner of a sugar plantation by whom he has a son and daughter, Charles and Clytem-

nestra (Clytie). In between those two "designs," he learns that Eulalia has black blood and that she and the children are mulattoes. Realizing this would destroy the possibility of establishing his own plantation, he abandons his family.

In 1833, Sutpen, with no known past and no possessions, arrives in Yoknapatawphan to start over. He spends his last coin on registering a deed of ten square miles just outside Jefferson—Sutpen's Hundred—and disappears again only to return with a wagonload of wild French-speaking Negroes with whom he builds his mansion. This takes five years. Then he marries Ellen Coldfield, the daughter of a successful local merchant, by whom he has a second family, Henry and Judith. In 1859, Henry enters the University of Mississippi where he establishes a close friendship with Charles Bon, a handsome, sophisticated and well-to-do gentleman from the French quarter of New Orleans. They spend Christmas at Sutpen's Hundred. Charles has identified Sutpen as his father and wants a son's recognition; Henry wants Charles to marry Judith so he will be a part of their family forever. But Sutpen refuses to recognize his first son while Judith proceeds towards an engagement. On a second Christmas visit Sutpen orders Charles not to marry Judith, envisioning miscegenation and rival inheritance. The War between the States interrupts all their lives. Thomas goes off to lead troops with Col. Sartoris; Charles and Henry participate as soldiers; Judith, her half-sister Clytie, and Rosa Coldfield, Ellen's older unmarried sister, manage to keep the plantation going. The latent powers of miscegenation are released during the Civil War, the battle of brother against brother, when Henry learns of his relationship to Charles. They fight, Henry upholding the supremacy and purity of his white father, and Charles, claiming elder status. Charles's challenge is firm: "*I'm the nigger that's going to sleep with your sister. Unless you stop me, Henry*" (358; italics in original). When they return to Sutpen's Hundred, Henry shoots his half-brother and runs off. Judith then goes to New Orleans to fetch Henry Etienne Saint Valery Bon, Charles's son by an octoroon, and brings him to Sutpen's Hundred; both die later in the historic epidemic of yellow

fever. Henry returns to Sutpen's Hundred and is kept by Clytie in an attic bedroom fearful that the police will come for her half-brother for killing her brother. When Ellen's sister Rosa Coldfield, hears of Henry's murder, Clytie bars her from the door to the bedroom where Charles's body lies and later once more when Henry, her half-brother by Sutpen, lies there before burning them and the house to the ground to protect him. All that remains of Sutpen's aborted design is Jim Bond, Charles Etienne's son by an extremely dark woman. He is an idiot who continues to "lurk around those ashes and those four gutted chimneys and howl until someone came and drove him away" (376). At the basis of the ruined house on the failed plantation, man has proceeded into animal. We do not have here the origins of the howling beast but only his representation. Faulkner has faced miscegenation in a wider scope than he did with Joe Christmas but much of it is still from the outside. The canvas has widened but the work lets the plot do the job of an interior consciousness.

Or at least so it would seem in the Sutpen family biography, the inner story of *Absalom, Absalom!* But this is really the way fragments and rumors and probabilities—conjectures-—make the fundamental narrative about four white people: Rosa Coldfield, who finds friendship in the end; Mr Compson, who reports on what Thomas Sutpen told his father; and Shreve and Quentin. They remain to shape the narrative.

> So it took Charles Bon and his mother to get rid of old Tom, and Charles Bon and the octoroon to get rid of Judith, and Charles Bon and Clytie to get rid of Henry; and Charles Bon's mother and Charles Bon's grandmother got rid of Charles Bon. So it takes two niggers to get rid of one Sutpen, dont it? (377-78)

Or this, at least, is the most pointed Shreve and Quentin can be with what information they have *and feel,* as they build an analogy between Quentin's love for his sister Caddy and the close bond between Shreve and himself. Shreve moves to be cruel to be kind.

> *—So it's the miscegenation, not the incest, which you cant bear.*
> *Henry doesn't answer.* (356; italics in original)

Shreve persists.

> "[…] Now I want you to tell me just one thing more. Why do you hate the South?"
>
> "I dont hate it," Quentin said, quickly, at once, immediately; […] *I dont hate it* he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark; *I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!* (378; italics in original)

That miscegenation is worse than incest may seem an extraordinary statement but not after writing the story of Joe Christmas nor just after, two close Oxford friends of Faulkner told me, he had recently learned that his maternal grandfather had eloped with a black woman. Along with Emmeline Falkner, William Faulkner learned he had descended from miscegenous acts on both sides of his own family.

Miscegenation, then, was not only increasingly practiced in the South but also in the North, but it was a way of approaching black consciousness. The concept and term were actually introduced in 1863 on the heels of the Emancipation Proclamation. The term imploded in December 1863 with an anonymous incendiary pamphlet entitled *Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races* written by a racist posing as an abolitionist. "Mulatto" was a white contribution which propagandists for abolition developed into the stereotype of the tragic mulatto whose inherited strength came from a patrician white father. William Faulkner had been born into decades of racist fictions. Weekly newspapers such as *The Issue!* published such stories as "Sexual Crimes Among Southern Negroes Scientifically Considered" and "The Negro: A Different Kind of Flesh." Faulkner's first-grade teacher Annie Chandler gave him a copy of Thomas Dixon, Jr.'s *The Clansman.* The culture thus prepared an audience, as well as Faulkner, for portrayals of biracial characters, by quadroons and octoroons. There are only five mulattoes in *Absalom, Absalom!*, all of them Bons—Eulalia, Henry, Judith, Henry Saint Valery, and Jim—but the novel's sequel, *Go Down,* is awash with them. Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin spawning two other family lines, the black Beauchamps and the white Edmonds.

The seven episodes that constitute this novel are all versions of hunting. The first, "Was," recounts the ritual hunt of Tomey's Turl, a servant to Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy McCaslin, Lucius's twin sons. Tomey's Turl has to escape the household to see his girlfriend always pursued by Uncle Buck. His agility and youth, his craftiness in refusing to run a straight path and his ingenuity in hiding challenge Uncle Buck, who is in turn pursued by the older maiden Sophonsiba. Caught the next morning, Turl wins his freedom by helping Uncle Buck to win a poker game where Sophonsiba is at stake. Faulkner says nothing directly of the treatment of Tomey's Turl nor does he note that Old Lucius impregnated his slave Eunice to produce Tomey and then impregnated Tomey to conceive Tomey's Turl: Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy thus poorly treat their own cousin. Feeling both sorry and responsible after the War of Northern Aggression, the twins move out of the McCaslin manor house to make room for their Negro servants and, furthermore, allow them to go out at night so long as they are back in the house each morning. As with Tomey's Turl, they live by their own consciences, which also reveals their inner thoughts. Thus Faulkner turns to unexpected actions and decisions as they depart from the norm in an attempt to understand a black consciousness. Still ashamed, they triple their father's thousand-dollar legacy to three thousand for Tomey's Turl's living children: Lucas Beauchamp, James, and Fonsiba. Lucius's white grandson Ike accepts money and initially the plantation but James has disappeared and Fonsiba's husband denies the offer. Once more, their reactions help us see that Lucas must fight for recognition, for what he considers his inheritance. He is especially challenged when he loses his wife Mollie, nursing his child, to his white cousin Cass to nurse his. At a showdown with Zack he speaks out.

> "I'm a nigger," Lucas said. "But I'm a man too. I'm more than just a man. The same thing made my pappy that made your grandmaw. I'm going to take her back." (*Go Down, Moses* 47)

This sudden revelation of suspicion, of fear, of pride and responsibility and self-worth is far more complex than Dilsey's remarks, or Joe's or even Charles's.

> "How to God," he [Lucius] said, "can a black man ask a white man to please not lay down with his black wife? And even if he could ask it, how to God can the white man promise he wont?" (59).

At last, Faulkner has fathomed a Southern mulatto man's thoughts. The same is true of a mulatto woman when the white Isaac has his epiphany. It occurs while everyone else in the hunting camp has left him to kill deer. Suddenly, a woman with a baby enters his tent. She is new to the South, having for years been a teacher at nearby Alauschskuna,

> […] because my aunt was a widow, with a big family, taking in washing to sup—"
>
> "Took in what?" he said. "Took in washing? […] You're a nigger!"
>
> "Yes," she said. "James Beauchamp—you called him Tennie's Jim though he had a name—was my grandfather. I said you were Uncle Isaac." (360-61)

Her lover was Roth Edmonds, Ike's younger cousin, the last of the McCaslin line, who had taken over the McCaslin plantation and had fathered the mulatto baby, although he wanted to be rid of her now. Roth instructed Ike to give her money and a farewell note. Ike attempted to give her General Compson's old hunting horn and she thanked him. But Ike was not done.

> "Go back North. Marry: a man in your own race. That's the only salvation for you—for a while yet, maybe a long while yet." […]
>
> "Old man," she said, "have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you dont remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love?"
>
> Then she was gone […]. (363)

Nothing anticipates flashing moments like these between mulattoes and whites in Faulkner's fiction. But these are not black characters.

Yet, *Go down, Moses* is where, for a moment, Faulkner succeeds. The fully black man is Rider, and his episode is, ironically, "Pantaloon in Black." The chapter opens with Rider furiously digging his wife's

grave, pushing others aside to manage it alone. Abruptly leaving the cemetery, he declines an offer from friends and the woman who raised him to join them in their homes preferring to go instead to the home he shared with Mannie, his wife, before her youthful, inexplicable death.

> The house was the last one in the lane, not his but rented from Carothers Edmonds, the local white landowner. But the rent was paid promptly in advance, and even in just six months he had refloored the porch and rebuilt and roofed the kitchen, doing the work himself on Saturday afternoon and Sunday with his wife helping him, and bought the stove. (137)

He is large and strong and, at twenty-four, the head of a timber gang walking four miles to work each day by sunup. Now his house meant nothing to him; it seemed to belong to someone else. His large dog greets him but skitters before the empty house. Rider wills Mannie's ghost before him but it fades. He sets the table but cannot eat the food. What Faulkner gives us is the interiority of indescribable grief.

Then there is change as thought transfers to action. Rider sleeps outside and then reruns to the mill. He reaches in a lard bucket for a morning biscuit. He tackles large logs, greets his uncle who delivers lunch and an invitation home.

> "She wants you to come on home. She kept de lamp burnin all last night fer you. […] You aint awright. De Lawd guv, and He tuck away. Put yo faith and trust in Him. And she kin help you." (145)

But he returns to work and then, with the dog, he goes to a shack where he drinks heavily. Now his aunt invites him to her home, pleads with him to pray. Still Mannie's unexplained absence goes unmentioned. "Efn He God, Ah dont needs to tole Him. Efn He God, He awready know hit. Awright. Hyar Ah is. Leff Him come down hyar and do me some good" (150). But he will not pray to an unfeeling God. Instead, he returns to the mill where he joins a game of dice. Suspicious—or knowing—he forces the white man rolling the dice to open his hand to reveal a second pair. "[T]he white man wrenched free and sprang up and back and reached the hand backward toward the pocket where the pistol was" (153). Rider pulls the knife handing

around his throat killing him. At last, he explains one thing inexplicable: the diceman's success with black victims who will lose no more. The inexplicable winning streak is clarified and finished, its victims freed. Rider returns home to sleep off the moonshine and is captured by the brothers of his victim, the Birdsongs, and lynched. He has exposed evil and defeated it, giving some purpose to his suddenly purposeless life. Now he may reunite with Mannie.

Go Down, Moses remains Faulkner's most layered, most complex, most *personal* novel with its countless resonances and inner correspondences. Behind all the episodes lurks Sam Fathers, the Chickasaw chieftain with red, black, and white bloodlines; it seems appropriate, then, that his father is called Doom. After this, there is a falling off. Lucas Beauchamp returns in *Intruder in the Dust,* Faulkner's novel in the civil rights era, a detective story in which an elderly woman and two boys prove Lucas was innocent of murder. It is the same Lucas—proud, independent, arrogant, self-assured, defiant. He annoys Jefferson residents by his haughtiness, sporting the gold chain of old Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin as his ancestor; but he is also innocent, well-mannered, and businesslike. On the other hand, the remaining black character, Nancy Manigoe, Temple Drake's black fellow prostitute, is another Dilsey—she will surrender her life to save Temple's. Together his characters consistently support Faulkner's claim at the close of his major essay "Mississippi": "you dont love because: you love despite; not for the virtues, but despite the faults" (43).

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NOTES

[1]This essay builds on my earlier publication: "Faulkner and Racism" in Connotations 3.3 (1993/1994): 265-78;
http://www.connotations.de/article/arthur-f-kinney-faulkner-and-racism/.
Recent criticism has only selectively been taken into account.

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Community and Conflict: A Practitioner's Perspective on Verse Drama*

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For my doctoral thesis at the University of Birmingham, I undertook a historical investigation into the impact of Shakespeare on the development of the form of verse drama in England. Crudely summarised, the cultural history sketched in the course of this project suggested that the overbearing presence of Shakespeare in the English-language tradition has made it increasingly impossible for playwrights using verse not to reflect upon and attempt to justify their own formal choices. In the final stages of my research, I became acutely aware of how necessary such reflection felt, having myself written three verse plays in an attempt to explore through practice the unique possibilities offered by verse as a dramaturgical resource to poets and playwrights working today, by testing those possibilities in my own writing.

This article therefore takes up a prompt offered by Rob Conkie and Scott Maisano, the editors of a special issue of *Critical Survey* dedicated to the emerging trend of critical-creative inquiry within Shakespeare studies: "What if knowing *why* Shakespeare made use of [a wide range of familiar dramaturgic features] as he did depended on learning *how* (or at least trying) to do it ourselves?" (4-5). As a practitioner engaging with the self-imposed fetters of iambic pentameter verse drama in the model now most commonly associated with Shakespeare, I am not only developing my own creative practice, but learning as a scholar to identify "what kinds of critical insights are

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debate/contemporary-perspectives-on-verse-drama>.

made possible only or especially via creative strategies" (Conkie and Maisano 3).

Since at least the early twentieth century, many of the verse dramatists whose work I have considered felt the need to offer reasoned defences of their own practice in response to presumed critical suspicion: a tradition in which my work here will follow. Some of the most persuasive commentary in defence of the form has been offered by Christopher Fry. In the two decades before his death in 2005, Fry—the author of *The Lady's Not For Burning*, who in 1951 had three plays running simultaneously on the West End, and had recently featured on the cover of *Time* magazine—gave a number of reflective interviews in which he attempted to account both for the particular advantages of his chosen form of theatre, and for its undeniable fall from grace. In 1992, he lamented to the *Times* that the contemporary verse dramatist feels unable to pursue his or her own practice in a climate of critical hostility: "Why does there have to be only one ruling taste? […] Why can't we have theatre which contains the poetic, as well as other approaches to life?" (Lewis).

Why the absence of a poetic approach in contemporary drama matters—and the case I wish to make for its continued value—can be understood in part through Fry's own justification for the existence of verse drama as a theatrical form. His comments on the productive constraints of the medium, written for the mass culture audience of *Vogue* magazine, are worth engaging with in a serious way:

> [i]n prose, we convey the eccentricity of things; in poetry, their concentricity, the sense of relationship between them; a belief that all things express the same identity, are all contained in one discipline of revelation. (Fry 137)

Fry's spiritually-inclined statement of intent positions verse drama as a form which is holistic, unifying, and democratic. This view of the medium is perhaps surprising: with regard to the best-known verse dramatist, Shakespeare, Kiernan Ryan notes that "most battles for the Bard have been won by forces intent on fabricating from his art a powerful apology for leaving the world as it is" (2). Anthony Easthope described iambic pentameter itself as the voice of "solid

institutional continuity" (476), in which "the tradition itself, the abstract pattern, is beyond question" (488). As such, verse drama availing itself of this metre might operate as a "hegemonic form" implicitly confirming cultural norms (Easthope 486). And in philosopher Sara Ahmed's terms, a contemporary verse play by a white, male, middle-class subject risks being solely "citational relational" to other such plays and subjects, even as it manifests its own forms of internal tension. For a practitioner working today, these challenges clearly beg the question: in what ways can a systematized way of writing "A Practitioner's Perspective on Verse Drama"—structured, metred verse—engage with, and allow for and facilitate challenges to, entrenched systems of power without merely endorsing or replicating them?

Fry's egalitarian view of verse drama as "concentric," however, finds support from a variety of perspectives—as George T. Wright puts it in *Shakespeare's Metrical Art,* with reference to pentameter lines split between multiple speakers, "the shared line only realizes more intently that condition of being bound together in a common action that the play as a whole affirms" (138). Irene Morra, in *Verse Drama in England, 1900-2015,* has demonstrated that the form was closely associated in the early twentieth century with "a strong sense of community and egalitarian social politics" (73).

Many authors in this period, however, up to and including Fry and Eliot, chose not to harness a quality I find essential to the democratic possibilities of poetic dramaturgy as exemplified by Shakespeare: a consistent, and thus unifying, shared metre. One of the crucial features of verse drama using a shared rhythmic baseline is the fact that everybody speaks the same language. While registers of diction may vary, on the level of dialect or idiolect, if all characters have access to the same governing rhythm, then all can be equally articulate, and all can access a higher, poetic linguistic range: Shylock's speeches can rival the rulers of Venice. As the rowdy, working-class satyrs in one modern verse play, Tony Harrison's *The Trackers of Oxyrynchus* (1988) put it in defiantly Shakespearean terms, they too have a right to access

and produce high art: "It confounds their categories of high and low / when your Caliban outplays your Prospero" (137).

This model—shared ownership of a common rhythm between characters of differing status—need not, however, mean that verse plays are devoid of conflict: instead, I argue here, with reference to my own practice, that it can give them license to manifest conflict within on-stage communities at the deepest formal level. My practice draws heavily on Caroline Levine's theory of form, wherein forms have "affordances." Levine's term, drawn from design theory, describes the range of "potential uses or actions latent in materials" (6): that is, "the range of uses each could be put to, even if no one has yet taken advantage of those possibilities—and also […] their limits, the restrictions intrinsic to particular materials and organizing principles" (10-11).

So what affordances within verse drama mean that it can challenge its own reputation as an unshakeably hegemonic and conservative medium? What is the use of dramatic verse, restricted to a certain range of metrical norms and variations and distributed among a range of characters, uniquely able to highlight and explore? George Steiner held verse to be "the prime divider between the world of high tragedy and that of ordinary existence," and asserted that "[t]here is nothing democratic in the vision of tragedy," wherein "[c]ommon men are prosaic and […] Kings answer in verse" (241-42); on the political left, critics such as Easthope have also implied that the form's "abstract pattern" is inherently undemocratic (488). Why then should I, today, impose upon myself the fetters of a form conventionally, if erroneously, associated by such a broad range of critics with a restrictive and hierarchical world-order?

My answer, as a practitioner, aligns itself with Annie Finch, whose introduction to her anthology *A Formal Feeling Comes: Poems in Form by Contemporary Women* asserts that "the poems collected here contradict the popular assumption that formal poetics correspond to reactionary politics and elitist aesthetics" (1). It begins by positing six basic hypotheses about the affordances of verse drama:

1) In creating an onstage community where all characters speak the same "metrical language," verse creates a stylised "natural order."
2) In this context, stretches of smooth, uninterrupted verse-speaking can consolidate (or establish) authority in this community.
3) By contrast, interruptions of a speaker's line, by another speaker or by a high degree of internal variation, can contribute to a sense of instability, fragmentation or conflict over the possession or bases of that authority within the community.
4) The opposition of norm and variation (and of verse and prose, where prose is a factor in the play's dramaturgy) can create meaningful character conflict, marking out individual characters as distinctive, engaging, or notably divergent from the other members of the community with whom they share the stage at any given moment.
5) The inherent artifice of verse can allow for explorations of theme and subject that go beyond the realistic and the everyday; in Tony Harrison's phrase, it can "rescue the actor and text from the suffocation of naturalism" (Introduction, *Square Rounds* 170).
6) If widely distributed, the linguistic resource of verse allows all characters in a community or network equal access to articulacy, eloquence, and gravitas.

With these aspects in mind, in putting into motion a community of characters who share underlying patterns of speech while each attempting to achieve different individual ends, verse drama reveals itself as a powerful formal tool for exploring the dialectic between the individual and society, and between self and other. In the three verse plays I have written over the last three years, iambic pentameter is the building block for a social world; my characters are bound by a shared metrical underpattern, and the regularity of shared metre creates a web of expectation which each divergence subverts. Metrical departure might connote revolutionary energy (a break from a repres-

sive system) or the darker freedom born of certain kinds of self-determination (a rupture in the social fabric).[1]

Whatever meaning is ascribed to metrical variation—revolution or rupture—the relative fixity of the shared pentameter has made it, for me, a paradoxically flexible and neutral vehicle. By writing characters who follow or subvert metre—who are in or out of line—or who steal lines from others, I can stage conflicts over authority, control, freedom, and restraint at the microcosmic level of the line. As I. A. Richards writes, "the notion that there is any virtue in regularity or variety, or in any other formal features, apart from its effects upon us, must be discarded before any metrical problem can be understood" (107), and not every trochee, spondee or extra syllable, of course, carries a weight of meaning on its own terms, beyond localised narrative impact or phonetic variety. But metre, in this account, is a political vehicle precisely because of its neutrality, or its malleability.

First Experiments: Freedom and Control

My first verse play, *Free for All,* looked at the increasing role of the free market in the British education system. Its setting was a new-built free school, a kind of educational establishment pioneered under the 2010-2015 Coalition Government which was intended to allow for the devolution of substantial decision-making powers away from local authorities and into the hands of parents and community groups. This type of school appealed to me as the basis of a verse play in as much as the thematic concerns associated with it seemed to lend themselves to formal parallels: I could pursue, through my management of verse and prose, concepts of status, hierarchy, freedom, and constraint.

The idea of a completely level, collectivist playing field which might neglect the range of individual needs ("An education—free for all, / And all the same in every town / From Millom to the Surrey Downs"—*Free for All* 2) could be contrasted to a system that favoured the development of individuality and tailored, child-centred learning:

a philosophy which in its extreme form might lead to a viciously individualistic competition for resources. My script's narrative ended in a violent video game simulation, taking place in a distorted version of the school where these dynamics of competition had been escalated to their fullest extent: the second meaning of the title's "free for all."[2]

The hypotheses stated above gave me an opportunity to explore the theories around freedom, control, authority, and verse which ran through the project dramaturgically. One formal choice I made in this script was informed by hypothesis (2), that stretches of fluent verse could consolidate character authority: by making some characters more "at home" in verse than others, I hoped to imply that being able to move fluently and flexibly through verse lines might signify other forms of social self-possession. Thus, the school's headmaster, Torben Krill, responds to a challenge from his main antagonist, Kerry—a veteran trade unionist—in lines which are light, supple and confident, with some of the self-interruptions of natural speech:

> TORBEN. See, what I mean is freedom—after years
> of desks in lines and one man at the board
> and targets, tests, the tedium of chalk,
> we're taking matters into our own hands,
> nourishing individuality.
> Open the windows, let in light and air;
> eat lunch for breakfast, Kerry—we don't care!
> Why shouldn't we? Because the man says no?
> Because some suit looked at his boring chart
> and said "Top button" and "Keep off the grass"?
> We don't have ties. We don't even have grass!
> And why? Because we took a step ourselves,
> broke out of LEA control—
> *KERRY can't listen to any more and leaps up.*
> KERRY. Control!
> Control, control, control, control, control!
> That's all you people talk about—control!
> TORBEN. Oh really? I remember saying "freedom" […] (18)

Freedom and control were thematically counterpointed throughout, but even at this early stage my treatment of Torben and Kerry revealed a potential challenge to hypothesis (4)—the use of norm and

variation to mark characters as divergent and thus create character conflict. It felt necessary for Kerry's character to speak an equally fluent verse, even when Torben patronisingly attempted to speak prose to connect "on her level." I thereby gave Kerry—a self-taught, working-class woman—a kind of parallel authority to Torben's speech style:

> We must seize this chaos here,
> grip it in our raised fists and cast it out.
> It all starts here, the job of taking back
> the future that was going to be ours,
> before they shunted it off to one side
> and took a piece for him, a piece for her,
> carved up our birthright like a wedding cake
> then pulverised it like an Eton mess… (27)

An alternative might have been to frame Kerry as Torben's formal opposite, even a kind of linguistic obstacle: in giving her extremely broken lines with multiple internal breaks, I might have positioned her as a metrical roadblock to his grandstanding rhetoric, though this could clearly have limited the latitude available to her to express herself as an independent character. I could also have written her entire dialogue in uncompromising prose: an option I did in fact use for one parent, Keith, whose construction company had part-funded the new school but who was clearly at odds with the middle-class paradigms encouraged by this institution. In a world to which his self-made wealth had bought him access, Keith's prose stood out as a form of resistance to its norms, a recalcitrant otherness which went hand-in-hand with his tendency to make off-colour and prejudiced remarks in public.

Early modern playwrights had used prose in similar ways: the more socially-integrated Simon Eyre in Dekker's *Shoemaker's Holiday* continues to speak primarily in ribald prose even when he has been elevated to Lord Mayor of London. That Eyre does so while his predecessor in the role, Sir Roger Oatley, speaks verse, might indicate something of his pride in his origins. By contrast, Leantio in Middle-

ton's *Women Beware Women* begins the play as an economically precarious "factor" but speaks comfortably in verse as he moves into the world of the court. In this extract, Keith's refusal to speak verse (after he has just made a gauche reference to paedophilia) could represent a stubborn certainty in his own identity, even as his wife, Angela, speaks an uncomfortably metronomic pentameter which our production framed as a learnt, aspirational behaviour:

> ANGELA. It's wonderful to see you, Dr Krill.
> What an occasion. Such a special day.
> TORBEN. And you, Mrs McEntee, though I must
> insist, I don't yet have a doctorate...
> ANGELA. A travesty. Well, neither does my Keith,
> as you can tell from that ill-timed remark—
> I must apologise reservedly:
> a shameful comment. From a governor!
> KEITH. If Turbo's gonna talk about kids roaming freely in the woods, Ang, it's got to be expected. Nonces behind every bush. I built the bloody school, I don't want my name on that. That's not the kind of thing we want in the paper.
> ANGELA. My husband sometimes struggles with deportment—
> KEITH. I'm always talking about deportment. It's all they bloody deserve.

But as director Rebecca Martin (who herself played Angela) and I discussed how to bring across the thinking behind these formal choices in the rehearsal room, I began to be haunted by the idea that the portioning out of the resources of verse and prose simply repeated inherited inequities: that to stage a builder speaking only prose would reinforce the kinds of assumptions about class and intelligence identified by Tony Harrison in "Them & [uz]": "You're one of those / That Shakespeare gives the comic bits to: prose." I justified the choice in part by reasoning that unequal access to the tools of social and cultural capital remains a persistent social problem, and that in the context of this particular play-world my use of linguistic stratification onstage could expose, rather than entrench, such real-world dynamics. Nonetheless, even before seeking audience responses on this question, hearing the prose/verse dynamic in practice I began to reconsider

how possible it was, in a contemporary context, to explore conflicts of character through the alternation of verse and prose without becoming complicit in a process of elitist othering.

An audience survey we conducted after performances in January 2016, which I will describe in greater detail in the next section, revealed similar issues with my use of variant verse forms in this script. In a Q & A session following one performance, actor Octavia Finch commented positively on the heightened form in which her lines had been written. I intended for the constraints of her tight, rhymed trochaic tetrameter, to show the internal and external pressure her character, Starfish, an overworked schoolgirl, was under:

> Ten-on-one debating winner,
> always back in time for dinner,
> Teenage Vegan Essay Contest,
> Cuckoo drowning in a swan's nest. (7)

Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, in *Shakespeare in Parts,* describe how "prosody furnishes the actor with his character's grounds of being […]. For the actor, prosody and ontology become one" (391). And, indeed, Octavia described the stylised form of her lines as "incredibly freeing"—rather than putting in detailed character work, she noted, "it just sort of came to me that this is who Starfish was."

While these distinct styles achieved a certain dramaturgical effect in terms of character definition, they also risked muddying the dramaturgical waters: one character, the Ghost of Anthony Crosland—a grotesquely exaggerated version of the 1960s Labour education minister responsible in part for the British comprehensive system—stood both for a lost continuity (a social order which used to, up to a point, make sense) and for a willed disruption of the current state of things:

> A comprehensive right to learn,
> no matter what your parents earn.
> It's in my "Crosland Circular"!
> But death is a great leveller,
> and now I'm six feet underground
> it's funny how it's all come round.
> I mean, take this school—*take* it, please! (2)

His rhyming, near-pantomimic verse style might have gestured to a different, older authority, and was certainly disruptive in its strangeness, but the very regularity its untimeliness required made it difficult for his interventions to seem truly chaotic and unpredictable, rather than the work of, say, a capricious but controlling magician. The character's overdetermination was only emphasised by the lack of clarity in what I was using his metre to mean. In general, therefore, the variety of verse idioms in this script made it more difficult for me to present verse as a social-structural world which is truly shared, and thus where individual departures from metrical norms might have a significant relationship to the social fabric.

Audience and Actor Perspectives

Despite my concerns as a practitioner regarding the formal choices I made in this first experiment, audience members did nonetheless report a clear awareness of the play being in verse as they listened to it in a survey we conducted after five performances across the course of the production. It seemed, therefore, that many listeners registered some of the stylised order implied in hypothesis (1). A brief account of this process might be helpful. In the tour of the production we mounted in early 2016, we gave audiences in Stratford-upon-Avon, Nottingham, Leicester, and Birmingham feedback sheets to fill out after the performance; responses were also collected at a Stratford preview in advance of the play's Edinburgh run. In total across the performances we were able to assemble 71 responses to a number of questions, including the following:

1) When watching *Free for All*, to what extent did you feel aware of the play being in verse?
2) Were there any moments in the play when rhythm or poetic language seemed particularly prominent?
3) Did the use of verse make the play feel different to other plays in any way? Did it have an effect on its meaning to you?

4) Verse drama—especially modern verse drama—isn't produced very often. Other than Shakespeare, have you seen a production of any other play in verse?

This last question was particularly helpful is developing a sense of audience awareness: how likely would spectators have been to have any pre-existing suppositions about stage verse which were not directly linked to Shakespeare? The majority of responses were negative, splitting 42 to 29. Among the "Yes"es, many respondents had seen works by contemporaries of Shakespeare and plays in translation from the Classical repertoire, ranging from Greek tragedies to Martin Crimp's adaptation of *The Misanthrope*. Only fifteen respondents offered contemporary examples, of which seven mentioned Mike Bartlett's *King Charles III*, a play which was promoted in explicit dialogue with the Shakespearean history cycles. The only other named examples of verse dramatists from the last twenty-five years who audiences had encountered in performance were Tony Harrison, Ted Hughes, and Helen Edmundson. It was clear, therefore, the main comparison points for my work in the audience's minds were unlikely to be contemporary writers.

Responses to the question about awareness of verse were coloured by the fact that the use of verse was explicitly announced in pre-show publicity materials; one performance was also preceded rather than followed, due to scheduling problems, by a question-and-answer session. Seeing the question put so bluntly, audience members might have felt compelled to "produce" an awareness of verse being used, a response which risked enhancing the idea of verse as an elitist hoop to jump through: as one wrote, "I feel stupid but I only noticed it when the ghost was talking." With these important caveats, 88% of respondents asserted they had noticed the presence of verse either "sometimes," "often," or "throughout" the performance. No respondent agreed with the proposition "I was only very rarely aware of verse being used." An online survey I conducted after the BBC screening of a filmed version of Bartlett's *King Charles III,* with a differently

phrased question, produced remarkably similar results: 89% found the use of rhythm noticeable either "throughout," or "somewhat" ("Some unscientific thoughts").

Both results resonate with George T. Wright's suggestion of an in-built somatic awareness in our "nervous systems" for the use of verse (92) but also have direct implications for practice. If I wished to heighten this awareness (converting the "sometimes" respondents—37%—to "often"—here 34%—or "throughout," currently 17%), which might in turn allow for a stronger awareness of the significance of regularity and deviation, I would have to work with actors and directors to foreground the role of verse speaking. At the Stratford post-show talkback, actor Blake Barbiche addressed some of the difficulties raised by the closeness of some of my verse to contemporary everyday speech:

> I think that's what actually makes it really difficult … because it is so, the words are constructed in a way that we would speak and not as heightened as Shakespeare, I think that's where I've found difficulty in making sure that it is clear that it's verse, I've had a really difficult time sort of driving through that and keeping the energy of that, personally.

And as director Rebecca Martin pointed out, my use of colloquial language in a rigid form might pose problems for maintaining metre, when considered in the light of the naturalistic traditions of contemporary actor training:

> One thing I found interesting listening and watching it is the tendency of modern actors, myself very much included, to put in your "um"s and your "ah"s when you're talking in modern day speech, and particularly on screen, if you get trained in screen, then the line is kind of a vague approximation of what you're going to say. I'm sure at every point I gave someone a note about "you can't say that 'ah,'" or "you can't do a cough in the middle of a line," or something as minute as that … you can't do it, because it'll automatically disrupt the metre, and that was a very nice lightbulb moment for me as an actor and as a director, the specificity.

Audience responses to the question of where, if anywhere, rhythm or poetic language seemed particularly prominent in the performance, suggested that hypothesis (2)—whereby longer, uninterrupted verse

speeches could consolidate authority—merited more investigation. 18 respondents mentioned moments where long speeches were delivered, or characters who did so, as making them particularly aware of verse use. As regards hypothesis (3)—that the audience might, in contrast to such fluency, perceive any split, broken or interrupted line as a struggle for power, alive with a new charge and energy—the responses we received did not reflect this. One audience comment offered a particular challenge to this idea:

> The times I had the most trouble keeping track of the rhythm were […] some of the shared lines in dialogue which sometimes moved too quickly.

Given that split lines did not seem to be registering as significant, the results also led me to favour what Martin describes as a linguistically "specific," non-naturalistic style of acting and directing, further bringing out the effects of end-stopping which Abigail Rokison's historical research suggests were practised in the early modern theatre (179-81). To test more fully what might happen if split lines were overtly emphasised, I would therefore need to pursue in future productions a mode of directorial practice which particularly heightened broken or split lines, perhaps at the expense of even more elements of naturalism.

Rhyme registered as a stumbling block of a different kind. With regard to the question about where rhythm felt prominent, my survey yielded 84 separate references either to rhyming or to Starfish and the Ghost, two characters whose dialogue was almost exclusively rhyming. Rhyme was seen as reinforcing rhythm and/or poetic language, by making it "a lot easier to notice" and because "the rhymes drew more attention to the meter." But rhyme also elicited by far the most negative responses to the effect of verse: one audience member felt it "made meaning more difficult to follow waiting for clunky rhymes at the end."

More positively, views consonant with hypotheses (5) and (6)—that the artificiality of verse could allow it to transcend realist conventions, and that verse added a sense of eloquence and gravitas to a range of

speakers—were also expressed unbidden in a number of survey responses to the question relating to the effect of verse on meaning. Poetic language, for instance, was considered by one respondent to "establish a level of suspension of disbelief upfront, such that the supernatural aspects were more reasonable in the established sort of non-reality," and by another to create "a slightly heightened, fairy-tale-ish quality." Verse was variously described as an element which made "certain words and sentences feel more significant," added "weight to certain moments," and "helped 'focus' meaning and attention"; the form "drew attention to particular characters' lines and in a way heightened their import and impact." William Stafford's review partly endorsed these ideas by arguing that a playing style "broader than naturalism" was an appropriate choice "to fit the comic styling as well as the sometimes-heightened language."

Though he did not, to the best of my knowledge, conduct any comparable surveys, T. S. Eliot commented in the 1950s, the low cultural esteem in which audiences by that point held verse drama meant that "to introduce prose dialogue would only be to distract their attention from the play itself to the medium of its expression" (134). In the *Free for All* experiment, survey responses showed that transitions between forms were often either not noticed or took the audience's attention away from the guiding principles of a shared-metre stage world. Having a number of scenes outside of the main blank verse metre, including in prose, risked diluting the sense of a baseline or norm against which variations were meaningful. In my future practice, I therefore resolved to avoid this distorting effect by using both rhyme and prose more sparingly.

Building a Shared World

With the successes and flaws of *Free for All* in mind, I wanted my next project to foreground my hypothesis that the shared-ness of a metrical stage-world allowed for domestic and political ruptures to take on a

greater resonance, expressed in formal terms, and to pursue the idea that verse licensed a certain rhetorical articulacy. I was coming to an understanding that verse and its uses could both set people apart, and bring people together. I therefore started looking for a story which, even more so than the school setting of *Free for All*, could foreground and link verse usage to the conflicts within a clearly defined community, allowing me to experiment with putting both these qualities into dramaturgical effect.

I found my material in a podcast episode telling the true story of Rajneeshpuram: a utopian religious community established in the 1980s around the teachings of the Indian guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh ("184—Rajneeshpuram"). Rajneeshpuram brought together a group of primarily highly-educated Westerners with an interest in Eastern mysticism as a model for remaking society: as Frances Fitzgerald puts it in her account in *Cities on a Hill,* which I consulted while redrafting the script, "guru or no guru, the ranch was a year-round summer camp for young urban professionals" (275). The site they occupied was in blue-collar rural Oregon and was viewed with suspicion and mistrust by many residents of the neighbouring town of Antelope, which the Rajneeshee community eventually annexed. A local professor told Fitzgerald that he "thought Antelope 'a Greek tragedy' in the sense that the outcome was inevitable given the character of both groups" (326), and to me the dramatic potential was readily apparent.

The story appealed to me in part because it was self-contained and *sui generis* enough to allow for an investigation into the very basics of what it might mean to live in community with others, and what the use of verse might reveal about that social paradigm. The Rajneeshpuram community eventually collapsed under a variety of internal and external pressures, including financial mismanagement, immigration fraud, the consolidation of power in the hands of a secretive leader who tapped the phones of the city's residents and literally tranquilised those expressing dissent, and, most prosaically of all, a wilful disregard for county planning and zoning laws. It also, due in

part to a paradoxically controlling focus on openness and spontaneity, became increasingly dependent on formal rules. The overall effect was that "the flowing, liquid, egalitarian community had to erect high walls around itself lest its members took to loving others and simply flowing away […]. In their attempt to suppress their differences they developed a kind of totalitarianism" (Fitzgerald 408). In the later stages of the commune's existence, in 1985, Fitzgerald explains how walls and rules had come to predominate:

> [t]here were security guards all over the place, and the restrictions on visitors were like those of a federal prison. From the entrance of the ranch to the reception center, there were five guard posts, each staffed by two Rajneeshee in uniform. At the reception center there were more uniformed guards with guard dogs to search all comers. Visitors were now asked to sign three separate regulations forms before being given an identification bracelet […]. All of this created a sense of constriction and threat—a feeling mightily strengthened by the fact that the guards and ranch managers could not, or would not, explain the reasons for the particular barriers and roadblocks. (354)

As the process of my writing and revisions went on, two core elements of the material—the fracturing of society into implacably opposed interest groups and the protectionist rhetoric of walls and barriers—suggested to me that a project updating the Rajneespuram story to the present day might be a helpful prism for political developments in contemporary America. The presidential candidacy of Donald Trump supplied the "push factor" lacking in my first draft about a modern utopian commune: a shift in the political climate capable of driving a disparate group of people away from their ordinary lives to form a new community based on an, at best, nebulous ideology.

With each revision, including most notably that for a run of staged readings at the Shakespeare Institute in February 2017, the play therefore became more and more directly a comment on first the campaign, then the Presidency of Donald Trump. The community at the heart of the play, called "Amnesty" in my first few drafts, eventually morphed

into "Sanctuary" as "sanctuary cities," such as New York and Los Angeles, set themselves up as centres of authority in opposition to the nativist immigration policies of the national government (cf. Zurcher). That conflict made this subject matter an effective testing ground to explore ideas of form, community, and tension between different kinds of networks and "bounded enclosures," and for the verse medium to take on political weight and power (Levine 25).

Before I had discovered Levine's work, however, Fitzgerald's account of Rajneeshpuram introduced me in the redrafting phase to the writings of the anthropologist Victor Turner. Various schools of thought had already seemed to offer me useful analogues for the structuring opposition between norm and variation, and between the individual and society, which shared-metre dramatic verse reified, from Freud's *id* and *superego* to Greenblatt's subversion and containment (38). New to me, however, was Turner's model of structure and anti-structure. Briefly sketched, Turner's terms provided an intriguing framework in which to consider the relationship of constraining pattern and variation: "social structure, while it inhibits full social satisfaction, gives a measure of finiteness and security," whereas the liminal state Turner called *communitas* and associated with anti-structural forces—sometimes individualistic, sometimes communal—"may be for many the acme of insecurity, the breakthrough of chaos into cosmos, of disorder into order" (*From Ritual* 46).

These terms did not, however, in practice, map as neatly onto the individual/community binary as I might have hoped. Shared-metre verse drama seemed to me at times to exemplify some of the aspects of *communitas*, wherein characters are "levelled" in their form of expression and brought, at least, linguistically, into a neutral relation: was this what might be going on in the social blending represented in the settlement I was then calling Amnesty? On the other hand, the need for the Amnesty residents to live in harmony seemed more relevant to Turner's use of "structure," within which marks of extreme, "antistructural" individuality are potentially disruptive (*From Ritual* 113).

In its challenge to structure, *communitas* "transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships" (*Ritual Process* 128) and "raises basic problems for social structural man, invites him to speculation or criticism" (*From Ritual* 47). This made it look somewhat like the challenges to the existing order of things, the sketching of alternative models, that Ryan finds in Shakespeare: Turner even cites as an example the utopian rhetoric of Gonzalo's commonwealth in *The Tempest.* But *communitas*, of course, by definition, is the manifestation of communal rather than individual feeling. Characters in plays who consistently flout the expectations of metrical structure, sometimes in the process ruffling and shaking the framework of their societies, do so as individuals, not as representatives of an alternative pattern.

As such, Turner's *communitas* could not map neatly onto "the breakthrough of chaos into cosmos" (*From Ritual* 46) represented by metrical deviation within Wright's world of "cosmic order" (262). The implicit separation necessary to maintaining structure meant that this term could not wholly be the domain of metrical regularity, either. Different forms of structural barrier in dramatic verse take on different meaning: end-stopping would tend to increase a sense of ordered proportion, whereas mid-line caesurae might be more likely to indicate an agitated individual isolating himself from others.

Turner's terminology for discussing communities was therefore a complicated and somewhat awkward model to explore dramaturgically. These theories nonetheless significantly informed the process of research and development (or trial and error) leading to my second draft of the script. So too did the significant challenge to Turner's model offered by Renato Rosaldo. Taking issue with the idea of culture and society as "control mechanisms" which "have the [potentially repressive] function of regulating human behaviour" (97), Rosaldo's challenge further stressed for me the importance of affirming that there is no necessary drive towards institutional healing, reintegration, or repression in verse drama.

Throughout the traditional five-act structure of *Amnesty*, I experimented with making the Turnerian ideas of structure and anti-structure which Fitzgerald applied to Rajneeshpuram register as significant in my exploitation of the resources of verse.[3] My intention, broadly speaking, was for the early speeches of the commune's residents—as they aimed to reject social norms in forming a new "seamless and structureless whole" (*Ritual Process* 135)—to convey some of the anti-structural dynamics of free flow. In this draft of the script, I prioritised keeping the residents' dialogue relatively light on full stops and mid-line disruptions, favouring instead a high use of commas and run-on lines, as in this public address from the commune's de facto leader, then called Meera:

> Thank you. Thank you for joining us today,
> on this great day of public celebration:
> this referendum signals to the world
> not only that our town is here to stay,
> but that our rights to congregate together
> have taken root and are unshakeable,
> despite the forces who'd prize us apart.
> This is a mandate for a better system:
> you've seen the goody bags? Go on, spark up—
> the use of cannabis for recreation
> is legal in this state and we are proud
> to show it can promote—forgive me—growth.
> You'll find a book of mycoprotein recipes
> and lifetime passes for the karmabus.
> Also, a brochure with our city plan:
> green spaces, native wildlife in reach,
> three thousand acres and an aquifer… (41)

In contrast, I explored the idea that a heavy emphasis on prosodic disruption, highlighting division rather than flow, might correspond to Turner's account of structure as a separating force. I therefore planned for Meera's political opponent, county planning official Tony Morelli, to speak in a less fluent way, using end-stopped lines and a high number of mid-line stops, starts and substitutions. An antagonistic figure arriving from outside, I wondered if the metrical disruption

brought with him could effectively mirror political disturbance having an impact on a community.

Already, however, this revealed the difficulty in using Turner as an analogue. Now the communitarian Amnesty residents, in seeming to represent unruffled order, read as a sort of *parallel* structure, whereas Tony felt like the malevolent individualistic force causing problems for this version of society:

> TONY. Sorry to butt in. Headed to the ranch?
> Me too. Spa, I should say. You need a ride?
> ANITA. That would be great, actually; are you joining?
> TONY. No, not exactly. More—checking things out.
> I'd say "Throw all your stuff in back," but, well…
> You haven't got much stuff, so—don't I know you?
> LEILA. I don't think so.
> ANITA. We're not from round here, really.
> TONY. Sure? There's just something…It'll come to me.
> I'm Tony, by the way. Tony Morelli.
> ANITA. What brings you here?
> TONY. Work. County Planning Team. (10-11)

As the play continues and the community, under internal and external pressure, begins to take on more of the aspects of an external "structure"—armed police, roadblocks, etc.—I experimented with making the increasingly-dictatorial Meera's lines begin to resemble Tony's. They became more end-stopped, with a higher proportion of mid-line interruptions and blockages. The idea was for Tony's somewhat authoritarian perspective to inform the kind of verse he spoke, and for that to influence Meera's own prosody, just as Othello's verse has been observed to "become infected by [the] poison" in Iago's speaking style (Palfrey 188). Here, for instance, is Meera dressing down the community's architect, Jerome, towards the end of Act Three:

> Go home, Jerome. Back to your drawing board.
> We told them we'd revamp the library,
> build new headquarters for the Fire Service,
> replant the parks. What more is there to give?

> Patty can see. The Mayor can't? Fuck the Mayor:
> bigots, sore losers, they can't look beyond
> their baseball caps. We're doing them a favour.
> If someone gets their little fingers bruised,
> so be it. You don't have to understand:
> this isn't art, now. This is politics. (48)

There was an internal logic to having Meera's lines become "aggressively asymmetrical" (a term Russ McDonald uses with regard to Jonson's verse, 109) as her style of leadership became more authoritarian. But Tony, the character to whom she was directly opposed in the narrative, could not himself in practice always employ a "poetic style marked by shifts in direction, emotional flashes, surprising turns, short stops" (McDonald 115-16), even as his role was to challenge the equilibrium of the Amnesty community by insisting they conform to external requirements. Tony had to deliver a lot of big rhetorical speeches, including a closing monologue to the audience. It therefore felt natural in practice to allow his language to flow more freely, to be more expansive with fewer shifts and stoppages, even though this would mean abandoning some of the Turnerian parallels with which I started.

Indeed, the more I considered my work in *Amnesty*, the further I felt from a neat equation between, on the one hand, individuality and resistance, and, on the other, order and social structure. Any verse system based on the theoretical oppositions I found in Turner and Fitzgerald started to melt away in the face of the demands of dramaturgical practice. When the time came to revise the play for its staged reading at the Shakespeare Institute, along with changing the title to *Sanctuary* to reflect its new political focus, I also found myself setting aside the vague and unwieldy framework drawn from my reading of Turner in favour of a greater practical attention to what each scene and onstage moment required.

In practice this meant—as in *Free for All*—prioritising a Shakespearean sense of equilibrium and balance between the arguments made by the two opposing sides. Accordingly, at moments where it was neces-

sary for him to carry the audience with him, I allowed Tony's rhetoric to become significantly more fluent, with more frequent enjambment:

> DENISE. They've got some really interesting ideas—
> why can't they try them here?
> TONY. Ideas? Right.
> Those airy things, those giddy clouds of nothing,
> that sit on human lives like bucking broncos,
> ready to tumble at one sudden lurch.
> You want a blank slate? Then build on the moon.
> Real people live here, and they're not lab-rats,
> waiting for some benevolent gloved hand:
> you think the Nettle Ridge guys will be grateful
> to see a living Twitter mob descend,
> turn quiet country into San Francisco
> while virtue signalling they understand
> the struggles of the rural working class?
> These people, fundamentally, don't care
> about them, they don't understand their lives:
> who clears up if their little project fails?
> They won't engage. It's summer camp to them.
> They've got ideas, sure. But they won't work,
> and we'll be left with sewage, trash and rubble. (33)

I also, in the interest of the "balance" McDonald finds in Shakespeare's plotting as well as his metrics, set about reshaping Meera into *Mona*—a more defined character whose investment in the Sanctuary project, in its new political iteration, was at least initially born out of progressive activism. The sense of Shakespearean equilibrium was therefore at least partly enhanced by presenting surveillance and the suppression of dissent emerging within a leftist community, against the wider backdrop of Trump's right-wing policy agenda.

I hoped the plot arc might, with Mona's character more distinct in her aims from the opening, feel something like *Richard II* in reverse, as an initially sympathetic character comes to govern in ways which are increasingly capricious and cruel. Mona now started off with a somewhat sharp-elbowed idealism, as in these lines reassuring Patty, an elected official from the neighbouring town of Nettle Ridge who is concerned about the influx of a new demographic:

> For instance, those well-educated folks
> you mention are spearheading these revivals,[4]
> but in their wake will come skilled manual jobs,
> the kind this county hasn't seen for decades,
> the kind with healthcare plans and training programs.
> I don't mean to presume about your vote,
> but this county has been through some hard times—
> we think we can respond to those concerns. (19)

By the end of the narrative, however, she displayed the spitting fury of a cornered animal, when local law enforcement refused to let claim her status as a political protestor as a factor mitigating the crimes in which she had been involved:

> MONA. I'll talk, Kim. It won't help you. But I'll talk.
> The problem with you is, you have no vision.
> None of you do. And no imagination.
> Did we cut corners? Yes. Did we cut limits?
> Of course. You've heard the phrase 'disruptive talent'?
> Yeah, I'm disruptive. I overturned tables,
> I rocked the boat, I cut the power lines.
> I am an earthquake underneath this country,
> and your response? To put me in a cage.
> My people understand—yours never will—
> that what you've done is taken hope, change, progress,
> and beaten it so hard it can't stand up.
> KIM. What we've done is arrested you for failing
> to follow the same laws that others do.
> MONA. It's known as revolutionary justice:
> you chose a moral side, and you deserve it.
> Why should our lives be bound by men like you? (79)

These revisions shored up both character and narrative arcs, and helped in part to develop my practice by ensuring my play in verse was inherently dramatic rather than in verse for its own sake. Accounts by both T. S. Eliot ("Poetry and Drama") and Peter Oswald indicate the particularly steep learning curve involved in working out how to write verse that is also dramatically effective: Oswald's experience in contemporary theatre is that "there was nowhere to be trained to work for the Globe or anywhere else like it" (Fallow 94).

The lack of widespread training in the skills necessary to develop theatre in verse means that practical experiment is essential but, paradoxically, rarely possible: "Verse plays are put together in a different way and they require a leap of faith. My first drafts are always terrible. It is about collaborating and seeing what works and doesn't work during the rehearsal period. Verse plays require patience" (Gardner).

In my own collaborative experiments, I found myself increasingly unable to answer the frequent question about what the resource of prose meant in my stage worlds in a way that felt to me wholly justifiable. In *Sanctuary*, I had still considered that prose might contribute something valuable to the dramaturgy: for instance, the Nettle Ridge council member Patty signalled some of her difference from the more privileged Sanctuary residents by initially speaking prose, and was subsequently coerced into a somewhat stilted verse as Mona talked her into joining their community.

Jack, an older male character who gave little thought to the space he took up in the world, also spoke a prose which had a sprawling quality—like Falstaff's, which Fernie defines as expressing a baseline "condition of superabundant liberty" that rejects the constraints of "duty, industry, self-control" (2). Jack's prose confirmed his Falstaffian role as exhibiting "the scandalous"—and, ultimately, destructive—"freedom of a mature person who lives his (or her) own life entirely beyond respectability" (4). When he used this prose style with neighbours he did not know well—as below with cake shop owner Anita, who stays in verse to maintain distance and rebuff his unwanted intimacy—I hoped it might appear as a kind of linguistic manspreading[5]:

> JACK. When I saw Leila the other day she promised you'd be able to rustle up something in no time, so—
> ANITA. What day was this? She's had the flu all week.
> JACK. Oh, must have been the weekend then, head like a Swiss cheese these days, even without de herb, probably best keep off it, you know me! Is she in, do you know?
> ANITA. I see. She's laid up. Like I said, the flu.
> I don't know when you would have spoken to her.

> What did you want? A cake with Liz's name?
> JACK. Oh well, it doesn't need to be anything special, just whatever cake you've got at this point, we'll muddle through, thought that counts and all.
> ANITA. Not something special? Sixty, did you say? (34-35)

When Jack was later given a position of public responsibility as an officer in the Amnesty police, I shifted his language into verse accordingly. Here, the power it exerted, based on his new-found public authority—as in the following extract, where he confronts a police officer from the neighbouring town Amnesty has just taken over—seemed to me entirely different from the power of his unsolicited volubility in prose:

> I'm not impersonating, mate—I've been signed up.
> Proposed, approved, and ratified. Boom boom.
> Efficient, eh? Your local bureaucrats
> should take a tip from us. That's how we do such things
> these days in Amnesty—Amnesty *Ridge.*

Nonetheless, over the many conferences and Q & A sessions at which I discussed my dramaturgical choices, including the 2017 meeting of the *Connotations* Society in Mülheim, Germany, there always seemed to be an angle from which prose could be felt to be pessimistically reinforcing hierarchies of exclusion more convincingly than making a strong dramatic point about the persistence of those hierarchies or demonstrating some kind of forceful resistance to their stranglehold on social capital. For all that I wrote about verse in terms of social cohesion, showing tensions being raised and/or worked out within a defined group, the persistence of prose continued to create an "out-group," the presence of which I would then struggle to intellectually and creatively account for, even as it reflected real-world social dynamics relating to access and power.

In *Sanctuary,* prose and verse were involved in a continuous dance around ideas of power, control, borders and boundaries, authority and resistance, and the conflicting demands of individuals and communities. Neither resource continuously meant one thing and one

thing only—and even considering verse alone, metrical fluency could not be counterposed with disruption in any stable sense that was not thrown into question by further reading and creative experiment. The presence of prose, however, as T. S. Eliot predicted, still seemed inevitably to "distract [the audience's] attention from the play itself to the medium of its expression" (134). In 1912, before Eliot had even publicly considered the issue of the rhythm of poetic drama, William Archer cautioned playwrights against using "some nondescript rhythm which is one long series of jolts and pitfalls to the sensitive ear […] to escape from the monotony of blank verse":

> If you cannot save your blank verse from monotony without breaking it on the wheel, that merely means that you cannot write blank verse, and had better let it alone. Again, in spite of Elizabethan precedent, there is nothing more irritating on the modern stage than a play which keeps on changing from verse to prose and back again. It gives the verse passages an air of pompous self-consciousness. We seem to hear the author saying, as he shifts his gear, 'Look you now! I am going to be eloquent and impressive!' (396-97)

Alongside these aesthetic arguments, I had to consider the political dimension. I have made the critical argument throughout this paper that one of the most significant currents in the historical development of verse drama, through writers like George Lillo, Joanna Baillie, and even, in his own way, T. S. Eliot, has been an extension of the social canvas on which verse drama operates in the face of an alternative tendency to constrict it. I felt therefore that my best course in my next play might be to follow suit: to distribute the resources of articulacy and eloquence equally among all characters, in accordance with hypothesis (6), and allow each character to make their case in equal terms.

Allowing Ebb and Flow

In the third and final script I am discussing here, I took these cautionary conclusions into full account. In *The Vetting of Kit Shaughnessy*, as a consequence, the "meaning" of verse during the writing process

was less overburdened, less explicitly theorised; I was more concerned with the moment-by-moment dramatic effects of regularity and variation than with the kind of external logic I applied to *Free for All* and *Sanctuary*. I did not assign any specific associations with regularity, order and subversion to particular characters, and I also eschewed the use of prose entirely, aiming instead, as Eliot recommended, "at a form of verse in which everything can be said that has to be said" (134). This final play took place on a smaller scale, with only four characters, but nonetheless addressed wider issues of politics and society which resonated beyond these interpersonal conflicts.

The script tested the possibility of verse drama to work as a kind of chamber piece, orchestrating four voices, while availing itself of some of the resources of more recent dramaturgy, namely overlapping lines indicated with a "/" as well as the traditional "split" metrical lines. It still explored social tensions, and those between individuals, through the distribution of metrical and variant lines, but on a more shifting, fluid, *ad hoc* basis, treating verse as an inherently flexible vehicle for the constant process of negotiation between ideas, states, and relationships between social groups and individuals.

The situation this play explored was personal and political: Kit Shaughnessy, an RP-speaking, Russell Group-educated candidate for a government intelligence position, is being vetted for the role by Geoff McCullough. A former policeman from Birkenhead, Geoff is a character from a working-class background who exercises a degree of institutional power, and the bulk of the play is a series of vetting interviews between him and Annabel Fensome, a friend of Kit's who is being pressed to reveal potentially compromising personal information about him to assess his suitability to serve the country.

GEOFF. We're curious about Kit's sex life, Annie.
ANNIE. That's quite an opener.
GEOFF. I'm sorry. Sit.
We find it helps to ask that question early.
ANNIE. Um, shouldn't you be asking him, not me?
GEOFF. Do you know anything about it?

ANNIE. No. Not really.
GEOFF. Can you elaborate on that? (1)

From these personal discussions, which turn on the question of to what degree we can really know another person, wider issues arise. What kind of country is Kit being enlisted in the service of, and how much can its constituent members even agree on what it is? Furthermore, by this point in my development as a verse dramatist, my theoretical conception of these issues was directly feeding into my practical writerly choices in a way that felt newly fluent and, despite its artifice, creatively "natural."

To my mind, this increased fluency of approach allowed for a similarly flexible dramaturgy. Characters from a range of social backgrounds were given the opportunity to grandstand, to embark on long, metrically fluent rhetorical speeches outlining their beliefs, holding the stage and leaving the other person silent: these sections of my writing corresponded to those moments noted by the *Free for All* survey respondents where longer verse sections heightened awareness of and focus on language, wherein words took on greater weight and significance, and the metre served as a springboard for more stylised language use. In this extract, for instance, despite her subordinate position in terms of the dynamics of the interview, Annie demonstrates the ability to steal momentum away from Geoff with a stretch of fluent verse:

GEOFF. I get the feeling you don't really know him.
ANNIE. Perhaps I don't, the way *you*'d like me to.
GEOFF. Me? I am an irrelevance. The country,
that's what this is about.
ANNIE. And what is that?
Will the pound crash (again) because Kit's dad
had shares in arms which, by the way, *we* sold?
Will the North Sea run dry because Kit's dad
once went to a boat party in Tobruk?
This is a man I never met. The country
you're selling me—panicky, paranoid,
a hedgehog curling up into a ball—

is not the one I know, and I don't want to.
And that's what he'd be serving? Did you vote?
GEOFF. Of course I did. I'm sixty-six years old.
ANNIE. How did you vote?
GEOFF. This isn't about me.

In the wake of the referendum result for Britain to leave the European Union, the questions Annie's speech addresses seemed particularly pressing, and touched on my wider concerns about social cohesion and fracture. As such, rather than having her provocations about Geoff's image of Britain unfold with total iambic fluency, I used her metrically disrupted, and thus livelier lines ("panicky, paranoid, / A hedgehog curling up into a ball") as essentially a call for a lost harmony rather than an assault on one that already exists. The logical link between order and disruption I attempted to borrow from Turner had become much more situationally dependent rather than an overarching set of rules of systems.

One final instance exemplifies this new flexibility of usage. Later in these, Geoff goes on the attack with a long speech of his own, putting his interlocutor on the back foot. His interruption in the extract below—"because you didn't care"—demonstrates the ability of the "stolen line" to recapture or reinforce power within a conversation. Annie's final response, however—a firm putdown which relies on an epistemic pulling of rank—falls in perfect pentameter, and the elegance of her deployment of the resource of verse at its most basic level, holding the line and the stage, allows her to once again "rebalance" the conversation:

GEOFF. I'd love not to need anything like this,
this fret, this agitation, these alerts,
these teams of geeks, these four cold submarines.
You know what I'd prefer? A folding chair,
a six-pack in the park in Birkenhead,
a radio, a nice ripe Granny Smith,
my grandkids playing catch—d'you think of them?
ANNIE. I didn't ask…
GEOFF. Because you didn't care.

That's OK. I don't care about you either.
Except that I am you, and you are me.
That's what this letterhead is meant to mean:
it marks what we've consented to. It says
our interests are the same under this crest,
under this crown. Under this stupid horse.
ANNIE. I think that's meant to be a unicorn. (11-12)

In her reference to the coat of arms of the British royal family, used in official governmental settings, she might be understood either to be recalling Geoff to a sense of their connectedness, but the dynamics of the scene and the affordances of verse, as discussed throughout, here imply a moment of one-upmanship. This is distinct from Geoff, her antagonist's, use of a similar metric structure: "Except that I am you, and you are me." This line is a direct enact of George Wright's description of how a shared baseline rhythm might pull two people back to their obligations to each other despite themselves. The ebb-and-flow of power throughout this scene takes place within—is enabled and contained by—this shared rhythm. These extracts, and indeed, the play as a whole ask, but do not answer, the questions of how we should relate to each other, as individuals and as citizens. As such, they demonstrate practically some of the concerns I have been arguing are hard-coded into verse drama as a whole.

Conclusion

My practice-led research across the three scripts I developed over the past four years attempts to challenge the curious doublethink whereby verse drama is treated in contemporary culture with a mixture of exceptionalism, if by Shakespeare or a few other "classic" writers, and outright contempt, if not. Not only does this situation restrict the possibilities of expression available to creative artists, it further adds to what Emma Smith describes as "the impossible ethical gravity with which we have charged these texts [Shakespeare's] and, in particular, this author." Treating verse drama as a form irrevocably tainted by its Shakespearean associations does very little to reduce the outsized

cultural weight accorded to Shakespeare; writing our own verse plays, by contrast, is not an act of homage but an active demonstration that this form has not been perfected and time-locked; it can, instead, continue to produce effects in the present day which are not only available through the revival of classic texts.

What Ben Lerner aptly terms "the hatred of poetry" in contemporary society is at least partly due to its status as a form apart from mainstream cultural expressions. How different might the cultural position of poetry be if it was heard as a mode of dialogue in modern-day political theatre; in TV sitcoms; in Netflix serials? How might our society look if once again, as George Wright commented of early modern England, "[r]hyme and meter belonged to the class of rhetorical devices [people] expected to meet in public places" (95), and what about our times might be discovered in the experiment? I conclude by offering these questions not as rhetorical speculation but as provocations for experimental practice on the part of writers, directors and commissioners.

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NOTES

[1]Indeed, the latter case might be experienced as the former: Peter Holbrook notes that "[V]illains want freedom too, and from his own perspective a tyrant will be merely exercising his own liberty" (26).

[2]This wordplay finds an echo in a recent critical comment on Shakespeare: as Ewan Fernie observes, Shakespeare's plays demonstrate an awareness of "how readily freedom degenerates into a violent free for all: a 'universal wolf' that will devour everything, including itself (*Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.121)," though modern readers are nonetheless unlikely to favour "Ulysses's recommendation that we should shut it out with an unassailable hierarchy" (73).

[3]Here I thank Martin Wiggins for reminding me that this is a "tradition" established and adopted by subsequent editors of Shakespeare's texts and other early modern plays, rather than a common factor of early modern theatre practice before the second decade of the seventeenth century. Anachronistic though it therefore is, the division into five acts nonetheless seemed to me a particularly and helpfully un-modern way of going about things.

[4]Mona is referring to a rewilding scheme, meant to build up both the local ecosystem and the town's economy.

[5]Defined by *Oxford Living Dictionaries* as "the practice whereby a man, especially one travelling on public transport, adopts a sitting position with his legs wide apart, in such a way as to encroach on an adjacent seat or seats."

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Literature, Culture, and Other Redundancies: Close Reading Donne*

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My title for this article—"Literature, Culture, and Other Redundancies"—results from a common advertisement of jobs by literature departments in America, at least when there were jobs to advertise. These advertisements in the literature and culture of a certain area or historical period bear on the current validity, or not, of the practice of close reading Donne, the topic Heather Dubrow proposed for current discussion.[1] They do so, first, because Donne was surely the poster boy for close reading in decades gone by, and, second, because the close reading of literature became ideologically distinguished from cultural studies toward the end of the last century. In this ideological perspective, literature likewise became, if not simply close reading, at least text-centered, and culture often became its putative opposite. I am frankly puzzled by the ideological opposition of close reading to culture and also by the larger opposition of literature to matter, or rather, to material culture's conceptualization of itself. The reason is that I am interested in language, which is the basic building block of human culture, whether as philosophy, as politics, as literature, or as something else. Again, *building* block, not just deconstructor: although I certainly see that some buildings need to be taken down to enable renewal, I also resist deconstruction of the whole city. I shall add that I am further interested in matter, especially historical constructions of matter and substance, as anyone engaged in the study of the language, rhetoric, and the ideas of Donne and his contemporaries ought

*Reference: Theresa M. DiPasquale, "Ways of Reading Donne's St. Paul's Epitaph: Close, Comparative, Contextu[r]al, Concrete," *Connotations* 27 (2018): 167-89. For contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at https://www.connotations.de/debate/close-reading-donne/

to be. These constructions—matter and substance—were unstable in Donne's time and arguably continue to be so.

Language itself is a material expression, as Erasmus and his early modern contemporaries, Donne included, conspicuously recognized, although this claim is qualified by other beliefs about the human intellect and about religion, especially a religion of the book, in this case the Bible.[2] Language is a basic, historically informed shaper of thought, belief, doctrine, and institutions, ranging from courts and parliaments to ritual and rhetoric—to the *Institutio Oratoria*, as Quintilian termed the *institution* of rhetoric. Poetic, or imaginative, literature, whether formally in verse or prose, is a distinctively heightened form of this mutual shaping of and by a particular culture—witness Donne's poems and prose. Once, I described major literary writings as landmarks and distinctive outcroppings of culture, simultaneously attached to, and apart from, the main.[3] If verbal language is a system of signs used by the people of a time and place, there is no way that the close reading of it can be isolated from this people's culture—the main in my figure. Such reading is immersed in culture, influenced by and contributing to it. Of course, language, including imaginatively heightened literary language, is only one domain or, better, one "mode of existence," to borrow anthropologically oriented phrasing from Bruno Latour. Yet language is a basic, cross-disciplinary mode, as any observer of recent institutional instability, such as Trumpian politics in America, can hardly ignore. And even Latour might underestimate the importance of the bridging function of language, although he takes the grammatical preposition, a signal of discursive positionality, to afford—in my view, metaphorically to figure—an interpretive key at what he terms a crossing, or traversing of modes and categories (57-58).[4] Yet the exaggerated claims about language in the later decades of the twentieth century, then the predictable reaction, the subsequent and inevitable refusal of centrality to language, might well have given Latour pause, as also have simultaneous claims for a host of materialist conceptualizations. Latour provocatively

characterizes the familiar, cultural concept of matter itself in our own time as an idealist fiction (98, 106, 118).

During the Enlightenment, Samuel Johnson famously kicked a stone to prove, against Bishop Berkeley's idealism, that the stone was really there.[5] Johnson's point still carries its punch, or kick. But so does Jonathan Swift's satire of extreme linguistic materialism, in which participants in a conversation limit themselves to the material objects they carry around with them to brandish wordlessly as needed: in short, *show and tell* taken to an absolute extreme in which *tell* disappears into *show*, word into thing.[6]

But my immediate subject is Donne, or rather the close reading of Donne, which I do not equate with readings isolated from history and culture. I also do not equate the close reading of Donne (or of any other writer) simply with what some call the Old New Criticism—the dominant practice of literary criticism around the middle of the twentieth century. In 2005, Harry Berger, Jr.—himself belonging to a generation educated in New Critical practices—listed the tenets of Old New Criticism in his book *Situated Utterances* and aligned them with numerous *isms* influential in the 1990s and early 2000s (30-31). Berger found New Critical tenets within these newer *isms*—flourishing, if often unrecognized—and he carefully preceded his list of New Critical tenets by acknowledging differences among the many practitioners of the Old New Criticism—differences that were numerous and significant.[7] Still, the conceptual model he discovers consists of six neat postulates: the structural postulate of the work's organic unity; the aesthetic postulate of its self-sufficiency; the deictic postulate of its dissociation from the author; the rhetorical postulate of its complexity, irony, ambiguity, and the like; the cosmological postulate of the work as a "world," paired with the epistemological postulate of its fictiveness. There is certainly some truth in Berger's model, as well as redundancy and reinforcement among his postulates, as he recognizes, attributing these to the New Critical practices themselves and implicitly acknowledging their lack of theorized rigor. Berger's postulates effectually analyze the work of art as a self-sufficient, cognitive object,

one cut off from the writer, the reader, and the socio-cultural, historical world somehow outside it.

Yet the retrospective positing of such an object is perhaps a better barometer of cultural change than of a massive delusion that once reigned supreme, which is too often the current view of the Old New Criticism. Abstractive models of this Criticism can resemble Procrustean beds, which eliminate excess, exception, and real difference. Arguably, Old New Criticism, or at least its close reading, was really more of a practice than a theory. As practiced, it differed substantially among its practitioners, the best of whom had an impressive knowledge of history, or rather, histories: linguistic, intellectual, textual, political, and so on. Be that as it may, it is certainly possible to resist some of Berger's postulates and to readily find in others the roots of more recent developments, as Berger himself does. The deictic postulate of separation from the author, the aim of which was to prioritize the text, is the obvious example of one such root. We can readily see in this root the death of the author that was to come later and that it ironically turned out, coincided first with the rise and persistence of feminism, then of race studies and other identitarian projects—an awkward coincidence at best. Perceptively, Berger also finds later "theories of the text and of the subject" to be less a challenge to the deictic postulate of the Old New Criticism than a radical extension of it: for example, to the Derridaean belief that there is nothing outside (except or beyond) the text and to the broadly Marxist or psychoanalytic assertion of the unwitting (seemingly witless) subject of political, economic, and/or psychic subjection (31).[8] There is likely a still further connection of this postulate to the total displacement of the individual and then of the category of the human. The postulate of organic unity invites additional resistance: while it conjures up Donne's "well-wrought urn" in "The Canonization," famously the titular source of Cleanth Brooks's New Critical manifesto, it brings with it recognition of the funereal urn's association with death and dissolution, which mock unity and self-sufficiency. If this mockery is just an example of the rhetorical postulate—complexity, irony, ambi-

guity, and the like—or even of self-reflexive fictiveness, another postulate, how are these postulates peculiar to the Old New Criticism?

My question shifts emphasis back to the postulates that encompass a fictive, self-sufficient, unified "world" that is necessarily apart from, or opposed to, the existence of the real one of history and politics, as well as apart from writers, textual editors, and readers. But in Donne's instance, evident in any reasonably informed reading of "The Canonization," this real world includes the Tudor-Stuart court, the Reformation, Donne's coterie readers, and his own biography, all concerns with which his poetry is infused and which close reading discovers. And these are only a start, as Theresa M. DiPasquale's personalized essay on Donne's epitaph in St. Paul's Cathedral relevantly and effectively demonstrates.[9] As my term "reasonably informed," together with DiPasquale's personalization, assumes, much depends on who is doing the reading and under what circumstances, for example, whether a Donne scholar or an undergraduate in a sophomore survey of English literature. In America, veterans of the Second World War and the Korean War, who flooded into colleges and universities on the GI bill, had much to do with the popularization and methodological defining of close reading within the academy that followed. For this population, close reading offered access to increasingly discriminating literacy, together with the sense of nuance and complexity that it fed, and, be it acknowledged, access to world views, ideally a range of them. Moreover, to a considerable extent, such reading could be hands-on from the outset, not simply passive. It could suit the greater experience of such relatively older readers. I would add that the discriminating literacy nourished by close reading is something much missed in the age of Trump.

Interpretation of Donne in the Old New Criticism also included central attention to what was often, inclusively called "tone." This concern, a sonic metaphor for the human voice, assumed a social or personal situation, including a speaker and an addressee, and the various devices of diction, syntax, genre (or subgenre, type, mode), rhythm, and rhetoric that credibly could account for the tone a reader

heard in a voiced reading or "saw," that is, imagined, in a silent one. This situated and sonic concern encompassed thought and feeling, thus connecting with Matthew Zarnowiecki's concern with affect, as well as specifically with sound in his talk on Donne's "Musical Poetry." Tone in close reading was hardly apart from readers and hearers, whether contemporary, historicized, or a combination of both. A current interest in "resonance" embraces another such sonic term, now extending to audio-engineering.[10] In some lyrics, the established term "tone" posited and reflected a specifically musical setting, in others a markedly dramatic one, in still others a contemplative one, and so on. A memorable example of emphasis on the elements of tone can be found in *The Fields of Light*, an interpretive manual by Reuben A. Brower, first published in 1951 and reissued as recently as 2013.[11]

To emphasize the postulates of a world apart from a historical and social one is also to return to the problem with which I started, namely, the separation of literature and culture, presumably in the interest of protecting legitimate literary and cultural concerns from one another. These twinned concerns are, on the one hand, that literature will have left no room of its own, becoming at best a subordinate illustration of a larger cultural entity, and, on the other hand, that cultural concerns will be suppressed or abandoned by literary ones. This is one reading. Another, more negative reading sees not twinned concerns but false binaries, too simply opposed, even while mutually dependent.

Returning again to the Old New Criticism of Donne, I think it may be helpful to look, at least summarily, at the contents of two collections of essays on Donne that might fairly be considered to have been representative once. Both date from the first half of the 1970s, about fifty years ago, although their editors had still older roots. By the early 1970s, any New Critical orthodoxy in America was already under immense pressure from events outside the academy: the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, the assassinations of Martin Luther King and two Kennedys, the resignation of Richard Nixon, the continuing Cold War, and on and on. The Iran hostage crisis and the

attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan were still on the horizon.[12] Looking back, I find it hard to conceive that changes and excesses in the academy would *not* have occurred. Certainly any delusions about self-sufficient poetic objects had to go. By then, "relevance" was the watchword—relevance to what was happening immediately. The innovative energy that close reading had once brought to the study of Donne was largely spent as well, and the low-hanging fruit readily published in a journal entirely on *Explication*(s) had been picked, or for the time appeared to have been so.

One of the collections of essays I found to explore is titled *Essential Articles for the Study of John Donne's Poetry*, edited by John R. Roberts, a visible, American Donne scholar, himself entering middle age in the 1970s. What I notice first is that the volume only concerns Donne's poetry, lacking a section on his sermons and tracts. Although their absence reveals less about editorial prerogative than about the focus of the series at once on poetry and on *earlier* essays of importance, it is nonetheless a notable bias. A companion volume in the same series, published contemporaneously on Spenser, lacks essays about Spenser's treatise on the colonizing of Ireland, for example. Spenser, it should be noted, was never close to being the poster boy for close reading that Donne was; in fact, quite the opposite.

Taken together, these two retrospective volumes in the same series—the one on Spenser, the other on Donne—show the privileging of poetry, but in Donne's instance not solely of lyrics, as might have been expected. Sections in Roberts's volume first cover "Donne's Reputation" and his place in the "Development of English Poetry." Next, a section on "Donne's Uses of Tradition" offers essays on Classical allusions, Renaissance medicine, Paracelsus, emblems, Montaigne and natural law, Petrarchism, and meditation. The next section includes essays on prosody and rhetorical tradition, including one on Ramism. Then come sections on the love poetry, the religious poetry, the *Anniversaries*, and the miscellaneous poems, this last with sample essays on the satires, elegies, epistles, an epithalamion, and "Metempsychosis." Close reading is evident in the sections on poetry, but

they also include a miscellany of topics, such as Anglican doctrine, paradox, the persona, dating, and interpretive cruxes. It would be hard to extract a single critical orthodoxy of doctrine or even of practice from the volume, although the focus on poetry is salient and a topical emphasis on politics, science, and theology is missing, along with Donne's prose writings. In contrast to the volumes on Spenser and Donne in the *Essential Articles* series, there have been times recently when publications on their prose writings have outnumbered those on their poetry. Their prose is seen to be more engaged in politics and probably also in religion, although both impressions are too simple. To limit questions of form, of aesthetics, or, indeed, of poetics to the generically defined poems of these writers is equally so.

But I want to look at the other collection on Donne from the 1970s, more exactly from 1972, the three-hundredth anniversary of Donne's birth. Aptly titled *John Donne: Essays in Celebration*, this volume is edited by A. J. Smith, at the time a professor of English in the UK and editor of a volume of *Donne's Complete English Poems* the year before. Whereas Roberts collected essays that were published earlier, Smith's essays are new, and a difference in emphasis is quickly evident. Smith's collection includes essays on "The Circulation of Donne's Poems in Manuscript," on "Courtiers," on "the Poetry of Patronage," on Machiavellianism in Donne's *Ignatius his Conclave*, on his *Devotions*, and on a sermon by Donne to the Virginia Company. Another essay on "Thinking and Feeling in the Songs and Sonnets" advertises affect, and still another treats hyperbole instead of the more predictable rhetorical devices of paradox or irony. Hints of skepticism are further noticeable in essays on Donne's "Dismissal of Love" and even "Donne and the Limits of Lyric." One notable titular absence is the topic of sex and gender. It was still early days for the flourishing of this topic, as it was for the topics of colonialism and race, not to mention the current emphases on religion and on law. Roughly twenty to twenty-five percent of the essays in Smith's volume are by women; roughly ten percent in Roberts' volume. With the possible exception of hermeticism, science is also missing from Smith's as well as from

Roberts' volume, although by the 1970s this absence is surprising (e.g., Marjorie Hope Nicholson and Charles Monroe Coffin). Out of a total of sixteen essays in Smith's volume, eleven treat Donne's poetry focally, although the focal emphasis of most is not close reading as such. Limited as is this sampling, Smith's collection begins to suggest the shift from technique to topic and from poetry to prose that will become far more pronounced in succeeding decades. It also signals a bridging of literary and cultural concerns rather than their opposition, which comes later.

This opposition, less often examined than accepted, fundamentally relates not only to the symptomatic job-advertisements with which I began but also to the purpose of English departments. To my mind, the special, transferrable skill that English departments offer to society at large resides in a comprehension of English that heightens awareness and enables its effective use. Of course, this awareness includes culture and otherness, past and present, as it does in other humanities departments. But in an English department, it also includes—or should include—a focal interest in the use of the English language. The place of poetry—whether in verse or prose—in heightening verbal awareness and expressive capacity rests in the fact that every word matters in a finely honed poem, as do a variety of connections among these words. Students of creative writing practice their craft by writing tight forms like sonnets and composing paragraph-length stories in monosyllables—all in the interest of heightening their awareness of language. Law, social work, and medicine, for example, value applicants with concentrations in English precisely because of their training in the hearing and use of language—sensitivity, nuance, discernment, insight, and awareness, not just precision or even just correctness, welcome as these may also be.

The special place and significance of Donne, the writer of numerous kinds of prose and verse, lie in his extraordinary awareness and skillful deployment of meaningful language. His sermons and devotional writing are highly poetic, if we abide by Sidney's view that it is imagination (100-01), not rhyming and versing (103), that distinguishes a

true poet. Even a single lyric by Donne, moreover, simultaneously entails a dip into historical otherness and a further enlarging of verbal and cultural awareness. To return to "The Canonization," Donne's canonical lyric for close reading, the radiating subjects and contexts I recently found extended from puns, metaphors, affect, structure, voice and address, to sex and gender, religion, politics, philosophy, intertextuality, architecture and Euclidean space, emblematics, biography, textual variants, circulation, and reception.[13] "The Canonization" is a *situated* utterance that is saturated in its culture, and a close reading of this poem opens up a wider, deeper awareness of its situatedness in real time.

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NOTES

[1]This article began life as a talk in the John Donne Society session at the MLA Convention in 2018. My particular role was to consider the close reading of Donne from a historical point of view. While the other two essays on the program—by Theresa M. DiPasquale and Matthew Zarnowiecki—make telling points about the close reading of Donne, I am inclined to see their arguments about its limitations as differences in emphasis from mine—that is, not as differences in kind.

[2]On the materiality of language in Erasmus, see Anderson, *Words That Matter*, chap. 1, e.g., 17, 20, 25; specifically on linguistic materiality in Donne, see ch. 6, esp. 189-230.

[3]"Once" refers to my *Reading the Allegorical Intertext* 2. On the complexity of conceptions of matter in the Renaissance and of the materiality of language, see the indexical entry for "matter" in my *Words That Matter*; also Harris, introduction.

[4]Latour's "traversing" aligns with a traditional word for metaphor, namely "translation," or the carrying of a thing across from one place to another (from Latin *translatio/-nis*).

[5]Boswell's anecdote about Johnson concerns Bishop Berkeley's "ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter, and that every thing in the universe is merely ideal." Johnson's refutation is to strike "his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it" (333).

[6]In the Grand Academy of Lagado, Swift's professors propose to abolish words, since they are "only names for things," anyway, and instead to have "all men [...] carry about them such things as were necessary to express the particular business they are to discourse on": picture a Santa-Claus pack on the back (210-11).

[7]One telling example of difference is the wide-ranging volume by René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*. That this volume is explicitly theoretical rather than practical in focus is significant.

[8]Berger's Old New Critical category of deixis, or textual isolation, is not the same as Heather Dubrow's in her recent study of deixis as the locator of immediacy and historico-cultural situation.

[9]My essay "Working Imagination in the Early Modern Period: Donne's Secular and Religious Lyrics and Shakespeare's Hamlet, Macbeth, and Leontes" compactly affords a recent discussion of Donne's "Canonization," together with extensive notes, including attributions (206-12).

[10]For example, see Dimock 1060-71; and for a more technical discussion that refuses to oppose the aural to the visual, Erlmann 9-27, esp. 12, 14-15.

[11]Brower, who was trained in the classics, was in his time a guru of close reading at Harvard University. In connection with "holy attention," Marno's recent study calls on the Stoic and Pythagorean notions of tone (*tonos*) as a principle of resonance connecting human beings to their environments (100).

[12]Writing this list actually made me feel more hopeful about the present.

[13]My description of the many subjects and contexts of Donne's "Canonization" is exemplified by the essay I cite in n9 above.

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Ways of Reading Donne's St. Paul's Epitaph: Close, Comparative, Contextu[r]al, Concrete*

THERESA M. DIPASQUALE

The close reading practices of the New Criticism helped to secure Donne's place in the canon of English poetry; but a range of other theoretical frames and methodologies, along with the labors of the Donne *Variorum* and *Oxford Sermons* editors, have strongly influenced applications of practical criticism in contemporary Donne studies.[1] Most Donne scholars continue to close read, though we do so with heightened awareness of how both we and the poems are—as Judith Anderson puts it—"situated." We keep in mind that the texts are products of a manuscript culture, that Donne's writings are embedded in vast intertextual networks, and that every reader (or auditor) reads (or listens) at a particular time and in a particular place. A scholar intent upon acknowledging such issues of textual provenance and reception can, in the case of Donne's poetry, usually begin the work of interpretation by focusing on the *Variorum* text. When that is not yet available, one can work with the text and textual apparatus supplied in editions of Donne's poetry by Shawcross, Dickson, or Robbins. Or one may study a digital facsimile of a seventeenth-century print edition (now readily available via Early English Books Online) and seek what Neil Fraistat calls "contexure": the "texture of resonance and meanings" generated by the "qualities of the poetic collection as an organized book: the contextuality provided for each

*Reference: Judith Anderson, "Literature, Culture, and Other Redundancies: Close Reading Donne," *Connotations* 27 (2018): 155-66.
For contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at https://www.connotations.de/debate/close-reading-donne/.

poem by the larger frame within which it is placed, [and] the intertextuality among poems so placed" (3).

But in approaching Donne's St. Paul's epitaph, one finds oneself between a rock and a hard place. The rock is the nineteenth-century marble slab that one sees above Donne's seventeenth-century statue when one visits the south quire aisle of Saint Paul's Cathedral; Volume 8 of the *Variorum*, published in 1995, takes as its copy-text the inscription upon this slab. The hard place is a landmark 2001 *John Donne Journal* article by Richard S. Peterson, which argues that the text inscribed on the nineteenth-century plaque inaccurately reproduces that of the original seventeenth-century plaque. The *Variorum*'s schema of textual relationships (8: 198) conjectures that the current plaque's inscription derives from a lost holograph manuscript; this conjecture is plausible, for the wording of the current plaque does match exactly that of the text as it appears in the earliest print transcription of the original plaque (Holland [E2v-E3]). Peterson, however, presents compelling evidence that Donne's epitaph is most accurately represented in a 1641 drawing by William Sedgewick and a 1658 engraving by Wenceslaus Hollar. If Peterson is correct, the wording and layout shown in these illustrations represent the original plaque and the lost holograph more accurately than do either the nineteenth-century plaque currently positioned above Donne's statue or the various seventeenth-century print transcriptions cited by the *Variorum* editors, any of which could have served as the Victorian engravers' copy-text.[2]

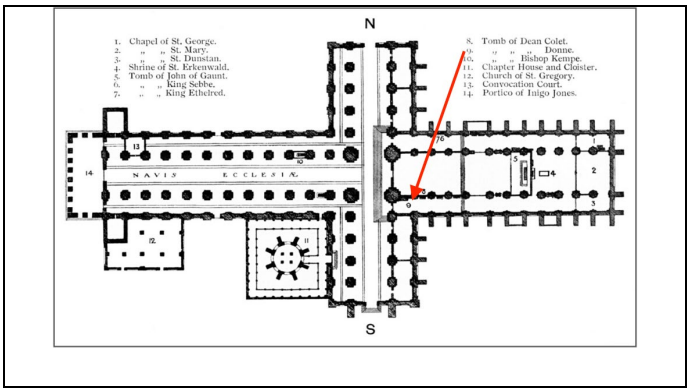
My essay arises from the tight spot between the *Variorum*'s rock and Peterson's hard place.[3] I carry out a situated close reading of the plaque as it appears in the twenty-first-century Saint Paul's while acknowledging that—if Peterson is right, as I believe that he is—today's plaque is an inaccurate facsimile of the one installed in late 1632 or early 1633 and destroyed by the Great Fire of London in 1666. My double-framed response to the epitaph as it appears in St. Paul's today and as it appears in Hollar's engraving and Sedgwick's drawing remains based in the practice of close reading but not limited to it.

I explicate portions of the epitaph's text(s) in some detail, building upon earlier commentary. But I also take into account the poetics of affect addressed by Matthew Zarnowiecki, recounting my own response to the epitaph as defined in part by its location in a particular architectural space, and not shying away from concerns about whether and how readers may be restricted from access to that space.

My first and only visit to Donne's monument took place in July 2017. I had been to St. Paul's before and had seen the fine bust of Donne by contemporary sculptor Nigel Boonham in the south churchyard. But I had never been to the south quire aisle inside the Cathedral to view the seventeenth-century effigy. Why? Because it costs £18 to get into that part of the cathedral, and I am notoriously parsimonious. The Cathedral has good reason to charge; if one visits the sightseeing page of the St. Paul's website and clicks on "Why do I have to pay to enter St. Paul's?" one receives a reasonable answer having to do with the expense of maintaining a popular tourist destination and explaining that there is no charge to attend religious services. It is an excellent rationale. Still, when I visited London in 2014, I told myself that I wanted to see the monument, not as a tourist or "sightseer," but as a Christian and a Donne devotee. I thought that a visit to the monument ought to be a pilgrimage both religious and literary. I thus decided that I would attend Evening Prayer—a service that would not highlight the divide that prevents the intercommunion of Roman Catholics such as I and members of the Anglican Church. I would worship in a context made richer by the history of Donne's ministry as Dean; then, before leaving the building, I would go to the south quire aisle to see the monument. My scholarly and liturgical experiences would overlap, and both would thus be all the more meaningful. So I told myself. But I was spared the rationalization; for as soon as the service was over, everyone was hustled out with an efficiency rarely seen in ecclesiastical settings. When I asked if I might please linger, I was told to return the next day and buy a ticket.

I did not. Instead, I brooded on the experience and read Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction":

"Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art," Benjamin says, "is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (220). How far was I, then, from experiencing Donne's epitaph, when all I had to go on were photographs of the current monument and Peterson's images of the seventeenth-century drawings and engravings, all of them grainy-looking in print reproduction. In online digital photographs, I found better resolution and color, especially in images with copyright watermarks. But the distance between these images and the thing itself remained insurmountable. I wanted what Benjamin calls "the aura of the work of art" (221), and I saw how right he was to say that "reproduction as offered by picture magazines and newsreels differs from the image seen by the unarmed eye" (223). At the same time, I began to realize, with a sinking heart, that paying for a ticket would not give me access to the "aura" of the monument as it was experienced by those who viewed it in 1633; not only would I be viewing a nineteenth-century facsimile of the inscription, but I would be encountering both the inscription and the statue in a space long since transformed by fire, by the mind of Christopher Wren, by later architects and artists, and by the economics of late capitalism. Even the position of the statue has changed: while it was located along the north side of the south choir aisle in "Old St. Paul's," it is to be found on the south wall of that aisle in Wren's structure.[4]



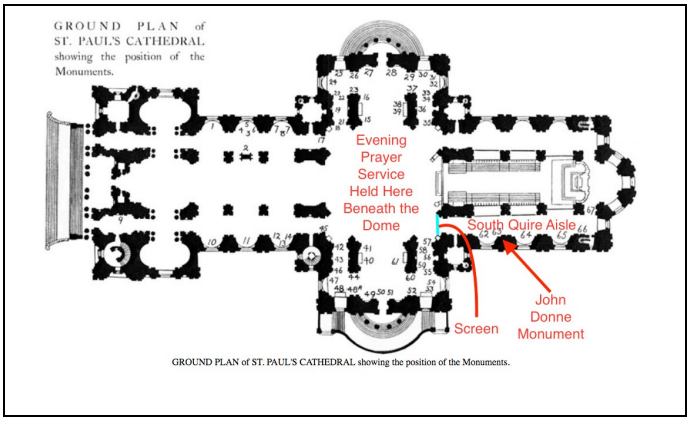


Figure 1. Location of Donne's monument in Old St. Paul's; location in today's Cathedral.[5]

Was there something to be gained in the loss of the previously-existing text and context? One might, I thought, discover something important by viewing the work *as it now exists* rather than as it did in mid-seventeenth-century England, when Donne's statue and epitaph—like "the earliest art works" as Benjamin describes them—"originated in the service of a ritual" (223). In 1633, the monument spoke to visitors with the spiritual authority and religious gravitas of the building's recently deceased Dean. But to whom, and with what kind of authority, does it speak now? Benjamin says: "Works of art are received and valued on different planes. Two polar types stand out: with one, the accent is on the cult value; with the other, on the exhibition value of the work" (224). The monument is now very much an exhibit, part of what tourists pay to see.

Approaching Donne's monument via the St. Paul's website underscores its exhibition value. The site takes advantage of digital technology to move beyond what Benjamin knew as *mechanical* reproduction, inviting virtual "visitors" to "Walk the Cathedral Floor" via an interactive map of its floor plan. If one clicks on the green ⊕ marking "The South Quire Aisle," up pops a photo of the Donne statue's head and upper torso. The accompanying text attempts to serve multiple audiences, touching with awkward poignancy upon church history, art history, literary history, and liturgical function: "The south quire aisle," one learns, houses "effigies of two Bishops of London" and "a

marble effigy of John Donne [...] a Dean of the Cathedral and one of Britain's finest poets, who died in 1631. It is one of the few monuments to have survived the Great Fire of London—scorch marks can be seen on its base." Then, almost as an afterthought: "This aisle is where the clergy and choir gather before services." But the text worked on me—in the wake of my failed attempt to see the monument within a liturgical context—as it was no doubt intended to work. It reinforced my sense that I needed to view the monument in person. In particular, it made me long to see those scorch marks, those residues of the occasion when some of the metaphors inscribed upon the seventeenth-century plaque above Donne's statue were suddenly literalized: "HIC IACET IN OCCIDVO CINERE / ASPICIT EVM / CVIVS NOMEN EST ORIENS."

With some license, and in light of earlier translations, I would translate these words (which appear in Hollar's engraving and in Sedgwick's drawing) so as to juxtapose the extinguished fire of Donne's earthly life with his hope in the name of the risen Son of God: "He lies here, in fallen (or 'western') dust (or 'ashes'); he looks toward Him whose Name is the East (or 'the Rising')." I am particularly indebted to Foxell's rendering of "ASPICIT" as "looks towards," though I find that he protests too much in objecting to Francis Wrangham's translation (printed in Gosse 2: 282). Wrangham's "beholdeth," Foxell argues, implies "that the eyes of Donne's as yet unrisen body can already see Christ." But as Foxell himself goes on to concede, the object of the verb "ASPICIT"—"EVM CVIVS NOMEN EST ORIENS"—implies "'he sees the light,' hence, 'he lives,' thus emphasizing the antithesis of life and death: the essence of the sentence is 'Though his body is dead, it is (*in potentia*) alive'" (7). Given Donne's near obsession with bodily resurrection (which Foxell himself acknowledges [1], and which Ramie Targoff strongly underscores in her study of Donne), the ambiguity is almost certainly intentional. Even more to the point, however, is that the meaning of "ASPICIT"—and of the epitaph as a whole—is not perfectly fixed or determined. Indeed, as

Helen J. Swift points out in exploring the "monumental writing" of medieval French epitaphs:

> The epitaph is a site of tension between fixity and fluidity. On the one hand, it performs a memorialising function: representation of someone at the last, and intended to last; [...]. On the other, it is inherently open to interpretation and response by dint of its audience-oriented nature [...]. Its deictic markers become those of the individual positioned in front of it. (6-7)

No wonder that Donne was so drawn to epitaph; no wonder he wrote his wife's, his own, and those of Elizabeth, Robert, and Anne Drury. No wonder that several of his epigrams are epitaphs or that he incorporated epitaph into a number of his secular lyrics and one of his verse epistles. It is the ideal genre to accommodate both his reader-oriented poetics and his proclivity to ambiguity.[6]

The phrase "IN OCCIDVO CINERE" and the deictic marker "HIC" are at least as interesting as the verb "ASPICIT." Donne's remains were not literally "ashes" or "dust" when the statue was erected, as the dean had been buried, not cremated. Nor was his place of burial precisely "here" in the south quire aisle of St. Paul's; his unmarked grave lay somewhere in the cathedral crypt.[7] Yet the inscription seventeenth-century viewers saw when they went to see the newly-installed effigy encouraged them to imagine Donne's remains "HIC": the most immediate point of reference for that deixis being the urn that forms the base of the marble effigy.[8] In the seventeenth-century illustrations discussed by Peterson, the layout of the text doubles down upon the claim implicit in the phrase "HIC IACET"; for as Peterson points out (21), the epitaph as it appears in Sedgewick's 1641 drawing and Hollar's 1658 engraving is centered, its lines of various lengths thus constituting a concrete poem, urn-like in shape.[9]

IOHANNI DONNE.
SAC: THEOL: PROFESS:
POST VARIA STVDIA QVIBVS
AB ANNIS TENERIBVS FIDELI=
TER, NEC INFŒLICITER INCVBVIT
INSTINCTV ET IMPVLSV SPIR: SCTI:
MONITV ET HORTATV REGIS IACOBI

ORDINES SACROS AMPLEXVS
ANNO SVI IESV 1614 ET SVAE ÆTAT. 42.
DECANATVS HVIVS ECCLES: INDVTVS
27° NOVEMB: 1621.
EXVTVS MORTE VLTIMO DIE
MARTII A. 1631.
HIC IACET IN OCCIDVO CINERE
ASPICIT EVM
CVIVS NOMEN EST ORIENS.

As Heather Dubrow explains, deictics do not function in isolation; on the contrary, they are positioned within what she calls "*deictic chains*" (37) that consist of "a prolonged series of linguistic, cognitive, and possibly even physical events" (2) that work together. In the case of Donne's epitaph, the visual impact of the layout is one link in the deictic chain that creates multiple implications for "HIC." Within its urn-like context, the word elides the distinction between text itself and the urn that forms the base of the effigy, as well as the distinction between the monument and Donne's actual gravesite.[10] It also resonates with the rest of the epitaph to blend spatial and temporal deixis in ways that reflect Donne's faith and that of the English Church as a whole.[11] "HIC" as it functioned for a Christian reader standing before the inscription in Old St. Paul's meant not only "here upon the grounds of this church" ("HVIVS ECCLES[IAE]") with the deanship of which the deceased was invested on a particular day of a particular year). It also meant "here in England" (which is "IN OCCIDVO," in the west, on the occidental fringe of the Old World); and, in its broadest spatial and temporal senses, it meant "here in the *saeculum*, in this mortal life and in the temporal realm where calendrical dates have meaning." The epitaph's "HIC," its *here*, thus stands in implicit contrast with an understood *ibi*—a *there* located somewhere spatially to the east and temporally in the future—a timeless realm into which the late Dean will enter at the coming of the divine "ORIENS" he awaits.[12]

Though the *ibi* of the life-to-come is not explicit in the epitaph, no Christian reader can fail to acknowledge it as implicit. As Swift notes, both historical epitaphs—those engraved upon tombs—and literary compositions in the epitaph genre prompt readers to appreciate "their

active role in constructing an identity for the deceased" (3). Donne's epitaph does just this, both providing the reader with biographical information about the late Dean's life and career, and pointing to his status as a redeemed Christian: a man who, though he lies "here," set like the sun into western dust, nevertheless looks forward to the reunion of his body and soul in the coming of the risen sun/Son whose name is "The East." The phrase "CVIVS NOMEN EST ORIENS" is an allusion to the Vulgate's rendering of Zechariah 6:12 ("Ecce vir, Oriens nomen ejus"; see Scodel 127n36; and Foxell 8). As such, it encourages the reader to recall that the deceased was not only a Christian who believed in the Resurrection of the Body, but also—conversion and English priesthood notwithstanding—the scion of a venerable Recusant family. For only the Vulgate and its Roman Catholic translation, the Douay Rheims Bible, translate the Hebrew צמח (*ṣemaḥ*) into the Latin "Oriens" and the English "Orient." All early sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestant translations render that word as "Branch" or "braunch."[13] Thus, the epitaph is—to quote Rachel Eisendrath's excellent description of art in general—"sedimented with the conflicts that society repressed" (56). It declares Donne very much indebted to King James for his place *here* in this life and in the English Church as a priest of that communion, and for his body's burial *here* within the Cathedral; but it makes clear that the deceased Dean of St. Paul's entrusts to a greater King, whose name the Roman Catholic Church translates as "Oriens," his hope in the dawning light of an Easter[n] realm that is, by definition, neither "HIC" nor "IN OCCIDVO."[14]

The "HIC" of Donne's epitaph remains multivalent on the restored plaque, which was created and installed in late 1872 or early 1873 when Nicholas Stone's effigy of Donne in his shroud was finally moved back into the south quire aisle after over two centuries of storage in the cathedral crypt (for the date, see Peterson 19). But the effect of the deixis is undercut somewhat because the text has been reformatted, the lines being justified into a rectangle rather than centered, and the urn shape thus lost.[15]

IOHANNES DONNE.
SAC : THEOL : PROFESS
POST VARIA STVDIA QVIBVS AB
ANNIS TENERRIMIS FIDELITER NEC
INFELICITER INCVBVIT INSTINCTV
ET IMPVLSV SPIR: SC̃TI MONI-
-TV ET HORTATV REGIS IAC-
-OBI ORDINES SACROS AMPLEX-
-VS ANNO SVI IESV 1614
ET SVÆ ÆTAT 42 DECANATV
HVIVS ECCLESÆ INDVTVS 27°
NOVEMB : 1621 EXVTVS MORTE
VLTIMO DIE MARTII A° 1631.
HIC LICET IN OCCIDVO CINERE
ASPICIT EVM CVIVS NOMEN
EST ORIENS

As this transcription shows, the text of the restored plaque is not only reformatted, but partially reworded; the most startling difference is that the concluding assertion reads not "HIC IACET," "he lies here," but "HIC LICET," "here it is permitted." In an effort to make sense of what would otherwise be a nonsensical construction, Nigel Foxell and others before him (see *Variorum* 8: 439, 443) translate the phrase, "here, though," or "although here"; but as Peterson argues, the "concessive sense" of the verb "licet" meaning "although" is indicated only "when the subjunctive follows," which "is not the case" in the epitaph (22n47). Given the consistent use of "IACET" in the seventeenth-century illustrations of the monument, it seems to me most likely that the epitaph in its original form—and Donne himself in the holograph that was its source—featured the standard epitaphic deixis "HIC IACET": "here lies." As Scott L. Newstok points out, this "locative declaration [...] entails the core statement of all epitaphs" (34), even those that do not explicitly employ the phrase.[16] That said, the "HIC LICET" of the restored plaque creates an interesting effect; the Latin word "LICET" both looks and sounds more like the English word "LIES" than does the word "IACET." It thus entails a kind of bilingual visual pun, implicitly Anglicizing a Latin epitaphic formula

in a way that reflects Donne's own self-translation from the Roman *Ecclesia* to the English Church.

Even when combined with "LICET," however, the "HIC" implies that Donne's remains are somewhere in close proximity to the text. And that implication is, as it turns out, even more misleading today than it was when "HIC" was inscribed upon the original plaque. An 1872 drawing by St. Paul's surveyor Francis Cranmer Penrose shows the floor plan of the Wren cathedral superimposed upon that of the old building: the axis of Wren's structure is skewed south vis-à-vis the axis of the previous structure in such a way that the current south quire aisle and all of the statuary along its south wall are located *outside* the space occupied by the building as it existed in 1633. The current monument is thus located not above the crypt of the old cathedral where Donne is buried, but above an area outside of the old cathedral's walls.

Analyzing the language of Donne's epitaph as I do above does not require setting foot in St. Paul's. And close reading of this kind can be further enhanced by intertextual approaches such as those of Joshua Scodel and Anita Gilman Sherman. Both read the epitaph within the context of Donne's other epitaphic works: the other Latin tomb inscriptions he composed, lyric poems such as "The Paradox" and "A Nocturnall Upon St. Lucie's Day," and a fascinating "Epitaph on Himself" that is appended to one of Donne's verse epistles ("To the Countess of Bedford": "That I might make your cabinet my tomb") (see Scodel 113-29; Sherman 153-68). In addition, Scodel puts Donne's epitaphic writing into conversation with Thomas Carew's well-known elegy on Donne (129-39); and Sherman—who follows Peterson's lead in taking the Hollar and Sedgwick illustrations as her sources for the text of the epigraph—compares and contrasts Donne's and Shakespeare's approaches to epitaph (168-89). Each of these approaches yields rich insights. But something is inevitably missing. Such readings do not grapple with how a reader's response to the epitaph is shaped by her experience of being in St. Paul's south quire aisle, nor can they account for the affective impact of the Nicholas

Stone statue that stands in a niche beneath the epitaph. Whether one is attempting to reconstruct the effect that the epitaph would have had upon readers who encountered it within its original position in Old St. Paul's or monitoring one's own response to the restored epitaph, one must consider the statue's un-reproducible Benjaminian "aura"—the impression made upon the viewer (and toucher) by that hauntingly material shrouded form and that coolly enduring grey-white marble, now partially ochre-colored after its passage through the Great Fire.[17]

But reading with a feel for the poetics of place in turn leaves unresolved the conundrum posed by the textual variants in the restored plaque above Donne's statue. If an epitaph is a concrete poem inseparable from its medium, then its words—graven in stone—ought to be read in person, without the mediating force of mechanical or digital reproduction. What is the good of analyzing a restoration containing dubious variants? One answer, I think, lies in Fraistat's concept of "contexture"; the restored plaque is now the only *concrete* (as opposed to printed, drawn, or engraved) instantiation of the text that one can experience, and today's cathedral is the contextural frame within which that experience takes place. Only within that frame can one be in the presence of the monument as one reads the epitaph.[18] It was with this notion of place-based contexture in mind, then, that I decided—three years after my initial failure to view Donne's memorial—to return to St. Paul's and pay for entry to the areas not used for public worship.

I planned that, in viewing the plaque, I would construct what I thought of as an eclectic edition of the mind. I would collate in my head the text inscribed in the stone and the one I had read in Peterson's article, and I would close read this collation. It seemed a reasonable plan. But I forgot it altogether as soon as I entered the south quire aisle and caught sight of Donne's statue. Tears sprang into my eyes without warning; I felt them and noticed the blurring of my vision even before I was able to detect the heart-swell of which they were the outward sign. Aura, indeed. I lack the poetry to articulate what I felt.

After musing for a time on the marble figure and gently touching the scorch marks I had so longed to see, I sat down on the wooden steps opposite the statue and sketched it.

Figure 2. Donne's monument in St. Paul's Cathedral, present day.[19]

Instead of meditating on the Latin inscription above the statue (or collating it with the text of the Hollar engraving), I found myself watching tourists' responses to the effigy; no one, it seemed, was looking at the plaque above the statue. The shrouded figure is, after all, the main attraction; it is the part of the monument that dates from the seventeenth century, and responding to it does not require a person to know Latin or to have studied a translation.

Many of the visitors were listening, as I also did before leaving the south quire aisle, to the audio commentary provided by the mobile

multimedia guide issued along with our tickets. In the English recording, that commentary is made by the current Dean of the cathedral, the Very Reverend David Ison; and what he says resonates with my experience as a reluctant consumer of the Cathedral-as-Museum.[20] Introducing the Donne monument, Ison explains that, in Donne's time, the Cathedral was funded by the government; he also notes that Donne's principal role as Dean was to preach, defending the English Church against the Roman Church. His own role, Ison says, is to manage the Cathedral as a business and to keep the toilets running. These remarks underscore the relevance of Benjamin's remarks on exhibition value versus cult value. Ison assumed his post in 2012, following the October 2011 resignation of his predecessor, whose stern handling of Occupy London protesters provoked controversy (see "Dean") and "New dean"). In the face of the Occupy Movement, it was no doubt impossible for either man to draw a clean line between the Cathedral as sacred space and the structure as art-space, between its religious function as a place of worship and its socio-economic significance as an iconic building under siege.

Not surprisingly, then, the current environment of Donne's monument encourages the viewer not to attempt any such sharp distinctions. Particularly compelling is the relationship between Donne's epitaph and a work of visual art that one encounters when one continues eastward past Donne's statue. Mounted on the west-facing wall at the extreme east end of the south choir is the permanent video installation *Martyrs* by American artist Bill Viola.[21] On the "Martyrs" page of the website *Bill Viola at St. Paul's,* scrolling down past the description of Viola's work, one encounters a photograph by Peter Mallet that shows how Viola's installation is positioned vis-à-vis Donne's effigy. One can see the Donne statue, mounted on its urn, in the extreme foreground along the right edge of the photograph, providing part of the frame for the four plasma screens of *Martyrs*. The photograph brilliantly captures the way the Donne monument appears as one approaches the installation moving through the south quire aisle from west to east.

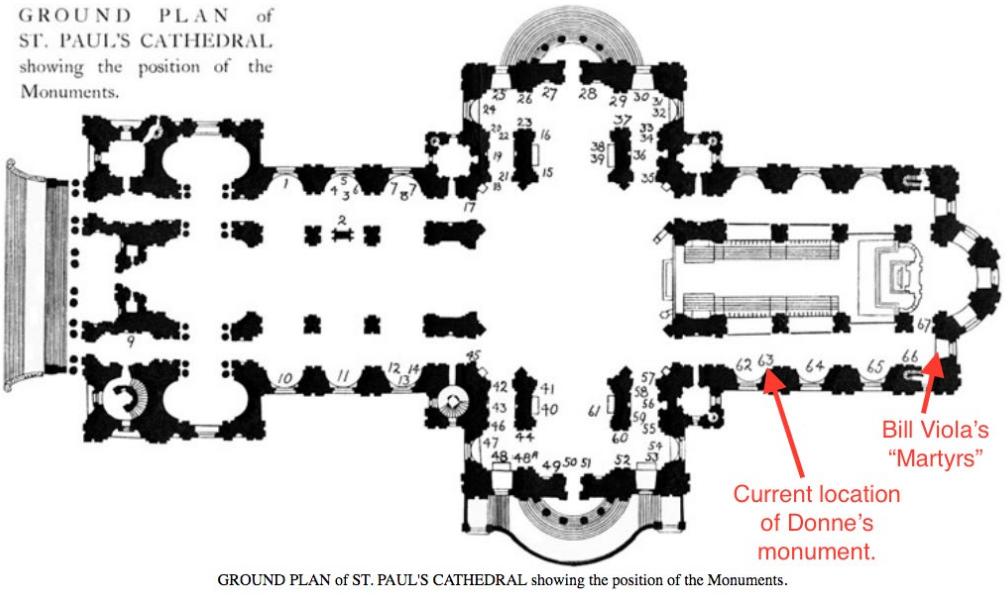


Figure 3. Position of Donne's monument vis-à-vis Viola's *Martyrs*.

Viola's video meditation, which the artist describes as a glimpse of martyrs' inner lives, invites the Donnean viewer to discover new and spiritually challenging ways of understanding the language of Donne's epitaph. First, one is reminded by the title of Viola's piece that Donne was the author of *Pseudo-Martyr* and *Biathanatos*, and that his reflections on the sacrifices of martyrs demonstrate a range of emotions from survivor's guilt to envy and from skepticism to reverence. In addition, Viola's representation of martyrs buffeted by the four elements resonates deeply for a viewer familiar with Donne's divine poems, which are replete with images of earth, air, fire, and water. Finally, reading the words "IN OCCIDVO CINERE" and "EVM / CVIVS NOMEN EST ORIENS" in juxtaposition with Viola's images re-ignites the words' elemental associations.

In the first image of Viola's work, the earth[22] that rises around the body of the human figure is as dry as ash; and though the actor was filmed under a cascade of falling dust, gradually crumpling over to be buried beneath the accumulated grains, the film runs this action in reverse, showing his gradual rise *out* of the dust. In the next panel, the winds pounding the roped body of the female air-martyr vividly illustrate "the inspiration and shocking impact of the Holy Spirit"—

"INSTINCTV ET IMPVLSV SPIR: SCTI:"—to which Donne's priestly vocation is attributed in the epitaph.

Even more relevant to Donne's epitaph are Viola's last two frames: one in which flames descend upon and eventually engulf a seated man and another in which a man is hanged head down, inundated by water, and then slowly pulled up and out of the frame. For a Donne scholar, these two sequences evoke Donne's "litle World, made cunningly / Of Elements" (*HSWorld* 1-2; *Variorum* 7.1: 14) in which the soul is burnt by apocalyptic fire and the body drowned in baptismal waters. But the video images also challenge key words in Donne's epitaph: in the third frame of Viola's piece, a body that has been enveloped and purged by descending flames remains intact, not "IN OCCIDVO CINERE." And in the fourth, the martyr's rising motion is an "ORIENS" that does not distinguish neatly between dying and rising. At the beginning of this sequence, the man lies on the ground in a fetal position; he is slowly drawn upward by a rope tied to his feet, then washed over by a shimmering cascade of falling water. Next, as an unearthly white light illuminates each of the four figures from above and as the first three look upward toward it, the fourth—hanging head down—flexes the muscles of his chest and spreads his arms wide like St. Peter on an inverted crucifix. Finally, he ascends, pulled upward and out of the frame.

Together, the four videos, executed in a medium *composed* of light, using light symbolically, and positioned to the east of Donne's monument, speak of the luminous hope inhering in the epitaph's word "ORIENS." Viola's work thus re-defines the space in which Donne's epitaph is housed and, with it, the experience of the reader who encounters Donne's concrete poem within that space. The light it casts upon the epitaph fruitfully blurs such binaries as cult value and exhibition value, sacred and secular, original and facsimile, text and intertext, close reading and visceral response.

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NOTES

[1]Influential New Critical approaches to Donne include those of Brooks, Sanders, Tate, and Unger. On the methods and implications of the *Variorum* project, see Stringer. On the importance of preaching venue in the Oxford edition of Donne's sermons, see "Editorial Conventions."

[2]See *Variorum* 8: 198-99; the wording found in Holland and on the restored plaque is substantially the same as that in Stow, in Walton, and in Dugdale's transcription (63), which contradicts the wording shown in Hollar's engraving on the page facing the transcription (Dugdale 62).

[3]This essay began as part of a panel at the 2018 MLA Convention: "Donne and/or Close Reading: Rejecting, Reevaluating, Renewing Critical Approaches," which was sponsored by the John Donne Society. I am grateful to the panel organizer and respondent, Heather Dubrow, and to my co-presenters, Judith H. Anderson and Matthew Zarnowiecki, for the fruitful critical exchanges the panel generated.

[4]The original orientation of the effigy is a subject of some debate because Hollar's diagram showing the locations of the various monuments in Old St. Paul's (in Dugdale [plate following p. 159) may be interpreted to imply that the effigy was affixed to the eastern side of a pier at the western end of the south choir and thus faced east (as Foxell believes [5-6]) or to imply that it was affixed to the north wall of the south choir and thus faced south (as Peterson thinks more likely [3n4, 24-25, and Figure 2]).

[5]These illustrations, and the one in Figure 3 below, are screenshots from the Project Gutenberg transcription of Dimock with my annotations in red. I am uncertain of the origin of the illustration for the Wren floorplan reproduced in Dimock's text, but Dimock's image of the Old St. Paul's floorplan is clearly based upon Hollar's diagram in Dugdale.

[6]Cf. Bauer and Zirker for an intertextual study of works by Donne and Shakespeare in which "the grave or monument is the site" of "intense exchange between human actors" as well as of "interaction between the living and the dead" (18).

[7]On the grave as unmarked, see Walton (Sig. [B6v]-C[1]). Ms. Jen Powell, Adult Learning Programme Manager at St. Paul's Cathedral, confirms that the grave is almost certainly somewhere in the Cathedral crypt: "My colleagues in the Collections Department think John Donne must have been buried in the crypt; he did not have a chamber tomb on the cathedral floor and he was a burial rather than a cremation, so the crypt is where he would have been."

[8]See Newstok, who points out that, through the word "here," an "epitaph claims, explicitly or through indirection," that *it* (the text) is located "in close proximity to human remains. However, this is just ... enough ... space ... to make the epitaph disjoint from the body, and in its very claims to accuracy in location, the epitaphic gesture becomes open to a manipulation akin to metaphor, or even synecdoche—a figure that represents something through a version of indication"

(58; the dramatic ellipses are Newstok's). Donne appreciated that the word "lye" is particularly "open to manipulation"—to use Newstok's phrase—in ways that connect recumbent posture to false statements. See, for example, his love lyric "The Paradox," which points to itself as a fabrication that in turn gives substance to that fountainhead of hyperbolic fictions, love: "Once I lov'd and dy'd; and am now become / Mine Epitaph and Tombe. / Here dead men speake their last, and so do I; / Love-slaine, loe, here I lye" (Donne, Shawcross ed. 149). On Donne's punning approach to the verb "lies" in his epigram "A Lame Begger," see DiPasquale, "Donne's *Epigrams*" (336-42).

[9]I have transcribed the text found on Hollar's engraving as shown in the high-resolution digital image at the University of Toronto's Wenceslaus Hollar Collection (see link in text above).

[10]As Eisendrath points out in discussing epitaphs' frequent use of the deictics *hic* (here) and *hoc* (this), "an epitaph claims to overcome the space of referentiality by collapsing the distinction between word and thing" (63).

[11]Cf. Dubrow, who notes that Donne's "deictic practices" tend to stress "the blurrings and the mergings, the distinctions and the indistinction" of what she calls "*prevenient proximity*": "a primarily spatial recording or negotiating of anticipated proximity to the divine" (94); see in particular her analysis of spatial and temporal deixis in Donne's "Hymne to God my God, in my Sicknesse" (103-04).

[12]For a geographical and phenomenological discussion of how "Here implies there, [and] now implies then," and of human life as "a perpetual stepping forward into light," see Tuan (127, 132, 134). For a multi-lingual survey of directional words' origin in terms for the rising and setting sun, see Brown. See also Hanks, who explains that, while both "(inter)subjective context" and a variety of socially-determined power-relations may affect the way deixis works, it may also be understood to function within the broad parameters of "a semantic field" wherein "the meaning of any individual item derives from its contrast with other items in the same domain" so that "the value of a term like 'here' depends upon its contrasts with other related terms including 'there'" (192).

[13]These include the Miles Coverdale Bible of 1535, the 1568 Bishops' Bible, the 1587 Geneva Bible, and the 1611. According to the *Variorum* commentary (8: 443), Donne's allusion to Zechariah 6:12 was first noted by Lightfoot (222). Foxell, who is my source for the Hebrew term, discusses the allusion at some length (8), explaining that *ṣemaḥ* means 'plant' or 'sprig' and "may also figuratively mean 'dawn.'" This is no doubt why the Clementine Latin Vulgate (1592) translates it as "Oriens," which the Catholic Douay/Rheims Bible (Old Testament published 1582) in turn translates as "the Orient." The only English Protestant translation that is close in spirit to Donne's choice of "Oriens," and to Stone's portrayal in the effigy of Donne's own face emerging from the folds of a shroud, is that of the 1395 Wycliffe Bible: "Lo! a man, Comynge forth, ether Borun [i.e., born], is his name, and vndir him it schal sprynge." Interestingly, the contemporary U.S. Roman Catholic translation (The New American Bible, Revised Edition) follows the early Protestant bibles in translating *ṣemaḥ* as "Branch," an epithet which—as Rose

explains—does not adequately account for the fact that *ṣemaḥ* is "a general term for what *sprouts* or *shoots* from the ground" (92); the 1917 Jewish Publication Society translation of the Tanakh translates the name of the prophesied figure as "the Shoot." My source for all biblical texts cited in this note is Studylight.org.

[14]Cf. Foxell's somewhat strained insistence that the epitaph's reference to Christ as "ORIENS" can be construed as "polemically sectarian" and that it implies Donne's preference for the English Church (8-9).

[15]For the nineteenth-century plaque, my sources are the photograph and transcription in the *Variorum* 8: 192-93.

[16]And even, I would add, one mounted above a statue that depicts the shrouded corpse of the deceased in a standing rather than supine posture. Donne's shrouded figure—unlike many tomb effigies in St. Paul's and elsewhere—stands erect; the feet are planted upon the top of the urn as though his body were emerging from it, but the folds of the shroud around his legs are draped as though the body beneath it were recumbent rather than standing. Commenting upon this anomaly, Foxell argues that it "enhances" the meaning of the monument: "the sculpting of the drapery as if the figure were recumbent indicates its position in the grave, and the absence of downward pull facilitates our seeing it as rising as well as descending" (5). On Walton's (very probably embellished) account of how Donne commissioned and posed for the deathbed painting that was (probably) Stone's point of departure for the sculpture, see Peterson (2-6, 25-26).

[17]Sherman comes close to including her own affective response to the effigy: "It literally stands alone in its eccentricity, radiating emotion" (184). More intensely personal are the urgent imperatives in the final lines in Brett Foster's poem "On a Prayer Shawl," written during the last year of Foster's life as he was battling colon cancer. Urging the degree to which he, wearing a prayer shawl given to him as a gift, resembles Donne in his shroud, the poet/speaker urges his reader to "Google Donne's little statue." But "Make no mistake," he then says: "Google can show you only a digital approximation. / It would be best for you to be taken there, to see / the marble close up. See for yourself. Make something of it." As Kimberly Johnson observes in her discussion of this previously unpublished poem (which she quotes in its entirety), Foster's final directive "interrupts the mortal abstraction of the self from historical entirety to absent idea, reemphasizing the physical as the primary instrument if meaningfulness" (Johnson 34).

[18]My approach here might also be understood within the context of "critical presentism" as defined by Hugh Grady, especially in his recent work on Walter Benjamin and John Donne (see Grady 1-8, 35-39, 53n10).

[19]Photograph by Aidan McRae Thomson. Reproduced by permission of the photographer.

[20]Though the multimedia guides were first made available to the public in 2010, the recorded remarks on Donne's monument are by the current Dean of the Cathedral, The Very Reverend David Ison (Dean of the St. Paul's, March 2012-present).

[21]On the ways in which contemporary art installations can refine contemporary readers' appreciation for deixis, see Dubrow 23-27.

[22]The *Público* website allows users to proceed to the *Martyrs* videos without logging in, though one must see and hear an advertisement in order to gain access; I recommend muting the sound, as Viola's videos are silent.

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