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MELVILLE AND THE QUESTION OF CAMÕES

George Monteiro

Brown University

Of Herman Melville’s interest in the life and works of Luis de Camões there exists ample evidence. First, there continues to sing out from the pages of his novel White-Jacket (1850) the cries of the “matchless and unmatchable Jack Chase,” who appears to have been the young sailor Melville’s beau ideal: “For the last time, hear Camoens, boys!” ¹ Secondly, from the pages of Melville’s encyclopaedic novel Moby-Dick (1851) come unmistakable references to Camões’ poem of empire The Lusiad (1572), a work that Erich Auerbach calls “the great epic of the ocean.” ² Third, among the books in Melville’s library (the term library being defined to cover both the books owned by Melville and/or known to have been read by him) we can with confidence number The Lusiad: or The Discovery of India, translated by William Julius Mickle (1776), Poems, From the Portuguese of Luis de Camoens, translated by Lord Viscount Strangford (1803), and Poems of Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1854), the last of which includes the unmarried Miss Barrett’s “Catarina to Camoens,” a poem well known to Melville and, it has been suggested, useful to him in the writing of his long poem Clarel (1876). Fourth, several of Melville’s poems allude to or draw upon Camões’ work. And, finally, as culminating evidence of his abiding interest in the Portuguese poet, Melville has left us “Camoens,” a poem made up of paired sonnets entitled “Camoens” and “Camoens in the Hospital.”

Yet, important as Camões was to Melville, it was not until 1924 that their names were first linked in a scholarly piece. Without insisting on influence, Merritt Y. Hughes made the connection in an essay commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of Camões’ birth by relating the whale Moby Dick to the giant Adamastor.³ It would be another five years before another critic, Lewis Mumford, would again bring up the matter.⁴ Incidentally, it is possible that Mumford was consciously following up on Hughes’s hint, for it is all but certain that he had seen Hughes’s piece. The very issue of the New York Evening Post Literary Review that carried Hughes’s essay also carried a book review by Mumford.

Even Hughes’ and Mumford’s modest references to the links between Melville and Camões stand out nearly alone in Melville scholarship until Newton Arvin’s seminal pages on the subject of
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Camões and Melville appeared in his American Men of Letters volume on Melville in 1950. "It is hard indeed not to feel that Moby Dick would have been somewhat different from what it is," decided Arvin, "if Melville had not known the Lusiads."5 Arvin’s work was followed by Leon Howard’s consideration in his biography of 1951,6 a work writing upon the documentary materials assembled by Jay Leyda for his two volumes of The Melville Log published in the same year,7 and by Lawrance Thompson’s provocative study Melville’s Quarrel With God (1952). Incidentally, Thompson became the first critic to attend in detail to the two soliloquies constituting Melville’s poem “Camoens.”8

In the same year, 1952, appeared the Hendricks House edition of Moby-Dick, edited with copious explanatory notes (in which references to and echoes of The Lusiads were identified) by Luther S. Mansfield and Howard P. Vincent.9

The 1960s brought the first recognition of the Camões—Melville connection from scholars in the Portuguese-speaking countries of Brazil and Portugal. First there was a passing reference by the Brazilian Augusto Meyer,10 and then, in The Portuguese and the Tropics (called in the original O Luso e o Trópico), a second Brazilian, Gilberto Freyre, incorporated considerations of both writers into his elaboration of his immediately appealing if somewhat controversial theory of lusotropicalism.11 The publication of Freyre’s influential book prompted some appropriate remarks on the subject of Camões and Melville by the Portuguese scholar Américo da Costa Ramalho.12

These pioneering efforts paved the way for most of the subsequent studies of the Camões—Melville connection. Salient among these are Brian F. Head’s piece published in English in Brazil in 1964,13 William H. Shurr’s contextual commentary on Melville’s poems in 1972,14 Edwin Haviland Miller’s suggestive pages in 1975,15 my own article in 1978 on Melville’s re-reading in 1867 of Lord Strangford’s Poems (an expanded version of which appeared in 1982).16 Lucy M. Freibert’s study of the influence on Melville’s Clarel of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s work, especially her poem “Catarina to Camoens,”17 and Alexandrino P. Severino’s essay on Camoenean echoes and traces in Moby-Dick, a piece based on his talk at the Modern Language Association meetings in New York in 1972.18

Yet for all of this, there is still much to be done, for the subject of Camões and Melville—their personal and intertextual relationships—is far from exhausted. To throw out a couple of ideas, as examples that cannot be pursued here: William Julius Mickle distinguishes between John Milton’s Paradise Lost and Camões’ The Lusiads: “In
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contradistinction to the Iliad and Æneid, the Paradise Lost has been called the Epic Poem of Religion. In the same manner may the Lusiad be named the Epic Poem of Commerce.\textsuperscript{19} Is it far-fetched to suggest that Melville in \textit{Moby-Dick}, taking hints from all earlier epics, but specifically the notion suggested by Mickle, attempted, by focusing on whaling, to write the great American Epic Poem of Commerce? Moreover, just as Camões wrote his celebratory poem in the years of Portugal’s decline as a nation of explorers, so, too, did Melville choose to romanticize the industry of whaling when it had fallen into decline and disrepute. Ishmael puts the matter succinctly in “The Advocate” (Chapter 24). “This business of whaling has somehow come to be regarded among landsmen as a rather unpoetical and disreputable pursuit,” he explains, “therefore, I am all anxiety to convince ye, ye landsmen, of the injustice hereby done to us hunters of whales” (p. 106). And as for Ishmael, was not Melville’s decision to make his first-person narrator a member of Captain Ahab’s crew anticipated by Camões’ decision to place himself, both ahistorically and anachronistically, on Vasco da Gama’s ship of exploration? These and other matters, particularly in the cases of \textit{Moby-Dick} and Melville’s last work of fiction, \textit{Billy Budd}, are still open to scholarly and critical investigation. But what I shall do here is something else. I shall look at the ways in which Camões’ life and work served Herman Melville the poet. In short, I shall examine the evidence supporting the notion that not only is Camões present in some of Melville’s poems but that the circumstances of Camões’ life became increasingly emblematic to Melville in the last decade of his life, a period almost exclusively devoted to poetry.

To begin with, there is a poem from Melville’s first collection of poetry, published in 1866, a year after the end of the War Between the States. In \textit{Battle-Pieces and Aspects of War} appears the poem entitled “The Fortitude of the North under the Disaster of the Second Manassas”:

No shame they take for dark defeat
While prizing yet each victory won,
Who fight for the Right through all retreat,
Nor pause until their work is done.
The Cape-of-Storms is proof to every throe;
Vainly against that foreland beat
Wild winds aloft and wilder waves below:
The black cliffs gleam through rents in sleet
When the livid Antarctic storm-clouds glow.\textsuperscript{20}
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The poem turns on a simple comparison. The Northern army, defeated for the second time at Manassas, is compared to the Cape-of-Storms, that foreland whose “black cliffs” are impervious to winds and waves, to sleet and storm-clouds.

This rather direct poem has not been materially misread. Yet that it is touched by Camões has gone undetected. Indeed Melville’s reference to “The Cape-of-Storms” recalls Camões’ “Cabo Tormentorio” (V, 50, 65; X, 37), which Mickle renders as “the Cape of Tempests.”21 Robert Penn Warren and Hennig Cohen, two of the more prominent critics who have worked with Melville’s poetry, misfire when they identify “The Cape-of-Storms” as a reference to Cape Horn. Cohen simply Gets it wrong when, annotating the poem, he says: “For Melville, Cape Horn, the ‘Cape-of-Storms,’ was a place of great tribulation. He had rounded it as a seaman and a passenger, and in his journal de August 7, 1860, gave it this telling description: ‘Horrible snowy mountains — black, thunder-cloud woods — gorges — hell-landscapes.’”22 Warren, on the other hand, linking “The Fortitude of the North under the Disaster of the Second Manassas” with an earlier poem, “The March Into Virginia Ending in the First Manassas,” draws on the reference to “The Cape-of-Storms” to insist: “Once the nature of the self and the terms of life are clear, one can bear the ‘throe.’ So here the theme of the poem goes back to Melville’s old obsessive theme. First Manassas is like the Horn that must be rounded if man is to be fully man.”23 But it is not Cape Horn that is traditionally known as the Cape of Storms. The key, of course, is not in Melville’s references to Cape Horn in a letter or an entry in his journal,24 but in his novels. In “The Spirit-Spout,” Chapter 51 of Moby-Dick, Ishmael cries out: “Cape of Good Hope, do they call ye? Rather Cape Tormentoto, as called of yore” (p. 233). And earlier, in White-Jacket, Melville writes: “Turned on her heel by a fierce West Wind, many an outward-bound ship has been driven across the Southern Ocean to the Cape of Good Hope—that way to seek a passage to the Pacific. And that stormy Cape, I doubt not, has sent many a fine craft to the bottom, and told no tales.”25

When we turn to John Marr and Other Sailors with Some Sea-Pieces, Melville’s second collection of lyric poems, published in 1888, we find Camões all but named in “Crossing the Tropics,” a twenty-one line poem divided into three stanzas of five lines each followed by a couplet. This is a nicely turned love poem that would not usually call for special attention. Given the topic of Camões’ presence in
Melville’s poetry, however, I would point to the reference to Vasco da Gama in lines ten and twelve:

By day the blue and silver sea
   And chime of waters blandly fanned—
Nor these, nor Gama’s stars to me
May yield delight since still for thee
   I long as Gama longed for land. (Coll. Poems, p. 202)

Since Mickle’s translation of The Lusiads was most likely Melville’s principal text for knowledge of Vasco da Gama, it is reasonable to look in that place for a specific source for Melville’s references in this poem. Brian Head points to such a place, Canto 5, stanzas 13-15 (Head, p. 65). I limit myself to quoting three lines:

While nightly thus the lonely seas we brave
   Another Pole-star rises o’er the wave;
   Full to the south a shining cross appears[].26

These lines are echoed by Melville at the very opening of his poem:

While now the Pole Star sinks from sight
   The Southern Cross it climbs the sky[]. (Coll. Poems, p. 202)

Melville’s use of Camões in “Crossing the Tropics” is not particularly suggestive. His borrowings from The Lusiads are tributary, of course, but only in the way a professional might tip his hat at the achievement of a fellow craftsman. The borrowings in this poem are not deeply personal, as they will become in other poems.

One other poem in this collection deserves a new look. Head (p. 65) has suggested that “The Enviable Isles” may have been “at least partly inspired by Camoens’ ‘Isle of Love.’”

Through storms you reach them and from storms are free.
   Afar descried, the foremost drear in hue,
But, nearer, green; and, on the marge, the sea
   Makes thunder low and mist of rainbowed dew.

But, inland, where the sleep that folds the hills
A dreamier sleep, the trance of God, instills—
On uplands hazed, in wandering airs aswown,
Slow-swaying palms salute love’s cypress tree
   Adown in vale where pebbly runlets croon
A song to lull all sorrow and all glee.
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Sweet-fern and moss in many a glade are here,
Where, strown in flocks, what check-flushed myriads lie
Dimpling in dream—unconscious slumberers mere,
While billows endless round the beaches die.

(Coll. Poems, p. 204)

Head adduces passages from Mickle's translation of Camões' description of this place (Canto 9), which I shall not reproduce here. The Melville who had visited the, at least superficially, Edenic islands of the Pacific and who would incorporate those experiences in his early books, Typee and Mardi, did not miss, one can be sure, as Head first pointed out, Camões' verses on the Blessed Isles as the locus of seductive beauty and enticing serenity. The suggestion that Melville's poem is indebted to Camões is plausible, though there is some likelihood that the similarities point as well to a more generic debt the two of them share with Homer, Vergil, Milton, Dante, Spenser, Ariosto and Tasso.

Head's additional suggestion that the four-line poem "In a Garret," published in Timoleon in 1891, can be related to the life of Camões has not hitherto been picked up by Melville scholars. Yet it does seem to me that it has considerable merit though I do think that the case Head makes for it can be enhanced. "In a Garret" reads:

Gems and jewels let them heap—
Wax sumptuous as the Sophi:
For me, to grapple from Art's deep
One dripping trophy! (Coll. Poems, p. 228)

Head points to the fact that in White-Jacket Melville has Jack Chase, the lover of Camões, refer to "the cave at the end of the flowery, winding way, where Camoens, according to tradition, composed certain parts of his Lusiad." He then adduces an original meaning for "garret"—that is, "shelter"—and equates "shelter" with "cave" to make his link in this poem between Melville and Camões. One additional connection that he does not make is the one implicit in the phonological similitudes in the words "garret" and "grotto," the latter a term used to describe the place in Macão made available to Camões while he was exiled from Goa and where he worked on his epic poem. As John Adamson writes, "A Grotto is shewn at Macão, wherein tradition reports Camoens spent great part of the time, during which he was employed on the completion of his poem: accounts of it may be seen in the works of the authors, who have recorded the proceedings of the two last embassies sent from England to China. It is still called
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The Grotto of Camões." The same information was available to Melville in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's massive anthology of European poetry in translation first published in 1845, where he could have read that in Macao Camões "spent much of his time in a grotto overlooking the sea, and there the greater part of the 'Lusiad' is said to have been written. The place is still shown to strangers as the Grotto of Camões."

In 1964, the same year in which Head published his speculative reading of the poem, appeared Henri Cohen's Selected Poems of Herman Melville, a carefully prepared edition armed with commentary. What he says about "In a Garret" has some bearing on the question of how Camões functions as a presence in the poem. Cohen (pp. 232-233) begins by glossing Melville's reference in the second line of the poem to "Sophi."

He sees it as referring to St. Sophia in Constantinople, which Melville visited in 1856 while on his travels in the Near East. "Supurb [sic] interior," wrote Melville in his journal, "Precious marbles Porphyry & Verd antique. Immense magnitude of the building.'" In a second entry, also quoted by Cohen, he added: "Owing to its peculiar [sic] form St: Sophia viewed near to, looks as partly underground; as if you saw but the superstructure of some immense temple, yet to be disinterred. You step down to enter." Fortified by Melville's references, Cohen interprets the poem as follows:

The impression of the sumptuousness of the building is retained in the poem and the need to descend in order to enter it may lie behind the nautical imagery of grappling for objects from the depths of the sea. However, the word "grapple" also indicates the strain and conflict involved in plumbing the depths. Melville rejects great riches accumulated through the efforts of others for the opportunity to grapple for a single gem himself. If he had in mind the significance of the name St. Sophia, in English "Holy Wisdom," then the poem hints at an opposition between philosophy and art in the process of artistic creativity. (Sel. Poems, p. 233)

"Sophi" refers, of course, first of all to the Persian princes whose waxing sumptuously results from an accumulation of gems and jewels. (Whether or not "Sophi" also refers to "the Magian priests" who brought myrrh and frankincense—in Melville's poem symbolized by "wax"—as William Bysshe Stein has suggested, I shall not venture.) But it is Melville's nautical imagery, unexamined as such by Head or
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Stein but pointed to by Cohen, that enhances the likelihood that Camões is present in the poem, however buried and disguised. Within Melville's asserted choice—"For me to grapple from Art's deep/ One dripping trophy"—are references to two poets: Schiller and Camões. Cohen points to Schiller and his poem "The Diver":

Titles which Melville considered but discarded include "Ambition," "Schiller's Ambition," and "The Spirit of Schiller." His copy of Schiller's Poems and Ballads in the translation of Edward Bulwer Lytton shows marked passages in "The Diver." This ballad is about a brave, ambitious squire who plunges into a maelstrom to recover a golden cup in response to the challenge of the king. When he succeeds, the king offers him the hand of his daughter if he dives for the goblet a second time. The squire does so and is drowned though he himself had warned that one should not "stretch too far the wide mercy of Heaven." "In a Garret" shares the idea of the risks involved in plunging for "One dripping trophy."32

Without gainsaying the strong evidence that Schiller was on Melville's mind when he entitled his poem on art and creativity, I would argue that at least subconsciously Camões was also on his mind. In Mickle's pages on Camões' life Melville had learned of the legendary survival of Camões' manuscript of The Lusiads. "Desirous to return to Goa," Mickle tells us, "he set sail, but was shipwrecked in the gulf near the mouth of the river Mecon, in Cochin-China. All he had acquired was lost in the waves: his poems, which he held in one hand, while he saved himself with the other, were all he found himself possessed of, while he stood friendless on the unknown shore" (Mickle, pp. lxx-lxxi). In Book 7 of The Lusiads Camões refers to the shipwreck:

Now bless'd with all the wealth fond hope could crave,
Soon I beheld that wealth beneath the wave
For ever lost; myself escaped alone,
On the wild shore all friendless, hopeless, thrown;
My life, like Judah's heaven-doom'd king of yore,
By miracle prolong'd; yet not the more
To end my sorrows: woes succeeding woes
Belied my earnest hopes of sweet repose:
In place of bays around my brows to shed
Their sacred honours, o'er my destined head
Foul Calumny proclaim'd the fraudulent tale,
And left me mourning in a dreary jail. (pp. 180-181)
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Obviously, one can point to the choice made by the shipwrecked Camões—his manuscript over any other kind of wealth—as not unrelated to the choice of “One dripping trophy” from “Art’s deep” indicated in Melville’s poem. To have grappled to keep The Lusiads from falling back into the depths of the subconscious (“Art” in Melville’s poem) only to lose the manuscript itself to the very sea that is both emblematic and natural would have been the poet’s greatest tragedy. The Lusiads, so saved from what Joseph Conrad called the destructive element, stands as the kind of “dripping trophy” that Melville would prize over all of the Sophi’s gems and jewels. As one of Melville’s contemporaries put it in 1848, “With but a single plank to which he could cling for succor, he suffered all else to perish—the savings of his exile—all his earthly possessions save the treasure of his heart, and to rescue this he struggled with the mighty ocean and was victor! He rescued his poem and himself, not without difficulty, from a watery grave.”\(^{33}\) It occurs to me, moreover, as I look back at Camões’ lines just quoted, that in employing the phrase “myself escaped alone”—with its echo of Job—Mickle anticipates Melville’s use of the same Jocean verse in Moby-Dick when, in the epilogue, Ishmael says: “And I only am escaped alone to tell thee” (p. 567).

Immediately preceding “In a Garret” in Cohen’s edition of Melville’s poems appears the poem “The Garden of Metrodorus,” also from the volume Timoleon:

The Athenians mark the moss-grown gate  
And hedge untrimmed that hides the haven green:  
And who keeps here his quiet state?  
And shares he sad or happy fate  
Where never foot-path to the gate is seen?

Here none come forth, here none go in,  
Here silence strange, and dumb seclusion dwell:  
Content from loneliness who may win?  
And is this stillness peace or sin  
Which noteless thus apart can keep its dell?  

(Sel. Poems, p. 140)

Cohen’s commentary is pertinent to our investigation into the matter of Camões’ presence in Melville’s poetry. He is alone, among Melville’s critics, in hinting at a connection, or at least evidence of an affinity, between the sentiments expressed in “The Garden of Metrodorus” and similar sentiments expressed in Camões’ poetry. Darrell Abel writes (p.
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335): “The Garden of Metrodorus’...symbolizes the cryptic character of the philosopher and his domain as seen by ordinary men, who may casually wonder about his esoteric experience but have no conception of its realities.” Cohen, on the other hand, sees it more as a poem about withdrawal and, perhaps by implication, estrangement (Sel. Poems, p. 232): “Melville suggests that the withdrawal into the silent, unkempt garden is in itself a puzzling response and raises more questions than it answers: for example, questions of whether the state of quietude is one of happiness or sadness, peace or sin. But he himself was sympathetic to withdrawal.” Cohen then follows up with this interesting sentence:

In his copy of Camoëns poetry he marked this passage from “Sonnet VI”:
My senses lost, misjudging men declare[,] And Reason banish’d from her mental throne, Because I shun the crowd, and dwell alone. (p. 232)

These opening lines, marked by Melville in the copy of Strangford’s Poems he acquired on May 17, 1867, were not the only lines so marked by the sympathizing author. In fact, the page appears as follows:

SONNET VI. (V.N.)

“Julgane a gente toda por perdido
Vendome tão entregue a meu cuidado,” &c.

| My senses lost, misjudging men declare, |
| And Reason banish’d from her mental throne, |
| Because I shun the crowd, and dwell alone |
| In the calm trance of undisturb’d despair, |
| Tears all my pleasure—all my comfort care! |
| But I have known, from long experience known |
| How vain the worship to those idols shown, |
| Which charm the world, and reign unrivall’d there: |
| Proud dreams of pow’r, and fortune’s gilded glare, |
| The lights that blaze in tall Ambition’s tow’r, |
| For such, let others waste life’s little hour |
| In toil and weary search—but be it mine, |
| Lady! to muse of thee—and in my bow’r |
| Pour to thy praise the soul-impassion’d line! |

Here, too, as in “The Garden of Metrodorus,” “the single-minded good man is crushed by less naive forces and cast out.” Here, with this poem by Camoëns, we can build a bridge between the Melville of “In a
Garret,” committed to Art and grappling for “one dripping trophy,” and the Melville who, late in life, devoted one two-part poem to Camões.

Among the some forty poems Melville left in manuscript at the time of his death in 1891 at the age of seventy-two—including poems on Shakespeare’s Falstaff, Don Quixote, Montaigne—was, preeminently, a poem devoted to Camões. This poem remained unpublished until 1924, when it appeared under the rubric of “Miscellaneous Poems” in volume sixteen—Poems—of The Works of Herman Melville brought out by Constable, the British publisher. The poem has been reprinted several times since, of course, but never to my knowledge exactly as it first appeared in the Constable edition, for it is the version published in Howard P. Vincent’s Hendricks House edition, of the Collected Poems published in 1947 that has become standard. Yet since the Constable and Hendricks House versions both have authority in the extant manuscripts—the textual differences resulting from editorial decisions—it seems consonant with my present purpose to offer you the longer, Constable version of the poem “Camoens.” Three minor typographical errors have been corrected silently.

CAMOENS
(Before)

And ever must I fan this fire?
Thus ever in flame on flame aspire?
Ever restless, restless, craving rest—
The Imperfect toward Perfection pressed!
Yea, for the God demands thy best.
The world with endless beauty teems,
And thought evokes new worlds of dreams:
Hunt then the flying herds of themes!
And fan, still fan, thy fervid fire,
Until thy crucibled gold shall show
That fire can purge as well as glow.
In ordered ardour, nobly strong,
Flame to the height of epic song.

(After)
CAMOENS IN THE HOSPITAL

What now avails the pageant verse,
Trophies and arms with music borne?
Base is the world; and some rehearse
How noblest meet ignoble scorn,
Vain now thy ardour, vain thy fire,
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Delirium mere, unsound desire;  
Fate's knife hath ripped thy chorted lyre.  
Exhausted by the exacting lay,  
Thou dost but fall a surer prey  
To wile and guile ill understood;  
While they who work them, fair in face,  
Still keep their strength in prudent place,  
And claim they worthier run life's race,  
Serving high God with useful good.\(^{36}\)

There is much to be said about these two sonnets (though the first one, a sonnet manqué, runs to thirteen lines) but I shall limit myself to two or three observations. First, it will be immediately noted that in these first-person verses spoken in the voice of the Portuguese poet we are intended to hear, in sequence, the voice, first, of the poet in mid-career and, secondly, the voice of the ageing and infirm poet. In the former, the poet resorts to imagery of fire and crucibles to describe the poetic fervor he feels as he composes his epic song. In full stride, in the finest line in poem, he “hunt[es] then the flying herds of themes.” Here, then, are his two metaphors: those of the poet at his forging, and the poet as hunter. The speaker exudes strength, passion and purpose. In the latter sonnet, subtitled, it will be recalled, “Camoens in the Hospital,” the tone is plaintive and recriminatory. “Vain now thy ardour, vain thy fire,” the poet laments. He has fallen victim, finally, to his art. He has been “exhausted by the exacting lay” and is prey, thus, to the “wiles” and “snares” (alternative manuscript reading in the manuscript) of those who have been more prudent, those who claim to have served “high God” in “practical mood” (again an alternative manuscript reading). It is as if, in this poem, Melville were trying to sound once again the note he had found in Ecclesiastes, as he acknowledged in Moby-Dick (p. 422): “the fine hammered steel of woe.”

There is, of course, ample justification in the accounts of Camões known to Melville—those of his translators, Mickle and Strangford—for the double portrait (before and after) Melville gives us. Consider, for instance, the testimony of Josepe Indio, who testified that he had been present in 1579 at the poet’s death in an alms-house:

What a lamentable thing to see so great a genius so ill rewarded! I saw him die in an hospital in Lisbon, without having a sheet (shroud) to cover him, after having triumphed in the East Indies, and sailed 5500 leagues! What good advice for those, who weary themselves night
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and day in study without profit, as the spider weaves its webs to catch flies.\textsuperscript{37}

It is of little matter that historians have questioned the historicity of such accounts, for the legend of the poet maligned and neglected has a long history. Yet there is a puzzling fact about the extant manuscript for this poem. The word “Tasso” is written besides the rubrics of both verses of the poem. The first sheet reads:

\begin{center}
Camoens \hspace{2cm} \textit{Before} \\
\hspace{2cm} \textit{Tasso} \\
\hspace{2cm} (Before)
\end{center}

And the second one contains an explanatory tag:

\begin{center}
\textit{Suggested by a bust of that poet Tasso \textit{[\textit{.}]}}\textsuperscript{38}
\end{center}

Melville knew both the poetry of Torquato Tasso, of course, and the story of his woeful life. Available to him was the scholarship of Richard Henry Wilde, the poet and translator of Camões, who entitled his book \textit{Conjectures and Researches Concerning the Love, Madness \& Imprisonment of Torquato Tasso} (New York: Alexander V. Blake, 1842). He knew as well Baroness de Staël-Holstein’s \textit{Germany}, in the second volume of which he scored and checked this passage: “The morbid sensibility of Tasso is well known, as well as the polished rudeness of his protector Alphonso, who, professing the highest admiration for his writings, shut him up in a mad-house, as if that genius which springs from the soul were to be treated like the production of a mechanical talent, by valuing the work while we despise the workman.”\textsuperscript{39} In 1857, in Europe on his way to the Levant, Melville made an obligatory visit to “St. Onofrio, church \& monastery, where Tasso expired.” “Tasso’s prison,” he wrote, “Mere cider-cellar. Grated window, but not strong” (\textit{Journal of a Visit}, pp. 207, 225).

In short, it is obvious that Tasso and Camões, melding somewhat in Melville’s mind, became emblematic for Melville of the fate of the poet in societies in which there was, to borrow Strangford’s words (\textit{Poems}, p. 24), a “decline of public spirit in matters of taste”—a “certain indication of political decay.” In 1881 Melville could have read in Richard Burton’s \textit{Camoens: His Life and His Lusiads}: “As Tasso, leaving the Hospital and Madhouse of St. Anne, found a last refuge in the Monastery of Saint, Onofrio, so his \textit{colto e buon Luigi} passed his
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latter days with the Religious of S. Domingos. Perhaps these were the only men, save the Licentiate Corrêa and a knot of personal friends, who could understand him" (Burton, 1:32).

The fact of the matter is that in his last years, perhaps for a decade or more, Melville took to seeing analogues for his own fate in the histories of other literary figures, both fictional and historical. In this sense, Camões' fate was Tasso's fate, and their fate was Melville's own. As such "Camoens" is a poem about the seemingly universal experience of these national poets. It was as if the epic poet who had sung of Gama and Adamastor, the epic poet who had written of the First Crusade, and the epic novelist who had sung the tragedy of Ahab and Moby Dick, belonged, ahistorically, to a cohort of genius in which each of the members had been accused of going mad. Yet, what each had done through his poetry, regardless of the low estate of each in an infirm old age, remained his own monument. This is the message proclaimed by Tasso, precociously for himself, in his own sonnet on Camões:

Vasco, whose bold and happy bowsprit bore
Against the rising morn; and, homeward fraught,
Whose sails came westward with the day, and brought
The wealth of India to thy native shore;

Ne'er did the Greek such length of seas explore,
The Greek, who sorrow to the Cyclop wrought;
And he, who, victor, with the Harpies fought,
Never such pomp of naval honours wore.

Great as thou art, and peerless in renown,
Yet thou to Camoens ow'st thy noblest fame;
Further than thou didst sail, his deathless song
Shall bear the dazzling splendour of thy name:
And under many a sky thy actions crown,
While Time and Fame together glide along.

(Mickle, p. xcvii)

Melville undoubtedly knew Tasso's poem, for it appears, in this translation, in Mickle's introduction to his English version of The Lusiads. For the Melville who had been largely forgotten in his own lifetime, it must have seemed bootless to believe other than that rather than any of his songs, especially Moby-Dick's, being "deathless," they had long since fallen into nothingness. Melville chose, then, in imagining the words of Camões (or Tasso) both in mid-career and at the
end of his life, to bring out, first, the impassioned confidence and, then, the bitter disappointment attendant to a poet who fears that his work has come to nothing. Happily what might have seemed to be outrageously hubristic in Melville’s later years—identifying himself with Camões and Tasso—has turned out to be, a century later, fairly close to the mark. *The Lusiads, Jerusalem Delivered, Moby-Dick*—merely to rehearse their titles suffices to make the point.

What I have said to this point stems logically from an initial decision to compile (and publish) a full collection of the available commentary and scholarship on the subject of Camões and Melville. The collection itself I chose to assemble chronologically because I thought others would be interested in the sequence of commentary and interpretation as established, seemingly, by dates of publication and by the provenience of certain observations and ideas insofar as I could trace them. In that compilation I did not make any attempt to weed out instances of repetition or overlapping, for those very instances seemed to me to be very much a part of the story of critical reception I would discover and display. This collection (soon to go to press) bears the same scholarly and methodological relationship, more or less, to a meticulously researched, richly detailed, and closely argued book (just out) bearing the title of *Melville’s Camões*, that Jay Leyda’s original *Melville Log* bears to Leon Howard’s biography of Melville. *Melville’s Camões* is the work of Norwood Andrews, Jr., and it was published in 1989 by Bouvier Verlag in Bonn. In it Andrews has brought together the existing scholarship, has synthesized it and organized it, and has put it back together to make the case anew for the importance that Camões held for Melville.

What Andrews reconfirms is (1) that Camões was even more important to Melville than the echoes of, and references to, Camões’ work that scholars have so far discovered would seem, at first glance, to indicate, and (2) that over his long career as a writer Melville found uses and reuses for Camões. In the paragraphs I have left, I will focus on only one of those uses, though because that use came late in Melville’s life and because it constitutes a major way in which Camões figures in Melville’s work, it takes on a truly large significance.

What are some of the implications in this late use of Camões that should be called to the attention of the student of Melville and his work? What are that student’s scholarly responsibilities, moreover, in the face of the fact that Melville insisted on superimposing his Camões on this Tasso? And if it is tenable to think that Melville identified closely with the Camões whose voice is dramatized in the two sonnets that constitute a single monologic poem (he had already unmistakably
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registered such an identification in 1867 when he annotated tellingly his recently acquired copy of Strangford’s translations of Camões’ lyric poetry), then what must the biographer make of the fact that in this late period of relative quietude (and reconciliation with the idea of living out his life with his wife and in marriage) Melville was still writing poems that are bitter in the words he gives us as spoken by his great predecessors, poems levelling charges of social neglect and personal abuse? Through these poems we can discover that Melville’s conception of those predecessors as maligned, neglected writers of genius enabled him to link his fate with that of other unquestionably great writers who suffered grievously at the end of their lives. The unrequited Melville plugs himself into an archetype or paradigm (one that belongs as much to history as to literature) that tells us much about Melville’s way of thinking about himself, at least at the time he was writing about Camões. That Melville changed his mind not only about the title of the poem but about the identity of the poem’s speaker suffices to tip us off that Melville at the end still saw himself—in “colossal cipher” (Emerson’s words)—as a member of the pantheon of the great epic writers who in their own time have not been decently treated or adequately appreciated. And more. Was not Melville also implying that under the guise of history the author of Moby-Dick would some day come into his own? What, then, are the implications of all this for the biography of a writer who at the end of his life, in a tale about mutiny, turned to the themes of law and society, innocence and depravity, will and determinism? How, too, will the biographer measure the mind and personality of the Melville who would apply metaphorically to himself what was literally true for Tasso (imprisonment) and for Camões (sickness and death in an almshouse)? What we have here at least (though it is also something more and different, I would suggest), is Melville’s rather pure and uncritical application to himself (revealed indirectly) of the romantic view of the artist woefully and ungraciously misused and abused by his society. This view of Melville (or one similar to it) has of course been the historical view of Melville that has prevailed in the twentieth century. In fact, the strong desire to believe in the historicity of this view stands behind the continuing refusal by many readers to acknowledge the fact that Melville’s works were not entirely ignored during the latter decades of his life or that they were absolutely forgotten in the three decades following his death. That in the 1890s alone there were available various inexpensive editions of his major fiction (including Moby-Dick), and that they were advertised, noticed and sold, is a fact that is itself ignored.
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Moreover, since Melville held this Romantic-Renaissance conception of himself so late in life, that information must be factored into biographical accounts of those last years. What did it mean to him and what should it mean to his late-twentieth-century readers that in his final years Herman Melville rationalized and aggrandized his situation as a "failed writer" (within quotation marks)? Did it somehow enable that last collection of poems he was working on at the time of his death as well as the unfinished Billy Budd?

ADDENDA

There is something to be said, at least in passing, for including Jorge de Sena, the twentieth-century Portuguese writer, in this discussion of Camões, Tasso, and Melville. Sena makes numerous references to Tasso throughout his voluminous studies of Camões and the traditions of fifteenth-century literature, and he even translated Tasso's sonnet on Camões, publishing it first in his anthology of world poetry, Poesia de 26 Séculos (Porto: Inova, 1971), 150, and then in the November 1972 issue of Ocidente devoted to Camões (p. 38). Of Tasso and Camões, Sena said once, "it was not without reason that the former died mad, just as the latter died of little more than hunger" (Trinta Anos de Camões [Lisbon: Edições 70, 1980], I, 53).

Sena was aware that Melville was an admirer of Camões. In an entry on the Portuguese poet in the fifteenth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1974) Sena observes: "The Italian poet Torquato Tasso's sonnet to him [Camões] and the admiring quotations by the Spanish writer Baltasar Gracián in his Agudeza y arte de ingenio (1648) are examples of his fame, which was also noted by the Spanish dramatist Lope de Vega and poets Góngora, Milton, Goethe, the German Romantics, Byron, the Brownings, and others among his admirers, the last, but not the least, being Herman Melville" (see also Trinta Anos de Camões, I, 299).

In 1961—on June 11th, the day after Camões Day, an event celebrated annually in various parts of the Portuguese-speaking world—Sena, like Melville decades earlier, adopted the voice of Camões for a first-person historical poem in which the angry poet delivers himself of a Philippic against all mediocrities who now oppose him as well as those who will oppose him in the future. In "Camões Addresses His Contemporaries"("Camões dirige-se aos seus contemporâneos"), Sena writes (in my translation):

Rob me blind:
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My ideas, words, images,
Metaphors too, themes, motives,
Symbols, and the primacy
In feeling the pains of a new language,
In the understanding of others,
The courage to fight, judge, and to
Penetrate into the recesses of that
Love for which you are castrated.
And then you shall fail to acknowledge me,
Suppress me, ignore me, even acclaim
Other more fortunate thieves.
No great matter, for the punishment
Will be terrible. Not only when your
Grandchildren no longer know you
Will they have to know me better even than
That which you pretend not to know, for
All, all that you so laboriously steal,
Shall revert to my ownership. And
Even that will be mine, taken for
My property, counted as mine, those
Small and miserly things that you,
Without robbing them, have done.
You shall have nothing, nothing at all—
Not your very bones, for even one of your skeletons
Shall be fetched
And passed off for mine so that other
Thieves, your peers, will on their knees
Bring flowers to the tomb.

(In Crete, With the Minotaur, and Other Poems [Providence, R.I.: Gávea-Brown, 1980], p. 41)

Sena himself, again like Melville, saw grand similarities between
his own difficult circumstances and likely fate and those of Camões (see
my essay, “In Quest of Jorge de Sena,” Hispania, 70 [May 1987], 257-64). While it is not certain that Sena actually knew Melville’s poem
“Camões,” there is no gainsaying that there are tantalizing similarities
between his poem and Melville’s. Three quarters of a century after
Melville’s example Sena had done exactly what the American had done.
He had, like Melville before him (and Tasso before Melville), chosen to
cast his biographical life along the mythic-legendary-literary lines of the
paradigm that Camões’ putative life had first made available to them
all.
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NOTES


2 Introduction to Romance Languages and Literature (New York, 1961), p. 185.


4 Herman Melville (New York, 1929), p. 58.

5 Herman Melville (New Yorks, 1950), p. 150.

6 Herman Melville: A Biography (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1951), pp. 73-74 et passim.


10 Prêto & Branco (Sao Paulo, 1956), pp. 134-140.


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19 The Lusiad; or the Discovery of India: An Epic Poem (London, 1809), p. i.


21 Mickle, Lusiad, p. 123.


25 White-Jacket, p. 96. See also Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, revised and enlarged (New York, n.d.), p. 868: "The Cape of Storms: So Bartholomew Diaz named the south cape of Africa in 1486, but John II of Portugal (d. 1495) changed it to the Cape of Good Hope."


29 The Poets and Poetry of Europe (Boston, 1871), p. 739.

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32 Cohen, Sel. Poems, p. 233. Darrel Abel argues along similar lines in "Laurel Twined with Thorn": The Theme of Melville's Timoleon," Personalist, 41 (1960), 338. Shurr also attends to the familiar Melvillian theme of "diving": "Grapple' here is not the same as 'wrestle' in the previous poem ["Art"], though one may be tempted to make a connection. The figure is different and, though innocent enough in appearance, one needs to pause at this word to consider the usual function of grappling hooks and dragging operations. The figure has much in common with Melville's consistent diving imagery and his feeling for the kind of reality one encounters in the depths" (Mystery, p. 243).

33 Ralph, "Camoëns," The Indicato [A Literary Periodical Conducted by Students of Amherst College], 1(1848-49), 7.

34 Poems, From the Portuguese of Luis de Camoëns, translated by Lord Viscount Strangeford (London, 1824), p. 90. Melville's copy is owned by J. C. Levenson of the University of Virginia, and is quoted with his kind permission.


38 "Poems Unpublished by Melville" (Ms Am 188 [369.1]), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Quoted with the Library's consent.

CALVIN DANIEL YOST, JR.
"TEACHER, SCHOLAR, MENTOR, FRIEND"

Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV

University of Mississippi

Within the Ursinus College community, few other persons more genuinely merit an annual Alumni Award for "traits of intellect, character, humanitarian concern and community achievement"—as stated in the letter informing him of his receipt of that honor—than Norman E. McClure Professor of English Emeritus, Calvin D. Yost, Jr. After forty-three years of affiliation with and service to Ursinus, he holds an exceedingly high place in the affections of faculty, staff, and alumni. He holds that high place, moreover, with a great modesty and self-effacingness, characteristics that have made him the respected, admired person he is. Let me say at the outset of this screed that if I manage to embarrass Calvin as he reads through what I've written, 'twill be done with not an iota of shame on my part; rather, it will result from his having to recognize, at last, a good deal of the truth about himself. Years ago, I recall him remarking one afternoon in class, in regard to those famous lines by Burns about seeing ourselves as others see us, that most of us could not face such a view. Time's revenges have overtaken Calvin himself in this respect, and he will now have to take cognizance of another's opinion. He will, no doubt, rise to the occasion with vigor.

The name of Calvin Yost has been well-known at Ursinus College for the greater part of a century, if one recalls that the combined careers of father and son, each with the same name, span some seventy-five years. And to speak of Calvin D. Yost, Jr. without mentioning his father's role at the same institution—because of the strong bond of affection which existed between them—would be a great oversight. In 1910 the Reverend Calvin D. Yost ('91), ordained as a clergyman in the German Reformed Church, took up full-time academic duties at Ursinus. In that same year, one March day, Calvin, Jr., was born, on campus, no less. The Reverend C. D. Yost's children all number among the graduates of Ursinus College: Merrill ('15) having pursued a career, cut short by his early death, in Classical Studies; Ethelbert ('21), like his father, entering the ministry [and marrying Gladys M. Boorem ('15)]; Margaret ('24) teaching in nearby public schools; and Calvin ('30) receiving a Ph.D. in English at the University of Pennsylvania (1935) and continuing in service to his alma mater. Dr. Yost, Sr., became Professor of German, and he also worked diligently
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as Librarian of the college for many years. He was also the only person in the history of Ursinus to serve simultaneously as a full-time faculty member and a member of the Board of Directors. As a supply pastor he was also actively engaged in serving needy pulpits in the German Reformed Church (now the United Church of Christ) until the time of his death, in the 1940s.

The apparent digression above will be seen as less of a digression if we remember that the present Dr. Yost, like his father, rose to the rank of Professor, in English rather than in German, and retired, after a distinguished career, in June of 1978. That Calvin should be the first incumbent in the McClure Chair of English is altogether fitting, too, because of his warm friendship with the late president of the College, Professor Norman E. McClure, who was also his former English teacher. Dr. Yost also served as Librarian at Ursinus from 1958 until 1975, guiding the Myrin Library from planning stages through completion. So the careers of Calvin Yost, Sr. and Calvin Yost, Jr. are strikingly similar, and both men contributed significantly to the development of their college in ways that many never realize.

The present Calvin Yost's ventures into college teaching began at Ursinus, when he was hired, at the position of Instructor in English, in 1934. He rose rapidly through the ranks, becoming Assistant Professor in 1938, Associate Professor in 1941, and Professor in 1944. These were years when it was unusual for one so young to attain the senior ranks. Chairman of the English Department from 1946 through 1972, Calvin became McClure Professor in 1964. Ursinus has derived many other benefits from his talents and labors: He acted as Secretary to the Faculty from 1947 until 1969, was a member of the Library Committee (1946-1975), of the Academic Council (1947-1969), of the Committee of Admissions and Standing (1954-1969), and of the Forum Committee (1954-1969). He served, too, on these other committees: Student Publications, Corps Curriculum, Presidential Selection, and Evaluation of the College by Middle States Association. He was advisor to the Weekly (the campus newspaper), the Lantern (the Ursinus literary magazine), the Manuscript Club, the English Club, and the Religion on Campus Committee of the Christian Association. He was Secretary-Treasurer of the Alumni Association (1936-1942), edited the Alumni Register in 1948, and edited several of the college's catalogues. He authored the sketch, "Ursinus College," that appears in all bulletins for commencement and Founders' Day ceremonies. He also represented Ursinus on "University of the Air" with weekly poetry classes (1949-1952). His History of Ursinus College: The First Hundred Years, a labor of love and scholarship, was published in 1985. For nearly thirty
years he was employed by the Educational Testing Service for several types of English examinations. Also, for a good many years, he was a regular contributor of reviews to the *United States Quarterly Review*. That Dr. Yost has had an active career is not to be questioned, and such activity would stagger many another. Ursinus recognized his long years of service in conferring upon him the Litt. D. in 1973. More recently, he has ably assisted the substantialness of UMSE (consenting to serve on the original Advisory Board and evaluating manuscripts since 1979); thanks to him, we have maintained high quality in our publications, most notably in Victorian poetry and American literature.

Calvin Yost is remembered as a teacher non pareil of English language, composition, and literature, and it was in this capacity that he first attracted my attention, years ago, during Fall-Term registration. I supposed, seeing him enter the English Department office, that a particularly well-dressed student had run up the steps to assist faculty members with counseling and registering new students. What a jolt to discover that this agile, youthful man was none other than the department chairman himself. No such misconception occurred shortly afterward when the snowy-haired teacher of Shakespeare, then Professor Emeritus of English and President Emeritus of the College, Dr. McClure, appeared and walked, with stately step, into the office.

Although Dr. Yost’s first book surveyed poetic trends in Cave’s *Gentleman’s Magazine*, an important British periodical during the eighteenth century, his teaching has ranged widely, through American to broader areas of World literature. Nor did many a semester of his eighty-six pass without his teaching at least one class in Freshman English. In these classes students went through their paces, generally to become far better writers than they had been when the term commenced. Instituting courses in Drama and the Novel, which years ago were among the largest in the college, Calvin soon took over American Literature, previously offered by Dr. McClure (who followed the pattern of teaching Shakespeare and American Literature established by his own renowned professor, Fred Lewis Pattee). The American Literature survey remained a customary Yost course until Calvin’s retirement. Professor Yost believed that classes should read, and read they did; during the first semester of American Literature, in addition to a two-volume anthology, in which little was skipped, great extra assignments of Poe’s and Hawthorne’s short stories, plus *The Sketch Book, Walden, The Scarlet Letter, Moby-Dick*, and a novel by Henry James expanded the students’ horizons. During the second semester, one had to read all of the works by a twentieth-century writer as the
groundwork for a term paper topic. Other Yost lit. classes included similar reading loads (and they were considered fun).

At this juncture, we move once again into realms of the eighteenth century. In a course in the non-fictional prose of that period, readings from neo-classic writers and their successors were the assignments, and Dr. Yost guided students through the pertinent biographies, styles, and theories. In particular, I can recall learning that Addison’s paragraphs were customarily longer than Steele’s, and that thus one could distinguish who wrote what in their collaborative writing. This course extended into another semester, during which nineteenth-century non-fiction prose artists, from Lamb through Stevenson, were the subjects discussed. Two more popular Yost classes were those in Romantic and Victorian poetry, which he taught for many years. Calvin ably charted students through the spacious, and often unpredictable, seas of nineteenth-century British verse, with a love and enthusiasm that has inspired many of us to continue in these areas as parts of our own teaching specialities. For many years his Seminar in Poetry for senior English majors afforded students a forum to think about and analyze poetic artistry and techniques—with opportunities, like those of George Eliot’s Mrs. Poyser, to “have their say out” about such matters. The Yost devotion to British poetry also helped in a pinch during Dr. McClure’s last illness, when Calvin gallantly undertook to captain a class through the waters of Renaissance non-dramatic verse. That this “captain” has continued energetic, even when off the “quarter-deck,” has not been doubted in any mind.

Calvin’s classroom manner was certain to engage a spectrum of students, not just those who majored in English. Believing that literature is created by human beings, Dr. Yost always offered abundant, delightful and significant biographical details about individual authors. He also imparted considerable information in regard to the more general milieu of an era or a particular school or movement of literary endeavor. Having frequently shocked students with information about some especially earthy point in Byron biography (in an age, of course, when college students were usually more timorous than they are at present), for example, he would proceed to “make you see” (in the sense intended by Conrad in the “preface” to The Nigger of the Narcissus) simply by his reading aloud of portions of the material. Tennyson, Keats, Swinburne (not a personal favorite with Calvin, but a poet to whom his attention has been repeatedly drawn because of a former student’s persuasion toward that author), Dickinson, and Frost, to choose but a few examples, came alive by means of the soft-spoken, but compelling voice at the front of the classroom. Students came away with
impressions that Dr. Yost "had read everything"—and remembered everything. His classes were stimulated to go and do likewise, all for great enjoyment.

For many years, almost no student could go through Ursinus College without enrolling in at least one Yost course. For most of those years Calvin maintained a standard rostering of five classes each semester—with no graders and no true-or-false exams. The quantity of papers he evaluated is staggering to contemplate. Calvin's enrollees evince long-time powers of recall when they come to recollecting his classes. At the 1977 Alumni-Day festivities, to cite an example, a person who had been in one of Calvin's earliest classes quoted to him lines—which the professor quickly remembered were from Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes" and Masefield's "Biography." Not bad on either side, after several decades. Another telling analogy immediately suggests itself, one with Emerson's "Man Thinking," that thinker possessed of original vital intellect—precisely what the subject of this screed has always conveyed.

A Yost exam was quite another experience for those being entertained by its contents—one that demanded plenty. Dr. Yost expected his classes to master not merely facts, but to know what to do with them. His exam questions aimed to discover what students knew, not what they didn't. He allowed all sorts of creativity, so long as it was backed up by a thoughtful reading knowledge. In a word, this man demonstrated in living embodiment just what a true "Doctor of Humane Letters" is. So that no reader will suspect me of over-sentimentality, I place on record here something of a less lofty aspect about exams and other papers turned in to Dr. Yost. Back they would eventually come, with comments in the inevitable red pencil. But the handwriting betrayed no mastery of any of the time-honored penmanship methods taught while Calvin himself was pursuing a course through elementary grades (The present writer is only too willing to admit his own deficiencies on this score.). After much labor, one could finally realize that the instructor's reading of student work was careful, thoughtful, and fair. Typically, the Yost sense of humor would crop up in these commentaries in red. In combination with the foregoing characteristics, students felt that their own studies had been worthwhile. Professor Yost had that inspiring method (so fine that we never thought of it as method) of persuading students to read more, to write effectively, and to conduct responsible research, because he whetted their appetites for reading and writing.
Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV

The public professor and the personal human being merge within the personality of Calvin Yost in spheres other than those restricted to academe. Proud of his Pennsylvania Dutch heritage, he is a loyal, active member of the Pennsylvania German Society. He and his wife have engaged in genealogical pursuits, which led them to the boondocks of Schuylkill County, Pa., where one of Calvin’s ancestors once operated a grain and flour mill, and where the remains of still others repose in the old cemetery at McKeesburg. The Yosts made significant contributions to a recently published history of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Calvin’s interests have included the Philadelphia Literary Fellowship and Philobiblon, where he inevitably encountered another Pennsylvania Dutchman, “Cousin” George Allen, the well-known head of the Philadelphia firm of William H. Allen, whose shelves of books “Cousin” Calvin has often recommended to those in the process of building their personal libraries. Recalling the “humanitarian concern and community achievement” phraseology in the Alumni-Award letter, mentioned above, let us notice Calvin’s accomplishments of some other “out-of-school” varieties. A true son of the German Reformed Church, he has supported his local church’s activities faithfully, in such roles as choirister, teacher, and consistoryman. Although I can not recollect him chasing fire engines, as I can recollect others doing during my years in Collegeville, Calvin was a longtime member of the town’s volunteer fire company. He is also proud of being a Past Master of the Warren Lodge of the Pennsylvania F. & A. M., and for many years he appeared as a featured speaker in Masonic gatherings there and elsewhere.

Remembering that bond between charity and domesticity, we should not ignore Calvin’s home life; as a husband, father, grandfather, and friend Calvin Yost is hard to beat. Visitors to 33 6th Avenue are always cordially welcome. To speak of Calvin without speaking also of Elizabeth Yost, his wife, is unthinkable. She has encouraged and assisted him, their family and friends as well, without stint. We must not forget that she, too, is a former Ursinus faculty member, having given her efforts to good evening-school teaching. Her hospitality is something else to bear in mind. Whether it be her entertaining dinner parties—even those at which she undid the rules of the college relevant to alcohol by serving her unsuspecting guests beef roasted in beer—or her adept supplying of refreshment to a late traveller passing through Collegeville, she is a gracious hostess. She has contributed mightily toward whatever might be worthwhile in this sketch. Like her husband, she is thoroughly attached to Ursinus College and its people.
Calvin and Elizabeth have added to the numbers of alumni, too, with daughters Betsy ('63) and Susan ('66) figuring among Ursinus honor students (Ellen cheated by heading for the University of Delaware). The Yost grandchildren have also become great favorites with their grandparents. Although Calvin is very much a family-oriented individual, he has perhaps realized another blessing in relation to the marriages of his children. Because they are no longer at home for long periods of time, he has long since ceased to fret about the woman-dominated household to which he had to return at the close of each college day—or so he used to inform his classes, many years ago.

To conclude, I must draw on the words of another to epitomize my own thoughts. In Charles E. Ward's The Life of John Dryden (1961), the dedication opens: "To Paull Franklin Baum, Teacher, scholar, mentor, friend." These tributes might also, and quite justly, be paid to Calvin Yost. Always willing and eager to learn, to teach, and, as well, to be a friend, he stands as a person well worth knowing.
"THE HAYSTACK IN THE FLOODS": AN UNCHARACTERISTIC PRERAPHAELITE POEM

Veronica M. S. Kennedy

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Presumably, the average reader when (or perhaps it would be better to say "if") he or she thinks of William Morris it is as the kind of poet Morris himself described in the Apology to The Earthly Paradise, written between 1868 and 1870. The reader classifies Morris correctly as a Preraphaelite, for indeed he embodied in his writings, and in the many arts and crafts he practiced with such genius and energy, the best ideals of that remarkable Brotherhood of the gifted and perhaps, therefore, one thinks of him as a poet, painter and craftsman who exemplified in his work those picturesque aspects of the Middle Ages which comprise rather the splendour, glory, charm and magic of that vanished world, than its harsher realities. The average view of Preraphaelite medievalism is of a flight to a more beautiful and more true age than the then-iron age of industry, commercialism, imperial expansion and general uglification: in a word, escapist use of an idealized past. This is indeed true of Morris in many of his poems, and even where, as for example in "Sigurd the Volsung" (1877), he does dwell on the ferocious rather than on the romantic or the picturesque; nevertheless, he is a poet whom we associate with the heroic rather than the merely grim.

Yet, as early as 1858, when he was only twenty-four, Morris composed his short narrative poem, of only 162 lines, "The Haystack in the Floods."1 A close reading of the poem reveals textures of irony and symbolism added to a stark realism that makes the poem both a study of the darker aspects of the Middle Ages, a psychological drama, and also a strongly prophetic, even apocalyptic, work, comparable, in fact, to such dark poems as Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" (1855), Arnold's "Dover Beach" (1867) and Thompson's "City of Dreadful Night" (1874).

The poem is set in the 14th Century, after the resounding English victory over the French at Poictiers in 1356. There, the victorious general was Edward, the Black Prince, a favorite in Victorian history books for children and in art; a colorful and dashing soldier (though apparently also an incompetent administrator), Edward died untimely at the age of 46. Thus, the historical background of the poem is in key with the militant sentiments of much of the Victorian reading public (and with the boastful imperialism of such political figures as Lord Palmerston ["Civis Britannus sum!"] and with popular historical
"THE HAYSTACK IN THE FLOODS"

iconography. Yet, we ought not to forget that the poem was written not long after the Pyrrhic victory of the Crimean War (1854-1856) and after the shaming horrors of the Indian Mutiny (1857). Perhaps these blows to Britain's imperial pride partly explain the somber tone of the poem and certainly provided (and still provide) ironical historical resonances. After the battle of Poictiers, Sir Robert de Marny, an English knight (though from his name he is seemingly of Norman or other French descent), is riding with his mistress and a small band of followers through French territory towards the safety of Gascony, then in English hands. Robert should be exultant and victorious, but he is a victor who is also a victim.

The first five lines of the poem arrest our attention and introduce important realistic and symbolic elements. Morris here focuses on the as-yet-unnamed Jehane. The centering of interest on a woman, is, of course, frequent in PreRaphaelite poetry and painting. But the landscape is not colorful and romantic. The rain-sodden countryside, with the soaked bulk of the haystack seemingly the only prominent feature in the drabness, with its brown and gray tones implied, under a lowering leaden sky, is at once the opposite of the jewel-like tones of Medieval landscape miniatures and of some of the most characteristic pictures of one of the more dreary aspects of rural experience and at the same time ironically symbolic. Rain, of course, obviously symbolizes tears, but there is also ambivalence here. The rain loosens and nourishes the soil; it brings fertility and plenty. The haystack, too, is susceptible of many possible symbolic interpretations. It is a storage place of food and bedding for livestock; of bedding and warmth for people; its shape and the thatch that covers it suggest the snugness of the archetypal country cottage. It is the piled-up evidence of past and future fertility and nourishment, and, above all, it is the traditional site for rural trysts and love-making. All of these realities and symbols of fertility and life are subsequently negated by the cruel events of the poem.

In lines 6-31 Morris continues with images of physical and emotional distress, as Jehane's misery is at once partly caused by and also projected on the landscape through which she rides. We notice that here there is none of the elegance depicted in such scenes of elegant ladies and gentlemen of the Court riding through jewel-like terrain so familiar to us from the illuminations in the "Très Riches Heures" of the Duc de Berri. (The picture of the hunt from this enchanting work was used for the cover of the paperback edition of Oldenbourg's The World is Not Enough, for example.) Here there is mud, and that harsh discomfort of riding astride, with skirts sodden with rain, "kilted to the
Veronica M. S. Kennedy

knee.” As Jehane rides along, the tears and rain mingle on her face: thus does Morris unite the personal misery, the physical discomfort and the symbolic import. He begins in this passage to depict Jehane for us. She has “heavy hair”: the crowning glory of the medieval lady and of the ideal PreRaphaelite beauty. One recalls the hair of Elizabeth Siddal, Fanny Cornforth and Jane Morris (whom Morris first saw in 1857 and whom he married in 1859), as depicted by D. G. Rossetti, Morris and others. All of these women could be described as having “heavy” hair. Jehane has “eyelids broad and fair,” and is thus typical of the ideal of Medieval beauty. One can see such eyelids, and the contrast of smooth face and heavy hair on countless statues of the Blessed Virgin and in paintings of the Virgin, of androgynous angels, of female saints and of ladies of the court. Jehane also has “slender fingers”; her hands are of that exquisite narrowness that to many distinguishes the aristocrat from the peasant. Here, too, Morris stresses the anxiety and the sense of dread of Robert and Jehane, and uses the ordinary features of the road, of any road, for symbolic effect. Robert must watch at every crossroad for an ambush, and he must try to placate his discontented followers. We are left to imagine details and to fill in blanks, while all the time Morris understates the poignancy of these last hours of life. Morris alludes to and hints at much, rather than telling a full story. The section ends with the futility and waste conveyed by the last few words, of

...all for this,/To part at least without a kiss/
Beside the haystack in the floods.

Soon, in lines 32-38, the little band reaches the haystack, “that old soaked hay,” where Robert’s enemy and rival, Godmar, lurks with his men. Here, Morris stresses the universality of treachery by calling Godmar “Judas,” and by giving the number of his men as “thirty,” a link with the blood-money paid to Judas: thirty pieces of silver. Every betrayal is in a sense a reenactment of Christ’s betrayal, and every sin is a reminder that Christ died for our sins, a religious resonance in keeping with the poem as an evocation of the Middle Ages and as addressed to an audience of (even if only nominal) Christians. One of the few splashes of color in the entire poem occurs here: “...the three/Red running lions dismally/Grinned from his pennon.” In this brief point of color, Morris at once reminds us of the colorful aspects of Medieval life, and its ceremony and panoply, contained in the mention of a heraldic device; of the red lion emblem of England; of the idea of
“THE HAYSTACK IN THE FLOODS”

hunting down a prey; of the cruel smile on the face of a human raptor; and of the sardonic smile, the death grin of a skull.

When, in lines 38-48, Jehane tries physically to tear off her coif (another PreRaphaelite touch of accuracy) to mask the horror of the “wretched end” which she foresees and knows is inevitable, Robert tries to cheer her with words that ironically recall at once the triumphant victory at Poictiers and the tantalizing nearness of the Gascon frontier, beyond which lies safety. The last phrase, “Nought after this,” is especially ambivalent. Robert means that their ride over the frontier, into safety, will be as nothing after the hardships they have already endured, but Jehane and we can construe it as meaning, “This is the end.”

Now we begin to learn something of Jehane’s past, and of her relationship to Godmar. She has been accused of witchcraft, and will, if Robert is killed, be taken captive back to Paris, to be tried by the judges, imprisoned in the Chatelet prison and swum as a witch in the Seine. The terrifying order that she envisions consisted of binding a suspected witch, left hand to right ankle and right hand to left ankle, behind her back and of throwing her into water. If she sank, she was innocent; if she floated (as she might, buoyed up by air under her skirts) she was guilty. In either case, her death was almost always inevitable. This hideous ordeal is, of course, a correlative to the impossible choice put before Jehane by Godmar. She can escape this fate only if she becomes Godmar’s mistress, for which she will also “be damned at last.” Here Morris touches on several dark aspects of medieval life. The fear of witches and witchcraft led to hideous mob scenes and the equivalent of lynchings. Ecclesiastical and other courts were harsh, and penalties extreme. Here, too, the misogyny expressed in so many medieval sermons, satires and anecdotes appears. He hints also at the archetypally horrifying idea of the dungeon or oubliette with its iron gratings, its dank stones, and its rats. And also, too, there is the horrible futility of Jehane’s vision of herself frantically scrambling for life, though to save herself from drowning would be to condemn herself to the fire. Lastly, the exquisite cult of Courtly Love, expressive of the elegant and playful side of medieval culture, is shown as, in essence, a cult of the damned. Since courtly love is outside marriage it is always sinful, especially if it is physically consummated. We remember that in “Aucassin and Nicolette” the lovers would prefer to be damned to Hell than to be blessed in Heaven, for in Hell they will be with all the famous lovers of the past, as well as with each other. But, though Jehane would presumably prefer Hell with Robert to Heaven without him if she became Godmar’s mistress against her will, she would suffer
Hell on earth, and Hell after death without the consolation of true love. She would have sinned against both God and St. Venus.

Robert takes the rein of Jehane’s horse (lines 59-68), to emphasize his role as her protector, and raises his battle-cry. This ironically recalls the cry of the victors at Poictiers; St. George was the chosen patron of English soldiers. No one among Robert’s followers takes up the cry: Godmar is not the only traitor. Morris here focusses on a tiny movement expressive of Robert’s rage and frustration at this betrayal: “...his thumb beat fast/Upon his sword hilt.” This is again a touch of realism. And in a supremely sinister moment of action and anonymous violence “...someone cast/About his neck a kerchief long,/And bound him.” Robert is dishonored and humiliated by a faceless man who uses a trick common to skullking thugs and footpads.

“They,” still faceless and nameless, drag Robert and Jehane to Godmar, who threatens her with what she has fearfully imagined. For the first time, almost half-way through the poem, we learn her name. “Jehane” (Joan) is a common name, of queens and of peasant girls, almost an archetypal name, but with powerful resonances of tragedy. Here again, in these lines, 68-88, we have Jehane at the center. Her actions are true indicators of her pain and bewilderment. When she stares at the damp palm of her hand, as though it were covered with blood from a cut on her forehead, Morris again is stressing the connection with the sufferings of Christ, the prime tragic figure of Medieval drama. Is not Jehane’s brow reminiscent of Christ’s brow bleeding from the Crown of Thorns? Her stark “No!” is the central negation in the poem and elicits the second splash of red, as Godmar flushes with fury. Now he utters a threat of rape, as opposed to the earlier request that she yield as his paramour. In this image of the helpless woman, bereft of her protector, Morris makes Jehane the personification of the defeated and the conquered, of all the helpless victims of war and conquest anywhere, at any time.

Then, surprisingly, in the next section of the poem, lines 88-99, we see Jehane as having the potentiality for evil, as hatred and loathing transform her into a witchlike creature: “A wicked smile/Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,/A long way out she thrust her chin”: she threatens to strangle Godmar or bite him to death: threats that are at once gruesome and unreal, because while we believe in her hatred, we cannot believe in her strength. But her agonized cry, “I cannot choose but sin and sin,” points up the reality of her situation and the paradox of courtly love. Her last refuge would be to commit suicide in the resolute mode of ancient Roman patrician ladies, by starving herself to death. Again, of course, suicide is a mortal sin, and she knows that
suicide would damn her to Hell, since she is not apparently conscious of the merciful, only the punitive, aspect of God.

Godmar threatens to destroy her if he cannot have her for himself. He would reveal all he knows (or may have fabricated) about her witchcraft. These lies will be eagerly believed by the cruel Paris mob, and we hear in his words the howls, the bloodlust: "Jehane the brown! Jehane the brown!/Give us Jehane to burn or drown!" We now learn that Jehane (like Jane Morris) is a brunette, not the blond beauty more admired in the Middle Ages or the redhead women admired by the PreRaphaelites. She has the magical darkness of Hugo’s Esmeralda, another accused witch. Godmar’s callous and brief aside, “Eh!—gag me Robert!—” is a dramatic and understated touch, whereby Morris suggests Robert’s impotent strugglings, and futile attempts to call for help. It is an aside as Godmar gloats over the beauty he will destroy if he cannot possess it: “This were indeed a piteous end/For those long fingers and long feet,/And long neck, and smooth shoulders sweet.”

Now comes one of the most psychologically telling passages of the poem, lines 116-127, where Jehane is so numbed by sorrow, fear and exhaustion that she falls asleep in spite of the rain and the cold. She wakes, still resolute, and says, “I will not,” and Godmar reddens again. His head turns “As though it hung on wires”, he is dehumanized by his hatred and frustration. So inhuman has he become that, when the lovers strain to exchange a last farewell kiss, lines 128-136, Godmar thrusts them apart and cuts Robert’s throat as he would slit the throat of an animal, and Robert’s end is at once an indignity and a desecration: lines 145-151. He “moaned as dogs do, being half dead,/Unwitting.”

Godmar turned grinning to his men,
Who ran, some five or six, and beat
His head to pieces at their feet.

The callousness of this and the deliberate ambiguity of “their” (does it refer to the feet of Jehane and Godmar, or to those of Godmar’s men?) add to its horror, and we note that Godmar’s grinning unites him to the beasts on his pennon.

The terrifying episode ends with Godmar’s reiteration of his threats and with the implication that Jehane has, at any rate temporarily, retreated from the horrors of the world into madness. The last two lines of the poem recall the first five:

This was the parting that they had
Beside the haystack in the floods.

This reiteration reminds us that the cycle of the world continues, and that the ugliness and cruelty like the beauty and kindness of the world are repeated in these world cycles.

So then, this poem, though in it Morris uses some archaic language, “the first fitte is read,” “gag me Robert,” and so on, and is accurate in his use of details of medieval life, is not a characteristically PreRaphaelite poem, in that it dwells on the harsh rather than the picturesque aspects of medieval life. However, it has indeed a universality in its depiction of an almost Hardyean irony of life, the universality of suffering and the horrors of war. Because its setting is the rain-sodden fields of France, it is inevitable, too, that a reader of the 1980’s will see the poem not only as an expression of the darker side of the Victorian imagination, but also as actually prophetic of the coming horror of the World Wars I and II, as an apocalyptic poem of the kind mentioned earlier, and as one of the earliest examples of a growing series of such poems, to be found not only in English but in other European literatures, in the latter part of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.

NOTE

DIDACTIC DEMONS IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH FICTION

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A particular phenomenon emerging in several post-war British authors is the odd combination of the moral and the macabre. Demonic personalities dominate a fiction charged with strong didactic currents. Searching for the good within the realms of the grotesque, Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark, and John Fowles make significant moral statements by using a variety of demonic elements.

Iris Murdoch's shadowy world, for instance, includes the following characters: an exotic European with one blue eye and one brown eye who demonstrates a special talent for mesmerizing his "creatures" into various stages of subservience; an anthropologist who swings a Samurai-sword and transforms a polite historian into a kicking madman; and a retired playwright so entranced with his fantasy about the lost love of his youth that when he finds her at the seashore forty years later, he kidnaps her even though she has accumulated not only seashells but also wrinkles, a moustache, and a violent husband (The Flight From The Enchanter, A Severed Head, and The Sea, The Sea). Murdoch's obsessed characters often circulate within eerie settings such as Gothic mansions, secret tunnels, labyrinthian cellars, and desolate seascapes. Some of the most uncanny events, however, take place in public libraries, hospital wards, or on city fire escapes as Murdoch reveals her keen sense of the unexpected in the midst of the commonplace. Sensational events laced with lurid trappings can also color her work: Black Masses, dead pigeons, whips, chains, suicide, murder, and mutilation are all to be found in a novel called The Nice and the Good.

Strange events and characters are similarly woven into the fiction of Muriel Spark, who has been described as an author with one foot off the ground.1 "It is all demonology," says one of her characters.2 In Spark's novels unusual personalities do often flit about like wraiths. The Hothouse by the East River is inhabited by a neurotic whose shadow falls in the wrong direction and who sits by the window hour after hour "seeing things." In The Driver's Seat a woman screams in disapproval when she learns that the gaudy dress she is about to buy will not show the blood stains she plans to produce during an appointment with her murderer. And in Not to Disturb a group of ghoulish servants make elaborate plans with the media to sell the sensational "inside" story of their masters' imminent murder-suicide,
which they have also helped to arrange; meanwhile in the background thunder rolls, lightning cracks, and “him in the attic” lurches about in lusty madness.

Besides Murdoch and Spark, John Fowles has also on occasion marched along in this phantasmagoric parade. Just as kidnapping becomes the central event in several novels by Murdoch, in Fowles’s first novel a deviant young man progresses from collecting butterflies to bottling up beautiful young women. In one of the selections from *The Ebony Tower* an elderly scholar receives a nocturnal visit from an unusual burglar whom the scholar soon refers to as “my young demon.” In *The Magus* a remote Greek island forms the backdrop for sorcery, sadism, and a pageant of grotesques in an eerie mingling of the worlds of fact and fantasy.

Along with their interest in the demonic, however, Murdoch, Spark, and Fowles also seem to be firmly committed to exploring their characters’ ethical dimensions. In a number of her philosophical essays, Iris Murdoch has explained that moral activity depends upon a constant attention to the otherness of people who are not ourselves. The problem results when we impose fantastic forms or concepts upon contingent reality, including other real people. Just as dominant types mold more formless beings into servile dependency, so too do those in need of a controlling power often enslave themselves to an enchanter figure. We thus create our own demons. Murdoch recognizes that art itself can become a type of enchantment, “a temptation to impose form where perhaps it isn’t always appropriate.”3 Thus the creation of art becomes a type of moral activity, as the novelist must constantly try to recognize contingency and construct a “house fit for free characters.”4 Murdoch has acknowledged that as an artist she has sometimes been unable to resist the temptations of form.

Muriel Spark, as well as Iris Murdoch, has expressed an interest in moral philosophy. In an essay on her religious beliefs, Spark states that her career as a novelist began only after her conversion to Roman Catholicism. Although she does not want to belabor this sequence, she admits that her religion has provided her with a type of groundwork from which to write. But as Karl Malikoff has said about Spark's fiction, “God is seen through a glass darkly, if...at all.”5 Muriel Spark has explained that fiction to her is “a kind of parable.”6 Although in *The Public Image* she explores a Murdochian situation where the myth of a celebrity becomes more vital than the woman herself, frequently she uses different moral strategies. Not unlike some of T. S. Eliot’s poetic maneuvers, one of Spark’s novelistic techniques is to create
clear, sharp images of a moral wasteland, where the ethical statement is expressed more by what is missing than by what is present. Death-in-life situations and characters who are often more spectral than human underline the qualities of compassion and integrity by their conspicuous absence.

In *The Arisots*, John Fowles elucidates some of the ethical ideas informing his fictional world. Like Spark, he calls one of his novels a “parable,” and like Murdoch, he sees the danger in imposing a rigid form on shapeless reality. He too recognizes the dangers of labelling and categorizing when “everything is unique in its own existing.” In *The Collector*, Frederick Clegg fails to perceive this uniqueness when he mumbles that the best photographs of the naked Miranda were those where the camera cut off her head. Instead of an individual being, Miranda has been turned into a replaceable object, whose form happens to be Clegg’s obsession. Miranda too for all her pseudo-liberal jargon really fails (in the Murdochian terminology) to “attend to” Clegg as a unique individual who has an existence separate from her conception of him as a bourgeois bumpkin. When he tells her his name is Ferdinand, she immediately substitutes the label “Caliban” and continues to think of him as such for the rest of the novel. Lastly, in *The Magus* Fowles’s cryptic old teacher, like Murdoch’s anthropologist, employs magical techniques ultimately to disintoxicate the young protagonist from the illusions he himself has created to avoid a direct confrontation with reality. With Fowles too, aesthetic concerns become ethical concerns. Like Murdoch, he has seen the dangers of form. In *The Arisot* he writes, “Form is a death sentence, matter is eternal life” (p. 14). Perhaps even more than Murdoch, Fowles tries to free his characters from older aesthetic conceptions.

These three novelists teach moral lessons in fiction whose symbolic texture is frequently colored by the demonic. In certain earlier novels by all three authors strange and charismatic individuals such as Honor Klein (*A Severed Head*), Douglas Dougal (*The Ballad of Peckham Rye*), and Maurice Conchis (*The Magus*) are portrayed as Satanic personalities who nevertheless offer moral instruction to particular individuals or groups of people. These didactic demons are usually outsiders whose failure to conform to conventional ethics becomes a prerequisite for their attack on the flimsy moral structures society has erected to keep life civilized. Satanic imagery appropriately surrounds these mentors because they usually force their students to undergo sudden and shocking re-evaluations of their lives which often plunge the dazed pupils into an underworld of the spirit resembling hell. Martin Lynch-Gibbon, the citizens of Peckham Rye, and Nicholas Urfe must
experience a painful descent into their subconscious minds before they
can begin to grow into more morally sensitive individuals. All the
wine-cellar, underground labyrinths, and basement prisons reinforce
this idea of a hellish descent into the hidden regions of the mind. In
exploring the fiction of Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark, and John Fowles,
one therefore finds connections between the fantastic fringes and ethical
centers of their novels. The demonic illusions often reflect deficiencies
in moral vision. Although a number of these authors’ works join the
satanic and the moral, three particular novels best exemplify this
strange combination.

In no other work by Iris Murdoch does the demonic become more
didactic than in A Severed Head. Her fifth novel, in fact, traces the
education of a protagonist by a forceful teacher whose eerie influence
upon her student disturbs him profoundly. But before the terrible
lessons begin, the author makes clear the necessity of instruction.
Murdoch’s decision to allow Martin Lynch-Gibbon to tell his own
story seems especially appropriate for a novel which criticizes self-
absorption and the consequent failure to “see” the uniqueness of other
individuals. On one level the novel delineates Martin’s attempt to break
out of his own solipsistic point of view. In the opening scene with his
mistress Georgie, for instance, Martin admits to himself that he more
or less phases her out of existence when he is not with her.\(^8\) When
later interests develop, he says, “I could not see Georgie anymore” (SH,
p. 189).

Martin especially likes the “dry way in which [Georgie] accepted our
relationship” (SH, p. 3). Martin has virtually turned his liaison with
Georgie into the type of crystalline aesthetic object which Murdoch
attacks in her essay, “Against Dryness.” Georgie submits to the rigid
form of the relationship carefully prescribed by Martin. Their affair
reminds one of a pretty bauble: Georgie has become Martin’s secret
plaything for whom he likes to buy barbarous necklaces, purple
underwear, and black open-work tights. The clandestine nature of the
relationship must be preserved. People as well as novels can suffer
from a sense of formal closure. Having locked up Georgie in an air-
tight concept, Martin blinks in contentment over his impression that
her apartment with its “warm murmuring fire” seems like “a
subterranean place, remote, enclosed, hidden” (SH, p. 12).

Since Georgie serves as Martin’s toy, the novel appropriately
begins during the Christmas season, but this holiday celebrating a
famous birth assumes grimly ironic overtones when at the close of the
first chapter we learn that Georgie has had an abortion. Although
responsible for the pregnancy, Martin has been let off easily by his
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secret mistress, who throughout the ordeal remained "calm, laconic, matter-of-fact" (SH, p. 13). We are told that, "It had all been quite uncannily painless"—for Martin, that is. Thus the messy contingency of an unwanted child is dealt with as Georgie remains true to the hard crystalline form of the relationship.

Laconic Georgie’s toughness and dryness are complemented by the “dewy radiance” of Martin’s loquacious wife Antonia. If Georgie is somewhat messy, Antonia is meticulously concerned with appearances; while Georgie wears her hair in a “chaotic bun” (SH, p. 79), Antonia’s hair is fashioned in a “neat golden ball” (SH, p. 56). If Georgie, a twenty-five year old graduate student, in some ways seems like a daughter to the forty-one year old Martin, Antonia, five years older than Martin, could be cast as his mother and has “more than once” been taken as such (SH, p. 16). Thus at the opening of the book Martin has achieved a type of formal stasis in his two relationships: “I needed both of them, and having both I possessed the world” (SH, p. 21). With sloppy Georgie and fastidious Antonia, Martin Lynch-Gibbon, wine merchant and amateur historian, has seemingly reconciled both his Dionysian and Apollonian impulses.

Both relationships prove to be false, however, because Martin has failed to attend to the real otherness of each woman. He has imposed his own fantastic shapes upon them and has turned them into so many ornaments on a Christmas tree. If Georgie suggests some cheap but curious trinket, Antonia, associated with gold throughout the book, seems like a “rich gilded object” (SH, p. 17). Martin’s delicately balanced holiday arrangement is upset when over cocktails one evening Antonia announces that for once she has been doing more than talking to her psychiatrist, Palmer Anderson. They have become lovers and Antonia wants a divorce.

Now roles are reversed and this time Martin becomes somewhat enchanted with both Antonia and Palmer, who as an old friend of the family has established a certain attractiveness for the main character. The book also begins to take on a surrealistic glow as Martin indicates: "the evening of Antonia’s revelation...seemed in retrospect a lurid dream, full of ghoulish configurations and yet somehow mysteriously painless” (SH, p. 37). If ghostly figures begin to populate the novel, they are at least friendly ghosts. In fact, Palmer and Antonia desperately want everyone to remain very friendly. His wife and her lover wish to take Martin in, almost adopt him as it were, into their new family. “My child, my dear child,” coos Antonia. Martin’s new “parents” create a pleasant appearance: the aging yet still golden Antonia blends in nicely with fifty-year-old, “beautifully cultivated”
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Palmer Anderson, whose “round head,” “soft...silver-grey hair,” and “smooth” young looking face (SH, p. 19) all suggest a lifetime of calming people down. Faced with this smiling twosome, Martin does cooperate and accepts his “role of taking it well” (SH, p. 34). He conveniently agrees to move out of the family home and into an apartment, although he will always be a welcome guest at Palmer and Antonia’s cheerful residence. He even realizes that the pleasant type of nightmare he is living can be thought of as being rather ordinary: he is simply being “coaxed along to accept an unpleasant truth in a civilized and rational way” (SH, p. 31). But although “good manners...assumed the air of a major virtue” (SH, p. 20), Martin must learn that gentility does not equal goodness. And this hard lesson must be taught to him by a ghostly personality who seems anything but friendly.

Since Antonia doesn’t want Palmer to go out into the bad weather with his cold, Martin kindly agrees to drive to the train station to meet Palmer’s half-sister Honor Klein. Shrouded in fog and smelling of sulphur and brimstone, Liverpool Street Station reminds Martin of an “image of hell” (SH, p. 62). In the midst of this smoky inferno, the sinister figure of Honor Klein slowly appears. In contrast to the soft smooth surfaces of Antonia and Palmer, Honor Klein throughout the book is described in images of hardness and sharpness. Her “curving lips [are] combined with a formidable straightness and narrowness of the eyes and mouth.” She flashes Martin a “keen look” when he first speaks to this “haggard” woman (SH, p. 64). Later she actually slashes about with a “hideously sharp” Samurai sword (SH, p.118). Also in contrast to the golden aura surrounding Antonia and Palmer, Honor is frequently associated with darkness: she has “short black hair” and “narrow dark eyes” (SH, p. 64). At one point her features remind Martin of a face in a “Spanish religious painting, something looking out of darkness, barbarous yet highly conscious” (SH, p. 134). In still another scene Martin suffers from the “illusion that [Honor’s] entire face...had become black” (SH, p. 134). Finally, Palmer and Antonia’s smiles have been replaced by Honor’s “hint of insolence” (SH, p. 63), “surly” looks (SH, p.134), and “something animal-like and repellent in that glistening stare” (SH, p. 64). At the hellish station the didactic demon swiftly sets to work by remarking, “This is an unexpected courtesy, Mr. Lynch-Gibbon” (SH, p. 64). Only gradually does Martin realize the scorn behind her remark: it seems rather odd for a man to be running errands for his wife’s lover.

As the novel progresses, Honor’s assault becomes more direct. In Lawrencian tones she tells Martin that he is a violent man who can no longer “cheat the dark gods” (SH, p. 76). By gentleness he only
prolongs this “enchantment of untruth” which Palmer and Antonia have woven around him. She insists that eventually he will “have to become a centaur and kick [his] way out” (SH, p. 76). The strange professor must turn Martin himself into a demon in order to draw him out of Antonia and Palmer’s “region of fantasy” and return him to the “real world” (SH, p. 70). Martin’s education then resembles the journey through the underworld required of the mythic hero before he could reach his true destination. Man must descend into the nightmarish hell of his subconscious mind before he can discover true reality. Honor serves as Martin’s hellish guide.

On New Year’s Eve Martin calls at Palmer’s residence, where a “yellow sulphurous haze” encases the street lamps (SH, p. 110). He finds the happy couple out but comes across Honor Klein in the dining room, which seems so “abnormally dark” that Martin wonders if some of the fog has not drifted in. He soon realizes that Honor has passed into an extreme state, although he does not know the cause of her agitation. Certainly looking like a fiendish instructor, Honor sits at the head of the table with a sharp Samurai-sword which she has removed from the dining room wall. An expert with the weapon, she tells Martin that sword play in Japan is considered a spiritual exercise expressing control and power. Although the title of the book reverberates in various ways throughout the entire novel, one particular meaning is reinforced in this scene as Honor then stands up and tosses first Antonia’s and then Palmer’s soiled dinner napkins into the air. Swiftly wielding the mighty weapon, Honor “decapitates” each napkin and then looks down at the “severed” remains (SH, p. 117). The dirty napkins represent Antonia’s and Palmer’s crumpled gentility. As Honor Klein slashes through the symbol of their civilized mentality, she creates for Martin a terrifying demonstration of naked power. Soon the novice “experiences an intense desire to take the sword from her,” as church bells signal the approach of the New Year. The scene forcefully depicts the transfer of demonic energy.

Reluctant to use his new power, Martin several evenings later serves wine to Palmer and Antonia in bed together. But Martin’s subsequent journey into the cellar with a heavy wine crate reminds one of a descent into the id, the dark basement where primitive and demonic forces are unleashed. As Martin swears and stumbles about, he is suddenly interrupted by Honor Klein, “looking down at [him] broodingly.” The didactic taunting continues as she labels him “the knight of infinite humiliation” (SH, p. 133). This time, however, the lesson hits home as the polite historian suddenly acts as if he is possessed by a demon. He knocks Honor onto the cellar floor, jumps
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on her, and belts her across the face three times. Although she struggles “like a maniac” (SH, p. 135), her fiendish pupil cannot be overcome. When Martin’s temporary madness ends, Honor Klein quietly glides out into the fog again.

Before too long Martin realizes he desperately loves Honor Klein, whose image becomes “vast across [his] way as the horizon itself or the spread wings of Satan” (SH, p. 150). His nightmarish compulsion for her makes his two previous relationships resemble so many pleasant daydreams. He is truly possessed. Honor’s hellish instruction of Martin continues as she makes Martin feel the full weight of his responsibility for Georgie Hands, who has ceased to exist for Martin while he has been busy elsewhere. In rebellion against being kept “in cold storage” for so long (SH, p. 181), Georgie dallies with Martin’s brother, cuts off her hair, sends it to Martin, and finally tries to cut off her life by taking an overdose of pills. As Honor and Martin kneel beside the unconscious Georgie, Honor like an avenging fury casts her eyes upon Martin who says: “She was present to me, but only as a torment, as an apparition; and I knew that I was looking at her as I had never looked at any human being but as one might look at a demon ....Then we both looked down at Georgie” (SH, p. 211).

As we have seen, Honor Klein is cloaked in symbolism and myth. Yet the demonic metaphors seem necessary to break through the web of genteel fantasy which Antonia, Palmer, and even Martin himself have tangled about themselves throughout the novel. Just before Martin met Honor, for instance, he had complained of Antonia and Palmer’s influence in terms of “a stranger’s rope....I was their prisoner and I choked with it. But I too much feared the darkness beyond” (SH, p. 62). The Nietzschean Honor Klein provides the searing force needed to cut through the “tender bond” (SH, p. 62) of this civilized trap. Ironically she also provides Martin with the “darkness” that allows him to “see.” But does Honor herself emerge from her symbolic demonism and enter the real world?

The imagery suggests that she does. Although the demonic references continue to the end of the book implying that her primitive impulses will never nor should ever be completely submerged, the dark imagery is complemented by pervasive light imagery in the final scenes of the novel, suggesting a type of breakthrough. Martin begins the last chapter of the novel with the words, “I turned all the lights on” (SH, p. 242). As Honor stands outside in the “semi-darkness,” Martin looks back and lets Honor follow him “in towards the light” (SH, p. 245). The pattern continues until the last sentence where he returns the “bright light” of her smile. The intense light imagery suggests that the
two people are finally "seeing" each other as real individuals rather than as mythological monsters or sweet darlings in a civilized fantasy. Honor Klein has used her dark power in order to clarify and liberate. She has shocked Martin into recognizing her unique reality.

Having an apprehension of Honor "which is deeper than ordinary knowledge" (SH, p. 220), Martin has desperately tried to approach Honor as an equal. Realizing the destructive nature of her obsession with her brother, Honor has also come to Martin, anticipating the chance of freedom through the recognition of his otherness. Besides the intensified light imagery, the spinning pace of the novel suddenly slows down in this final chapter so that every word, every look, every gesture assumes great importance as two people perhaps for the first time in the novel perceive each other clearly. Martin exults: "An intoxicating sense possessed me that at last we were treating on equal terms. I kept my face stern, but there was so much light within, it must have showed a little" (SH, p. 247).

The title of the book thus applies to its form as well as to its content. Murdoch demonstrates that she is not tyrannized by form: in the last chapter she severs the satiric mask of the rest of the novel which has come to resemble a game of musical beds as the reader watches Antonia jet off to Rome with her third lover. In this last chapter the mythic clothing of Honor Klein is loosened. The tone becomes more natural, and no more frivolous Antonias jangle about. Instead, two serious people emerge. The demonic Honor Klein has done her didactic work and can now confront Martin as a real woman. The proof of Martin's growth lies in the ultimately perceptive narration he has just composed.

Muriel Spark's The Ballad of Peckham Rye also provides a precise example of demonic didacticism in that moral instruction is offered by a trickster who may be the devil himself. By making her devilish protagonist a Scot (named Dougal Douglas), Spark no doubt intends to delight any Calvinists in her reading audience. Although a playful spirit in fact ripples over much of this work, an undercurrent of blood and violence frequently erupts, making the overall effect unsettling.

The basic situation recalls the demonic Honor Klein's crashing entry into the genteel world of Martin Lynch-Gibbon; only now we are dealing with the working classes rather than the more intellectual upper classes. But like Honor Klein, Dougal is an outsider who plunges into the community, stirs up a lot of mischief, and tears away illusions, forcing people to recognize the superficial nature of the flimsy structures they have tacked together to order their lives. But while Honor Klein influences Martin Lynch-Gibbon in an ultimately positive
way, some of the characters in Spark's novel are shattered when they are made to view reality from a more illuminating perspective. In fact, one critic sees Dougal simply as an evil force who wrecks destruction and chaos upon the formerly tranquil community. Other readers point out that Dougal really does no evil himself but merely acts as a catalyst for the evil churning under the respectable surfaces of society. Karl Malkoff has, however, recognized the morally instructive role that the demonic visitor plays: "What Dougal offers is freedom from the confines of artificial moralities; he preaches the respect for oneself that must precede respect for others." Honor Klein teaches a similar lesson to Martin Lynch-Gibbon, but Spark's book differs from Murdoch's in that the Scot's demonic traits are not just imagined in the mind of a fanciful first person narrator as in the case of Honor and Martin. In The Ballad of Peckham Rye the sardonic third-person narrator reports that Dougal asks a number of different characters to feel the bumps where his horns have been sawed off by a plastic surgeon. Dougal's hunched shoulders and claw-like right hand provide him with unnatural dexterity. And he tells about dreams where he appears as the Devil. But Dougal also boasts about having powers of exorcism: "the ability to drive devils out of people." Playing with Dougal's diabolic nature throughout the novel, Spark offers just enough information so that we do not quite believe that Dougal is really supposed to be the Devil nor do we quite believe that he isn't. As Malkoff points out, Dougal's identity remains ambiguous (p. 23). His aversion to sickness, for instance, can signify both a limited sense of compassion and a commitment to health and vitality. To add to the ambiguity, Dougal Douglas sometimes refers to himself as Douglas Dougal.

Another important difference between Murdoch's demonic professor and Spark's fey highlander concerns their commitment to others. While Honor Klein becomes intensely involved with two other characters, Dougal Douglas flits through the novel without ever really establishing any serious relationship with another human being. On one hand, his detached manner makes him look even more devilish, for perhaps only the devil would go to such lengths to cause trouble among people he doesn't really care about. On the other hand, it often seems that Dougal wants to jolt the whole town into a new perception of moral values. It is he, for instance, who classifies the four types of morality observable in Peckham (B, p. 94). Although here Dougal is trying to trick a prospective employer into thinking of him as an expert sociologist, he nevertheless does shrewdly assess that in the three most common moral
attitudes in Peckham, people are subordinated to other values, whether it be one’s own emotional indulgences, class structure, or money.

One of the citizens of Peckham Rye who has subordinated the individual to other concerns, Mr. V. R. Druce presides as managing director of the local textile plant. As Mr. Druce interviews Douglas for a job as a social researcher at the plant, the managing director becomes a mouthpiece for company values. After he is hired, Dougal engages in a much more intimate chat with the managing director, who by now begins to reveal the insecurity behind his official mask. While Druce pontificates about organizational skill and the “moral fibre” needed to “get on in business,” his personal life lacks any real meaning, although here too he clings to artificial structures. His marriage is an empty form: he hasn’t talked to his wife since the time five years ago when she mimicked him by quacking like a duck. Since then he only writes notes to her. It doesn’t take Dougal long to figure out Druce’s unethical motive for staying married. Now an inquisitor, he points an accusing finger at the managing director and states “Mrs. Druce has got money” (B, p. 75). Putting his head down on his desk, Druce ends the conversation by breaking into tears, while a co-worker observes, “This place is becoming chaos” (B, p. 76).

The statement could apply to both Honor Klein’s and Dougal Douglas’s attacks on the artificial forms which society erects to establish a semblance of order. Chaotic destruction of superficial forms must precede the creation of true order. The citizens of Peckham Rye have adhered to artificial structures so rigidly that life in the community has become very mechanical. Workers at the textile plant, for instance, are usually associated with their menial assignments such as: “Dawn Waghorn, cone-winder... Odette Mill, uptwister ...and Lucille Potter, guummer” (B, p. 14). In contrast to the mechanical forms which make the villagers so predictable, Dougal Douglas often jumps about like Pan in odd and unexpected ways.

Besides the managing director, several other materialistic citizens of Peckham Rye emerge. Unlike Mr. Druce, who at first found Dougal charming, Dixie Morse hates Dougal almost immediately. A typist at the textile plant, Dixie is engaged to “refrigerator engineer,” Humphrey Place. Although she realizes Humphrey is being influenced by his new neighbor, she herself remains unimpressed by Dougal’s almost supernatural aura. Dixie’s character never changes. From the first time we see her scrutinizing her bank book to the last days before her wedding when she reminds her fiancé that his company is offering “plenty of overtime,” Dixie thinks mainly of saving her pennies. Her
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philosophy of life seems to be: "We need all the money we can get" (B, P. 140).

Dixie’s limited perspective is reinforced by her mannerisms which suggest a trivial, self-absorbed mind. A description of Dixie eating at a restaurant functions nicely as an objective correlative for her meticulously frugal soul: she “touched the corners of her mouth with a paper napkin, and carefully picking up her knife and fork, continued eating, turning her head a little obliquely to receive each small mouthful” (B, p. 115). One senses that if Dixie marries Humphrey, she will eat him up in small mouthfuls too. Humphrey is allowed to go out with his fiancée only once a week so he too can save income. On their mountain rendezvous he carries along two rugs, one for Dixie to sit upon and the other to put over her legs while he sprawls on the damp ground and listens to her complain about their finances. At a restaurant where the waitress spills the coffee into Dixie’s saucer, he quickly exchanges cups of coffee, pours the spilled liquid into his cup, and downs it without saying a word. Through a number of such episodes, it becomes clear that in their future marriage, Dixie will dominate and Humphrey will serve.

The situation is ripe for intervention. Strategically located just one floor above Humphrey in Miss Friene’s rooming house, Dougal Douglas frequently invites the naïve refrigerator repairman up for talks lasting long into the night. The two men provide a study in contrast. While Humphrey talks seriously about trade unions, Dougal lolls on his bed, fiddles with a knob on the brass bedstead, and finally starts to chatter about a mermaid who plays a harp and writes poetry. When Dougal asks Humphrey if he would like to be married to such a mermaid, he doesn’t add “rather than Dixie,” but Humphrey seems to understand his meaning. After Humphrey admits that such a marriage would be “fascinating,” the demonic qualities of his new friend intensify: “Dougal gazed at Humphrey like a succubus whose mouth is its eyes” (B, p. 31). Humphrey’s vulnerability makes him easy work for Dougal, whose influence is seen almost immediately. As the Dionysian conductor of human research pours wine down Humphrey’s throat and even entertains him with a sprightly dance or two, Humphrey begins to slip off his rigid Apollonian demeanor: “Humphrey laughed deeply with his head thrown back...so Dougal could see the whole inside of his mouth” (B, p. 55). As a result of his talks with Dougal, Humphrey becomes increasingly critical of Dixie, accusing her of losing her sexuality because of her preoccupation with money. When she harps that the couple will not be able to afford a new spin-dryer,
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Humphrey boldly proclaims, “Oh to hell with your spin-dryer” (B, p. 62).

As Dougal continues to stir up the placid waters of Humphrey’s soul, he even asks the refrigerator repairman to feel the two bumps on his head. But refusing to recognize the demonic nature of his new friend, Humphrey suggests that the bumps are simply “a couple of cysts” (B, p. 86), rather than sawed-off horns. Dougal performs his most devilish piece of mischief, however, on the night that he mocks a traditional wedding ceremony by pretending to be a groom who, when asked the crucial question, says “no.” Although Humphrey laughs off Dougal’s derisive performance, the seed is planted. Shortly thereafter during his own wedding, when the minister asks if he will take Dixie as his wife, this polite young man distinctly states: “No, to be quite frank, I won’t” (B, p. 158). He then leaves town, again imitating his friend Dougal, who has become very unpopular among the citizens of Peckham Rye.

Although the last chapter remains inconclusive as Spark provides several endings, many townspeople say that Humphrey returned and finally married Dixie with a crowd of uninvited guests waiting around the church to see if he would say no again. Even though his influence may have been temporary, Dougal Douglas did then make a conventional young man perform an act of daring individuality which could have liberated him from a long, oppressive relationship. And probably as a result of Dougal’s influence, this usually unimaginative young man at least glimpses at a more idealistic world as he experiences the most visionary moment of the novel. The book’s last words reflect Humphrey’s point of view: “It was a sunny day for November, and, as he drove swiftly past the Rye, he saw the children playing there and the women coming home from work with their shopping bags, the Rye for an instant looking like a cloud of green and gold, the people seeming to ride upon it, as you might say there was another world than this” (B, p. 160). The other world represents a higher spiritual plane which strangely enough may have been revealed to Humphrey by the devil himself.

In The Situation of the Novel Bernard Bergonzi has recognized that along with Iris Murdoch and Muriel Spark, John Fowles has produced fiction “at a considerable distance from the well-made realistic novel as conventionally understood.” One might compare, for instance, Spark’s playful manipulation of form in The Ballad of Peckman Rye to Fowles’s experimental techniques in The French Lieutenant’s Woman, where Fowles questions the arbitrary power of the author not by imposing one obviously artificial pattern but rather by refusing to
lay down any rigid structure at all and instead providing multiple endings which more directly involve the reader in the art of fiction. This technique reinforces the central theme of freedom as Sarah Woodruff becomes a didactic demon who haunts the Victorian mind of Charles Smithson as she teaches him to look at the world with a more modern, existential awareness.

But one of Fowles’s earlier novels serves as a clearer example of demonic didacticism as a result of its more bizarre subject matter and its decidedly moral foundation. Although superficially different, Fowles’s *The Magus* and Iris Murdoch’s *A Severed Head*, when examined more closely, show some interesting similarities. Both are novels of education in which the protagonist proves to be in dire need of instruction. In each work important lessons are taught by powerful, mysterious figures who often seem demonic in the hellish influence they exert on their pupils. In both cases the learning process of the protagonist often resembles a type of psychological descent into hell. At Pelham Crescent Martin Lynch-Gibbon goes down into the wine cellar of his subconscious mind, while on the Greek island of *The Magus* Nicholas Urfe explores the underground of his psyche.

Another important parallel lies in the first-person point of view which in each book reflects the self-absorption of the protagonist. Just as Martin Lynch-Gibbon’s solipsistic tendencies are established early in Murdoch’s novel, Nicholas Urfe’s fundamental egotism is suggested at the outset with the first person pronoun being used ten times in the novel’s opening three sentences all of which also begin with “I.” Although both men have studied at Oxford, they each need more education in the area of human relationships. Women especially have been victimized by their insensitive egos.

Just as Martin Lynch-Gibbon locks up women in tidy compartments labeled “mistress” and “wife,” so too does the younger Nicholas Urfe seem categorical when he veers away from a particular type of female intellectual who “was as familiar as a species of bird” (*M*, p. 26). Nicholas also arrives at a party late so that “the ugly girls... would have been disposed of.” In order to net his preferred species of bird, he employs a technique which, according to his statistics, must have been somewhat successful, for he brags, “By the time I left Oxford I was a dozen girls away from virginity” (*M*, p. 21). Nicholas’s trick involved being cynical and unpredictable, but then, “like a conjurer with his white rabbit,” he would pull out his solitary heart—his loneliness, which proved to be a “deadly weapon with women” (*M*, p. 21). Making his encounters with the opposite sex even more magical and illusory, Nicholas would always quickly disappear, for he became
“almost as neat at ending liaisons as at starting them” (M, p. 21). As a college student, Nicholas arranged most of his affairs during the term breaks so that he could easily terminate them by “having to go back to school,” at which time he wore the “Chesterfieldian mask” instead of the lonely one. The imagery of a conjurer and his masks anticipates the title character, who in the course of the novel will turn the tables and use some of the same deceptive techniques on Nicholas himself—a reversal which can support an allegorical interpretation of the novel. In one sense the magus or sorcerer who will function as Nicholas’s didactic demon can be seen as part of Nicholas’s own mind: in many ways the magus, whose name is Conchis, can represent the protagonist’s own moral consciousness. Just as Nicholas deceived young women, Martin Lynch-Gibbon also enchanted Georgie Hands with various illusions (such as a promised trip to New York) before Honor Klein enchanted him and ultimately taught him to preserve his own honor. In spite of the strange personalities whom they designate, the names of both Honor and Conchis thus assume decidedly moral overtones.

One difference is that in Fowles’s novel the satanic instructor turns out to be an older man while in Murdoch’s work a formidable yet captivating older woman takes command. Fowles did at one point consider making the magus character female, but the older man who so powerfully influences Nicholas has at his disposal several distinctly female assistants. Another difference between the two books lies in the fact that more time seems to have elapsed between Nicholas’s telling the tale and its actual occurrence. His tone often tends to be more detached and analytical than Martin’s: Nicholas explains, for instance, that his technique with women during his Oxford period “was calculating, but it was caused less by a true coldness than by my narcissistic belief in the importance of the life-style. I mistook the feeling of relief that dropping a girl always brought for a love of freedom” (M, p. 21).

Nicholas’s attitude alters slightly when he meets an Australian girl named Alison Kelly at a party right below his own apartment in Russell Square. After Alison moves in with him, an intense relationship develops, and interestingly the image of the enclosed room surrounding both Georgie Hands from A Severed Head and Miranda Grey from The Collector is also found in this novel. Because the sister of Alison’s old boyfriend lives immediately below Nicholas, for a time Alison hardly ever leaves Nicholas’s apartment. The protagonist explains:
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I went and bought food, and we talked and slept and made love and danced and cooked meals at all hours, *sous les toits*, as remote from ordinary time as we were from the dull London world outside the windows. (*M*, p. 31)

Just as Martin Lynch-Gibbon and Frederick Clegg had closeted girls in secret rooms, so too does Nicholas Urfe collect Alison in a room as well as in an "affaire [which] was like no other [he] had been through" (*M*, p. 35).

Loving Nicholas far more than he cares for her, Alison wants their relationship to become more than just an "affaire." Yet within five weeks Nicholas seems happy that a new teaching job in a distant land—rather than a new term at Oxford—will provide an easy escape from what has become a stifling situation. While Alison provokes several bitter arguments and even contemplates suicide, Nicholas feels relief that "all this" will soon be over. Like Martin Lynch-Gibbon in the early section of *A Severed Head*, Nicholas Urfe in the first part of *The Magus* has demonstrated a callous indifference to the women he has emotionally imprisoned. Thus both Murdoch and Fowles have set the stage for the entrance of the mysterious figures who will jolt these first-person narrators out of their limited point of view and into a new moral perspective.

But while Martin Lynch-Gibbon had to travel only as far as the sulphurous fog at Liverpool Street Station to meet his Satanic mentor, Nicholas Urfe must sail to a remote Greek island before he can begin his nightmarish tour of a psychological hell, carefully designed for him by a wealthy physician who owns a villa called Bourani on the southern end of the island. In London Nicholas had whimsically answered a curious newspaper ad offering a position as an English instructor at the Lord Byron School for Boys on the small Greek island of Phraxos.

While job hunting, he had expressed a Romantic desire to travel: "I needed a new land, a new race, a new language; and, although I couldn't have put it into words then, I needed a new mystery" (*M*, p. 19). He felt that Greece would supply him with this mystery, as indeed it does, but in ways which he never imagined.

The French epigraph introducing the second part of the book describes a scene from DeSade in which a victim is being tortured on a table bordered by religious paintings and candles. Suggesting a black mass, the image sets an ominous tone for the long middle section of the three-part novel. Although not as pervasive as the sulphurous fog creating the hellish landscape for Honor Klein's entrance into Murdoch's novel, the "pale smoke" curling up from a rooftop serves as...
the first indication that the secluded villa at the southern end of the island is no longer deserted. Combing the shore line after he sees the smoke, Nicholas discovers a beach towel and some poetry books opened to various passages underlined in red. One passage includes T. S. Eliot's lines from "Little Gidding":

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploration
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

As well as alluding to the novel's three-part structure with the setting changing from London to Greece and back to London again, the passage points to the book's didactic theme and the new knowledge that Nicholas must attain before traveling back to England to rediscover Alison.

But another passage by Pound indicates that the journey Nicholas must make before he acquires his new knowledge will involve a descent to the underworld:

This sound came in the dark
First must thou go the road to hell
And to the bower of Ceres' daughter Proserpine,
Through overhanging dark, to see Tiresias,
Eyeless that was, a shade, that is in hell
So full of knowing that the beefy men know less than he,

Ere thou come to thy road's end.
Knowledge the shade of a shade,
Yet must thou sail after knowledge
Knowing less than drugged beasts (Canto XIV)

This passage not only reinforces the comparison between Nicholas and Odysseus but also appropriately focuses on one of the central themes of The Cantos—the descent into Hades from Homer. Indeed, it soon becomes clear that Nicholas Urfe, like Martin Lynch-Gibbon, must plunge to the deepest regions of his soul before he can bloom into a more sensitive moral being. While Murdoch's protagonist is led to the lower depths by Honor Klein, Nicholas Urfe is conducted on a tour through hell by the wealthy owner of the remote villa, the exotic Maurice Conchis.

Malcolm Bradbury has compared Conchis to "the Psychopomp figures of Iris Murdoch's early novels—Hugo Belfounder, Mischa Fox,
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Honor Klein—with their ambiguous philosophical or anthropological charisma...[who represent] forces beyond and outside the familiar orders of society and its states of mind, possessors of ambiguous myths that yet contain both truth and falsehood.” Bradbury maintains that Conchis’s supra-rational knowledge “has the prophetic pull of Honor Klein’s dark wisdom in A Severed Head, and the same sense that it is a knowledge beyond the novel’s capacity to register....[As] with A Severed Head, the rationalistic underpinning of day-to-day life, with its casual sexual relationships and its vague code of personal relations, is left behind.”

One might extend Bradbury’s analysis to certain polarities in the novels of Muriel Spark, such as the tension between the normally complacent village of Peckham Rye and Douglas Dougal. All three authors use demonic imagery to emphasize the dark powers of their exotic, charismatic figures. In tracing a line from Honor Klein to Douglas Dougal to Maurice Conchis, one does begin to notice a gathering of devils in contemporary British fiction. Their creators no doubt feel that powerful, compelling forces are needed to blast contemporary man out of his moral lethargy.

When Nicholas finally meets Conchis, for instance, his first impression resembles that of Martin Lynch-Gibbon confronting the formidable Honor Klein:

The most striking thing about him was the intensity of his eyes; very dark brown, staring with simian penetration emphasized by the remarkably clear whites; eyes that seemed not quite human....There was something mask-like, emotion-purged, about his face. Deep furrows ran from beside his nose to the corners of his mouth; they suggested experience, command, impatience with fools. He was slightly mad....He kept his ape-like eyes on me. The silence and the stare were alarming...as if he was trying to hypnotize a bird. (M, pp. 78-80)

Several images in this passage continue to ripple throughout the novel. The element of disguise prevails. After one of the many strange occurrences on the island, Nicholas looks to Conchis for an answer only to confront the “blank mask of his face” (M, p. 185). Similarly a number of Conchis’s associates wear both literal and figurative masks (M, pp. 196, 204, 205). The hypnosis imagery also continues. Enigmatic and mysterious, Conchis does actually hypnotize Nicholas after dinner one evening but countless other times captivates Nicholas with his “naturally mesmeric eyes” (M, p. 237).
Although Nicholas’s curiosity is aroused by Conchis’s appearance, the protagonist finds his host’s actions even more inscrutable. Besides making cryptic comments, Conchis produces for Nicholas a series of psycho-dramas or bizarre tableaux, which he collectively refers to as “The Masque.” Various figures in the masque soon walk offstage and into Nicholas’s life so that the young man finds it increasingly difficult to distinguish between illusion and reality. In time he suspects, however, that Conchis is manipulating him for some unknown reason by using these talented performers who never really remove their masks either on or off the stage. In fact, the whole concept of stage and audience disappears as the protagonist becomes more involved in the series of dramas. But the deception becomes so pervasive that Nicholas learns to distrust Conchis and frequently refers to him as that same Arch-trickster who taunted the citizens of Peckham Rye. Whenever Nicholas feels that Conchis has shut down his strange theater, he is made to realize that the apparent end proves to be only an intermission: “The masque had moved outside the domaine, and the old devil had not given in one bit” (M, p. 373).

The Satanic references become even more appropriate when in one strange episode Nicholas finds himself imprisoned in an underground chamber and facing the devil himself:

The head was that of a pure black goat: a real goat’s head, worn as a kind of cap, so that it stood high off the shoulders of the person beneath, whose real face must have lain behind the shaggy beard. Huge backswept horns, left their natural colour; amber glass eyes; the only ornament, a fat blood-red candle that had been fixed between the horns and lit....I realized that he was lampooning the traditional Christ-figure; the staff was the pastoral crook, the black beard Christ’s brown one, the blood-red candle some sort of blasphemous parody of the halo....The goat figure, his satanic majesty, came forward with an archdiabolical dignity and I braced myself for the next development: a black Mass seemed likely. (M, p. 502)

After being tied to a whipping post and psychologically tormented, Nicholas considers himself to be “chained in hell” (M, p. 530).

Thus one need not search far to find demonic imagery—all of which reinforces the point that the protagonist not only is spending an unusual year on a Greek island but also is embarking upon a journey through Hades. As he himself says, “Always with Conchis one went down, and it seemed one could go no farther; but at the end another way
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went even lower" (M, p. 515). Like Honor Klein, the demonic Maurice Conchis also proves to be didactic. For the strange masque is designed to show Nicholas that the real devil is lodged within his own soul—especially in his callous treatment of young women like Alison. Many of the tableaus performed on that Greek island reflect Nicholas’s own selfish nature. Only gradually does this first-person narrator begin to understand Conchis’s cryptic remark: “Greece is like a mirror. It makes you suffer. Then you learn” (M, p. 99).

One might hesitate to use such sweeping terms as “the new morality” or perhaps “a rediscovered morality” to describe the didactic impulses of a number of post-war writers. Yet, unlike the formalist preoccupations of modernism, an increasingly orthodox concern for one’s fellow man emerges. Murdoch, Spark, and Fowles intend to rout the demons—even though they use methods which themselves often seem diabolic. As Muriel Spark’s curious trickster proclaims: “I have the powers of exorcism...the ability to drive devils out of people.” Reflecting upon Dougal Douglas’s frequent reports that the bumps on his head were caused by the removal of horns by plastic surgery, his friend states, “I thought you were a devil yourself.” The Scotsman—both demonic and didactic—replies, “The two states are not incompatible” (B, p. 115).

It might be helpful here to consider the larger picture. With the exception of A Maggot (depicting both the founder of a religious sect and the Devil), Gothic shadows fall most often throughout the earlier work of John Fowles. But his fiction continues to be highly innovative. Although many of Iris Murdoch’s ideas remain constant, her style has changed noticeably. Her later works, longer and more leisurely, emulate the expansive nineteenth-century novels that she has always considered superior to typically crystalline modern works of fiction. After comparing her 1986 novel, The Good Apprentice, to several of her earlier books, one must agree with Elizabeth Dipple that in the “protracted subtleties” of her recent technique a new Iris has bloomed.16 But both Murdoch and Spark have kept close to their original themes late in their careers. In The Philosopher's Pupil, Iris Murdoch’s 1983 novel, the philosopher maintains, “The holy must try to know the demonic” (p. 196). In Muriel Spark’s 1981 novel, Loitering with Intent, the heroine confesses, “I was aware of a daemon inside me that rejoiced in seeing people as they were” (p. 10). Both novels explore mysterious and even supernatural realms of experience.

Besides looming in the novels of these three modern British authors, didactic demons have appeared in earlier times. Christopher Marlowe’s Dr. Faustus certainly learns an important lesson from
DIDACTIC DEMONS

Mephistopheles. John Milton’s Satan teaches profound truths even though he loses Paradise. In their sensational design, the Gothic novels of Ann Radcliffe make strong moral comments by focusing on the plight of the victims enthralled by Satanic villains. In the first half of the twentieth century, pedagogical devils appear in Shaw’s *Man and Superman* and C. S. Lewis’s *The Screwtape Letters*. Philosophical and playful, these two works fail to explore the psychological complexity of demonic obsession rendered so vividly by the three contemporary novelists.

Other post-war British authors who have combined the demonic and the didactic include Mervyn Peake to a limited degree in *Mr. Pye* and the *Gormenghast* series, Anthony Burgess in *The Eve of Saint Venus*, and William Golding in *Lord of the Flies*, whose title provides the meaning of the Hebrew word “Beelzebub.” These authors use demonic elements to react to a permissive postwar society. As Anthony Burgess writes, “Nobody sins anymore...the whole land’s...a drawing-room in pink cretonne.” Many recent writers therefore create hellish imagery to jolt readers into an awareness of real evil—symbolized in Golding’s novel by that satanic pig’s head delivering its dark sermon to the mystical Simon. These contemporary novels refute the character from *The Good Apprentice* who says: “Modern science has abolished the difference between good and evil.”

With their didactic purpose and diabolic texture, Murdoch, Spark, Fowles, Burgess, and Golding teach us to recognize the demons lurking within our own hearts.

NOTES


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8Iris Murdoch, *A Severed Head* (New York, 1961), p. 11. Other page notations in the text from *A Severed Head* (abbreviated SH) will refer to this edition.


10Carol Murphy, “A Spark of the Supernatural,” *Approach*, 60 (1966), 27.


16Elizabeth Dipple, *Iris Murdoch: Work for the Spirit* (Chicago 1982), pp. 306-48. Published before *The Good Apprentice* was written, Dipple’s comprehensive yet penetrating study nevertheless focuses in its last chapter on the “languorous extensions” of other later works such as *The Sea, The Sea* and *Nuns and Soldiers*.

Chester Himes at age 35. Used with permission, Professor Joseph S. Himes, Jr.
CHESTER HIMES: A PRIMARY BIBLIOGRAPHY

Robert Skinner & Michel Fabre

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Few Afro-American writers in the past fifty years have had the impact of the late Chester Himes. Since critical commentary first began to appear on his work in the late 1940s, critics both Black and white have been sharply divided on whether Himes was a brilliant, angry genius, a dangerous racist bent on stirring up racial unrest, or a militant separatist preaching organized Black revolution.

Himes’ reputation is based on a number of novels he published between 1945 and 1969. These novels show a remarkable range and include stark sociological protest, revealing autobiographical fiction, satire, and crime novels. Most are at least well known to critics and some, particularly the so-called “Harlem Domestic Series” gained a wide popularity both in the United States and abroad.

Himes’ life was a difficult and peripatetic one. Before he was out of his teens he was imprisoned at Ohio State Penitentiary for robbery. Upon his release during the Great Depression, he bounced from one menial job to another as he attempted to make a name for himself, first as a short story writer and finally as a novelist. In the early 1950s, fed up with the racism he saw at every turn and the failure of all of his writing to gain for him any critical or financial success, he expatriated himself to France. He wandered about Europe for a number of years before he was rediscovered by the French and finally achieved the popularity he was denied at home.

Himes began writing short fiction while he was in prison and because much of his early work was published in now defunct Black periodicals and newspapers, it has been largely unknown to scholars and Himes enthusiasts. At the same time, Himes himself never kept track of the many short stories and articles he wrote in his early days. As a result, when scholars first began to evidence some interest in this output, so much time had passed that even Himes could not remember where all his work had appeared. This has often resulted in vague or completely mistaken bibliographic entries which have tended to confuse rather than enlighten the researcher interested in Himes’ roots as a writer. This has been compounded by the few other bibliographers who have attempted to document Himes’ writing career.

While scholars and critics have tended to disagree on Himes’ importance to American and Afro-American literature, it is undeniable that there is both a scholarly and popular interest in his work. New
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editions of his work and new reappraisals of it have both appeared recently. Because of this, the authors decided that the time was right to attempt to present a bibliography of Himes' major and minor work that would approach comprehensiveness. A number of the items in this bibliography were discovered by accident and it is possible that we will never know the full extent of Himes' writing.

SECTION I
THE NOVELS

Himes' novels are listed in order of their chronological appearance. Each entry lists first and second American, French, and British printings. Titles appearing first in French are listed ahead of subsequent American printings.


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SECTION II
THE SHORT FICTION

Those who have attempted to organize a bibliography of Himes' work in earlier times have been forced to rely on Himes' own recollections, some of which have proven to be faulty. A good example of this is a claim by Himes that a story by him appeared in the weekly *Pittsburgh Courier* around 1932. A page-by-page investigation of this newspaper from the time of Himes' imprisonment through 1935 has, thus far, yielded no text by Himes. One can only surmise that Himes did submit a story but that it was not accepted for publication.

Himes also claimed to have published a story in *The Bronzeman*. Unfortunately, a complete set of this magazine has not been located anywhere in the United States and the available issues do not contain any work by Himes.

His short fiction shows not only the roots of his later crime fiction, but also his interest in creating strong, proletarian Black characters and the canny ear for Negro street talk that characterized so much of his dialogue.

Below are listed all first periodical appearances of short fiction in their chronological order of appearance. When stories have been anthologized, the works in which they appear are also noted.

28. “To What Red Hell.” *Esquire* 2(October 1934), 100-1, 122, 127
32. “Salute to the Passing.” *Opportunity* 17(March 1939), 74-9.
34. “Looking Down the Street.” *Crossroad* (Spring 1940), pages not numbered.
37. “Strictly Business.” *Esquire* 17(February 1942), 55, 128.
41. “Heaven Has Changed.” *The Crisis* 50(March 1943), 78, 83.
42. “So Softly Smiling.” *The Crisis* 50(October 1943), 314-6, 318.
43. “All He Needs Is Feet.” *The Crisis* 50(November 1943), 332.
45. “All God’s Chillun Got Pride.” *The Crisis* 51(June 1944), 188-9, 204.
46. “He Seen It in the Stars.” *Negro Story* 1(July/August 1944), 5-9.
50. “There Ain’t No Justice.” *Esquire* 23(April 1945), 53 (Although subtitled “Article”, this dialogue appears to be a work of fiction.)
51. “My, But the Rats Are Terrible.” *Negro Story* 1(May/June 1945), 24-32.
52. “Make With the Shape.” *Negro Story* 2(August/September 1945), 3-6.
53. “A Night of New Roses.” *Negro Story* 2(December 1945/January 1946), 10-14 (Original manuscript title was “A Night of Neuroses.” Published title was a misprint.)
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57. "To End All Stories." *The Crisis* 55(July 1948), 205, 220.

SECTION III

NON FICTION

Even more tantalizing than his missing short fiction are the missing nonfiction publications that Himes is reported to have done during his early years. For example, Himes is reputed to have acted as a kind of reporter for the *Cleveland News* around the year 1939. In a letter he wrote he said:

"the editor of the *Cleveland* daily News, one N.R. Howard, gave me an assignment writing vignettes about various places in Cleveland, street scenes, etc., of the various ethnical groups of which Cleveland was chiefly composed at that time. These ran in a box on the editorial page, under the heading THIS CLEVELAND, and signed by ch."

(Chester Himes to John A. Williams, October 31, 1962, pp. 4-5)

Himes indicated that about fifty such columns were published. Only one was found in draft form among Himes' papers at Yale University. The entire publisher's run of the *Cleveland News* is located at the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland. Searches by the staff of the Historical Society have discovered unsigned advertisement-like test in the paper called "In Cleveland" but sufficient differences exist between the items and Himes' description to make it impossible to attribute them to him.
Himes also reported that he worked on a history of the C.I.O. Archivists at the George Meany Memorial Archives (official archives of the AFL-CIO in Silver Spring, Maryland) discovered such a history, entitled CIO: *What it is...and How it Came to Be*. This 46 page pamphlet, Number 12 in the C.I.O. Publications Series, was published in October of 1937. Similarities in style, the publication date, and the fact that much of the C.I.O.'s publication activity came out of Cleveland during this period provide strong indications that the booklet could, indeed, be Himes' work.

Himes also reported working on a history of Cleveland for the *Ohio WPA Guide*. Lack of any indication of authorship makes it impossible to attribute this piece to Himes, either.

Other Himes checklists have also noted "Equality for 125,000 Dead", reputed to be in a 1945 issue of the *Chicago Defender*, and a review of Ann Petry's *The Street*, reputed to be in an issue of *New Masses*. Although a typescript of the latter was found in Himes' papers, neither of these items has yet been positively identified.

Books and Book Appearances


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Magazine Appearances

68. "A Modern Fable—of Mr. Slaughter, Mr. McDull, and the American Scene." Crossroad No. 2(Summer 1939), 5 unnumbered pages.

69. "Native Son: Pros and Cons." New Masses (May 21, 1940), 23-4 (A letter discussing various aspects of Richard Wright's Native Son.)

70. "Now Is the Time! Here Is the Place!" Opportunity 20(September 1942), 271-3, 284.

71. "Zoot Suit Riots Are Race Riots!" The Crisis 50(July 1943), 200-1, 222.


83. "The Making of a Black Writer." Intellectual Digest (December 1971), 24-7 (excerpt from The Quality of Hurt [Item #66])
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86. Letter to Jazz Hot (Paris) dated April 18, 1972. Jazz Hot 38(July/August 1972), 14. (Himes sends greetings to the magazine, which carries articles about him and his work).

SECTION IV
COLLECTIONS

This final section of the bibliography consists of collections of short fiction and articles by Himes. Some material was not previously published and, where this is the case, it is so noted.

87. Black on Black, Baby Sister and Selected Writings. New York: Doubleday, 1973, 287 p. The contents of this work are as follows:
   “All God’s Chillun Got Pride.” (see item # 45)
   “All He Needs Is Feet.” (see item #43)
   “Baby Sister, A Black Greek Tragedy.” (A script, previously unpublished)
   “Black Laughter.” [1946] (previously unpublished)
   “Christmas Gift.” [1944] (previously unpublished)
   “Da-Da-Dee.” [1948] (previously unpublished)
   “Heaven Has Changed.” (see item #41)
   “Headwaiter.” (previously unpublished)
   “In the Night.” (see item #39)
   “Cotton Gonna Kill Me Yet.” (previously published as “Let Me
   At the Enemy—An’ George Brown”, item #47)
   “Lunching at the Ritzmore.” (see item #38)
   “Mama’s Missionary Money.” (see item #58)
   “A Nigger.” (previously unpublished)
   “The Night’s for Cryin’.” (see item #30)
   “One More Way to Die.” (see item #55)
   “Pork Chop Paradise.” (previously unpublished)
   “Prediction.” [1969] (previously unpublished)
   “Tang.” [1967] (previously unpublished in English. Part of
   Plan B)
   “If You’re Scared, Go Home.” [1941] (essay, previously unpublished)
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"Negro Martyrs Are Needed." (essay, see item #72)
"Now Is The Time! Here Is The Place!" (essay, see item #70)
"Zoot Riots Are Race Riots." (title slightly altered, see item #71)


Published in France as Black on Black. Paris: Editions Des Autres, 1979, 243 p. (translated by Maurice Cullez) In this edition, the script to “Baby Sister” and the four political essays were excluded.; Reprinted as Noir sur Noir, Paris: Christian Bourgois, 10/18, 1984, 243 p.

88. Le Manteau de rêve. Paris: Editions Lieu Commun, 1982, 217 p. (translated by Hélène Devaux-Minié). The contents of this volume are as follows:

"Le manteau de rêve." ("On Dreams and Reality", previously unpublished in English)
"Le fantôme de Rufus Jones." ("The Ghost of Rufus Jones", previously unpublished in English)
"Un taulard dingue." ("Crazy in the Stir", see item #27)
"Les tricheurs." ("To End All Stories", see item #57)
"Le gin espagnol." ("Spanish Gin" [1957], previously unpublished in English)
"En taule, on ne peut rien dépenser." ("Money Don’t Spend in the Stir", see item #44)
"La dame de la 100e rue." ("Every Opportunity", see item #31)
"Le puceau." ("My, But the Rats Are Terrible", see item #51)
"Son sourire était si doux." ("So Softly Smiling", see item #42)
"Les deux soldats." ("Two Soldiers", see item #40)
"Le serpent." ("The Snake", see item #60)
"Business avant tout." ("Strictly Business", see item #37)
"Pour l’uniforme." ("A Penny for Your Thoughts", see item #48)
"Une nuit dans le New-Jersey." ("One Night in New Jersey", previously unpublished in English)
"Keep on Smilin’ dit la chanson." ("The Song Says: ‘Keep on Smilin’", see item #49)
"Une vie éternelle." ("Life Everlasting", see item #61)
"Névrose en noir et blanc." ("A Night of Neuroses", see item #53)
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"Chanson sous la pluie." ("In the Rain", previously unpublished in English)

89. Faut être nègre pour faire ça... Paris: Lieu Commun, 1986, 224 p. The contents of this volume are as follows:
- "Moitie d’homme." ("Friends", see item #59)
- "Black Rodeo." (originally entitled "Daydream", previously unpublished in English)
- "Faut être nègre pour faire ça..." ("The Something in a Colored Man", see item #54)
- "L’heure des visites." ("The Visiting Hour", see item #29)
- "Les visages de la lune." ("Face in the Moonlight", see item #35)
- "L’effet que ca fait." ("I Knew", see item #25)
- "Messe en prison." ("Prison Mass", see item #20)
- "La loi de la chair." ("The Way of Flesh", previously unpublished in English)
- "Le mur." ("There Ain’t No Justice", see item #50)
- "Son dernier jour." ("His Last Day", see item #19)
- "La femme au foyer." ("Make With the Shape", see item #52)
- "Le paradis n’est plus ce qu’il était." ("Heaven Has Changed", see item #41)
- "Je cherche pas à te faire mal." ("I’m Not Trying to Hurt You", previously unpublished in English)
- "Les enfants d’Hitler." ("He Seen It In the Stars", see item #46)
- "Vers quel enfer de flammes?" ("To What Red Hell", see item #28)

- "Baby Sister" (previously published in English in the collection listed as item #87. Translated by Maurice and Yvonne Cullaz)
- "Joue, Gabriel, joue." (a script originally entitled "Blow, Gabriel, Blow", previously unpublished. Translated by Hélène Devaux-Minié)
- "Naturellement, le nègre." (a script originally entitled "Naturally, the Negro", previously unpublished. Translated by Hélène Devaux-Minié)
DEATH, DARKNESS, DESOLATION: 
NEGATIVE HOUSE-IMAGERY IN THE POEMS OF 
E. A. ROBINSON 

Carol Cedar Amelinckx 

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For most of us, the words "house" and "home" have positive connotations. As Gaston Bachelard points out, "a house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proof or illusions of stability."  
Symbolism of house/home in literature is most often used to produce images of warmth, comfort, protection, shelter. In Bachelard's words, a house is "the human being's first world." "It maintains him through the storms of heaven and through those of life." "When we dream of the house we were born in,...we participate in the original warmth..." (p. 7). 
House-imagery in the poetry of Edwin Arlington Robinson, however, stands in sharp contrast to these traditional positive connotations. He writes often about houses, but they tend to be dark, deserted, desolate, barren, and sepulchral. They sometimes represent scenes of violent death, at other times evoke a prison image. I will explore here a sampling of the negative house-imagery used by Robinson. 

Cavender's House, a narrative of murder; intrigue, and coming to terms with self, is the story of a man, who, after many years of wandering, returns to the house he once shared with his wife, Laramie. Early in the poem Cavender opens the door of the house he had closed twelve years before, "the house of self," as Martin puts it. The hour is midnight; the house is dark and silent, filled with painful memories of the past. We sense Cavender's deepest thoughts as he stands there. Some lines from Maurice Blanchot's "L'arret de mort" seem aptly to describe the situation: "About this room, which was plunged in utter darkness I knew everything. I had entered into it, I bore it within me, I made it live with a life that is not life, but which is stronger than life, and which no force in the world can vanquish" (Bachelard, pp. 288-289). Or, as Robinson himself tells us: 

Into that house where no men went, he went 
Alone; and in that house where day was night, 
Midnight was like a darkness that had fingers. 
He felt them holding him as if time's hands 
Had found him; and he waited as one waits 
Hooded for death, and with no fear to die.
Carol Cedar Amelinckx

It was not time and dying that frightened him,
Nor was it yet the night that was around him;
It was a darker night, and one within him....

And so the house, the darkness, the solitude, the opening of a door
upon the past, are used as symbols of a life, an inner darkness, a
loneliness, a turning back:

He stood by the same door that he had closed
Twelve years ago, and waited; and again
He closed the door, slowly and silently,
And was himself part of the darkness there,
There in his own dark house.

(p. 961)

Cavender waits in the all-encompassing silence, and senses in the
apparently barren atmosphere a kind of negative vitality, an alien
triumph, a furtive force conspiring against him. He feels the terror of
the silence; in his paranoid state he fears it is spying on him, that it is
listening to his very thoughts and will disclose them to demonic beings
who may be lurking in the shadows of the dark room. Bachelard refers
to the kind of uneasy quiet which Robinson uses so effectively as
“uneasy waves of silence that vibrate in poems.” He speaks as well of
“complicated forms which, even when they are at rest, make...creaking
contortions” (Bachelard, pp. 178-179).

Cavender shudders; the house is cold, bereft of the cozy hearth-fire
which had once brought warmth and comfort, sense of home:

...He was colder, now,
And shivered as he turned again to see
Where moonlight filled a desolate hearth,
So many a time alive with fire that once
Had hummed a comfortable song of home.

(p. 964)

In these lines Robinson deepens the negative image of the house
no longer home by emphasizing the present, intense coldness. He does
this by having Cavender shiver, and by replacing the warm image of
firelight, no longer present in the house, with the colder image of
moonlight. Through the use of these strong negative images he
involves the reader in the poem, creating a kind of empathy with
Cavender, in what Kaplan refers to as his feelings of “doubt and fear.”

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In the next stanza, the house is described as being "dead" and referred to as a "many-chambered cenotaph" (p. 964); each room becomes a sepulchre, containing "stillness and dark of memory" (p. 964). In his reverie and self-confrontation, Cavender imagines that Laramie has returned. What appears to be a dialogue between husband and wife follows. Within her face Cavender seems to see "a menace and a merriment" (p. 975). She speaks, confronting him with the reality of who he is and what he has done. The "calamity" of his life, she tells him, has "come...upon him like a broken house," and then continues her speech, using more house-imagery:

...In Cavender's house,
As in the Lord's house, there are many mansions,
And some that he has not so much as opened,
Having so much to learn.

(pp. 968-969)

Cavender tries in vain to possess Laramie, but she eludes him. The room becomes a battleground of unrest and unreality, familiar in aspect, but strangely different in atmosphere. Cavender realizes that the house will not, cannot ever be what it once was, because he himself is no longer the same.

In the most powerful house-image of the poem, Robinson uses an oxymoron; he describes the house as being "alive...with dying" (p. 976), a term which could as well describe the decaying mansion in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher."

A nameless innovation was at work
In walls and corners; and all over it,
In all its darknesses and silences,
He could feel atoms moving and conspiring
Against him, and death rustling in the shadows.

(p. 976)

As the poem draws to its conclusion we learn that Cavender had murdered Laramie twelve years earlier because he believed she had been unfaithful to him. After the apparent reunion between husband and wife, which is actually a monologue taking place in Cavender's mind, he has a change of heart, deeply regrets what he has done, and decides to give himself up to the authorities. As he looks back at his house, he knows he can never enter it again:

He could do anything now but go again
Carol Cedar Amelinckx

Into that house of his where no man went,
And where he did not live. He was alone
Now, in a darker house than any light
Might enter while he lived. Yet there was light....

(p. 1007)

In “Eros Turannos,” which some critics consider to be one of Robinson’s greatest poems,⁶ the house symbolizes the wife’s isolation, even imprisonment, in her married life. Neff describes her as “a woman of intellect, taste and wealth who has sorely blundered in marriage.” She chooses to remain with her husband, even though he has betrayed her, “out of pride and fear of lonely old age” (Neff, p. 181). She thus becomes a prisoner in her own home, estranged from her husband and from the community in which her house stands—alone, and as W. R. Robinson puts it, “divested of her illusions of love,...thrown back upon the terrible truth of her being.”⁷

And home, where passion lived and died,
Becomes a place where she can hide,
While all the town and harbor side
Vibrate with her seclusion.

(p. 33)

In “Tasker Norcross,” the sketch of a lonely, unhappy New England character, the house is described in some detail, both inside and out:

See for yourself that house of his again
That he called home; An old house painted white,
Square as a box, and chillier than a tomb
To look at or to live in.

(p. 502)

Now come into his house along with me;
The four square sombre things that you see first
Around you are four walls that go as high
As to the ceiling.

(p. 505)

The poet compares Norcross to “a white rat in a box” (p. 505). Thus, once again the house is seen as prison, occupant as prisoner. Franchere describes the “prisoner” (quotes my own) thus:
DEATH, DARKNESS, DESOLATION

Norcross lives there, being neither good nor bad—nor anything....He listens to great music but it does not reach or stir him. His house and garden are filled with fine art pieces, but he can see neither their beauty nor their living quality. He knows that the world turns and is full of people whose voices he hears, but whose words have no meaning for him. (Franchere, p. 87)

Another house-as-prison image occurs in “The Dark House.” Once again an individual is trapped, locked in; this imprisonment, however, is psychological in nature. The jailer is referred to as a spiderlike demonic creature who has entrapped his victim like a fly is trapped in a web (p. 44). The poem is somewhat obscure, but according to Neff, the demonic jailer is liquor, and the poem’s theme is “the miracle of salvation from drink” (Neff, p. 178). In spite of its dark, depressing imagery, the poem ends on a positive note, for the narrator says that he, too, has been a prisoner in a “dark house,” but has escaped; thus he sees a similar possibility for his friend:

But there lives another sound
More compelling, more profound;
There’s a music, so it seems,
That assuages and redeems,
More than reason, more than dreams.

So if he be very still
With his demon, and one will,
‘Murmers of it may be blown
To my friend who is alone
In a room that I have known.

After that from everywhere
Singing life will find him there;
Then the door will open wide,
And my friend, again outside,
Will be living, having died.

(pp. 44-45)

Another type of house-imagery in Robinson’s poetry is that in which a dwelling becomes the scene of violent death. In “Stafford’s Cabin,” termed “melodramatic” by Neff (p. 178), this kind of imagery is briefly but vividly expressed. Stafford, we are told, was a “loner” (my quotes)—shy, retiring, apparently not the kind of person whom anyone would have expected to meet a violent death. But someone
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came to his home under cover of darkness, murdered him and burned the cabin, leaving only mystery and a legend. "Once there was a cabin here, and once there was a man..." (p. 14).

In "Avon's Harvest," one of Robinson's longer dramatic poems, Avon, the protagonist, has been haunted by fear and paranoia which began when he was a schoolboy as the result of an incident between himself and a classmate. The antagonist, having sworn revenge, has succeeded in destroying Avon's peace of mind. Again there is a house which has become a prison; again there is a mysterious, violent death, though of a different nature. The poem's narrator has known Avon for many years. As he returns to the house of his friend after a long absence, he is shocked by the change in Avon, and in the atmosphere of the home which Avon shares with his wife. Looking back to a happier time, the narrator recalls:

It seemed an age ago that we were there
One evening in the room that in the days
When they could laugh he called the Library,

But that was long ago, and there was now
No laughing in that house.

(p. 545)

He describes the fear in Avon's eyes as "living fire that only death [m]ight one day cool" (p. 543). Death comes that very night for Avon. Neither the locked doors of his house nor of the library, his inner-sanctum, can protect him. In the words of his physician, "He died... because he was afraid—[a]nd he had been afraid for a long time" (p. 573).

In "Haunted House," as in "Stafford's Cabin," we are again told of a legend: sometime in the past a woman was killed in her home by an axe-wielding murderer. In this case the scene of the crime has remained intact, though through the years it has become deserted, silent, gloomy, run-down, an unlikely shelter. The poem's persona, however, has apparently entered the house with a companion, during a rainstorm. She describes the house not as "haunted" in the traditional sense—i.e., there are no ghosts, no footsteps, no noise at all—only a lingering legend and an overpowering sense of what has happened there:

Here was a place where none would ever come
For shelter, save as we did from the rain.
We saw no ghost, yet once outside again
Each wondered why the other should be dumb;
DEATH, DARKNESS, DESOLATION

For we had fronted nothing worse than gloom  
And ruin....

...  

There were no trackless footsteps on the floor  
Above us, and there were no sounds elsewhere,  
But there was more than sound....

(p. 870)

One is reminded of “The Witch of Coos,” by Robert Frost, where, as in Robinson’s “Haunted House,” the poem’s narrator is seeking shelter and finds it in a place where violent death has occurred in the past.

The last type of house-imagery apparent in Robinson’s poetry might be called the imagery of desolation or former glory. “The House on the Hill” is such a poem. The house is “shut and still,” with “broken walls” (p. 81), long deserted by those who once called it home. There are no ghosts here, not even a legend, but the images are those of sadness and loss. The poet uses strong words to convey these feelings: “gone away,” “shut,” “still,” “broken walls,” “bleak,” “sunken sill.” He further emphasizes the sense of hopelessness and finality by his repetitive use of lines in each of the poem’s stanzas: “They are all gone away” (stanzas 1, 2, 4), and “There is nothing more to say” (stanzas 1, 3, 5). In the poem’s final stanza, he brings the two lines together, and the poem concludes on a note of somber desolation:

There is ruin and decay  
In the House on the Hill:  
They are all gone away,  
There is nothing more to say.

(p. 82)

As Coxe points out, there seems to be a strong link between “the House on Lincoln Avenue [Robinson’s home], decaying New England,...the decay of his...family...[and] ‘The House on the Hill’ and other ‘houses’ in the long catalogue.” And although, as W. R. Robinson observes, “the story of a house—symbol for an individual’s life—cannot [ever] be [fully] told” (p. 86), through his skillful use of negative house-imagery, Edwin Arlington Robinson has presented his readers with some fascinating verbal glimpses into dark, deserted, desolate houses—symbolic of sad and broken lives, including, perhaps, the poet’s very own.

NOTES


3E. A. Robinson, Collected Poems of Edwin Arlington Robinson (New York, 1929), p. 961. Subsequent citations from Robinson’s poetry will be from this collection.


JANE EYRE—A DAUGHTER OF THE LADY IN MILTON’S COMUS

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Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre, a canonical text for feminists,1 empowers its heroine to transcend social limitations and achieve full independence. While twentieth-century critics often focus on the evolution of Jane’s personality, i.e., psychological concerns such as her emotional growth, her sexual maturation, and her experiential development,2 they largely overlook the religious convictions structuring her thinking. Despite her social non-conformity, her will to prevail through difficult circumstances is ultimately driven by a traditional idea of religious duty, important both to the greater nineteenth century and to Charlotte Brontë, daughter of a clergyman. The centrality of Brontë’s, and Jane’s, faith requires a critical re-examination of the novel’s religious agenda.

Affirming the religious core of her art, Brontë invokes John Milton as a literary spokesman of Christian duty. Biographers Elizabeth Gaskell and Winifred Gerin vouch that Brontë revered Milton as England’s foremost poet and recommended his works to Emily, even before Shakespeare’s.3 Others have noted a direct influence in Jane Eyre from several Miltonic works: Robert Martin discusses Rochester’s similarities to Milton’s Samson, and Alan Bacon links Jane’s paintings to key passages in Paradise Lost.4 Brontë even cites Milton in Jane Eyre when she names Samson Agonistes in describing Rochester and again in Shirley when the title character compares her vision of Eve to Milton’s.5 Inspired by his works, Brontë infuses the novel with his imagery and reemploys his themes celebrating the infinite capacity of the human spirit and strength of free will. Recognition of the Miltonic posture of Jane Eyre must alter the perception of the novel by restoring the primacy of its religious considerations.

Milton’s most courageous heroine, the Lady in A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle, habitually referred to as Comus, offers a prototype for Jane Eyre, who re-enacts the theme of triumph amidst spiritual trials. Lost in a wooded dell, Milton’s Lady alone faces the demon-seducer Comus, sustains through faith and resolution a chastity of mind and body, and defies the attempted tyranny of the seducer. Like Milton’s allegorical Lady, Jane Eyre encounters a tempter in Rochester who similarly tests her strength of will and purity of spirit. Also
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without aid from family or friends, Jane withstands Rochester’s onslaught to divert her to his own purposes, overriding her values. In a pervasive way, *Jane Eyre* echoes *Comus*—in its theme of temptation, its climax emphasizing the form of resistance, and its denouement celebrating spiritual triumph.

Jane’s character rests on an ideal of moral excellence identical to Milton’s broad conception of chastity which is personified in the Lady. Their chastity represents an insistence upon pristine truth formed according to ethical standards which cannot be adjusted to fit time, place, or circumstance—marriage vows are sacred to Jane in the same way that the Lady’s virginity represents virtue to her. Exactly as the Lady lives by “sober laws” of unfallen, “innocent nature,”6 Jane pledges obedience to divine laws: “I will keep the law given me by God.... Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation....” (p. 404). Absolute allegiance to timeless values of truth to God and self is the crux of Jane’s and the Lady’s achievements. Recasting a recurrent figure in Milton’s poetry—the single, uncorrupted, chaste spirit among the throngs of fallen humanity—Jane Eyre serves as an example to the multitude.

Lacking this form of chastity which characterizes the heroines, Comus and Rochester serve not only as their tempters but also as their foils. In imagery similar to that detailing Satan in *Paradise Lost*, Comus is the “damn’d magician” (l. 602), the “foul deceiver” (l. 696), who represents “visor’d falsehood” (l. 696) and “glozing courtesy” (l. 161). Rochester, also a demonic figure, confesses to Jane more than once that he is the “very devil” (pp. 328, 368), and when Jane meets Bertha Mason, Rochester tells her that she is peering “at the mouth of hell...at the gambols of a demon” (p. 371). Although Rochester is referring to Bertha’s malevolence, a second meaning implicates Rochester himself, who has the demonic “falcon-eye” (p. 343). Because of their spiritual shortcomings, both men are drawn to their heroines’ divine essences. When Comus first sees the Lady, he speaks of her with awe: “Can any mortal mixture of Earth’s mold / Breathe such Divine enchanting ravishment? / Sure something holy lodges in that breast.... ‘I’ll speak to her / And she shall be my Queen” (ll. 244-65). With equal urgency, Rochester desires through Jane to be “healed and cleansed, with an angel as [his] comforter,” as he entreats her, “to the soul made of fire,...I am ever tender and true” (p. 328). Camouflaged in sensual expressions, their appeals nevertheless reveal the hollowness of Comus’s and Rochester’s spiritual existence.

In contrast to the intangible, inner strength of character which the women possess, the power of their tempters rests in external, temporal
props—their material wealth, social and political vantage (Comus’s leadership of the “herd”), and physical dominance. Both Comus and Rochester tantalize their heroines with luxurious gifts and physical pleasures which, the seducers argue, mortals should relish as their appetites dictate: jewels, silks, wealth, social position, and other sensuous delights. They advocate a selfish doctrine of use which the Lady terms “flewdly-pampered Luxury...swinish gluttony” (ll. 770-76) and which causes Jane to feel like “an ape in a harlequin’s jacket—a jay in borrowed plumes” when Rochester decorates her with his finery, his “patent of nobility” (p. 326). Rather than luring the heroines, Comus’s and Rochester’s vain devotion to wealth and luxury evokes only feelings of degradation and disgust from them.

In their demonic, twisted reasoning, Comus and Rochester pervert the sense of the Lady’s and Jane’s chastity by reducing its scope to the narrow meaning of sexual abstinence. Repeatedly, Comus attacks the Lady’s “doctrine of Virginity” (l. 787), her “lean and sallow Abstinence” (l. 709), and her “waste fertility” (l. 729):

List Lady, be not coy, and be not cozen’d
With that same vaunted name Virginity;
Beauty is nature’s coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current, and good thereof
Consists in mutual and partak’n bliss....

(ll. 737-41)

Like Comus, Rochester acts upon sexual impulse as he too disparages Jane for her denial of physical affection: “...you have refused to kiss me....you will say,—‘That man had nearly made me his mistress: I must be ice and rock to him;’ and ice and rock you will accordingly become” (pp. 382-83). Neither Comus nor Rochester comprehends the dictates of the the Lady’s and Jane’s principled consciences. Rochester confesses that his “principles were never trained...[and] may have grown a little awry for want of attention” (p. 331) and distorts the truth to answer to his passion: “[Jane] must become a part of me....it is all right; you shall yet be my wife: I am not married” (p. 387). Ultimately, Rochester’s flaw repeats that of Comus—his values lack a spiritual foundation, and his allegiance to principles has been traded too easily for gratification. In other words, both have abandoned chastity for other prizes.

When seduction using material or physical enticements fails, Comus and Rochester attempt to constrain the heroines. Determined to possess the Lady, Comus literally imprisons her in his cave. Rochester
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also attempts to rule Jane and even bind her to him, to “attach her to a
chain” (p. 341) or “twine her around [his] finger” (p. 328). Images of
bondage intensify and increase in frequency with his frustration at his
inability to capture the inner Jane. In the culmination of his failed
attempts to control her, Rochester traps Jane on their wedding morning
with a “grasp of iron” (p. 363). But finally Rochester must lament that
physical power has no hold on Jane’s spiritual core: “Never...never
was anything at once so frail and so indomitable” (p. 405).

Cast opposite bold and possessive seducers, the heroines thwart the
power of their tempters and uphold valued principles. In spite of
imprisonment, both proclaim their liberty of mind, their inner freedom.
Physical imprisonment, then, only casts in relief the indestructible
independence of the virtuous soul.

Jane’s thoughts and emotions repeat mental processes of the Lady
sustaining chastity; likenesses coalesce in recast imagery and
phraseology derived from the masque. As the prototype, Milton’s Lady
first masters insidious lower faculties of the mind—fancy and
imagination—in order to resist seduction and remain chaste. When lost
in the wood, the Lady momentarily gives way to fanciful doubt:

A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes and beck’ning shadows dire,
And airy tongues that syllable men’s names
On Sands and Shores and desert Wildnesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind.... (ll. 205-10)

She exerts her free will and clears her mind of these thoughts. In this
initial step, she confronts and controls fancy and imagination which, in
Milton’s view, can dissolve the mediating salve of human reason by
allowing evil into the mind through the senses.

Jane, too, is threatened by fear and passion which produce
“withering dread” (p. 285) and “delirium” (p. 188), the “wASHy draught
of feeling” ungoverned by judgment. Jane’s words, “I had no time to
nurse chimeras” (p. 205) echo the warning in Comus against “dire
chimeras and enchanted Isles” (l. 517). Conscious of the potential
dominance of passion over reason in her psyche, she, too, wills to rise
above it; she brings back thoughts “straying through imagination’s
boundless and trackless waste, into the safe fold of common sense” (p.
200). Like the Lady’s “desert wilderness,” Jane’s “boundless and
trackless waste” of uncontrolled thought threatens her but does not
overwhelm her.
A trait which characterizes Milton’s Christian heroes, “Right Reason” shapes Jane’s thoughts and actions. Just as the Lady asserts that Comus cannot “charm my judgment as mine eyes, / Obtruding false rules prankt in reason’s garb” (ll. 757-58), Jane declares that “reason sits firm and holds the reins” (p. 252). A faculty which likens mortals to angels, Right Reason resembles the governing force of conscience, but it also assumes unequivocally an extension of the hand of God. Robert Martin discusses Jane’s vacillation between reason and passion as mere workings of the human psyche, but Jane’s power of reason is reinforced by Providence. Whereas the Lady knows she has Right Reason, Jane doubts this and often pleads for increased power of reason, which manifests itself as inward vision or inner light: Jane’s “bright vision” reproduces the Lady’s inner “radiant light” and places divine strength within her.

The heroines face a symbolic threat to Right Reason in the sinister darkness which accompanies their first meetings with Comus and Rochester. Just as the forest’s darkness blinds the Lady as Comus draws near, Rochester’s black silhouette blinds Jane when he first appears before her on the path to Thornfield: “drawn in dark and strong on the foreground, [he] efface[s] the aerial distance of azure hill, sunny horizon, and blended clouds...” (p. 135). Jane later adds, “He stood between me and every thought of religion, as an eclipse intervenes between man and the broad sun (p. 346). Aside from its direct association with evil, darkness in Miltonic terms represents the dim disordered matter of chaos untouched by the Creator and, more important, its parallel in the disordered human mind uncontrolled by reason. Therefore, the Lady’s “double night of darkness” in “chaos” (ll. 334-35), as well as Jane’s dark “abyss” (p. 168), represents those uncontrolled passions which can undermine judgment, or Right Reason.

In Comus and Jane Eyre alike, the gift of illumination symbolically guides each heroine to spiritual sources and imbues her with grace. Celestial light in Milton’s poetry manifests God himself: like the “Sun-clad power of Chastity” (l. 782) in Comus, God appears “unfolding bright” in Paradise Lost. The virtuous woman must simply bathe in that light to immerse herself in His grace. Lost in the dark wood, the Lady invokes spiritual aid in order to see the “Supreme good” (l. 217) and immediately, “a sable cloud / Turn[s] forth her silver lining on the night, / And casts a gleam over this tufted Grove” (ll. 223-25). She then visualizes “enlivened spirits” of Faith, Hope, and Chastity which “prompt her” from fear (l. 225) and spur her to act by calling for her brothers. Like a disciple of the Lady, Jane looks to the
ceiling of her bedroom at that darkest moment when she must leave Rochester and envisions the gleam of the moon:

She [the moon] broke forth as never moon yet burst from cloud: a hand first penetrated the sable folds and waved them away; then, not a moon, but a white human form shone in the azure, inclining a glorious brow earthward. It gazed and gazed on me. It spoke, to my spirit: immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart.... (p. 407)

Invoking this light, Jane, too, receives instruction to act virtuously during her ultimate trial, the painful rejection of Rochester’s offer: the moon-vision tells her, “My daughter, flee temptation!” (p. 407). In images nearly identical in Comus and Jane Eyre, the sable folds of cloud part to reveal a spirit which, in the form of light, merges with the heroine and guides her.

Deliverance from darkness by the sun, stars, and moon pervades both works, giving these women a seemingly personal lighted vision of virtue. The Elder Brother explains the significance of the Lady’s inner light:

Virtue could see to do what virtue would
By her own radiant light....
He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i’th’ center, and enjoy bright day,
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts
Benighted walks under the midday Sun;
Himself is his own dungeon. (ll. 373-85)

The Lady’s light within the breast, like Jane’s moon-gleam within the heart, is God’s spirit within woman/man.

Jane’s frequent prayers for the “power of vision” in her “mind’s eye” (p. 132) are often answered with light-emploms of Providence. Reminiscent of Uriel, who travels via sunbeam in Paradise Lost, Jane finds herself encased in “fostering sunbeams” (p. 234). After the resplendent night-vision tells her to leave Thornfield, a glowing beacon on the dark moors leads her to family at Marsh End. With Jane’s final confidence in the supernal powers of the mind, Brontë’s art defends Milton’s concept of a divinely inspired human reason.

In order to receive celestial light, the Lady must distinguish it from a demonic false light, the ignis fatuus, associated with Comus. He entices the Lady with a “purer fire” (l. 111), which is ironically sensual
rather than celestial, and revels in his capacity to deceive when he proclaims, "[We] Imitate the starry choir" (l. 112). Also, Comus applauds and emulates another will-o-the-wisp figure Charybdis (ll. 259-61), who lulls victims to madness in Ovid’s Metamorphoses. Yet the Lady distinguishes God’s light from that of the deceiver when she miraculously visualizes the radiant spirit figures of Faith, Hope, and Chastity (ll. 213-16).

Jane, too, must recognize the ignis fatuus, which initially surfaces as her own obsessive passion leading “into miry wilds whence there is no extrication” (p. 201). Later, Rochester’s confession to Jane concerning his past debaucheries explicitly links him to the ignis fatuus: "I transformed myself into a will-o’-the-wisp. Where did I go? I pursued wanderings as wild as those of the Marsh-spirit. I sought the Continent, and went devious through all its lands,...I have deceived you" (pp. 395-96). Temporarily misled, Jane trusts in the honor of Rochester’s proposal of marriage until the moment she meets his insane wife, just as the Lady trusts that Comus’s palace is a humble cottage until she sees it. Jane faces deceptions symbolically linked to dangers which the Lady encounters. As fancy reasons, the ignis fatuus threatens to distract from the true light.

But the heroines’ clarity of vision ensures their discernment of truth. When Comus offers the Lady his magical balm, she affirms, “Twill not restore the truth and honesty / That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies” (ll. 690-91). She declines his offered drink knowing that “only good men can give good things” (l. 702). Jane mirrors these thoughts when she recalls, “The attribute of stainless truth was gone from his [Rochester’s] idea; and from his presence I must go: that I perceived well” (p. 374). Both heroines recognize that sin has darkened the hearts of Comus and Rochester.

In detail as well as in grand conception, Jane Eyre echoes Comus. Spirit symbols in Jane Eyre correlate to those which harbor and guide the Lady in Comus. Supernatural figures—the Attendant Spirit, the “rapt spirits” of Faith, Hope, and Chastity, and Sabrina—act as God’s emissaries in the masque; they warn the Lady of danger, instill faith, offer hope, and finally set her free. Similarly, Jane is protected by mysterious forces which direct her and buoy her at vulnerable moments: visible spirit countenances, whispers of the wind, and dream-visions. Despite the common Romantic, pantheistic interpretations of these prophetic manifestations of nature, Jane’s spirit guides symbolize traditional Christian concepts of grace. Before Jane leaves Gateshead, Bessie heeds the divine origin of Jane’s supernatural guides in a ballad she sings to the child:
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My feet they are sore, and my limbs they are weary;
Long is the way, and the mountains are wild;
Soon will the twilight close moonless and dreary
Over the path of the poor orphan child.

Why did they send me so far and so lonely,
Up where the moors spread and grey rocks are piled?
Men are hard-hearted, and kind angels only
Watch o'er the steps of a poor orphan child.

Yet distant and soft the night-breeze is blowing,
Clouds there are none, and clear stars beam mild;
God, in His mercy, protection is showing,
Comfort and hope to the poor orphan child.

Ev'n should I fall, o'er the broken bridge passing,
Or stray in the marshes, by false lights beguiled,
Still will my Father, with promise and blessing,
Take to His bosom the poor orphan child.

There is a thought that for strength should avail me,
Though both of shelter and kindred despoiled:
Heaven is a home, and a rest will not fail me;
God is a friend to the poor orphan child. (p. 21)

Bessie's prophetic ballad merges natural images of moon, stars, sky, and breeze with Christian concepts of angelic guidance, divine mercy, eternal rest, and Providential protection: the ballad places the novel's supernatural elements within a Christian context.

Furthermore, Bessie's ballad duplicates ideas expressed in Milton's invocation for the Lady's divine protection:

Unmuffle ye faint stars, and thou fair Moon
That won't to love the traveller's benison,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud...
Or if your influence be quite dam'd up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush Candle from the wicker hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long levell'd rule of streaming light
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady
Or Tyrian Cynosure. (ll. 331-42)
But the “strength of Heaven” (l. 317) represented here by stars and moon remains only an adjunct to the Lady’s own “hidden strength” (l. 419), her chastity. Also self-determined, Jane explains the intervention of mysterious spirits as “a sense of influence, which supported me” (p. 386), clearly relegating them to an important but nevertheless auxiliary position. For both women, the spirit guides represent God’s freely offered grace, but only for those who freely choose it. With these spirit symbols, Brontë corroborates Milton’s view of a loving God who offers aid but does not override human free will.

Jane’s Christian grace is also confirmed by her instinctive wisdom, the highest faculty of mind in Milton’s scheme—it marks the angels in Paradise Lost and thus signals Jane’s elevated spiritual status. Rochester questions her divine instinct and, at the same time, attempts to undercut it: “By what instinct do you [Jane] pretend to distinguish between a fallen seraph of the abyss and a messenger from the eternal throne—between a guide and a seducer” (p. 168). Jane embodies the Miltonic concept of sufficient grace afforded to the chaste soul; she can assuredly—if sadly—withstanding any temptation presented to her. Rochester realizes her bulwark of strength as he parrots her thoughts back to her: “I [Jane] need not sell my soul to buy bliss. I have an inward treasure, born with me...if all extraneous delights should be withheld; or offered at a price I cannot afford to give...” (p. 252).

Jane’s “inward treasure” and “unpolluted memory,” (p. 166) like the Lady’s “unpolluted temple of the mind” (l. 461) and “unblessed majesty” (l. 430), give her immunity to the persuasions of tempters. Her source of wisdom cannot be eroded by Rochester, or any mortal.

To achieve a triumph like the Lady’s, Jane overcomes frailties of mind, uses Right Reason, and employs spiritual aid. A Miltonic Christian hero, she asserts her moral superiority through an essentially passive but steadfast stand against evil, rather than in aggressively heroic acts. Jane refuses to blindly follow others, but neither must she ostentatiously lead. She follows a precept enunciated in Raphael’s admonition in Paradise Lost to be “lowly wise” (VIII, l. 173) and triumphs in her resolution, “There I plant my foot” (p. 405).

The final note in both Comus and Jane Eyre celebrates the freedom of the chaste. The women win for themselves independence of the soul from domination of others, whether demon-lovers or nineteenth-century paramours, and assure their greater freedom to sustain spiritual lives. Their brand of liberty transcends the issues of social equality or political rights commonly associated with independence: theirs is trust in one’s own values and free conscience before God. Sabrina, the Lady’s rescuer, concludes the masque: “Mortals that would follow me, / Love virtue,
she alone is free” (ll. 1018-19). Jane finally claims the liberty of mind which she has sought. Indeed, the Lady’s words—“Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind” (l. 664)—could have been spoken by Jane.

Both heroines personify the independent thought and action consciously sought by twentieth-century women. The Lady, an allegorical abstraction of these traits, offers an empowering archetype realized in Jane as an exemplum for feminists. Jane enunciates what Adrienne Rich terms “Brontë’s feminist manifesto”:

It is vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquillity [sic]: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a constraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrowed-minded in their more privileged follow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. (pp. 132-33)

Therefore, Brontë’s utilization of Milton’s heroic woman as a model for her feminist paradigm calls into question the notion of Milton as an arch-sexist developed by traditional male critics and perpetuated by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in The Madwoman in the Attic.

Recently, Joseph Wittreich has in Feminist Milton argued for a revision of feminist criticism’s standard portrait of Milton as an arch sexist. Milton grants women strength, independence, and responsibility, not only in Comus but also in Paradise Lost. Certainly Eve, who confronts her own guilt, overcomes weakness, and creates a new life, ultimately achieves a triumph of her own. In allowing the sexes equal latitude for action and assigning equal obligation for its execution, Milton creates in a religious context a well-spring for Brontë’s inherent feminism: she implicitly formulates ideals of feminism, working from principles of Christianity in Milton—integrity, dignity, spirituality, strength, will, determination, and, of course, duty.
JANE EYRE

The Miltonic elements of the novel render the twentieth-century attention sheer personality in Jane Eyre an ahistorical and therefore inadequate critical focus. Jane embodies a spiritual chastity not confined to the human psyche; she strives for Right Reason not attainable through the intellect alone. Like the Lady, she both asserts her human will and accepts God’s grace in order to achieve moral excellence and true independence. Abandoning the patriarchal trappings of Christianity to concentrate on its essence, Brontë claims a legacy from Milton’s Lady and wills it to twentieth-century women.

NOTES


5 Jane Eyre, 1847, eds. Jane, Jack, and Margaret Smith, (Oxford, 1969), p. 552; also noted in Martin, p. 98. Subsequent quotations from Jane Eyre are cited parenthetically in the text.


7 Martin, pp. 57-109.

8 John Milton, Paradise Lost, Hughes, pp. 211-469, X, 1. 63. Subsequent quotations are cited parenthetically in the text.
Connie L. Eberhart


SYMBOLIZING THE SUPERNATURAL IN CARLYLE'S
SARTOR RESARTUS

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In "Natural Supernaturalism," a central chapter of his strange work Sartor Resartus, Thomas Carlyle's hero, Teufelsdrockh, exclaims with amazement: "Witchcraft, and all manner of Spectre-work, and Demonology, we have now named Madness and Diseases of the Nerves. Seldom reflecting that still the new question comes upon us: What is Madness, what are Nerves? Ever, as before, does Madness remain a mysterious-terrific, altogether infernal boiling-up of the Nether Chaotic Deep, through this fair-painted Vision of the Creation, which...we name the Real. Was Luther's Picture of the Devil less a Reality, whether it were formed within the bodily eye, or without it?"¹

In this passage, three approaches to the supernatural are indicated. One is suggested in the allusion to Martin Luther, who threw a lead ink-stand at the Devil that appeared to him: he took it literally—as an outer perception of his "bodily eye." The second attitude is the rational approach: not to take such phenomena seriously, but to dismiss them as superstition, madness, or bad digestion. The third way is that of Carlyle himself: to assume that the manifestation originated within the "bodily eye," but to regard the vision as nonetheless significant—a symbol to be taken seriously though not literally.

In these three attitudes toward the supernatural, we have the "Victorian dilemma": the critical 19th-century conflict among at least three different versions of reality—the Religious, the Rational, and the Romantic world-views. In the 18th-century "age of reason," western man's faith in religious revelation and romantic imagination was seriously challenged. He began to rely more heavily on reason to define reality, while religion and romanticism assumed increasingly defensive postures. In extreme views, the revelations of the prophets were denigrated as psychotic hallucinations; and the inspirations of the poets were regarded as rather childish, but usually harmless, and often diverting fantasies.

Sartor Resartus is Carlyle's fictionalized spiritual autobiography, representing his own struggle with this Victorian dilemma. Through his eccentric character, Diogenes Teufelsdrockh, he portrays his own effort to resolve this cultural conflict.

Central to Carlyle's resolution of the dilemma is his theory of symbolism, which Teufelsdrockh expounds in the chapter entitled "Symbols." There he defines man as the symbol-making animal: "It is
in and through Symbols that man, consciously or unconsciously, lives, works, and has his being” (Sartor, 222). This emphasis on symbols is a unifying principle in the structure of Carlyle’s work. For at the heart of Sartor Resartus (literally, “The Tailor Retailored”) is the view that man uses symbols to clothe his world with a sense of order, value, and purpose; that the old symbolic construct of the Medievel period—the “supernaturalism” of the religious tradition—is worn out; that the world-view of the Enlightenment—the “naturalism” of the rational tradition—is too limited; and that, therefore, a new set of clothes—the “natural-supernaturalism” of the romantic tradition—must be created to cover the spiritual nakedness of modern man.

As Teufelsdrockh notes, man’s symbolic constructs are imaginative creations. But the imagination can body-forth hellish nightmares as well as heavenly daydreams. For Teufelsdrockh insists, “not our Logical, Mensurative faculty, but our Imaginative one is King over us; I might say, Priest and Prophet to lead us heavenward; or Magician and Wizard to lead us hellward” (Sartor, 222).

The category of the supernatural is traditionally subdivided into two modes—the “sacred” and the “demonic.” Building on the religious studies of Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade, Peter Berger explains that "religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established. By sacred is meant here a quality of mysterious and awesome power...which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience."2 Historically, Berger notes, man has variously expressed his experiences of sacred power in animistic, polytheistic, monotheistic, or pantheistic terms. Although the awesome power of the sacred can be dangerous, it is perceived as basically a creative potency, graciously sustaining a vital cosmic order of light and life.

Opposed to this vision of a “sacred cosmos,” however, is the sense of “demonic chaos.” This counter-reality is vividly expressed, Berger continues, in those myths “that confront the divine order of the world...with an under-world or anti-world that has a reality of its own--negative, chaotic, ultimately destructive of all who inhabit it, the realm of demonic monstrosities” (Sacred, 26).

In the 19th century, Carlyle-Teufelsdrockh encounters this “demonic chaos” in its modern guise as the rational world-view of mechanistic materialism. This radical naturalism he associates with Jeremy Bentham’s Utilitarianism—a philosophy whose practical hedonistic aim is to calculate the greatest happiness of the greatest number. “Fantastic tricks enough man has played, in his time,” Teufelsdrockh asserts, “but to fancy himself an Iron-Balance for weighing Pains and Pleasures on was reserved for his latter era.... Alas, poor devil! spectres are appointed
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to haunt him; one age he is hagridden, bewitched; the next, priestridden, bedevilled; in all ages, befooled. And now the Genius of Mechanism smothers him worse than any Nightmare did; till the Soul is nigh choked out of him, and only a kind of Digestive, Mechanic life remains. In Earth and in Heaven he can see nothing but Mechanism; has fear for nothing else: the world would indeed grind him to pieces....” (Sartor, 220-1)

The imagery here symbolizes the mechanistic world-view as a demonic monster, a destructive agent of chaos. It implies that to hold this rational world-view is, ironically, to be held in the grip of a dark hellish power as in demonic possession.

This pattern of imagery is most prevalent in the chapter “The Everlasting No,” where Teufelsdrockh is represented as losing his religious vision after encountering the skeptical rationalism of the time. There he complains: “Some comfort it would have been, could I, like a Faust, have fancied myself tempted and tormented of the Devil...but in our age of Down-pulling and Disbelief, the very Devil has been pulled down, you cannot so much as believe in a Devil. To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb. O, the vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha, and Mill of Death!” (Sartor, 164)

Here, although bereft of a naively literal belief in the supernatural, the hero describes his condition in mechanical images that, ironically, involve implicit allusions to the demonic. For the “Steam-engine,” which symbolizes the materialistic world-view, is a mechanical version of the dragon, a Satanic monster. Later in the chapter, this imagery becomes explicit: “it seemed as if all things in the Heavens above and the Earth beneath would hurt me; as if the Heavens and the Earth were but boundless jaws of a devouring monster, wherein I, palpitating, waited to be devoured” (Sartor, 164). Symbolizing the materialistic world-view, this demonic dragon confronts modern man with the threat of a meaningless nihilism—the death of God.

This nihilism or atheism is Carlyle’s the “everlasting no.” It is both the outer Hell of the Mechanistic universe and the inner Hell of skeptical despair. Although Teufelsdrockh now experiences no “sacred” reality, he feels various “demonic” effects: “The heart within me, unvisited by any heavenly dew-drop, was smouldering in sulphurous, slow-consuming fire” (Sartor, 167-8).

While the imagery of Sartor Resartus symbolizes the rational world-view as a demonic monster, threatening spiritual death, the characterization and allusions in the work associate Teufelsdrockh with
the archetypal Hero figure. And the central experience of Carlyle’s Hero, then, is structured as an archetypal Quest-Journey. However, although Teufelsdrockh does travel some, his Journey is primarily a psychological quest—an inner pilgrimage of the spirit. Essentially, his Journey is a Quest for ultimate meaningfulness, as set forth especially in the two most famous chapters—“The Everlasting No” and “The Everlasting Yea.” Having traced the Hero’s descent to a demonic under-world in the first, we need now to trace his ascent to a sacred upper-world in the second.

In “The Everlasting Yea,” Teufelsdrockh relates a mystical vision that he experienced. It is a numinous perception of nature’s awesome power in a snow-storm on a distant mountain. Although he uses the image of witchcraft to describe the phenomenon at first, suddenly his perspective dramatically shifts: “Often also could I see the black Tempest marching in anger through the Distance: round some Schreckhorn...would the eddying vapour gather, and there tumultuously eddy, and flow down like a mad witch’s hair; till, after a space, it vanished, and, in the clear sun-beam, your Schreckhorn stood smiling grim-white, for the vapour had held snow. How thou fermentest and elaboratest, in they great fermenting-vat and laboratory...of a World, O Nature!—Or what is Nature? Ha! why do I not name thee God? Art not thou the Living Garment of God!” (Sartor, 187-8)

Here is the archetypal motif of the holy mountain, like Sinai or Olympus, where divine light is shining and a transfiguration occurs. In Carlyle’s terms, when Teufelsdrockh is able to stop looking at the world through the lens of reason (Verstand) with its limited sense of reality and, instead, beholds the world through the eye of intuitive imagination (Vernunft), his perspective is radically transformed. What he then perceives is essentially a Romantic world-view: an idealistic, transcendent, pantheistic view of God as immanent in nature—the “everlasting yea.”

The imagery in the work shifts, then, from the chaotic, mechanical, and demonic to the organic, personal, harmonious, and sacred: “Like the mother’s voice to her little child that strays bewildered, weeping, in unknown tumults; like soft streamings of celestial music to my too-exasperated heart, came that Evangel. The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres; but godlike and my Father’s!” (Sartor, 188) Symbolically, the imagery in this chapter proclaims that he is a child of God, that the universe is his home, and that all creatures are his brethren. And the chapter “Natural Supernaturalism” merely spells out in greater detail this new vision of
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the open secret—the latent yet manifest presence of the sacred in all being.

Thus Carlyle expressed, powerfully and beautifully, a personal resolution of the Victorian dilemma. When rational naturalism threatened to dissolve religious supernaturalism, Carlyle felt despair at the prospect of the demonic chaos that would be unleashed by the "death of God"—that is, the loss of a sacred cosmos investing human life with ultimate meaningfulness. Therefore, he imaginatively transformed the traditional Christian vision of reality. To re-symbolize this consoling vision, he re-clothed it in a new vesture—Romantic "natural-supernaturalism." As Myer Abrams indicates in his Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature, a major task of the Romantic writers was indeed to re-symbolize lost religious values in the wake of the Enlightenment; and in that effort Carlyle's contribution in Sartor Resartus is singularly notable.

NOTES


5 Naturalism Supernaturalism (New York, 1971).
SWIFT’S DISCOURSE OF POLITICS AND POLITICS OF DISCOURSE: DISENFRANCHISMENT THROUGH DEFINITION

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In Some Thoughts on the Present State of Affairs May 1714, written in his retirement at Letcombe Bassett after the break between Harley and Bolingbroke, Jonathan Swift reflects upon his service as propaganda master in the turbulent Harley ministry and offers a most successful way to manage an argument: “In all Contests the safest Way is to put those we dispute with, as much in the Wrong as we can.” One of the best ways to put them in the wrong is to subvert their words and thus destroy the foe by destroying his words. The strategy of much of Swift’s prose is to assert political control over his opponents by asserting control over their language. He seeks to disenfranchise his foes by denying them control over their own words. By continually calling attention to what he deems their misuse of words and then “correcting” those words, Swift establishes his political power. Swift employs a number of rhetorical strategies to accomplish this appropriation: he uses signal phrases like “under the Name” to suggest a distance between word and thing; he treats his opponents’ figurative language as if it were literal and vice versa; and, most frequently, he defines or redefines a key word in his own or his foes’ argument. Indeed, many of his works revolve around a definition or redefinition of a specific word like “Protestant,” “Moderate,” or “Subjection,” and demonstrate the abuses of religion and politics wrought by his opponent’s misuse of that word. The opening sentence of On the Testimony of Conscience offers a typical example: “There is no Word more frequently in the Mouths of Men, than that of Conscience, and the Meaning of it is in some Measure generally understood: However...it is likewise a Word extremly abused by many People, who apply other Meanings to it, which God Almighty never intended” (9: 150). He then provides his own definition in order to reassert the proper word­thing relationship and consequently to reassert the proper religious and political behavior. What is at stake in such definitions and redefinitions is power, control of language as control of political power and control of political power as control of language. In this use of definition for polemical purposes, we see one of the great paradoxes of Swift’s work: he is desperately afraid of the consequences of the abuse of the word­thing relationship, but at the same time he faces the need to get political work done and recognizes that to do so he must use what he
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sees as his foes' own methods. He demonstrates brilliance in manipulating language, often in the very process of censuring others for exactly the same abuse.

Two purposes underlie Swift's use of definition: lexical purity and polemical effectiveness. As for the first, the same impulse that leads Swift to write *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue* causes him to define as a way of "fixing" words by specifying the word-thing relationship at least in this place at this time. Although the preponderance of Swift's definitions are polemical, a few are straightforward attempts to assert lexical accuracy. Of the few non-polemical examples, most define legal, technical, or other "hard" words. Another class of relatively non-polemical definitions contains Swift's pronouncements on the "proper" meaning of common words, the most well-known of which is "Proper Words in Proper Places, makes the true Definition of Stile" (9: 65). These few pronouncements invariably refer to some form of social behavior or taste rather than to partisan politics, although the two are never entirely separate in Swift's world. In these instances Swift deploys his definitions as a base from which to lecture upon "proper" behavior; such lectures are indeed a kind of argument but these arguments certainly depend less upon an aggressive manipulation of language than his political arguments. For example, Swift opens *On Good-Manners and Good-Breeding* with the definition, "Good-Manners is the Art of making those People easy with whom we converse" (4: 213), and a little later adds a definition on the obverse of good manners: "Pedantry is properly the overrating any Kind of Knowledge we pretend to" (4: 215). After these definitions Swift explains what kinds of behavior fall under each term, and in doing so he is indeed arguing. At the same time, however, the control of these specific words—"good-manners" and "pedantry"—is not the central purpose of the definitions or the essay, nor is he attacking or "Correcting" an opponent's use of these words.

Swift's careful attention to definition in an attempt to "fix" the word-thing relationship in the interest of lexical correctness is, of course, not unique: indeed, a careful definition of words and terms is a central tenet of virtually every post-Baconian philosopher, including Hobbes and Locke. One of the main aims of these philosophers is to avoid the linguistic hairsplitting and "tedious disputes over words" of the Schoolmen, and definition is usually seen as the first and best defense. Bacon claims, "It is almost necessary, in all controversies and disputations, to imitate the wisdom of the mathematicians, in setting down in the very beginning the definition of our words and terms, that others may know how we accept and understand them, and whether they
concur with us or no. For it cometh to pass, for want of this, that we are sure to end there where we ought to have begun, which is, in questions and differences about words." Hobbes also calls for strict, formal definitions as the foundation of philosophy: "The light of human minds is perspicuous words, but by exact definitions first snuffed, and purged from ambiguity." One of the achievements Sprat boasts of in his History of the Royal Society is how the members have reformed the abuses of the Schoolmen by replacing the Schoolmen's words with "things" secured by experimentation and careful definition. Swift agrees wholeheartedly with this refutation, as evidenced, for instance, by his treatment of Scotus and other Schoolmen as dunces and frauds in the episodes on Glubbdubdrib, the Island of Sorcerers, in Book III of Gulliver's Travels, and he agrees with the goal of a one word-one thing relationship. His difference, however, is that while he sees definition as one way to achieve this goal, he does not agree that it is the only way nor that there is only one way of defining as Hobbes and Locke have it. Swift accomplishes his definitions not primarily through the rigorous, formal, mathematical definitions of the logicians and philosophers, but rather through a variety of informal definitions and rhetorical devices. Also unlike Hobbes, Locke, and most of his predecessors, Swift is much more likely to apply definition to the words of others than to his own.

Throughout his Essay Locke does indeed purge the words he intends to use of their earlier accretions; as he announces the purpose of his work in "The Epistle to the Reader," "It is ambition enough to be employed as an under-labourer in clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way of knowledge." Accumulated misdefinitions are a part of the rubbish he is clearing. For example, in his definition of "man" Locke claims, "I think that to one who desired to know what Idea the word Man stood for; if it should be said, that Man was a solid extended Substance, having Life, Sense, spontaneous Motion, and the Faculty of Reasoning, I doubt not but the meaning of the term Man, would be as well understood, and the Idea it stands for be at least as clearly made known, as when it is defined to be a rational Animal....I have in explaining the term Man, followed here the ordinary Definition of the Schools." But while Locke then builds upon the ground he has cleared, Swift is far more interested in appropriating the ground he is clearing or at least in scorching the ground to deny it to the opposition. Sometimes he simply wishes to reconnect the original "correct" thing with the correct word, but far more often his redefinitions serve as the preface and opening sally in
some argument; he will not only “clear the ground,” as Locke would have it, but will also advance a considerable way over it under the cover of definition or redefinition. In the fourth Drapier's Letter Swift attacks the claim that Ireland is “a depending Kingdom” by objecting to this phrase as “a modern Term of Art,” repudiating what his opposition means by it—“that the People of Ireland is in some State of Slavery or Dependence, different from those of England,” and redefines the “dependence” as the loyalty and legal obligations both nations owe the King (10: 62). Swift advances more than lexical propriety here; rather he reiterates one of the major tenets in his argument against Wood’s halfpence: the English Parliament has no legal right to legislate for Ireland, in this case as to what is or is not legal tender. If Swift’s reader accepts the premise that appears as a redefinition, he will have to accept Swift’s conclusion about the halfpence.

At times Swift offers his definition in the form of a Trojan horse—something which appears to be neutral but which in fact contains his strongest forces or arguments. The Examiner, in particular, often protests his neutrality in political issues and purports to “examine” current events with an unbiased perspective, only to employ definitions of crucial words in order to argue pointedly for the Harley ministry’s position under cover of this neutrality. Similarly, in the first Drapier’s Letter Swift employs a Trojan horse tactic in his definition of “Lawful Money,” “Half-Penny,” and “Farthing” in order to refute Wood’s halfpence. Under the appearance of explaining the terminology of English law concerning coinage, the Drapier says, “By the Laws of England, the several Metals are divided into Lawful or true Metal and unlawful or false Metal; the Former comprehends Silver or Gold, the Latter all Baser Metals” (10: 8). He reiterates his definition by citing a later law which “shews that by the Words Half-Penny and Farthing of Lawful Money in that Statute concerning the passing of Pence, is meant a small Coin in Half-pence and Farthings of Silver” (10: 10). If Swift’s opponent accepts his definitions, he must logically accept Swift’s conclusion that Wood’s brass halfpence are not legal currency; the argument is thus lost before it has even begun. Here Swift, as the Drapier, adopts the guise of an unlearned man simply seeking to explain difficult legal language in terms more comprehensible to his audience, but underneath the apparently neutral definition lurks one of Swift’s central arguments against Wood’s patent.

Most often, however, the battle with and for words is more nakedly conducted. In Some Remarks Upon A Letter to Seven Lords, for example, Swift quibbles with the expression of the writer he is answering and replies, “As for the Head that has done the greatest
Mischief to the Kingdom, I cannot consent it should fall, untill he and I have settled the Meaning of the Word Mischief” (3: 196). Words are the central weapons in such battles, and there is no pretense of impartiality or disinterestedness. This battle over words and their definitions occurs throughout the political works especially; most often Swift defines a controversial word or phrase in a government document he defends or attacks. So, for example, in The Conduct of the Allies, Swift defines the phrase “the whole Strength of the Nation” from the Grand Alliance treaty to mean the strength of the King’s revenues but not also everything he can mortgage or borrow (6: 18). Through this definition Swift justifies the Harley ministry’s decision not to increase supplies for the war; in doing so, he explicitly refutes the Whig definition of the phrase and thereby refutes their war policy. The side that wins the contest of definitions, in this case Swift’s side and Swift’s definitions, wins the support of the populace.

Of course while he worked for Harley’s Tory administration, Swift always claimed that he himself was a Whig—an “old Whig” rather than a follower of the speculators and stock-jobbers the party had become—in matters of governance such as in support for a constitutional monarchy. Swift argued repeatedly that he had not changed, but the two parties had. This conflict between Whig and Tory (or old Whig) definitions of the same words is continually re-enacted in Swift’s works. One of the clearest examples is the battle over the definition of “Wealth of the Nation”: in Examiner 13 Swift bemoans the corruption that “the Wealth of the Nation, that used to be reckoned by the Value of Land, is now computed by the Rise and Fall of Stocks” (3: 13). Over and over Swift argues that the landowners are the only proper judges of what is right for the nation, and he constantly scorns or satirizes the “Stock-jobbers and moneyed-men.” The same argument recurs in another definition in the sixth Drapier’s Letter: “I take the proper Definition of Law to be the Will of the Majority of those who have Property in Land” (10: 134). In consonance with the Tory view, Swift insists that the landowners are the truest citizens and the rightful possessors of legal and political power. The issue in these definitions is not primarily lexical correctness (although one of the corruptions Swift invariably charges his opponents with is misuse of language); rather the fundamental principles of government are being argued through the medium of these definitions. The fact that the Whigs still hold or have just held much of the political and economic power of England is what enables them to control the language; now that the Tories are newly in power (this is Swift’s first Examiner), the “thing” can only be corrected after the word is corrected. Swift’s contribution to
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the new Tory government is that while Harley's ministry corrects the previous Whig administration's policies, Swift corrects their words. This is the purpose of The Examiner's definitions.

Another variation of employing definition for argumentative purposes to which Swift frequently resorts is defining or rather misdefining the words of his opponents. In many works in which he directly or indirectly answers the language of others, he often "explains" their words by putting the least charitable interpretation possible upon them, or distorting them altogether, and then claiming that the resultant definition is theirs rather than his. Martin Price argues that this is a "constant" trick of Swift's: because the power of words depends on association, Swift changes those associations subtly and subverts his foes' terms. Very often, however, the subversion is not at all subtle. In Examiner 40, for example, Swift says of the Whigs and one of their key terms, "A Revolution-Principle, as their Writings and Discourses have taught us to define it, is a Principle perpetually disposing Men to Revolutions" (3: 147); here Swift reverses the frequent Whig claim that they are the party that accomplished and supported the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the party that safeguards the Act of Settlement, guaranteeing the succession of the Hanoverians. He employs a (mis-) definition no Whig would agree to in order to charge the Whigs with sympathies for the Pretender, and at the same time he claims that this is the Whig definition rather than his own. Another way he accomplishes this shift is to impersonate his opponent and have that opponent restate or redefine his own words in a more "honest" and less attractive way. In A Letter of Thanks from My Lord Wharton to Bishop Asaph, "Wharton" first refers to "Such a Peace, as would have answer'd all our Prayers," then restates the same phrase to the more mercenary "When the Dutch could get nothing by the War, nor we Whigs lose anything by a Peace," and finally restates it in baser and even more mercenary terms: "When we had exhausted all the Nation's Treasure...and so far enrich'd ourselves, and beggar'd our Fellow-Subjects, as to bring them under a Necessity of submitting to what Conditions we should think fit to impose" (6: 154). Swift's impersonation of Wharton here is part of his campaign to justify the Tory-negotiated peace with France by accusing Whig leaders, especially Wharton and the Duke of Marlborough, of prolonging the war out of personal greed.

A final example of a misdefinition "corrected" by an argument masquerading as a redefinition involves one of the more controversial terms of the age—"passive obedience." In The Sentiments of a Church-of-England Man Swift cites a misdefinition of passive obedience that began in the early seventeenth century: "The Clergy of the two Reigns
before the Revolution...under the Terms of Passive Obedience, and Non-Resistance, are said to have preached up the unlimited Power of the Prince” (2: 16). He follows this misdefinition with a careful redefinition espousing the Tory or old Whig view that, according to the original and correct sense of the word, obedience is due to the whole balanced government including the Commons and Lords, and not only the King. The results of this misdefinition are wide-ranging and profound: Swift calls this mistake “the Foundation of all the political Mistakes” in Hobbes’ Leviathan, a book which has done enough damage to church and state (2: 16). More seriously, this misunderstanding of the term passive obedience has led to a slavish dependency on the King from the clergy and their congregations, and this dependency has in some ways contributed to the need for the Revolution of 1688. In The Sentiments of a Church-of-England Man (1708) Swift’s purpose is generally to explain and defend the position of a moderate churchman aligned with neither party, and thus this misdefinition-redefinition serves little further argumentative purpose. But by the time he writes Examiner 33 in March, 1710, Swift is much more fully committed politically, and his exposure of the misdefinition and his redefinition of “passive obedience” have a clearer partisan political purpose. Swift introduces his redefinition in order to refute the charges of “ Arbitrary Power, Tyranny, and Popery” that the Whigs hurl at the Tories. He announces as the purpose of Examiner 33, “I will therefore give two Descriptions of Passive Obedience; the first, as it is falsely charged by the Whigs; the other, as it is really professed by the Tories” (3: 112). The opening of each definition provides a fair sense of Swift’s slant: the “Whig” definition begins, “The Doctrine of Passive Obedience is to believe, that a King, even in a limited Monarchy, holding his Power only from God, is only answerable to him. That, such a King is above all Law; that the cruellest Tyrant must be submitted to in all Things; and if his Commands be ever so unlawful, you must neither fly nor resist, nor use any other Weapons than Prayers and Tears” (3: 112). Opposed to this is the “correct” Tory definition: “They think that in every Government, whether Monarchy or Republick, there is placed a supreme, absolute, unlimited Power, to which Passive Obedience is due....That, among us, as every Body knows, this Power is lodged in the King or Queen, together with the Lords and Commons of the Kingdom” (3: 113). Clearly Swift intends to throw the Whig accusation right back upon them. This redefinition in effect denies to the Whigs the “Revolution Principles” each party strives so hard to claim. Usually the Whigs proclaim most proudly their part in the Revolution, but if Swift’s redefinition is accepted the
Whigs can only be seen as having opposed the Revolution. They must also logically be the current supporters of the Pretender, since James is the monarch to whom they owe absolute "passive obedience." Again the ostensible reason for Swift's redefinition (and indeed the often-stated purpose of The Examiner itself) is to set the record straight, but this Whig misdefinition-Tory redefinition in fact serves the advancement of an argument rather than lexical accuracy, indeed, at the cost of lexical accuracy.

After his (mis-) definitions Swift frequently makes the ingenuous claim that his is the only possible interpretation; by their tone and, indeed, by their very presence such protests are generally a very clear signal that Swift is well aware he is twisting his opponents' words back on them. In the fourth Drapier's Letter Swift answers some letters published in London newspapers that he claims were directed, if not written, by Wood in order to attack the Drapier and the refusal of the Irish to accept Wood's halfpence. Swift plays with some of the phrases from these letters and offers just such a (mis-) definition and protest: "They are going to Shake off their Dependence upon the Crown of England; that is to say, they are going to chuse another King: For there can be no other Meaning in this Expression, however some may pretend to strain it" (10: 61). Swift's misinterpretation again serves a political purpose: Wood's expression refers to the controversy over the legal right of the English Parliament to make laws for Ireland, but Swift deliberately exaggerates and misdefines Wood's words in order to accuse Wood of "Slander" when actually it is Swift who slanders Wood. By protesting against other interpretations of these words, Swift indicates their very presence and, in fact, calls attention to them. Swift then employs this misdefinition as a preface to his own definition of "a depending Kingdom," which once again carries his central argument that the English Parliament alone cannot make laws for Ireland alone.

Swift does fight to keep words politically correct, but he is far more often forced to "destroy" them. This is perhaps because of the generally losing position the Tories held during the early eighteenth century: Swift enjoyed a few brief years during the Tories' political control and produced official Tory documents like The Conduct of the Allies which set the linguistic and political record straight, but even most of this short period was spent fending off Whig encroachments on Tory power. Most of his career, however, he wrote in opposition to Whig governments solidly in power. A second reason Swift spent more time attacking the language of his opponents is that his concern for the use of words is habitually far more often a concern for their misuse, whether politically motivated or not. In his various writings
Dan Doll

about language, his many satires of the misuse of language (A Tale of a Tub, Argument Against Abolishing Christianity, Tatler 230), and his various rhetorical strategies designed to guard language, Swift offers far more criticisms than answers. Speaking in particular about the Irish tracts and the Drapier's Letters, Edward Said argues that this is Swift's great skill: "His element was language, as was the enemy's, but far more than anyone he was able to exploit the negative aspects of the medium: its airiness, its impermanence, its potential for solipsistic debasement."

What Irvin Ehrenpreis says of Swift's sermons might well be extended to the rest of his prose: "His obsession with correctness of language led him to practice definition and redefinition as part of his rhetoric." This obsession manifests itself throughout Swift's work, from the overt prescriptions like the Proposal to the wildest satires of language abuse in the Tale, and definition in all its forms and rhetorical techniques plays a central role in the pursuit of this correctness. There is, however, more to Swift's use of definition than its power to correct the word-thing relationship. What Swift says sarcastically of Tindall's work provides a fair final assessment of his own definitions: "The Strength of his Arguments is equal to the Clearness of his Definitions" (2: 81). In some definitions linguistic clarity is Swift's primary goal, but in his political arguments the "clarity" is perhaps evident only to Tories. In Swift's definitions it is more likely that the clarity of his arguments is equal to the strength of his definitions. Throughout his prose, this disenfranchisement through definition is a central strategy of Swift's politics of discourse and discourse of politics.

NOTES


5Locke, p. 413.
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THE WEAKER SEX: HANNAH COWLEY'S TREATMENT OF MEN IN HER COMEDIES OF COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Jean Gagen

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Hannah Cowley, who lived from 1743 to 1809, is just beginning to receive some of the notice and appreciation as a playwright which she deserves. A recent critic who refers to Cowley as the finest woman playwright since Aphra Behn perhaps overstates Cowley's merits. Certainly Susanna Centlivre's achievement as a playwright earlier in the century has been much more widely recognized than Cowley's. Nevertheless, Hannah Cowley's plays deserve a place of honor in the roll call of eighteenth century playwrights. In fact, as early as 1782, the reviewer of The Belle's Stratagem in The Critical Review asserted that this play was the "best dramatic production of a female pen...since the days of Centlivre, to whom Mrs. Cowley is at least equal in fable and character, and far superior in easy dialogue and purity of diction" (vol. 53, p. 314). The reason for the neglect of Cowley's plays in this century is not easy to understand. But the appearance in 1979 of the two volume edition of her plays edited by Frederick Link now makes her dramas much more readily accessible than formerly.

Mrs. Cowley wrote thirteen plays—two of them tragedies—but her reputation rests on her comedies. The way in which she began writing for the stage has often been repeated. While attending a theatrical performance with her husband, she remarked, "Why I could write as well myself!" She took her husband's laughter as a challenge, and the next day she began to write a play that she eventually called The Runaway. She finished it quickly and sent it to Garrick to read; he encouraged her and suggested revisions. In 1776 Garrick presented the play at Drury Lane, where it met with more success than she dreamed possible. In fact, a reviewer for The Critical Review marveled at the skill which this "untutored genius" displayed (vol. 41, p. 239). Cowley continued to write for the stage for eighteen years, and many of her comedies were popular successes with long runs and frequent revivals.

Her characters are often stereotypes drawn from Restoration and earlier eighteenth century comedy, but at her best she is able to give them freshness and vitality. Although she was much more deeply influenced than Centlivre by the emphasis on moral reformation in drama, Cowley's desire to write plays free of moral offense did not stifle
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her sense of humor. Her plays are full of laughter and wit. Not only did she have unusual skill in the handling of dialogue but she was also capable of portraying well a wide variety of types of characters. Her most celebrated characters are undoubtedly her witty young heroines, who are often the prime manipulators and intriguers in her plays, which usually center on courtship and marriage.

Cowley was not primarily a reformer or disturber of the status quo. She was not a feminist in any militant way. Yet in the independence, resourcefulness, and daring of her witty heroines, Cowley is surely making a statement about women, their capabilities, and their rights. She defined comedy as "a picture of life—a record of passing manners—a mirror to reflect to succeeding times the characters and follies of the present."4 One of the follies on which she often focused was the failure to respect and cultivate the minds of women and to give them more control over their lives, especially in the choice of a husband. She ridicules men who have patronizing attitudes towards women and who undervalue them and their abilities. Moreover, the agents of her ridicule are women of wit and ingenuity who are capable of manipulating and deceiving these men and gaining from them or in spite of them what they wish to have.

In Who's the Dupe (1779), a short farce which became one of Cowley's most popular dramatic productions, Cowley satirizes what she refers to in a perfunctory note as "the disgusting vulgarity in an upstart citizen." In the prologue, moreover, she remarks that since learned men and writers have often satirized the "petty foibles" and faults of women and exposed their "whims and vanity," she as a woman asks leave to laugh at these same learned men, whose sarcastic pens have spared neither "Matron Maid or Bride." And this is precisely what Cowley has done in this broadly amusing farce.

Old Doiley, the vulgar "upstart citizen," wealthy but ignorantly enamoured of "Larning," is the chief butt of Cowley's satire. Old Doiley is determined to have a son-in-law who is "Larned" and has chosen the pedant Gradus from Oxford to be his daughter Elizabeth's husband. Elizabeth, however, dupes both her father and Gradus and wins for her husband the man Granger whom she loves. She engineers the ruse by means of which Gradus is discredited as a learned man in her father's eyes, while Granger, who has never seen the inside of a university, entrances Old Doiley so thoroughly with his display of bogus learning that Doiley offers to leave him every farthing of his fortune if he will only marry Elizabeth.

The humor of this situation is made all the more pointed by the fact that when Old Doiley and Gradus are talking together shortly after
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Gradus’ arrival, Old Doiley complains of the money wasted on educating girls in such matters as French and dancing, “Jography” and “Stronomy,” while Gradus eagerly seconds these opinions and extols those “immortal periods” when women could neither read nor write. Both men underestimate the wit of women and deservedly fall victim to the stratagems which Elizabeth devises in order to escape marriage with Gradus. Gradus, of course, is a familiar comic figure—the pedant who may know a great deal about what is in books, particularly ancient books, but who knows almost nothing about life in the real world, including women.

When Old Doiley repudiates Gradus in favor of Granger, Gradus knows that he has been duped and that the oration by means of which Granger has enraptured Old Doiley is only high-sounding, polysyllabic gibberish without a word of Greek in it. But Doiley, declaring himself the happiest man alive, remains in blissful ignorance of how completely he has been duped. In fact, he patronizingly urges Gradus to trot back to Oxford for further study so that he can learn the difference between Greek and English.

Letitia Hardy in The Belle’s Stratagem (1782), Cowley’s most popular comedy, faces a situation very different from that which confronted Elizabeth Doiley. Letitia was contracted in marriage to Doricourt when both of them were children. But until the time for their marriage was approaching, neither had seen each other for years. Unfortunately for Letitia, Doricourt is not impressed by Letitia’s reputation as a beauty. “Why, she’s only a fine girl: complexion, shape and feature; nothing more...she should have spirit! fire! l’air enjoué! that something, that nothing, which everybody feels, and which nobody can describe, in the resistless charmers of Italy and France” (I.iii.9). Despite this lack of enthusiasm for Letitia, Doricourt is nevertheless determined to do the honorable thing and marry her. Letitia, however, is deeply troubled over Doricourt’s apparent indifference to her because she is more attracted to him than ever before. But she has no intention either of marrying a man who does not love her or of letting this handsome man she adores escape without a struggle.

She tells her father that she has a plan to win Doricourt’s love, although this plan may seem a bit paradoxical. She intends to heighten Doricourt’s indifference to actual dislike because she believes that “’tis much easier to convert a sentiment into its opposite, than to transform indifference into tender passion” (Liv.18). Her plot, quite simply, is to appear before Doricourt as a simpleton, loud, garrulous, crude, and completely lacking in refinement. Doricourt is so thoroughly repelled
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by her that he wants to set off for Bath that very night. But a friend
who is privy to Letitia’s plot persuades him to stay one night more and
attend the masquerade.

At the masquerade, Doricourt notices how divinely a masked beauty
dances. Soon he learns how bewitching as well as beautiful she is,
how spirited and wild. Soon he is madly in love with this beautiful
unknown, who, of course, is Letitia. Letitia continues to tease
Doricourt and to refuse to show him her face. She also makes it quite
clear that she will never be snared unless Hymen spreads the net to
catch her.

On the advice of a friend, Letitia agrees to torment Doricourt
further by seeing if he will promise to marry her even when he thinks
she is a simpleton. Poor Doricourt is thus trapped, so to speak, into
doing what he considers honorable—that is, marry a revolting
simpleton.

Shortly after the wedding, Letitia, now disguised as the unknown
beauty of the masquerade, enters and pretends to be deeply distressed
over Doricourt’s marriage. She claims that Doricourt’s professions of
love won her “Virgin heart,” and that her honor is as spotless as that of
the girl he has married. Her birth is also equal to his and her fortune
large. Then she leaves Doricourt desperate with misery and
wretchedness. Later, however, after a few more complications in the
plot, Doricourt learns the identity of the masked lady and the tricks
played on him. But he is overjoyed to find himself married to the witty
and beautiful Letitia, who, because she has the “delicate timidity” of the
English character, threw a veil over her charms. But now that he
knows her better, he insists that no woman in France or Italy or even in
the entire world could surpass her in delightfulfulness. Letitia’s stratagem
has worked. Her wavering, reluctant fiancé is now an ardent lover, and
one supposes he will be an ardent husband too.

A Bold Stroke for a Husband (1783), set in Madrid, deals not with
one woman but with two women who take bold strokes for husbands.
In one case, Victoria, a deserted wife, regains her husband Don Carlos,
who has succumbed to Laura, an unscrupulous fortune hunter; Don
Carlos, in an alcoholic stupor, has even deeded to Laura the estate that
came to him through his wife Victoria. In the other plot, Olivia repels
two unwelcome suitors selected by her father and wins for her husband a
man she truly loves. In these interwoven plots, women are the prime
manipulators; they are the brains and boldness behind the strokes that
gain them their husbands. In comparison with these women, the men
are relatively weak and passive, and, in the case of Don Carlos, grossly
culpable and foolish also.
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Victoria has to overcome her repugnance for the role she feels compelled to play. But she is determined not merely to win back her husband, whom she still loves, but also the property, without which she and her children will be financially ruined. Disguised as a young man named Florio, she easily wins the love of the fickle Laura, who promptly discards Don Carlos, though she keeps the deed to the property he has given her.

Eventually Don Carlos appreciates the goodness of his wife and is half mad with remorse over his treatment of her and with fury over Laura’s perfidy. In a rage he decides that he will kill this new paramour Florio. When he bursts in on Laura and Florio ready to plunge his sword into the bosom of his “blooming rival,” Florio doffs his hat and reveals “himself” as Victoria, who now urges him to plunge the sword into her bosom since she has already been stabbed far more deeply by the anguish of betrayed love.

This is too much for Don Carlos, and we are simply told that “he sinks.” Then Victoria rushes to him begging forgiveness for her too severe reproaches and assuring him that he is as dear as ever to her. When Carlos protests that she knows not what she does, for he has made her a beggar, she joyfully informs him of another bold stroke by means of which she has regained the estate he had deeded to Laura. She has engaged a friend to impersonate her uncle Don Sancho. He has convinced Laura that the deed Carlos had given her was invalid because Don Sancho himself was the owner of this property. In a rage, Laura tore up the deed. Now, realizing that she has been tricked out of this estate, Laura stalks out in a fury, vowing revenge, while Carlos turns to his “charming wife,” full of gratitude and love.

Olivia’s stratagems to free herself from the suitors chosen for her by her father and to win Julio instead are equally successful and much more light-hearted. She has repelled her music-loving suitor by claiming that the Jew’s harp is her favorite instrument. She has driven another suitor away by posing convincingly as a shrew. She has also sought out Julio, met him at the Prado, and won his love while veiled and her identity unknown. Only after a number of amusing complications does she reveal her identity and accept him as her future husband. Thus the play ends with the restoration of a marriage and with an imminent marriage, both brought about by the bold strokes of two strong, ingenious, and daring women.

In More Ways than One (1786) another strong-minded and delightfully witty heroine appears in the person of Miss Archer. Beautiful, wealthy, and sophisticated, she has a well-cultivated mind, the experience of traveling in Europe, and the reputation for rejecting
scores of adoring suitors. Though she is under the guardianship of a wealthy and avaricious old man Evergreen, she is not in the least threatened by him in any way. Evergreen apparently has no control over her fortune and makes no attempt to arrange a marriage for her. In fact, he is eager to get rid of her. Annoyed by her impudence and independence, he tells her to go ahead and marry one of her suitors—she has his consent. But she tartly replies that she wants the consent of a much more important personage—herself. In the meantime, she is not yet ready to give up the right to make conquests. But when the time comes to “retire from the scene of action,” she promises to pick out the most constant of her adorers, to “go gravely with him to church,” then “drive soberly to the seat of his ancestors” and thereafter become a dutiful wife, studying family receipts and making wine. She ends her sarcastic picture of her future married life by claiming that when the sixteen year old girl Arabella whom Evergreen is planning to marry has become a “young widow,” she will invite her and her new husband to drink to Evergreen’s memory in a cup of “cowslip” of her own brewing (I, i, p. 6).

When Evergreen in a rage orders Miss Archer to seek new lodgings immediately, she cheerfully refuses and continues to twit her “own dear, sweet guardian” who in marrying a sweet young wife is going to become a “sweet simpleton, at the sweet age of sixty” (p. 7).

Evergreen’s prospective young bride is under the guardianship of her uncle Feelove, who is not only an avaricious but a ruthlessly incompetent physician. Moreover, he has subjected her to a repressive upbringing which has left her ignorant, naive, and utterly unable to help herself out of the predicament Feelove has placed her in by arranging for her to marry Evergreen. Raised in the country by two spinsters who taught her only such household arts as sewing and “making seed-cake, and stewing codlings,” she cannot read or write, has never heard of “Point or Brussels,” and her only card game is “beggar my neighbour.” Arabella knows so little about the ways of the world that she supposes she has to marry the old man Feelove has chosen for her. Feelove never allows her to stir from his home, and Evergreen intends to continue this kind of incarceration in his own home. But Arabella finds a sympathetic friend and mentor in Miss Archer. To Evergreen’s face she vows that no matter how stringently Evergreen tries to protect his young bride from the dangers of young men and the infections of fashionable life, she herself will teach this “pretty young cherub” to captivate the whole town and to acquire a greater desire for laces, feathers, diamonds, and fops than can be satisfied in six years. But what Miss Archer actually does for Arabella is much more
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important. She helps her to escape marriage to Evergreen and to marry instead young Bellair, who had fallen so desperately in love with Arabella that he had feigned an illness in order to gain entrée into Feelove’s home and be nursed by Arabella. Although Cowley avoids any suggestion of lasciviousness on the part of either Bellair or Arabella, the tears of pity Arabella feels for the supposedly dying Bellair are symptoms of her quite natural attraction to him. Her childlike frankness in expressing her distaste for Evergreen and her preference for Bellair is the source of several pleasant comic scenes.

When Bellair finally seizes an opportunity to declare his love to Arabella and to assure her that she need not marry the old man whom she detests, Arabella is delighted and astonished and more than willing to flee from Feelove’s house with Bellair. Unfortunately, not knowing the identity of Arabella’s prospective husband, Bellair takes her to Evergreen’s home thinking that this “grave gentleman” will provide a sanctuary for her until Bellair can arrange the elopement. Cowley makes good comic use of Bellair’s mistake and Evergreen’s glee over it. But through the help of Miss Archer, all is still not lost.

When she learns that Evergreen has already hired a coach to whisk Arabella off to an unknown destination to protect her from Bellair, Miss Archer acts quickly. Evergreen has already enveloped Arabella in a large white riding cape and hood in preparation for her drive. But in the few moments that he is absent, Miss Archer bribes the foppish knight from the country, Sir Marvel Mushroom, who has fortunately appeared at just the right moment, to conceal himself in the riding cape and hood while she and Arabella jump into Marvel’s waiting carriage. Miss Archer then directs the driver to take Arabella to a lodging for safekeeping.

Eventually everyone concerned with Arabella’s future ends up at this lodging, where Bellair wins Feelove’s consent to marry Arabella and both Feelove and Evergreen, though they angrily wrangle with each other, have to accept the fact that they have both been outwitted and outmaneuvered. Once again a resourceful and clever young woman has frustrated the attempt to force a young woman into a repulsive marriage as if she were a mere pawn in a financial negotiation.

During her efforts on behalf of Arabella, Miss Archer has been carrying on a rather tempestuous courtship of her own, marked by many misunderstandings. By the time Arabella’s happiness is sealed, Miss Archer and Mr. Carlton, who are well suited to each other, are also looking forward to marriage.

Again in School for Greybeards (1786) a young girl Viola, who is about to be hustled into a marriage to a man she does not love, is
THE WEAKER SEX: HANNAH COWLEY

spared this fate through the help of a forceful and fearless young woman—in this case, her young mother-in-law Seraphina, who has recently married Viola's father Don Alexis. Don Alexis has already realized that he has made an ass of himself in marrying a mere girl, for he now knows from experience that it is easier "to spin cables out of cobwebs...than to manage a young rantipole wife" (I, p. 11). Seraphina often reminds us of Sheridan's Lady Teazle as she playfully torments her husband by her many pointed references to his age. She admits that she loves to sit on her balcony while "All the impudent young face-hunters in Lisbon" fall prostrate before her, "adoring, and deifying" her. In fact, she insists that she will enjoy admiration until she becomes "old, shrivell'd" and "grey-pated" as Don Alexis is now (II, pp. 18-19).

When Alexis threatens to block up all the windows and nail shut the doors to secure his honor, she retorts that if he cannot find better security than these devices, he'll be one of the herd of cuckholds. The best security for his honor, she tells him, is her honor: "It is due to my own feelings to be chaste—I don't condescend to think of you in the affair. The respect I bear myself, makes me necessarily preserve my purity—but if I am suspected, watch'd, and haunted, I know not but such torment may weary me out of principles, which I have hitherto cherish'd as my life" (II, p. 19).

Although marriage to Seraphina has taught Don Alexis that youth and age do not mix well in matrimony, the importance of love between the partners still escapes his rather dense mind. When his friend Don Gasper remarks that his son Don Octavio is sufficiently attracted to Alexis' daughter Viola to be willing to marry her, Don Alexis snaps at the suggestion. It apparently never occurs to him to consult Viola herself about her feelings.

Viola happens to be deeply in love with Don Sebastian and has no interest whatsoever in Don Octavio. Fortunately, when Octavio comes to woo Viola, he mistakes Seraphina for Viola and proceeds to woo her in all the trite, conventional ways, which provide her with a great deal of ironic amusement. Because she enjoys his mistake, she does not undeceive him. Then she suddenly realizes that she can use this mistake to help Viola escape from her father's house and meet and marry Don Sebastian. Seraphina as Viola convinces Octavio that she despises the sober, quiet prudence of a courtship which is approved by her father. Only if her father opposes the marriage and she will have to face all sorts of "blissful" difficulties, such as scaling ladders to elope and being pursued, will she believe that Octavio really loves her. Of course, all this very clearly reminds us of Sheridan's Lydia Languish.
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Don Octavio unsuspectingly accepts all these conditions and persuades Alexis that they must plot against this "dear little madcap." Don Alexis accordingly orders Viola to see Octavio no more. In fact, Don Alexis is vastly amused by what he thinks is a clever ploy to secure Viola's marriage to Octavio while she imagines that she is eloping without her father's consent. Of course, it is Seraphina (still playing the part of Viola) who climbs down the ladder from Don Alexis' house, though she has stipulated that she has a friend who must accompany her. That friend is Viola who, once out of her father's house, meets and marries Don Sebastian. Thus, once again, men—both Don Alexis and Don Octavio—who regard women as property to be disposed of in marriage without any regard for their own inclinations—are outmaneuvered and made ridiculous by the sex which they patronizingly brand as the weaker sex.

Cowley apparently thought of marriage as the normal and desirable goal for women. Her witty heroines all look forward to marriage, but they demand a marriage based on love and mutual respect and trust, and they expect to have the deciding vote in the selection of their husbands. Cowley glorifies these women who are independent and resourceful, intelligent and well educated without becoming pedantic, and completely undeterred by the authority that men attempt to impose on them in the choice of their mates. Instead of weeping or arguing against the injustice of tyrannical fathers or guardians, they often devise very complicated stratagems by means of which they outwit would-be tyrants and win for husbands the men they love. Sometimes they also exercise their wit and ingenuity in rescuing some of the weaker members of their sex from the unwelcome marriages which domineering parents or guardians try to force on them. These courageous ladies have insight and initiative. They can think for themselves, make their own decisions, and act with intelligence and daring. They are Cowley's "new women."

NOTES


2The Critical Review was a London publication. It is accessible in bound volumes at the British Library.

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for a Husband are in volume 1; More Ways than One and A School for Greybeards are in volume 2.

4 Advertisement to the first edition of A Day in Turkey (London, 1792), Link II, n. p.

5 The portrayal of Arabella is reminiscent of that of Margery Pinchwife in Wycherley's The Country Wife (1675) and/or Agnes in Molière's School for Wives (1667), to which, of course, Wycherley's play is clearly indebted.
ARThUR MACHEN’S SUPERNATURALISM:
THE DECADENT VARIETY

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The links are numerous between Arthur Machen and that rather ill-defined group of writers and artists in the 1890s known as “decadents.” In 1894 John Lane at the Bodley Head published Machen’s The Great God Pan and The Inmost Light in his Keynotes series, complete with an Aubrey Beardsley cover. Machen knew Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas; he dined with Wilde on several occasions and when critics characterized Machen’s stories as “disgusting,” “revolting,” “loathsome,” and “demoniac,” Wilde congratulated him on the furor he had caused. The general public obviously associated Machen with the decadent coterie of writers connected with either Wilde or The Yellow Book, because the Wilde scandal of 1895 had an adverse effect on the sale of Machen’s The Three Imposters, again published by Lane. But Machen’s personal links with this group never went beyond these rather superficial, mostly professional connections. He himself asserted that he was “not even a small part, but no part at all” of the nineties,¹ and the critics Aidan Reynolds and William Charlton maintain that these decadent figures “scarcely affected Machen at all.”² Wesley Sweetser points out that “he derived fringe benefits from the school without becoming a part of it”:

Though Machen was not of the absinthe-sipping school, he took his gin, four-ale, and Australian burgundy on any occasion; though not a catamite, he wore his cape; and though not a complete literary bounder, he saw some of his works between yellow covers.³

Machen enjoyed a good wine, good company, good plays, but his temperament did not admit cynicism or despair. Evil to him was not the facile, fleshly decadence of bordellos, or homosexuality, or opium. A Johnsonian figure, he was not of Yeats’s “Tragic Generation.” But in his supernatural stories published in the 1890s, his themes, settings, and style were indeed influenced by the decadent manner, as I seek to prove by discussing three of his 1890s stories: “The Great God Pan,” “The Inmost Light,” and “The Novel of the White Powder.” In their luridity and sensationalism, these studies of a mysterious, omnipotent
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evil lurking in London streets and behind closed doors in London
suburbs clearly align him with the decadents.

First, let me present a quick summary of these stories since none
of them is now widely read:

In “The Great God Pan” a scientist performs “minor” brain surgery
on his beautiful, innocent ward, Mary, to enable her to see beyond the
“veil” of material things, in other words, to “see the great god Pan.”
The operation is a success but after her initial glimpse of “something
wonderful,” she slips into a horrible insanity. Nine months later she
gives birth to a daughter and dies. When the child, Helen Vaughan, is
about ten, the doctor sends her to a farm in Wales; he asks the farmer
and his wife to leave Helen to her own devices, and she spends most of
her time in the deep forest. Gradually mysterious happenings alarm the
neighborhood. One young boy goes insane after having seen Helen and
a “strange naked man,” whom he later associates with a satyr sculpture
found in a local Roman ruin. Then Helen’s friend, Rachel, disappears
in the forest under mysterious circumstances. Her disappearance is later
associated with an ancient place of worship for the “god of the Deeps”
and a marriage ritual. Helen then disappears for some years and returns
married to a Dr. Herbert, whom she corrupts “body and soul.”

The story is told through a Chinese box of narratives by various
men. One of the narrators, Villiers, finally pieces all the information
together to describe Helen’s life after her husband commits suicide.
After several years in Argentina, she has returned to London as a Mrs.
Beaumont and has made a mark in London society. A series of
mysterious suicides by prominent, aristocratic young men stymie the
police, but Villiers connects them to Mrs. Beaumont. When he has put
together all the data about Helen Vaughan, Mrs. Herbert, and Mrs.
Beaumont, he reveals they are the same woman, the daughter of Mary
and the god Pan, and that unspeakable horrors have been revealed to
these young men, from which their only escape is suicide. When
Villiers confronts her with exposure, she kills herself. As she dies she
transforms or deliquesces from sex to sex, beast to man, man to beast,
and beast to a primordial ooze. The overall effect is meant to be an
ineffable, unspeakable horror, an awareness of inhuman forces and
powers in the world which destroy and horrify.

In “The Inmost Light” a doctor interested in the occult sciences,
appropriately named Black, experiments on his young wife. A horrible
transformation results; she becomes a vile, inhuman creature and upon
her death, an autopsy reveals her brain to be “not the brain of a human
being at all.” Her husband somehow has converted her essence into an
opal-like stone which emanates a prismatic, flamelike light. A
common thief steals the box containing the stone, but the narrator, Dyson, who befriends Black before his death, tracks it down. When he sees it and reads Dr. Black's account enclosed in the box, he is compelled to crush the stone to pieces out of sheer terror—a flame, steam, and yellow smoke issue from the stone and only a black cinder remains.

In "The Novel of the White Powder," which is not a novel but actually the shortest of the three stories, a Miss Leicester relates the horrible history of her brother's death. He becomes ill from overwork while studying law. The apothecary makes an error in filling the doctor's prescription and sends Leicester a white powder which is efficacious initially but leads to behavior changes after a while. The once serious-minded, studious young man becomes dissolute and licentious and abandons his studies. His sister becomes increasingly worried. One day she notices a mysterious black spot on his finger. He goes about with a bandaged hand for awhile, but eventually retires permanently to his room. The girl calls in the doctor who discovers the aged apothecary has made an error in the powder. A chemist friend analyzes the innocent-looking white powder and discovers it to be "the powder from which the wine of Sabbath, the Vinem Sabbati, was prepared," (the wine of the Witches' Sabbath). The doctor leaves his interview with Leicester trembling and disoriented, saying, "I can do nothing in this house." No one sees Leicester for weeks, and he eventually stops eating. One morning the maid discovers a black ooze dripping from the ceiling under Leicester's room. The doctor comes once more, and he and the sister break down the door to discover

... a dark and putrid mass, seething with corruption and hideous rottenness, neither liquid nor solid, but melting and changing before our eyes, and bubbling with unctuous oily bubbles like boiling pitch, and out of the midst of it shone two burning points like eyes...something moved and lifted up that might have been an arm.\textsuperscript{5}

The doctor soon dies from the shock.

The first obviously decadent feature we notice in these three stories is Machen's fascination with evil, but Machen's evil is of a different type from Wilde's or Beardsley's. There is no impish, naughty attractiveness here, no promise of physical, sinful delights of flesh or intellect. Machen's evil is terrible—something beyond words. His is a primordial, transcendental evil which lurks beneath the exterior of
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material reality. His is a more philosophical, primal consciousness of evil in the world. Machen resurrected Pan to embody this evil, and in the process contributed an important element to supernatural fiction. Machen played a major role in initiating the Pan craze so obvious in early twentieth-century literature. Somerset Maugham describes this striking phenomenon in Cakes and Ale. He notes that around 1900 "God went out (oddly enough with cricket and beer) and Pan came in. In a hundred novels his cloven hoof left its imprint on the sward, poets saw him lurking in the twilight on London commons, and literary ladies in Surrey and New England, nymphs of an industrial age, mysteriously surrendered their virginity to his rough embrace. Spiritually they were never the same again."6 According to Patricia Merivale in her study Pan the Goat-God: His Myth in Modern Times, Machen’s primary accomplishments were “to bring back to the Pan motif possibilities that had lain buried for centuries, to counteract the pretty sterilities of the minor poets and provide the first major examples of a Pan in modern fiction.”7 His Pan is a hostile force who represents unspeakable horrors and an ineffable evil. This Pan appears frequently in those early twentieth-century stories alluded to by Maugham, including works by Saki, E. M. Forster, and E. F. Benson, to name a few. But Machen’s sinister Pan was the first.

By using the Pan myth, Machen makes the evil in “The Great God Pan” more concrete than in the other two stories, where the evil manifestation is equally terrifying and loathsome but has no name. But Machen’s Pan is a universal, natural reality underlying the conscious world, not a hoofed, lecherous goat-god visible to his victims. The vagueness in his description of Pan is typical of his treatment of evil. For example, in the descriptions of Helen Vaughan or Mrs. Black or Leicester the power resides more in what is not said than in what is. The graphic description of Leicester’s decomposing, oozy form quoted above is one of the most concrete descriptions Machen offers. The deliquescent figure in “The Great God Pan” is similar but more mysterious in its descent of the evolutionary ladder. The narrator reports:

“I was then priviledged or accursed, I dare not say which, to see that which was on the bed, lying there black like ink, transformed before my eyes. The skin, and the flesh, and the muscles, and the bones, and the firm structure of the human body that I had thought so unchangeable, and permanent as adamant, began to melt and dissolve.
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...I saw the form waver from sex to sex, dividing itself from itself, and then again reunited. Then I saw the body descend to the beasts whence it ascended, and that which was on the heights go down to the depths, even to the abyss of all being. The principle of life, which makes organism, always remained, while the outward form changed....

I watched, and at last I saw nothing but a substance as jelly....for one instant I saw a Form, shaped in dimness before me, which I will not farther describe. But the symbol of this form may be seen in ancient sculptures, in paintings which survived beneath the lava, too foul to be spoken of....8

Machen presents the horrible Mrs. Black in “The Inmost Light” more indirectly. Her death is not described. The narrator dwells on his reaction more than on her:

“...I looked up in the direction of the houses, and as I looked I felt my breath caught back, and my teeth began to chatter, and the stock I had in one hand snapped in two with the grip I gave it. It was as if I had had an electric current down my spine, and yet for some moment of time which seemed long, but which must have been very short, I caught myself wondering what on earth was the matter. Then I knew what had made my very heart shudder and my bones grind together in an agony.” (p. 160)

He says her face bespoke “a lust that cannot be satiated” and “a fire that is unquenchable.” She had “the visage of a satyr” (p. 161).

These grotesque, vivid revelations constitute climaxes in the action in each story. Machen more often uses expressions such as “scenes evil beyond the power of words,” “that for which we have no name,” “a horror we dare not express,” or “an indefinite terror which hung about him like a mist.” In “The Great God Pan” the narrator says Helen “spoke of things which even now I would not dare whisper in blackest night, though I stood in the midst of a wilderness” (p. 77). Dr. Black tells Dyson:

“...there is a region of knowledge which you will never know, which wise men seeing from afar off shun like the plague, as well they may, but into that region I have gone. If you knew, if you could even dream of what may be done, of what one or two men have done in this quiet world of
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Ours, your very soul would shudder and faint within you...No, when men say that there are strange things in the world, they little know the awe and the terror that dwell always with them and about them." (pp. 173-74)

Of course, these speakers never reveal any of this knowledge or mention any unspeakable truths. In "The Great God Pan" Rachel tells her mother about her experiences in the forest with Helen, but the narrator breaks off because he cannot bear to read the account of this conversation. Machen consistently describes evil in its effects, not in its reality. Villiers sees a visitor to Mrs. Beaumont's leaving at 2:00 a.m. and reports:

"I knew I had looked into the eyes of a lost soul...the man's outward form remained, but all hell was within it. Furious lust, and hate that was like fire, and the loss of all hope and horror that seemed to shriek aloud to the night, though his teeth were shut; and the utter blackness of despair. I am sure he did not see me; he saw nothing that you or I can see...it was a devil's face I looked upon." (p. 102)

Many readers have objected to Machen's vague and obscure assertions of unrepeatable evils, but as the unfortunate Herbert says of his wife in "The Great God Pan," "Only human beings have names." Machen tries to suggest a level of evil which transcends words—admittedly a difficult task for a writer. Machen's point is that there are forces in the world which go so far beyond human comprehension that language does not exist with which to describe them. Man must rely on mysterious symbols and signs.

In his shadowy aloofness and suggestiveness Machen demonstrates a kinship with Baudelaire and the French Symbolists (favorites of the decadents). Material reality—objects or words—mean more than they are. He shared Baudelaire's belief in the material symbol's ability to reveal underlying truth. This vagueness is consistent with Machen's literary creed outlined in his book of criticism, Hierglyphics (1902). He holds that "fine literature" concerns itself with the communication of "ecstasy" (which includes "wonder, awe, mystery, sense of the unknown, desire for the unknown") and that "literature, by means of ecstasy leads man beyond the common world of appearances to the world of the miraculous, of realities."9 In his works, whether we call them Symbolist, Romantic, Coleridgean, Idealistic, or Transcendental,
Machen seeks to reveal what Russell Letson calls “the horror at the heart of things.”

Though Machen’s evil is of a more cosmic sort than that of his contemporaries, evil often carries the sexual overtones associated with decadence. In “The Great God Pan” Helen plays in the forest with a “strange naked man” and her friend Rachel disappears in the woods, near ancient Caermaen, where a small pillar of white stone is later found bearing this inscription: “To the great god Nodens (the god of the Great Deep or Abyss) Flavius Senilis has erected this pillar on account of the marriage which he saw beneath the shade” (p. 114). The gatherings at Mrs. Beaumont’s where guests drink one-thousand-year-old wine and revel until 2:00 a.m. certainly suggest a sexual element.

One of Mrs. Beaumont’s victims leaves behind a collection of drawings in black and white which Villiers examines:

Villiers turned page after page, absorbed, in spite of himself, in the frightful Walpurgis-night of evil, strange monstrous evil that the dead artist had set forth in hard black and white. The figures of fauns and satyrs and Ægipans danced before his eyes, the darkness of the thicket, the dance on the mountaintop, the scenes by lonely shores in green vineyards, by rocks and desert places, passed before him: a world before which the human soul seemed to shrink back and shudder. (p. 93)

(Could anything be more Beardsleyesque?) Helen’s crimes, though described in indefinite terms, have a sexual edge. Villier’s contact on Queer Street who reports on her is even shocked. Villiers says, “The person from whom I got my information, as you may suppose, no great Puritan, shuddered and grew sick in telling me of the nameless infamies which were laid to her charge” (pp. 104-5). Mrs. Black in “The Inmost Light” is associated with “lust that cannot be satiated” and is described as having “a mist of flowing yellow hair” which looked as if it were “an aureole of glory round the visage of a satyr” (p. 161). Pan is never mentioned in this story, but the satyr allusion clearly suggests his lusty, goat god qualities.

In “The White Powder,” as the young man slips into dissipation, he tells his sister, “I have felt what it is to be young and a man; I find I have blood in my veins as other men have” (p. 446). Peter Penzoldt asserts that this story is about masturbation and believes “the symbolism is so transparent that the reader feels what is meant and is disgusted rather than terrified.” He particularly focuses on the guilt
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which would account for the change in Leicester’s appearance, and on
the dissolution of his hand, an appropriate punishment for
masturbation. He concedes that Machen probably was not aware of the
symbolism. I find this interpretation suspect not only because the
suggestion is there that Leicester’s sexual pleasures go beyond
masturbation but because such transparent symbolism is so atypical of
Machen. Machen did not aspire to disgust, but rather to terrify. His
evils are always larger than some personal naughtiness or perversity,
but obviously the sexual note is struck in the evocation of evil in this
story.

A more concrete feature of all three stories which clearly aligns
Machen with his decadent contemporaries is his use of the London
setting. He brings Pan into Soho and onto Ashley Street. An emanate
evil lurks in the London suburbs; Dyson in “The Inmost Light” says,
“I had...looked through the window of a commonplace, brand-new
house, and seen hell open before me” (p. 160). The London streets
figure largely in all three stories, and worldly young men-about-town
enjoy London night life. In “The Great God Pan” Villiers loves to
roam the London streets:

Villiers had emerged from his restaurant after an excellent
dinner of many courses, assisted by an ingratiating little
flask of Chianti, and, in that frame of mind which was with
him almost chronic, had delayed a moment by the door,
peering round in the dimly lighted street in search of those
mysterious incidents and persons with which the streets of
London teem in every quarter and at every hour. Villiers
prided himself as a practised explorer of such obscure mazes
and byways of London life, and in this unprofitable pursuit
he displayed an assiduity which was worthy of more serious
employment. (p. 76)

He describes the joy of a late night walk: “It’s a curious thing,...to be
alone in London at night, the gas-lamps stretching away in perspective,
and the dead silence, and then perhaps the rush and clatter of a hansom
on the stones, and the fire starting up under the horse’s hoofs” (p. 101).
In investigating Mrs. Beaumont he admits to having been “in very
strange places.” He says, “I have always been fond of diving into Queer
Street for my amusement” (p. 104). His friend Austin is “famous for
his intimate knowledge of London life, both in its tenebrous and
luminous phases” (p. 79). Either Villiers or Austin could be Wilde’s
young man who “loitered down the moonlit street / And stopped
beneath the Harlot’s House.”12 The young men Dyson and Salisbury,
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in “The Inmost Light,” drink Chianti and make such comments as, “Do you know, I have heard people describe olives as nasty! What lamentable Philistinism! I have often thought...that I could write genuine poetry under the influence of olives and red wine. Let us have Chianti; it may not be very good, but the flasks are simply charming” (p. 156). Such a speech epitomizes the nineties flaneur. Dyson, “an idler about town” asserts he is studying a “great science.” It is:

“the science of the great city; the physiology of London; literally and metaphysically the greatest subject that the mind of man can conceive.... Yet I feel sometimes positively overwhelmed with the thought of the vastness and complexity of London. Paris a man may get to understand thoroughly with a reasonable amount of study; but London is always a mystery. In Paris you may say: 'Here live the actresses, here the Bohemians, and the Rates'; but it is different in London. You may point out a street, correctly enough, as the abode of washerwomen; but in that second floor, a man may be studying Chaldee roots, and in that garret over the way a forgotten artist is dying by inches.” (p. 157)

This delight in London byways and obscure quarters, particularly at night, is a recurring feature in 1890s fiction and poetry—Wilde, Dowson, Douglas, and Symons, to name only a few, write of metropolitan nights and share Richard LeGallienne’s sentiment in his “A Ballad to London”:

Ah, London! London! our delight,
Great flower that opens but at night,
Great City of the midnight sun,
Whose day begins when day is done. (Beckson, p. 127)

Machen may have felt himself to be “no part at all” of the nineties, but these London walks and London nights definitely lend his stories a decadent, fin de siecle flavor. The occasional purple prose in the conversations of his dandified young narrators clearly dates his early tales. Like his contemporaries, he strove to push the bounds of experience, but his bounds are the fartherest of all. He shares their preoccupation with evil but makes an original contribution to supernatural fiction by parting the veil and loosing Panic terror once again on the world.
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NOTES


3Sweetser, p. 82.


10Letson, p. 1634.


THE POWER OF SILENCE IN DELTA WEDDING

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Eudora Welty has said of the South, "I think the Southerner is a talker by nature."1 "All [Southerners]," she says, "have to talk about each other, and what they’ve seen during the day, and what happened to so and so."2 Welty’s observation of this Southern characteristic apparently assisted in the crafting of her novel Delta Wedding, a work deeply involved in the “quintessentially Southern” oral tradition.3

The novel’s setting, Shellmound, symbolizes the spoken word; it is the home of what Ellen calls a “clamourous” family (p. 68). After her silent, meditative trainride, Laura is assaulted by the noises of Shellmound. The constant motion of the joggling board, going up and down with the pressure of even one body, let alone three, sets in mental motion for Laura the memory of Shellmound as a place of voices, mixed with a variety of other noises. The noise always continues long after the children are put to bed. Peals of laughter, Uncle Battle reciting poetry, Aunt Mac (supposedly deaf) calling out Bible verses, visiting planters “arguing” with Battle and George—these are the sounds of Shellmound. “Theirs was a house where, in some room at least, the human voice was never still” (p. 194). Shellmound will be heard, Ellen thinks, because Shellmound is importunate with myriad desires.

The characters best equipped to deal with the everyday demands of Shellmound are those who are most verbal. Battle throws his commands around the house without hesitation. At dinner he might shout, “Breast, gizzard, and wing! Pass it boy.” He even feels comfortable talking about the abstract and eternal, as long as they are rooted in the context of Shellmound: “he could also mention death and people’s absence in an ordinary way.” Aunt Tempe as well sports the Fairchild knack for words; her declarative manner makes gospel truth of mere gossip. Dabney wonders at Tempe’s powers of transformation, knowing “beyond question” the truth of the matter when “Aunt Tempe came and stated it like a fact of the weather” (pp. 12, 116).

Aunt Tempe’s bits of gossip represent the Fairchilds’ love of storytelling, which surfaces at times of pleasure or crisis, to entertain, to heal, and sometimes to harm. One recurring story is the Yellow Dog incident; it waits to be told. At one telling, Welty implies that the story has been told so many times that India knows precisely what response she can expect if she tells the story: “I can tell it good—make everybody cry,” she says (p. 61). Of course not all the family respond

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alike, but Shelley, as if on cue, turns white and begins to cry at one point of the tale.

If the stories of Aunt Tempe or India serve a particular end—to "make everybody cry," etc.—then the oral tradition will often distort what "really" happened. Welty said in one interview, "Tales get taller as they go along." In the Fairchild family, someone might recall the past with the question, "Why did such and such happen?" Then someone answers, with the "facts," carefully woven into a narrative, shaped by the teller to follow handily the all-important phrase which lends credence to the fictional, "Here's the way it was—" (p. 119). Welty reveals the Fairchild penchant for fictionalizing events in the thoughts of Ellen Fairchild, who wishes in some corner of her mind that the Yellow Dog incident might have proved fatal, creating a legend "heroic, or tragic" rather than what it is, a merely "romantic and absurd" story (p. 188).

Indeed the ones who have died, Denis and others, are pinned to the storytelling whims of the living. Denis, for the old aunts at least, is no longer Denis, but a god without limits—the best in law, gambling, horseriding—who "was cut off before his time." For many members of the Fairchild clan, Denis, in the best oral tradition, has been shaped such that he "could have planted the world, and made it grow" (p. 116).

Words also distort the world of the living. Dabney is disturbed by the "nice things" people say about Troy (p. 31). Words are not inherently bad, but Dabney recognizes the power of words to distort the subject so much as to make him invisible; the person her family describes is not Troy at all, but a wished-for fiancé that replaces the real thing.

Ellen, too, ponders the mask the Fairchilds have dressed themselves with, accomplished through the repetition of a single word—"happiness." Ellen hears Battle repeatedly ask Dabney on the day of her marriage, "Are you happy?" as if by some incantation the family's happiness might be realized. The theme of happiness, Ellen thinks, dominates Fairchild speech, rendering happiness their "legend." Over and over again the family implies, through their stories and small talk, that "the Fairchilds are the happiest of people" (p. 222).

The power that words have to distort, and thereby enshrine or otherwise imprison people, circumvents its power to reveal things as they are. Shelley laments, "Nobody had ever told her anything—not anything very true or very bad in life" (p. 122). Where do the keys to the universe, or at least the keys to the Fairchild universe, lie? As significant as the oral tradition may be in Delta Wedding, much of the power in the world of Shellmound lies in the "tradition" of silence.
Overlooked corners of silence in the novel resonate with meaning, producing in effect a sound. It seems that many of the voices in the novel, loudly proclaiming themselves, have their silent counterparts that direct the reader’s attention to the margins, nooks, and crannies where the secrets of Shellmound are kept. What Virginia Woolf said of her novel The Voyage Out might appropriately describe a significant portion of Delta Wedding: “I want to write a novel about Silence, [about] the things people don’t say.”

Shellmound has its silent places. The family library frequently lies vacant: “no one ever went” there at certain times of the day (p. 54). Laura loves the library, approaching it with the utmost reverence. To her this silent place speaks a language all its own, evoking the spirit of the past and the voices of the dead, a place where the “dead Fairchilds...live again.” The library contains an old dictionary, survivor of a flood long ago and thus a symbol of the past. Inside the dictionary is the name of Great-Great-Uncle Battle, silently calling Laura back several generations. On the wall hang pictures of the dead—Denis, Great-Grandfather George Fairchild, Aunt Ellen’s mother, and others. The silence of the library invites the dead, and the dead invite the silence, making the room really a shrine of the past, becoming a reference collection for the present to measure time with.

Notwithstanding this haven of silence, there are places much quieter than Shellmound. The Grove symbolizes silence, with its doors that shut so softly, and the very quiet ring of the phone, like the ringing of a “tiny silver bell.” The silence of the Grove evokes a sense of delicacy; people and things here are fragile. Dabney can’t help but compare the Grove to the constant noise of Shellmound, where “even when at moments people fell silent,” there was still the rushing sound of the fan penetrating every corner (p. 40). The silence dominates the Grove because it stands as a shrine for the dead. Here, on the open veranda where people “never walked anymore,” Denis had read poetry by himself (p. 37). In a sense Denis controls the lives of the aunts who live here now. His silence speaks to them as no other voices can, decorating their memory with what now seem superhuman attributes.

Marmion is another silent shrine of the dead. Dabney thinks how Marmion has been uninhabited by the family since the death of Marmion’s builder, Grandfather James Fairchild, in 1890. The silence here speaks much louder than words, a perpetual reminder to the living of a past nobler than the present. The aunts became the verbal vehicles of Marmion’s message, with the words “honor, honor, honor” sounding repeatedly in the ears of the eight children they adopted.
While silence may appear in the human sphere, it thrives in the world of nature. Nature is a simile for silence, when, at the wedding, a silence falls on the party "like the [silence] after a flock of fall birds has gone over." Indeed, some of the most silent moments in the novel are set in nature, far from the human voices of Shellmound. The reaches of nature, up to the very walkway in front of Shellmound, evoke a sense of silence, particularly when contrasted with the human noise inside. Outside in nature "there was a quieting and vanishing of sound." The words "quieting" and "vanishing" instill nature with a power to diminish and even eliminate sound, as if nature prefers silence, and has the power to beat the voices of life into submission (pp. 155, 7).

The silences of nature are significant, and Welty emphasizes the significance of silences in nature by attributing to them certain sounds—characters "hear" the silence of nature. Laura, on her train ride to Fairchild, hears nature, though in reality it produces no sound at all. She looks at the Delta through the train window and thinks how it seems "strummed in the shimmering sunlight, as though it were an instrument" (p. 4).

Nature's silent sound is loud enough to awaken Dabney—"the silver night woke her." Welty emphasizes that it couldn't be literal sound, for the night that awakens her is "breathless and serene." Dabney again confronts the sounds of silent nature when she visits the whirlpool at Marmion. Staring at the water, she "listened to the silence and then heard it stir, churn, churning in the early morning" (pp. 89, 123).

One major significance of nature's silence is death. "The 'great confines' of Shellmound are bordered by that which the family least recognizes: mortality." Like the silent library in Shellmound, or the silent edifices of Marmion and the Grove, the silent woods are a shrine for the dead, in this case some ancient Indian tribe. When Ellen passes through the forest, she is struck by its stillness. The woods have drawn her from the security of the present into the unfamiliar as she anxiously listens for human voices which might call her back to Shellmound—"Even inside this narrow but dense wood she found herself listening for sounds of the fields" (the songs of the cotton pickers and the hoofbeats of the overseer's horse) and the sounds of the house (Dabney calling her for help) [p. 69]. Instead of familiarity, the woods produce a strange little girl who, interestingly enough, can be identified as white by Ellen only when the little girl speaks. This human voice brings Ellen back into the known world, while nature's silence confuses Ellen with its unspoken powers.
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Shelley is disoriented as well by the silence of nature when she goes to the Grove by way of the bayou. In her mind, Shellmound is clearly associated with human voices—"laughing and crying went rushing through the halls"—while the bayou is silent, like a lagoon. Much like Ellen’s experience of some element of strangeness, the silence for Shelley is not meaningless, but rich in significance, presenting to Shelley’s senses “a foreign world” (p. 194).

Welty imbues water with a more intense silence than the silence of the land, instilling in the water’s silence an even more powerful expression of death. Laura thinks, “The water was quieter than the land anywhere.” Welty symbolizes this by presenting an image of a road of earth to Shellmound, while a road of water leads to silent Marmion. “[Marmion] was all quiet, and unlived in surely; the dark water was going in front of it, not a road” (p. 172).

The silence of water as a symbol of death haunts Shelley when she visits the bayou. Musing on the silence of the water there, she thinks of another relatively silent place, the Grove, which borders on the Yazoo River. She remembers the words told to her by Laura who had heard from her fourth-grade teacher that “Yazoo means River of Death.” With this phrase, Welty associates water with death, but circles back to the theme of silence in the thoughts which follow. To Shelley, the “River of Death...meant not the ultimate flow of doom, but the more personal vision of the moment’s chatter ceasing.” For her, the river silences the activity of the human community, and provides temporary and immediate refreshment, where “tenderness and love, sadness and pleasure” are “let alone to stretch in the shade” (p. 194). The river, then, carries a message of temporary silence and rest on one level, while on another it speaks of the permanent silence of death.

Meanwhile, Dabney confronts the whirlpool, which speaks to her of the dead who had fallen in, black and white alike who had dared get too close to the edge. She is overcome with the beginnings of vertigo, as if at any moment she might throw herself into the pool and drown. In the silence of the dead there lies a power over life. Places of silence, unlike places filled with the voices of life, bring the living into contact, sometimes treacherously close contact, with lives which have passed before, and with their own death.

The silence in nature vibrates with another meaning as well: it symbolizes the silence of the universe, a demonstration of Ruth Vanderveen Kieft’s observation that Welty “seems to be saying that there is no final meaning to life beyond the human meanings.”8 The Fairchilds importunately ask questions of universal significance, but the answers, if they exist, remain unspoken. Even Battle effectively throws his
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hands in the air on one occasion, as if to say, “Look at me! What can I do? Such a thing it all is” (p. 12)! Meditative characters suffer even more in their silence. Laura, precocious in her meditations, finds the world silent to her questions. She wonders about the needs of herself and others—“Need pulled you out of bed in the morning, showed you the day with everything crowded into it, then sang you to sleep at night as your mother did, need sent you dreams. Need did all this—when would it explain?” Laura is consoled by the thought that one day she will receive direct, verbal answers. For now answers would be “put off, put off, put off” with silence (p. 76).

When she was young like Laura, Ellen too had known the significance of silence. Her mother’s running away to England, and then suddenly returning, went unexplained, and her mother’s passion remained a mystery to her, “like an act of God.” The cliche “an act of God” resonates with new meaning in this context. Always careful in her choice of words and phrases, Welty calls attention to this phrase in the words which follow. In her adult life, Ellen is confronted with similar silences, and the answers have not come. True, her family members have not spoken, like the old women of Mitchem Corner who had remained silent in the face of Ellen’s mother’s effrontery, but the complexities Ellen thinks of seem ultimately to be beyond the human sphere. She thinks: “How deep were the complexities of the everyday, of the family, what caves were in the mountains, what blocked chambers, and what crystal rivers that had not yet seen the light” (p. 157). There is a sense in the book of questions which will go unanswered indefinitely.

Robbie experiences similar anxiety when she says to Ellen, “Once I tried to be like the Fairchilds. I thought I knew how.” Ellen meets this statement with silence. While this could be just another obstinate human silence, there is the implication of a more persistent quietude. Robbie says, “Don’t any other people in the world feel like me? I wish I knew” (p. 165). Her wish for solidarity in some precise expression may never come.

The silent world of the deaf Aunt Mac provides a humorous counterpart to any silence of weightier significance. People give her answers, but she doesn’t hear them because she can’t. At one point Robbie raises her voice in consideration “of the deaf,” but “Aunt Mac did not hear Robbie’s answer, or suppose there could be one.” She talks on, comfortably oblivious of the world around her. She responds to those annoyed by her deafness with, “Talk louder. Nobody’s going to make me wear that hot ear-phone” (pp. 161, 164). Her eternally silent existence is rendered comic by her self-satisfied air.
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As characters seek meaning in the universe, so they seek some personal meaning in the mundane realm of Shellmound. Many times the spoken word fails to achieve significance for the speaker. A telling moment is Ellen's meditation on Laura, who has become, by her familiar manner, just another face and thereby insignificant. Ellen thinks how Aunt Shannon had never shed a tear for Laura, the "motherless child." Yet Denis, the now silent and once meditative young man, who had often retreated to the quiet balcony to read poetry, had Aunt Shannon "[tearing] herself to pieces" with sorrow for him. The element which determines significance seems to be in part the degree of silence associated with a certain character. Laura and others at Shellmound become nameless faces in "the general view," belonging "to the multitudinous heavens" because they "all were constantly speaking," or rather "twinkling," often with that imploring quality Ellen calls "clamorous" (p. 63). In speaking, they become anonymous.

The power of a well-placed silence is something to be wished for amidst the frequent insignificance of words. One of the most silent characters is Maureen. Her communication with words is limited by a speech impediment; in fact her verbal communication is marred by too many words—"she had never talked plain; every word was two words to her and had an 'I' in it." So Maureen performs best in silence, provoking fear in Laura. After Maureen tumbles a pile of logs over Laura, with no verbal explanation but the words "choo choo," Laura contemplates that what Maureen meant by her marred speech and more frequent "speechless gaze" was "harm" (pp. 10, 74). Rendered incomprehensible by her failure to enact the verbal exercises required by the Fairchilds, Maureen achieves a certain power with her unspoken malice.

Yet other characters who can speak with clarity choose silence over words to make themselves significant. Theirs is the silence of secrecy. This manipulative silence empowers the user at the expense of other community members; "silence becomes...the invincible adversary." Manipulative silences surface with Dabney's marriage plans. The conversant Battle makes it verbally clear to Dabney that he doesn't approve of her marriage to Troy. For example, he's happy to say to Dabney that Maureen certainly won't comb her tangled hair just for Dabney's wedding (p. 62). These verbal outbursts have little power. "The caprices of his restraining power over his daughters filled her with delight now that she had declared what she could do" (p. 33). Her verbal declaration undermines her father's.

Her mother is silent on the subject, however, and this silence assumes great significance for Dabney. Mother and daughter, retreating
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into “shells of mutual contemplation,” cannot verbally communicate, and Ellen’s silence “somehow defeat[s]” Dabney (p. 33). That her mother “had never spoken the first word against her sudden decision to marry” does not guarantee approval; in fact it might imply misgivings too complex to verbally define. Ellen, by withholding valuable information, tacitly asserts a degree of power over her daughter.

Another instance of silence as a means to power—though in this case it ultimately fails—is the family’s secrecy about George’s separation from Robbie. In a scene complicated with undercurrents of meaning, George arrives without Robbie, and the adult family members who are present—Ellen, Battle, Shelley, and George—quickly determine the people from whom they will withheld this information. They will not tell India or the other little girls, who are young and might not understand. They will not tell Dabney—she is getting married, and needs no additional disturbances. They will not tell Tempe because she might respond irrationally, particularly after hearing of Dabney’s “marrying the way she is, and after Mary Denis married a Northern man and moved so far off” (p. 52). And the elderly aunts, Primrose and Jim Allen, who depend so much on a placid present which does not disturb the past—they must never know. Indeed the family’s superficial motive is protection of others, but these silent individuals are wise in their knowledge, sensing in their secrecy a way to preserve the surface placidity of Shellmound. For example, Battle is free to badger George into searching for Robbie so George can “wring her neck,” before the rest of Shellmound feels the effects of the separation.

As young as she is, Laura is well aware of the power of silence. Laura thinks when she sees Maureen dancing that “she [Laura] could never be able to hate anybody that hurt her in secret and in confidence.” This sentence may be read on two levels, both levels suggesting the power of silence to do harm. First, Laura recognizes that for her to hate others, she must do so in silence. Second, that there are people—namely Maureen—who have “hurt her in secret and in confidence.” She would like to be secretly spiteful, as Maureen is. At this point, Laura observes that Shellmound houses an infinite number of secrets. The silences of Shellmound, far from being impotent, assume tangible proportions for Laura, becoming so thick that “she could not get by” (p. 102).

Laura does finally employ secrecy to her ends to achieve power over Ellen. “Laura wanted so badly to be taken to [the Fairchilds’] hearts” Ellen “saw” that she, Laura, is not a part of Shellmound (p. 77). Yet in the last pages of the novel, Aunt Ellen becomes Laura’s Aunt Ellen: “Laura lifted on her knees and took her Aunt Ellen around
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the neck.” Just then, she thinks about what Ellen does and does not know. What Ellen does not know is that Laura knows where her rosy pin is—deep in the river bottom. The pin, in the silent river, will remain Laura’s secret. “Should she tell her, and suffer? Yes. No” (p. 247). By secrecy she achieves power because she possesses information Ellen wants, at the same time eluding punishment for her actions.

Dabney also employs silence as a means to power. Her marriage to Troy is not really her marriage as long as family members pry. What is known is shared. Significantly, Dabney withholds information at the end of the novel concerning the whereabouts of the honeymoon. “Instead of going to the Peabody in Memphis they had gone to the St. Charles in New Orleans.” This is Dabney’s and Troy’s secret, and theirs alone, to be cherished. It is their “success” (p. 145).

The significance of silence is further enhanced in Delta Wedding by Welty’s favoring relatively silent characters over verbose characters. The meditative characters are the silent voices that compose the novel, revealing the thoughts inhabiting their apparent silences. Sympathetic characters like George and Ellen are both associated with silence. The “favored center of consciousness in the novel,” Ellen is relatively quiet. She enters rooms in Shellmound with a “meditative” air, not rushing immediately into words as other family members might: “She walked into the roomful of family without immediately telling them anything.” Her silence is described in positive terms, associating her with restfulness, reflection, and beauty (p. 20).

Ellen and George communicate best in silence: “Caught in their momentum, [George] looked at Ellen perfectly still, as if from a train window.” George’s quiet manner is later imaged in his standing “in the midst of the room’s commotion...by the mantel as if at rest” (pp. 125, 186).

Though these quiet characters may be on the fringes of this community in several ways, they stand ultimately at the center of emotional power in the novel, and in this sense their silences are equated with power. Their meditative character lies exposed to a full range of experience which characters who do not watch, feel, and listen, but are instead talking, may miss altogether. Battle and Tempe are relatively unsympathetic characters largely because they are not sensitive to the silent undercurrents of Shellmound. It is in silence that personal revelation often occurs; in Delta Wedding, significant thoughts and feelings seldom break into words.” When Ellen is at Battle’s side toward the end of the novel, “comfortable and silent,” she thinks, “One moment was enough for you to know the greatest things” (p. 244).
Though the sound of voices rings through Shellmound, the undercurrent of silence speaks importantly as well. Characters of a quiet demeanor function as the emotional centers of the book. Other characters attempt on occasion to achieve significance by the use of well-placed silences. Finally, the quietude of nature echoes with the sound of mortality to those who will listen, and symbolizes as well a more profound silence.

To look beyond the spoken word is a key to this fictional world. Surface meaning can only be what it is—superficial. Meditating on George, Laura thinks how, to be a true receptacle of experience, one must appreciate phenomena through all the senses, exceeding the traditional modes of apprehension (p. 34). An ear for silence might well be included.

NOTES


7Griffin, p. 102.


10Vande Kieft, Eudora Welty, p. 94.

THE "GRITTY STAGES" OF LIFE: PSYCHOLOGICAL TIME IN THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD

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The Macbeth motif throughout The Mystery of Edwin Drood has been extensively discussed by Dickensian scholars and amateurs alike. Besides the narrator’s pervasive references to Shakespeare’s play, most notably the ominous title of Chapter 14 “When shall these Three meet again?,” there are many parallels in the action. For example, Jasper has hideous visions of the murder that he feels compelled to commit and, at the same time, deeply abhors; Macbeth sees the “air-drawn dagger” before he goes reluctantly to kill his beloved kinsman and guest. In both cases, an innocent party is elaborately “framed” for the crime (Neville in The Mystery of Edwin Drood, the grooms and the young princes in Macbeth). Meanwhile, the murderer in each instance goes free, still self-tormented and a threat to others.

The novel also has its own “witch,” Princess Puffer, a hag whose riddling words of intended revenge against Jasper as she bubbles her opium-pipes could not be more strongly evocative of the “weird sisters,” the blasted heath, the cauldron, and Macbeth’s own disastrous “trafficking” with Fate. But in addition to these powerful Shakespearean echoes, of which Dickens the mature craftsman was certainly aware, The Mystery of Edwin Drood also suggests a persistent theme that the novelist shared with Shakespeare: the misuse of time.

Macbeth and Jasper both demonstrate a warped perspective on time. Macbeth kills Duncan, we recall, not only because he wants to be king now but also because he wants to found a future dynasty of kings as the perfection of his love for Lady Macbeth. When the witches show him the apparition of Banquo’s royal descendants stretching out to the “crack of Doom” (IV, 1), Macbeth realizes that he has indeed traded his soul for a “fruitless crown” (III, 1); thereafter he becomes the grieving, insomniac, furious child-killer of the latter part of the play. Similarly, Jasper loses the possible pleasures of the present because of his two obsessions: one with the unknown forces in the past which apprenticed him to an unsuitable career that he feels it is “too late”1 to change, and secondly, with the imagined future when he will finally possess Rosa. It is the loss of the present moment, the only moment in which we can truly live, that makes existence seem tedious, “a tale/ Told by an idiot” (V, v) to both Macbeth and Jasper.

Like Shakespeare, Dickens understood the necessity of a well-balanced use of the time of memory, the time of living, and the time of
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anticipation; that is why, after all, the haunted Scrooge in A Christmas Carol must promise his last ghostly caller that “the Spirits of all Three [that is, the Past, the Present, and the Future] will strive within me.” When Scrooge makes this promise, the phantom changes into a bedpost and he awakens to joyous life. Jasper also wakes up clutching a bedpost in the famous opening paragraph of The Mystery of Edwin Drood, but his return to consciousness is of a very different kind. Jasper’s drug-induced dream can teach him nothing but futility.

In a sense, his addiction is a misguided attempt at creativity; Jasper wishes to fashion a fourth zone of time, an alternate reality, in which the painful burden of his past and the painful distance of his imagined future will be obliterated, temporarily, at a very steep price. As Macbeth has “murder’d Sleep” (II, 2), so Jasper has murdered that healthy continuity of the self that is essential to adult mental health.

When we speak about the integration of the self, we are really discussing an individual’s ability to cherish or use his past constructively, to be zestfully engaged in life in the present, and to work energetically so that the future will be just as pleasurable as the present—or even more so. Like numerous other characters in The Mystery of Edwin Drood, Jasper is too divided, too dissociated for any such wholeness of being.

When Christmas Day dawns for Scrooge, his three “therapists” the spirits have led him to the achievement of this wholeness. But when Christmas Day dawns for Jasper, after the presumed murder of Edwin at his hands during the storm of Macbeth-like proportions the night before, we see that “the hands of the Cathedral clock are torn off” (p. 165). The symbolic connection between clocks and the misuse of time and life occurs repeatedly in The Mystery of Edwin Drood. Jasper is not the only character who is stuck in those inappropriate regions of time which breed mental disease and arrest normal growth of the personality.

When Rosa and Edwin end the engagement made between them so long ago in the wills of their widowed fathers, for example, they immediately begin to behave less childishly. They show the kind of mature affection and compassion for each other that we might expect of fellow sufferers from the weight of the past; they sensibly reject the limiting life-scenario that their distracted fathers wrote for them, breathe freely for the first time, and take up their own authentic lives apart. As Edwin pities the two engaged children that they once were, he finds significantly that “his watch has stopped [and] turns into the jeweller’s shop to have it wound and set” (p. 158). Appropriately, the jeweller reminds him “not to let it run down” (p. 159)—in short, not to get

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stuck in time. Once Edwin is liberated from the past, the personality of this formerly somewhat insensitive young man starts developing in a rapid, most promising manner.

Whether we belong to the "undertaker" school of thought on the insoluble mystery of Edwin's disappearance or the "resurrectionist" school, I think we can all agree that his new-found capacity to use the present more wisely may be a compelling argument in favor of his eventual re-appearance as a deeper person. After all, Dickens seldom disposes of mentally healthy, maturing young men (think, for example, of shipwrecked Walter Gay in Dombey and Son). Or one might say, in the language of David Copperfield, that Edwin seems to be emerging at this point as "the hero of [his] own life."

At the beginning of The Mystery of Edwin Drood, there are just two characters who have already achieved that integration of personality and capacity for further psychological expansion which only comes on the terms of a positive relation to their past, present, and future. These two are Crisparkle and Helena Landless. We see their higher level of development at first chiefly through their enduring, touching primary relationships, Crisparkle with his charming "china shepherdess" mother and Helena with her "tigerish" brother Neville. It is only natural for Crisparkle and Helena to admire one another, become allies, and perhaps to fall in love. These two proceed from strength to strength in each encounter with the other characters in the novel. The more we see them, the more they impress us with their loyalty to the ties of the past, competence in the face of the challenges of the present, and vigorous striving towards a sunnier future for those they love and for themselves. Perhaps it is because Helena and Crisparkle have already proven themselves the heroes of their own lives that they are a shade less interesting than the characters who have just begun the process of mature integration of the self.

Among these more absorbing characters, Rosa and her guardian Mr. Grewgious make the most astonishing progress. Interestingly, their growth can only occur in London and thereabouts. Cloisterham is a whole town stuck in the past. This grotesque setting alone—with its graveyards, crypts, and mausoleums—suggest an enlarged version of Miss Havisham's mansion with its cobwebs and stopped clocks. Both represent unhealthy modes of existence, unassimilated experience. As Mr. Grewgious exclaims, peering into the mouldy Cathedral where he seeks Jasper, "Dear me, it's like looking down the throat of Old Time" (p. 94).

Mr. Grewgious describes himself vividly as an "Angular" man of business who feels within Miss Twinkleton's school for girls "as if he
was a bear—with the cramp—in a youthful cotillion” (p. 88). He goes on to explain his dissimilarity from youth as follows:

I was the only offspring of parents far advanced in life, and I half believe I was born advanced in life myself....I remark that while the general growth of people seem to have come into existence, buds, I seem to have come into existence a chip. I was a chip—and a very dry one—when I first became aware of myself.

(p. 90)

Despite Mr. Grewgious’s doubts about having any connection with youthfulness and the ability to grow, he does loosen up and become a fuller personality as he acts on Rosa’s behalf. Prompted perhaps by remembrances of Rosa’s mother, whom he loved from afar, Mr. Grewgious bestirs himself to explain the will in such feeling terms that both Edwin and Rosa review the prospect of their ill-considered marriage. Here Mr. Grewgious shows his fidelity not only to his legal obligations but also to the past, the present, and the possible future. He becomes increasingly capable of this continuity of perspective, the “long view” that in part makes us mature, well-balanced adults. As he sees more of Rosa when she flees to him in London for protection from Jasper, Mr. Grewgious finds himself surprisingly able to cope with the dangers that the future may bring and also—perhaps for the first time—to enjoy the pleasures attainable in the present with the lightheartedness of a boy.

When Mr. Tartar offers an outing to the “delicious” springtime countryside in his boat, for example, Mr. Grewgious cannot resist, remarking, “I have not been up the river for this many a day” (p. 246). Moreover, he tries his hand at rowing, falls backward, and laughs at the comic spectacle that he presents. In short, Mr. Grewgious behaves in the manner of Scrooge when he awakens in such high spirits on Christmas Day that he dances as he shaves. Mr. Grewgious, too, has regained that connection with his own childhood that is essential for emotional well-being in later life. Now he can thoroughly relish the present, remain faithful to the past, and plan for the future. No longer a “chip,” Mr. Grewgious is becoming an integrated personality—or, as he might say, a “bud” that is opening up. His life has expanded at last to include attachments, pleasures, and possibilities far beyond the office.

Even more certainly, Mr. Grewgious’s ward Rosa ceases to be a rather over-indulged, over-protected schoolgirl and emerges as a spirited young woman. When Rosa takes the mature step of initiating the serious conversation with Edwin in Chapter 13 “Both at Their Best,”
she transcends the silly pet name Pussy and her personality as the “Little Miss Impudence” of his portrait. She also becomes the most realistic, most likeable young heroine in Dickens. The transformation is almost as dramatic as if Dora Copperfield had acquired the capacity to grow up.

We are more prepared for Rosa’s change because she has already demonstrated a greater degree of perception than Edwin about the distorting effects of their unnatural engagement: “I am a young little thing, Eddy, to have an old heartache” (p. 33), she exclaims to him on her birthday walk. Once this unfair pressure from the past is released and Rosa is free to be herself, she behaves at once in a more mature, sympathetic manner. She also becomes a more genuinely young individual, capable of such pleasures of youth as falling in love or enjoying a springtime excursion to the country.

In addition, Rosa becomes almost as resourceful as her friend Helena. She flees Cloisterham after Jasper’s terrifying revelations by the sun-dial, for example, and finds Mr. Grewgious and other allies in London. She also shows that she can now handle the more ordinary challenges of the present quite adequately, as when we see her functioning in the role of the tolerant, amused spectator and referee of those verbal skirmishes between her elders Billickin and Miss Twinkleton over types of meat. Most striking of all, she begins to think in more sophisticated terms.

As Rosa returns from the exuberant trip up the river “among the delicious odours of limes in bloom” and the company of the dashing sailor Mr. Tartar, for example, she feels that the gray contrast that the city presents is an emotional let-down:

...the everlastingly-green garden seemed to be left for everlasting, unregainable and far away.  
“Cannot people get through life without gritty stages, I wonder?” Rosa thought next day...She began to think that, now the Cloisterham school-days had glided past and gone, the gritty stages would begin to set in at intervals and make themselves wearily known!

(p. 247)

As we older adults know about unsettled, trying periods of transition in our lives, the answer to Rosa’s age-appropriate question is, of course, “No, people can’t get through life without ‘gritty stages.’” It is the stages of stress or waiting that propel us towards greater growth and integration in personality. These intervals also enable us more fully to appreciate those other, more welcome intervals of refreshment.
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and renewal in the "everlasting-green garden" that we associate with childhood’s capacity for joy. We never lose access to this Eden if we become mentally healthy adults, like the reformed Scrooge, in communication with our past, present, and future selves. When we have our last glimpse of Rosa in the novel, she is happily absorbed in a new interest—reading books "of voyages and sea-adventure" (p. 253)—which may have some bearing on her romantic future.

In any event, we can safely say at this point that Rosa has progressed through her first round of life’s "gritty stages" quite splendidly. No longer the passive victim of her father’s will, unnaturally stuck in the past, she has fulfilled the promise of her surname Bud; she has blossomed. As Rosa grows and the net tightens about Jasper in the two last-written chapters of The Mystery of Edwin Drood, springtime symbolically returns in full glory. Or in the language of the last act of the play by Shakespeare that most influenced Dickens’s unfinished novel, "the time is free" (Macbeth, V, vii). In fact, even that region that we connect most closely with dislocations in time—the Cathedral, a place of stopped clocks and closed tombs—seems to come to life. The narrator describes this amazing metamorphosis in religious terms:

Changes of glorious light from moving boughs, songs of birds, scents from gardens, woods, and fields—or, rather, from the one great garden of the whole cultivated island in its yielding time—penetrate into the Cathedral, subdue its earthy odour, and preach the Resurrection and the Life.

(p. 269)

All of England now seems to be in harmony with the general movement of such characters as Mr. Grewgious and Rosa towards a more abundant, integrated, and constructive life.

NOTE

SAVING FACE/SAVING FRANCE—EDITH WHARTON, SHAME AND THE MARNE

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In the explosion of Wharton criticism over the last fifteen years, Edith Wharton has finally, it seems, emerged from the shadow of Henry James as a major American writer who deserves critical attention in her own right for unique social and psychological insights. But critics are still limiting their inquiries to a small range of books and issues, continuing the decades-long neglect of many works that have been virtually abandoned by Wharton scholars. Consider the fate of her World War I novella, The Marne, which in 70 years has become a mere footnote to her long career.

This simple and affecting story of Troy Belknap, a young American Francophile who volunteers for ambulance service and is then wounded in the second battle of the Marne, was enthusiastically received in 1918. Reviewers called it “almost flawless,” “a beautiful and enlarging tale,” praising its “truth” and amazing “richness.”¹ No longer seeing the book through the perspective of a world at war, however, subsequent critics almost uniformly found it “banal” and “sentimental,” deploring the author’s “propagandistic attitude and narrow thinking.”² These verdicts have been confirmed by the last two decades of Wharton criticism, which have utterly swept this little book aside as “dated,” “very inferior,” and mere “propaganda.”³

My purpose here is not to claim that The Marne is a neglected masterpiece. Yet this little-read novella is well worth discussion because it illustrates a completely unanalyzed and central theme in Wharton’s work as well as a blind spot in Wharton criticism. It is not simply a love of La Belle France that ultimately leads Troy Belknap into battle. Troy desperately needs to prove that he is brave, important, strong. Like so many of Wharton’s protagonists, Troy is struggling with the most painful of all inner experiences: shame. Examining the dynamics and impact of shame will illuminate the novella’s artistic problems in an entirely new way, and pinpoint its previously unacknowledged strength.

Silvan Tomkins’ affect theory is the foundation of all contemporary research on emotion, and he is the pioneer in exploring the importance of shame in human motivation.⁴ Tomkins does not view human beings as a battleground for imperious drives that urge them blindly on to pleasure and violence, contained only by a repressive

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society and its internalizations—the ego and super-ego. For Tomkins, affect is the primary innate biological motivating mechanism, more urgent than drive deprivation or even pain. Such a conclusion is not obvious when one considers the urgency of drives like hunger, or the need to breathe, or the importunities of sexual desire. Deprived of air, for example, one becomes terrified, but Tomkins explains that “this terror is in no way part of the drive mechanism.”5 One can become equally terrified by the fear of being caught in a fire or of contracting a fatal disease. In Tomkins’ view, affects provide “the primary blueprints for cognition, decision and action”:

Humans are responsive to whatever circumstances activate the varieties of positive and negative affects. Some of these circumstances innately activate the affects. At the same time the affect system is also capable of being instigated by learned stimuli and responses. The human being is thus urged by nature and by nurture to explore and to attempt to control the circumstances that evoke... positive and negative affective responses. (p. 359)

Of the nine innate affects Tomkins has identified,6 shame strikes “deepest into the heart of man.”7 An innate response to any perceived barrier to positive affect, shame is the affect of indignity, defeat, transgression, and alienation. Whether an individual has been shamed by self-mockery or the derisive laughter of others, that person feels naked and “lacking in dignity or worth” (AIC, p. 118). Feeling shame, one reduces communication with others by lowering one’s eyes, face and neck, “producing a head hung in shame” (“Affect Theory,” p. 378).

Tomkins makes the important observation that shame, discouragement, shyness, embarrassment and guilt are phenomenologically the identical affect. It is because their causes and consequences differ that they result in different overall experiences. What we typically call shyness, for example, is shame in the presence of strangers. Psychologists have not grasped this underlying biological unity, with the result that shame’s major role in human functioning as the “keystone affect”11 has been missed until quite recently: “The importance of the individual’s struggles with his shame, the incessant effort to vanquish or come to terms with the alienating affect, his surrenders, transient or chronic, have too often been disregarded” (AIC, p. 156).
Lev Raphael

Gershen Kaufman's recent books,⁹ synthesizing affect theory with the work of Sullivan and Fairbairn, define the essential nature of shame as feeling

*seen* in a painfully diminished sense. The self feels exposed both to itself and to anyone present. It is this sudden, unexpected feeling of exposure and accompanying self-consciousness that characterizes the essential nature of... shame.... To live with shame is to experience the very essence or heart of the self as wanting. (p. 8)

Kaufman conceives of shame as originating interpersonally, primarily in significant relationships, generated whenever one significant person "somehow breaks the interpersonal bridge" with another (p. 13). Originating between parent and child (and later linking any two individuals), this bridge is the emotional bond which enables the child to feel a sense of belonging and security. It can be severed through being disappointed, blamed, mistreated, ridiculed, disparaged, ignored.

Shame can have an almost paralyzing effect on the self, Kaufman observes: "Sustained eye contact with others becomes intolerable. The head is hung. Spontaneous movement is interrupted. And speech is silenced... thereby causing shame to be almost incommunicable." Shame is of course not always so severe, and can occur in a wide variety of forms, those that Tomkins lists, as well as inferiority and worthlessness. Shame leaves us feeling "immobilized, trapped and alone" (pp. 8, 9), as if there is no way to rectify or balance the situation—we have simply failed as human beings. What makes shame particularly devastating is that it can become internalized so that the self is able to activate it *without* an inducing interpersonal event. Internalized shame is experienced as a deep abiding sense of being defective, never quite good enough as a person. This central affect-belief gradually recedes from consciousness and also becomes the unconscious core of the personality. We no longer have to suffer real defeats, rejections or failure; just perceiving events in these ways, or even *anticipating* failure can confirm our sense of shame. Such a way of relating to oneself, as an inherent failure, absorbs, maintains and spreads shame ever further, leaving one increasingly alienated from others and divided within.

Despite her wealth, her deep and lasting friendships, her fame as a writer, Wharton throughout her life "carried within her the conviction that she was at base a small, hungry, helpless creature" and felt "intolerably isolated" (Wolff, p. 11). It is well documented that
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Wharton was also afflicted by incorrigible shyness—the social manifestation of shame. Wharton was indeed haunted by shame, and the evidence is clear and unmistakable in her memoirs, A Backward Glance and “Life and I,” in her often desolate letters to Morton Fullerton, and throughout her fiction where shame is a consistent cause of unhappiness and isolation. In her autobiographies, Wharton reveals how she was intensely and consistently shamed by her family for the very person she was. A talented, literary child who was never pretty, she had the misfortune to grow up in a society that revered conformity, and where, as she saw it, “there was an almost pagan worship of physical beauty, and the first question asked about any youthful newcomer on the social scene was invariably: ‘Is she pretty?’ or: ‘Is he handsome?’”¹⁰ Though suffering in such an environment, Wharton unfortunately absorbed this shallow but vigilant standard to some extent, and says she was never able to overcome an intense hatred for anyone or anything ugly.¹¹

As a book lover, Wharton felt deeply isolated, unable to claim resemblance to anyone on her family tree in this regard, and aware that such interests made her an anomaly in her social milieu. It was an “intellectual desert” in which she “never exchanged a word with a really intelligent human being until [she] was over twenty” (“Life and I,” p. 37). Her literary attempts were not really encouraged in a family that saw writing as something both mysterious and beneath them, and even her later success was apparently a source of embarrassment for her family. The anecdote is often quoted of Wharton’s mother’s dismissive response to her first novel, written at 11. Its opening line mentioned an untidy drawing room, and Lucretia Wharton icily remarked that drawing-rooms were always tidy.¹² This withering comment seems typical of their relationship, as Wharton portrayed it in her memoirs, and she could never quite understand or please her mother. Wharton for instance records having been contemptuously criticized by her mother for wanting to know about sex, and for knowing nothing before her wedding—when that terrible ignorance was a product of Lucretia’s own insistence that such questions weren’t “nice.”

Wharton’s adolescence brought what reads like a virtual family conspiracy to crush whatever self-esteem she might have still possessed—though the purported aim was to keep her from being conceited. Wharton was subject to a new barrage of criticism and contempt:

I was laughed at by my brothers for my red hair, & for the supposed abnormal size of my hands & feet; as I was much
the least good-looking of the family, the consciousness of my physical shortcomings was heightened by the beauty of the persons about me. My parents—or at least my mother—laughed at me for using “long words,” & for caring for dress (in which heavens knows she set me the example!); & under this perpetual cross-fire of criticism I became a painfully shy self-conscious child. (“Life and I,” p. 37)

When Wharton wasn’t subjected to this fusillade that severely diminished her confidence, she felt enveloped by a “thick fog of indifference” (*A Backward Glance*, p. 122), which was also a source of shame in that it powerfully communicated to the young girl that she was unimportant, beneath attention. One finds the sense of being excluded, of counting for nothing permeating her correspondence with Morton Fullerton: “This incomprehensible silence....your utter indifference to everything that concerns me, has stunned me.”13 Like the other central men in her life—her husband Teddy, Henry James and Walter Berry—Fullerton withheld himself from her in “critical, heartbreaking ways.”14 She seems almost to have been playing out her relationship with her mother, indeed with her whole milieu, struggling to be appreciated, understood, valued—aching to be freed of her shame. Again and again in her letters to Fullerton, Wharton cries out despairingly (and sometimes in anger) that she is utterly insignificant, unworthy of his love, his letters, even his *thoughts*: “I know how unequal the exchange is between us, how little I have to give that a man like you can care for,” “...what I might be to you...is little enough...for the reasons we know: the fact of all I lack....”15

Not surprisingly then, we find that her novels are full of protagonists who despite their outward good fortune feel isolated, worthless, weak. Troy Belknap in *The Marne* is not merely the vehicle for Wharton’s intensely pro-French and anti-German feelings, but a typical Whartonian hero, if only in miniature, so to speak.

Well-travelled and well-schooled in the glories of France, Troy feels quite helpless at the outbreak of the war when he is in Switzerland. Suffering under “the shafts of the world’s woe,”16 Troy thinks that he alone is concerned, while his parents and their friends worry “that they could get no money, no seat in the trains, no assurance that the Swiss frontier would not be closed” (10). Expressing typical adolescent contempt for adults (familiar to parents with teenage children), he wonders how they can be so disloyal to France, “the world of his fancy and imagination” (10). That world has come to be personified for Troy
in the figure of his tutor, Paul Gantier, “whose companionship [had] opened fresh fields and pastimes to Troy’s dawning imagination” (8). When Troy hears that war has been declared, he immediately thinks of the tragedy in terms of losing Paul:

War against his beautiful France! And this young man, his dearest friend and companion, was to be torn from him suddenly, senselessly, torn from their endless talks, their long walks in the mountains, their elaborately planned courses of study...and vistas and vistas beyond—to be torn from all this, and to disappear from Troy Belknap’s life into the black gulf of this unfathomable thing called War. (8-9)

Agonizing over not being able to help the “attacked, invaded, outraged” France because he is “a poor helpless American boy” Troy feels there is nothing he can do for France, “...not even cry, as a girl might!” (10).

Few strivings are as important in adolescence as the compelling “need to identify with someone, to feel a part of something, to belong somewhere” (Shame, p. 27). Paul is Troy’s link to France, embodying as he does France’s “ideas in his own impatient, questioning and yet ardent spirit” (39). It is Paul’s advice Troy most treasures: “Whatever happens,” Paul tells him, “keep your mind keen and clear; open as many windows on the universe as you can” (39). But parallel with the adolescent need to belong is the equally powerful need to separate from one’s parents. Through Paul, Troy can abandon his parents and claim a different heritage as one of France’s children, with “that long rich past” in his blood. Later in the novella, the image of France as mother takes on biblical resonance: she is the “Naomi-country that had but to beckon, and her children rose and came...” [Wharton’s ellipsis] (107).

With delicious satire, Wharton attacks American complacency about the war “at every opportunity” in the novella (Plante, p. 21). All around Troy at the war’s onset, Americans “whose affluence and social prestige had previously protected them from the unpleasant and the violent”17 are scheming to get out of the country. “If [the Germans] do come,” one woman whispers at his mother’s tea-table, “what do you mean to do about your pearls?” (21). Troy, “long-limbed, strong-limbed, old enough for evening clothes, champagne...and views on international politics” (15), faces an altogether different trap. He is “sullen, humiliated [my emphasis], resentful at being associated with all the rich Americans flying from France” (16). Adolescence is “a time of especially heightened self-consciousness” and thus a “critical period of...vulnerability to shame” (Shame, p. 25). The Americans’
hypocritical self-interest and lack of concern for France shame Troy. Watching refugees pouring into Paris from the Marne, Troy is miserable about his “inability to do more than gape and pity” (20). Shame is an isolating experience, in which one longs to hide, to avoid further exposure—which is what Troy does here. He avoids the streets where he might find those refugees coming into the city; their very presence is a terrible reminder of his helplessness, of his feeling “small and useless” (21).

Back in the United States, Troy is irritated by the way Americans respond to the waves of returning Americans reporting on their own experiences in France. “No one was listened to for long, and the most eagerly sought-for were like the figures in a moving-picture show, forever breathlessly whisking past to make way for others” (36). Outraged that the "Americans had neglected a moral responsibility," Troy at dinner one night calls for America’s entry into the war (Plante, p. 21). He blushes furiously at the sound of his own voice—blushing is a sign of shame—and again when he is condescended to by a distinguished senator (AIC, p. 120). The adults see this war as an alien concern, and his fervor as just an adolescent phase, which of course in a sense it is. Troy’s shame is triggered; his fervent commitment to France, which distinguishes him from his family, friends and country, is brushed aside as unimportant, even silly by pompous adults.

The reaction at school is even more painful for Troy because public humiliation “creates a far deeper wound than the same action done in private” (Shame, p. 9). In addition, the peer group rivals the family’s importance in adolescence and thus is a potent source of shame. Troy is “laughed at, scolded, ridiculed, nicknamed, commemorated in a school-magazine skit in which ‘Marne’ and ‘yarn’ and ‘oh, dam,’ formed the refrain of a lyric [apparently to the tune of “The Star Spangled Banner”] beginning ‘Oh, say, have you heard Belknap flap in the breeze?” (51). Even the young woman he is most attracted to embarrasses him by her flippant assertion that the war is “boring,” as late as 1917 when such a claim is no longer clever. As America’s involvement seems increasingly likely, Troy is stung by sensing that friends see him “as a little boy” because he is not old enough to join the army.

When America finally enters the war, and Troy insists on going to France to be an ambulance driver, he angrily interprets his mother’s natural fear for him as being treated like a child not “out of the nursery.” Given what his veritable worship of France means to him, how it is the focus of his emerging identity as an adult, this reaction is not surprising. “Shame carries a multiplicity of meanings for the self,”
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depending on such things as the “actual importance of the part of the self that has been exposed or shamed” (Shame, p. 9). Troy will also be ashamed of Americans who are fatuously convinced that they are in the war not just to defeat the Germans, but to teach France “human values.”

Driving an ambulance, however, is no solution to Troy’s problem. It is important for him to be “relieving a little fraction of the immense anguish” (76) through his “humble job” (103). But Troy still feels “almost as helpless” as when the war broke out, a mere spectator (85), an “infinitesimal cog” in this “turning point of history” (86). Near the front, in a YMCA shelter full of American soldiers, none of whom he feels could be “more passionately eager” than he, Troy feels more “keenly than ever, the humiliation [my emphasis]” of being “so hopelessly divided from [them] by [the] “stupid difference” in their ages (90-91). Invidious comparisons like this one are a potent source of shame, whether made by others or by oneself (AIC, p. 224).

When his ambulance breaks down close to the front, Troy grabs a fallen rifle and is swept into battle by an American unit. Once again, along with his fierce desire to fight, he feels shame. He fears anyone discovering that he is not really a soldier; “his heart sank at the dread of doing something stupid, inopportune, idiotic” (113). He is afraid of being exposed as the helpless thing he is, and worse, as a deserter. Guilt is shame over a moral transgression, according to Tomkins and Kaufman, and Troy feels guilty about having deserted two refugees and a wounded soldier in his ambulance because of his war fervor. Wondering if he will be court-martialled, he volunteers for a scouting party, which seems “the one chance to wash his guilt away” (119).

His training as an ambulance driver betrays him, because Troy tries to rescue a wounded soldier and is himself wounded. Waking in a hospital, he at first has absolutely no sense of accomplishment or satisfaction; rather, he is “filled with the bitter sense of his failure. He had abandoned his job to plunge into battle, and before he had seen a German or fired a shot he found himself ignominiously [my emphasis] laid by his heels” (123). The novella ends more positively with Troy’s relief that the Germans were turned back, France and the wounded people in his ambulance saved. He is especially joyful to have been part of the action, and there is an unexpected conclusion. Troy tells no one that he is convinced he was brought to safety by the ghost of his beloved tutor, Paul, who died four years before in the first battle of the Marne, and is buried nearby.18

David Clough is somewhat accurate in assessing The Marne as showing “no evidence either of [Wharton’s] talent [in the years she wrote Summer and “Xingu”], or of her considerable direct personal
experience of the war." Laden with stock scenes, and burdened by the myth of American troops as virtuous, noble Galahads winning the war in a sort of adolescent day-dream, the book's weakness is perplexing to Clough. He concludes that the tremendous personal significance of France as avatar of Western civilization for Wharton led to her gross simplification of the war in this novella. However, this latter conclusion, shared by Patricia Plante, is only partly accurate. What consistently appears in the novel is Troy's shame—in response to American lack of concern for France, to those around him who do not take his adoration of France seriously, and to events that seem to dwarf his potential for action.

At each turning point in the novella, Troy's sense of himself as worthless, helpless, exposed, dominates the action and even the demagogic rhetoric. If the novella is thin, it is because Wharton's own shame, more successfully integrated and given richer context and substance in novels like Summer, The Reef, The Mother's Recompense, overwhelms the frail narrative. France had come to be home for Wharton, representing the values of Old New York which she was coming to cherish rather than see as solely repressive: reverence, taste, "the love of continuity or tradition" (Plante, p. 22). In Paris, recovering from the embarrassing failure of her marriage, publicly announced by her divorce action in 1913, Wharton had made herself a true home in "an intellectual, artistic and cultural milieu in which she moved with ease." The novella "reiterates over and over again how worthy of adoration France is" (Plante, p. 18), and is one of her literary attempts, as an "unrecanting expatriate and Francophile," to win Americans over to appreciating and defending the glories of France. The shame she felt about America's failure to enter the war before 1917, and about American cultural arrogance and ignorance, is what turns The Marne strident and makes it a sketchy performance.

Yet the novella is a precise and moving little study of the impact of shame on an adolescent, and here is Wharton's unacknowledged success. She intuitively understood how shame could leave one feeling worthless and outcast, and dramatized that understanding here with admirable acuity. What has escaped decades of critics is the centrality of shame in this novella (as in so many of Wharton's works); we see it in the iteration of words like "humiliation," "humiliated," "ashamed," and various synonyms, in the blushing, and in the situations where Troy consistently feels exposed, worthless, inferior, helpless, guilty—all manifestations of his shame. Wharton's war novella in some ways focuses less on the war than on her protagonist's reactions to the war,
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which would be her explicit aim in her later more rounded and
substantial war novel, A Son at the Front.

We know that Wharton’s “name became a legend in connection
with her war charities work” (Buitenhuys, p. 495). With
“organizational genius” (Lewis, Edith Wharton, p. 370), she plunged
into a “stupendous contribution to the [French] effort,” and was made a
Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, “an unprecedented distinction for a
woman... sparingly awarded to foreigners.” Wharton was not remotely
insignificant, powerless, or a mere observer; she “raised funds, organized
relief for refugees, founded hospitals and hostels, created jobs
for war widows and homeless women, wrote propaganda, took in
orphans” (Ammons, pp. 170, 128).

There has been much speculation on the impact of the war on
Wharton’s fiction and psyche, but her war work seems in no way
whichever to have healed the shame that plagued her all her life, as
painfully revealed in her autobiographies, in her letters to Morton
Fulerton, and in her fiction as early as her first collection of short
stories and her first two published novellas, The Touchstone and
Sanctuary.22 In The Marne, we once again see this extraordinary
woman focusing on “loss and dissatisfaction and failure” almost to the
exclusion of “accomplishment, scope achieved, experience garnered.”23
When she wrote The Marne, it did not present or even highlight the
many small victories any war worker would have achieved, and which
she undoubtedly had to her credit. Instead, she chose as her protagonist
someone helpless, young, “shy and awkward” (48), someone wracked
by shame, who is not saved by his own effort, but by ghostly
intervention. Because of her own internalized shame, which we can
finally understand, she could imagine no other “hero,” and no other
resolution.

NOTES

1Frederick Tabor Cooper, “A Clear-cut Gem of War Fiction,” The
Literary Supplement, 19 Dec. 1918, p. 642; B. F. E., “The
Indomitable Spirit of America,” Boston Evening Transcript, 21
Dec. 1918, P. 3, p. 6; “Mrs. Wharton’s Story of the Mme,” The

65-6; Peter Buitenhuys, “Edith Wharton and The First World War,”
A2, 18 (1966), 497; Patricia Plante, “Edith Wharton and the
Lev Raphael


4Donald Nathanson, ed. *The Many Faces of Shame* (New York, 1987), p. 133. The work of Helen Block Lewis, Carroll Izard and Paul Ekman—noted theorists of affect in general and shame in particular—is based on Tomkins' discovery of the primacy of affect. Prior to Tomkins, the only models for shame were psychoanalytic (Piers and Singer, Erikson, Helen M. Lynd). These models fail to partition affect from the drives, and thus lack an accurate language for shame.


6Tomkins describes the innate affects in a range from lowest to highest intensity, and with their characteristic facial expressions as follows: “The positive affects are *interest* or *excitement*, with eyebrows down and stare fixed or tracking an object; *enjoyment* or *joy*, the smiling response; *surprise* or *startle*, with eyebrows raised and eyes blinking. The negative affects are *distress* or *anguish*, the crying response; *fear* or *terror*, with eyes frozen open in a fixed stare or moving away from the dreaded object to the side, with skin pale, cold, sweating, and trembling, and with hair erect; *shame* or *humiliation*, with eyes and head lowered, *dissmell* [sic], with the upper lip raised; *disgust*, with the lower lip lowered and protruded; *anger* or *rage*, with a frown, clenched jaw, and red face.” “Affect Theory,” p. 359 and “Shame,” in *The Many Faces of Shame*, p. 139.

7Silvan Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery and Consciousness* (New York, 1963), vol. 2, p. 118. Further references to this volume will be to *AIC*.


11“Life and I,” Wharton Archives, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn., p. 3.
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12 A Backward Glance, p. 73. Wharton describes her mother’s response as producing “a sudden drop” in her “creative frenzy.” In Tomkins terms, her affect of excitement is “incompletely reduced” (responded to)—and the result of such an interaction is always shame. Indeed, Wharton felt crushed and switched from fiction at that point to poetry.


15 The Letters of Edith Wharton, pp. 189, 219. Similar expressions of her sense of inferiority, her lack of value, are to be found throughout the Fullerton correspondence, and show the affair to be far less positive and liberated than previously believed.


17 Margaret McDowell, Edith Wharton (Boston, 1976), p. 112.

18 While Wharton wrote superb ghost stories (like “Pomegranate Seed” and “The Eyes”) this novella cannot be classified in that genre. The surprising supernatural note at the end seems a metaphor for the resurrection of France, and for its cradling and protection of Paul (and of course Wharton herself).


22 Neither work has been sufficiently appreciated as more than an apprentice effort, but an understanding of shame reveals both novellas to be quite powerful, and significant in her oeuvre. See my “Haunted by Shame: Edith Wharton’s The Touchstone,” JEP, 9 (1988), 287-296 and “Kate Orme’s Struggles with Shame in Edith Wharton’s Sanctuary,” MSE, 10 (1986), 229-236.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?
RICHARDSON'S ROGER SOLMES AND
GALSWORTHY'S SOAMES FORSYTE

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Throughout Galsworthy's long and successful career as the quintessential English man of letters, his attitude toward the work of Richardson alternated between denigration and feigned indifference. Yet Richardson's Rogert Solmes serves as more than just a namesake for Galsworthy's Soames Forsyte; Soames Forsyte is the duplicate of Richardson's character in name, personality and attitude toward women. The flight of Clarissa foreshadows the flight of the fictional Irene—and the all-too-human Ada—because they are in essence running away from the same man. Thus, through an association provided by their homophonic nemeses, the character of Clarissa validates the unconventional behavior of Irene and pleads the Galsworthy's own case before a literate public. A discussion of literary and biographical factors influencing Galsworthy creates a context for an exploration of the similarities between Solmes and Soames which enriches both our reading of The Man of Property and our understanding of Galsworthy's relationship to his art.

Galsworthy was well aware of Clarissa. When discussing the English novel and its inclination to "self-indulgence," Galsworthy singled out the two works he believed most exemplify this disastrous trait: Ulysses and Clarissa.

The English novel, though on the whole perhaps more varied and rich than that of any other country, has—from Clarissa Mariowe down to Ulysses—been inclined to self-indulgence; it often goes to bed drunk.

Galsworthy's negative assessment of Richardson's greatest literary achievement would seem on the surface to eliminate Richardson as a role model for the later writer. Recently, however, literary criticism has acknowledged the relevance to inter-textual studies of one writer's disparagement of the achievement of another. Harold Bloom has argued that for the poet, denial of the power of his literary ancestor provides the necessary defense against his own fear of failure to measure up to his precursor: "The poet confronting his Great Original must find the fault that is not there."
Galsworthy also denied Richardson’s power by failing to concede Richardson a place in the literary canon. In Galsworthy’s essays and addresses on various literary and social issues, many of which were gathered together by him and published under the title *Candelabra* because their purpose is to illuminate, he refers time and again to the great and familiar novelists who shaped the course of literary history. Richardson’s name is excluded from mention. In focused remarks about the two centuries of the English novel preceding his own, Galsworthy begins by “comparing Defoe, Fielding and Smollett with the Victorians” (p. 124). His plan, to shed light on the definition of sentimentality, glows as much from the figure left in the shadow as from those brought into the candlelight. Richardson’s shadow casts its image unrecognized over the mind and works of Galsworthy. Rita Goldberg points out in her book on Richardson and Diderot that *Clarissa* “is the sort of novel which filters through the roots of consciousness like a subterranean stream”; the revolutionary work of Harold Bloom on literary influence has enabled critics to recognize that the old saw “a man is known as much by what he doesn’t say as what he does” applies to the writer as well as to his writing. Thus Galsworthy’s exclusion of Richardson’s name from his list of eighteenth century novelists may be even more significant than its mere inclusion would have been.

Critics, led perhaps by Galsworthy himself, place Galsworthy in a line which runs directly from Fielding to Thackeray to *The Forsyte Saga*. This position is valid only in so far as Richardson’s strong influence on Galsworthy in the early years began to fade, or perhaps be repressed, after *The Man of Property*. The relationship between Galsworthy and his precursor can be clarified by looking back at the origins of the novel in English. The English novel is commonly divided at the point of its inception in the eighteenth century into two distinct traditions. Fielding, whose *Tom Jones* is distinguished by its inclusion of neo-classical and epic elements, initiated one tradition. The other, more bourgeois, tradition, often referred to as formal realism commenced with the prose fictions of both Richardson and Defoe in spite of their obvious dissimilarities. In the ensuing history of the novel, the distinctions between these two traditions became blurred. Ian Watt asserts that this melding of the two types of fiction occurred as early as the same century in which they were born. His final chapter, “Realism and the later tradition: a note,” in *The Rise of the Novel* centers on a discussion of the reconciliation of the methods of
Richardson and Fielding in Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* and the works of Jane Austen.  

In light of the fusion Watt points out, I would suggest that in examining Galsworthy’s work the formal constructs are less significant than the authorial intent that occasioned their usage. Fielding proposes to present in his work a panoramic view of the whole of society, whereas Richardson conceives his task on a much smaller order (Watt, p. 251). The latter novelist’s concern is with a small group, a single household and those connected to it through kinship or commerce. The discrepancy in intent between the two writers results in two distinctly different kinds of novels. Fielding who privileges society and the social order emphasizes plot over character. Richardson, on the other hand, gives priority to the individual and concerns himself more strenuously with the development of character than of plot: *The Man of Property* is a bourgeois novel centered around the ramifications of the personality and desires of Soames Forsyte. Soames’ need for ownership becomes obsessive; it obliterates all compassion for the suffering of others. The increasing strength of his avidity determines the final outcome of the novel. Thus, despite Galsworthy’s disclaimers, a much closer family resemblance is recognizable between his novel and *Clarissa* than between it and *Tom Jones* or *Joseph Andrews*.

Only in retrospect, when taking all nine volumes of Galsworthy’s saga as a whole, does the influence of the Fielding tradition become evident. When Galsworthy expanded the simple plot of *The Man of Property* through the addition of the later works, a picture of the social structure in England in a specific period of time did begin to emerge. Richardson’s overt influence on the saga is confined to *The Man of Property*, the first book of the first trilogy. *The Man of Property* was published in 1906. Fourteen years elapsed before a more personally settled, mature Galsworthy returned to the Forsyte family. At that point he rethought the characters and repudiated or at least modified his earlier vision with a continuation of plot that earlier had seem resolved: “*The Man of Property* was so complete as a novel that to continue with it must have seemed pointless.”  

*The Forsyte Saga* turns the moving story of a love triangle and the woman pinned at its apex into only an incident within a *roman fluve*. This change lessens the impact of the earliest book, as the slammed door becomes a new beginning, not an ending. Irene shut away in her London-house prison will not die like Clarissa, but fight on in Vol. II. In order to become a survivor rather than a victim, Irene must come to resemble more closely heroines like Thackeray’s questionably respectable Becky Sharp or Beatrice, rather than the irreproachable Clarissa of Richardson’s pen. Catherine Dupre
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points out that this precise transformation happens as the characters move from *The Man of Property* through *In Chancery* and into *To Let*: “So the ‘wicked’ Soames of the first novel becomes the ‘good’ Soames of the latter, and the ‘good’ Irene, who had never been very securely good, becomes the ‘at least not-very-good’ Irene” (Dupre, p. 251). Richardson’s model with its tragic resolution no longer oppresses Galsworthy with its possibility. Clarissa’s escape from Solmes results in her own re-imprisonment and death. Irene’s attempt to leave Soames is thwarted by the death of her lover, which returns her to the confines of marriage. Ada was more fortunate; her husband divorced her and she married John.

Though unexpected and slightly incongruous character transformation suggests that the married Galsworthy viewed the situation differently than Galsworthy the single and smitten young man, it also argues for a consideration of *The Man of Property* in the manner in which it was originally conceived, as a separate novel. Galsworthy worked on *The Man of Property* for a three year time span covering the years 1901-1905. In addition to being inspired by Richardson during this interval, he was impelled by his own personal situation, which he apparently understood in Richardson’s terms. Ada Galsworthy’s position, in this period, in some respects, paralleled that of Clarissa. Marriage with John, the man of her own choosing, remained an impossibility, although in her case the impediment was legal not familial. Ada was already married to John’s first cousin, Arthur. Identification of Soames with Arthur Galsworthy in the minds of Ada, John and their circle is made clear by the words Ada herself wrote to Rudolph and Vi Sauter, John Galsworthy’s nephew and his wife, in a letter after Arthur Galsworthy’s death: “Rosalie was here yesterday, and brought news of the death of ‘Soames’ (Major Galsworthy)” (Dupre, p. 114). The distress felt by John’s immediate family over his decision to publish his own story is also discussed in letters written by his sisters (Dupre, pp. 110-114). Speculation as to Galsworthy’s motivation for postponing his scandal of an elopement with Ada until after his father’s death bears no real relevance to a discussion of his works. Whether protection of his father’s sensibilities or of his own sizable inheritance prohibited the quick resolution of an obviously uncomfortable situation, the issue at stake for Galsworthy is unchanged: women are denied any escape from a marital destiny decided upon social and financial considerations alone. To run away with another man, as did Clarissa Harlowe and eventually, Ada Galsworthy, is to invite scandal and ruination. The very circumstances confronting Galsworthy which he inscribed in his most
noteworthy novel were originally detailed by the novelist he perhaps perversely scorned as “self-indulgent”: Samuel Richardson.

Ada Galsworthy and countless other women before and since the illustrious Clarissa all chose scandal over security. Clarissa, terrified by the arrangements for her marriage to Solmes being made by her family, falls easy victim to Lovelace’s lies. She goes with Lovelace, leaving her family behind but thinking to find refuge with another family, that of Lovelace. If her ultimate destination is to be the church, it can only be to participate in a different ceremony than that planned by the Harlowes. Ironically her journey does end at the church which blesses her final resting place, rather than her marriage bed. Irene similarly leaves her husband Soames to go to her lover, Phillip Bosinney. The note she leaves behind, which says “I think I have taken nothing that you or your people have given me,”11 indicates her complete rejection of Soames and the finality of her decision. By her disdain of the jewels he has bought her, Soames himself recognizes that she understands the full implications of her act: “Nothing that she could have done, nothing that she ‘had’ done, brought home to him like this the inner significance of her act” (TMOP, 317). But Bosinney has already died and Irene returns to No. 62 Montpellier Square “like an animal wounded to death” (TMOP, 340). So John Galsworthy must have pictured Ada as she returned from one of their many encounters to the home of Maj. Galsworthy.

Ada and John became lovers as early as 1895, although their marriage did not take place until Sept. 3, 1905. John Galsworthy writes in his diary on Sept. 3, 1916, of “‘our wedding day of twenty-one years ago; ‘de facto’ if not as yet ‘de jure’ then” (Dupre, p. 55). Ada had to have known the social consequences of her act; yet she faced them boldly and willingly. As Catherine Dupre observes,

It is impossible not to feel some admiration for Ada’s courage in embarking on a second relationship that was outside the social pale. Now, at the age of thirty, Ada as a married woman agreed to become the mistress of John Galsworthy; to become once again the object of ‘nice’ people’s scorn and pity. (Dupre, p. 55)

Ada encouraged John to become a writer. Her comment to him at the Gare du Nord, “‘Why don’t you become a writer? It’s just the thing for you’” apparently gave him the idea (Holloway, p. 21). Their love gave him a cause. Galsworthy needed to find the right literary vehicle to present Ada’s affair with him sympathetically. Although many literary
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critics wish to guard against reading the author’s life into his art, such caution is probably counterproductive for Galsworthy scholars. Dudley Barker suggests that

The dangers of culling biography from experiences which a writer has transmuted into a novel are obvious, though they are perhaps less than usual in the case of Galsworthy. He was not a highly imaginative novelist but rather a careful observer who had the patience (and the time) to acquire an immense technical skill. (Barker, p. 79)

At the time he was writing The Man of Property John Galsworthy lacked confidence in his own talent as a writer, so he used every resource available to him to improve his craft. His awareness of his own shortcomings made him unusually conscientious in his acknowledgements of literary debts to friends, family, editors and other writers both alive and dead. In the early years of his career, he solicited the advice of his wife, Joseph Conrad, Ford Maddox Hueffer and his publisher’s reader, Edward Garnett. The correspondence between Garnett and Galsworthy over the fate of Bosinney radically altered the final shape of The Man of Property and was instrumental in helping Galsworthy come to terms with the nature of the character he himself created.12 Galsworthy recognized this debt and characteristically expressed his gratitude in the simple dedication, “To Edward Garnett,” which precedes the novel. Galsworthy also stressed the fact that his inspiration came from the books of men like de Maupassant and Turgeniev, from them he received “an insight into proportion of theme and economy of words” (Barker, p. 79). In light of Galsworthy’s willingness to give credit to so many mentors, his failure to acknowledge his dependence upon Richardson for the character of Soames Forsyte is uncharacteristic and intriguing.

Although no critic has yet pointed them out, the parallels between Solmes and Soames are clearly more than coincidental. The actions and personalities of the two characters in Clarissa inform and regulate those of their inheritors in The Man of Property. An examination of the two sets of characters together clarifies this relationship. Richardson’s Solmes has money and the mores of society on his side. Clarissa already occupies a somewhat unusual financial position within that society. Her grandfather in his will passed over his father, uncles, brother and sister and bequeathed to Clarissa a house and estate of her own. Her inheritance and the “social claim to independence”13 which it gives her are in actuality the impetus behind her family’s insistence on

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the alliance with Solmes. The marriage will unite the estates of the two families and cost the Harlowes nothing as “Solmes is very rich but he is meanly born, and in return for such a grand alliance will not expect any more dowry from Clarissa than her grandfather’s estates, which is already hers and whose loss therefore cannot in any case be avoided” (Watt, p. 221). The meanness of Solmes’ birth puts the Harlowes at an advantage which Christopher Hill describes in his essay, “Clarissa Harlowe and her Times”: “Mr. Solmes was ideal for their [the Harlowe’s] purposes. He had no relations whom he valued, and was prepared to bid high for the honor of union with the Harlowe’s.”

Solmes’ bid inclues a willingness to overlook the claims of his own relations—“rob,” them as Clarissa puts it, and allow the combined estates of himself and Clarissa to revert to the Harlowes if he has no children. Clarissa was put into her present position through her grandfather’s exercise of will which privileges individual preference over convention and Clarissa has only her own feelings and the strength of her individual will to offer as a defense against the match. But Richardson proved, at least in the case of Clarissa, that feelings can be enough. The theme of feelings over fortune succeeds, it seems, where feelings are engendered by a spiritual repugnance rather than sexual passion.

Clarissa’s growing repulsion for Mr. Solmes appears noble; Galsworthy’s heroine must also be motivated by superior sensitivity. Their situations, while not the same, must be seen as the same because the women face the same threat. The danger of becoming Mrs. Solmes is expanded into the horror of being Mrs. Soames. It is at this point, where the menace is given a single homophonic name, that the texts merge. Climenam is Bloom’s term for a point in a text where the misreading of the earlier work by the later writer allows him to alter the direction his own work will take. Bloom feels this movement is corrective in nature and deliberate on the part of the belated writer. Galsworthy undoubtedly felt that alteration and correction were necessary in light of the ending of Clarissa (Bloom, Anxiety, pp. 14, 19-45).

As Clarissa’s family becomes increasingly determined in their efforts to marry her to Mr. Solmes, she comes to recognize with a greater awareness the fate that is about to overtake her. The key words “Mrs. Solmes” and “Solmes’ wife” begin to appear frequently in her letters as she reports the conversations of others and her own thoughts. The words take on the quality of a litany or refrain punctuating and encircling all other thoughts and actions in the first section of the novel. Her family urges her “to think of being Mrs. Solmes” (Clarissa,
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Letter 16, 89) and eventually instruct her that she “must of necessity... be Solmes’ wife” (Clarissa, Letter 19, 105), until finally, when she is poised indecisively at the gate, Lovelace is able to manipulate her with these very same words. He inserts them into his speech three times, each time augmenting their ability to give immediacy to the threat they hold for her. First he simply asks, “Would you stay to be Solmes’ wife” (Clarissa, Letter 94, 375). Then he explains, “If you stay, you will inevitably be Solmes’ wife” (Clarissa, Letter 94, 375). Lastly he attempts to show her that she has no time left to waiver because “it will be more than a risk if you go back, that you will on Wednesday’s next be Solmes’ wife” (Clarissa, Letter 94, 375).

The terror that these words held for Clarissa reverberates in their usage throughout The Man of Property. Irene is also referred to as “Mrs. Soames” or “Soames’s wife,” especially by the older members of the family. The old aunts call June by her Christian name but Irene is assigned a title connoting her marital status, although the two women are close in age and bosom friends. The distinction is maintained when discussing the two simultaneously, as in the following report:

Had she [June] not said to Mrs. Soames—who was always so beautifully dressed—that feathers were vulgar? Mrs. Soames had actually given up wearing feathers, so dreadfully downright was dear June!

(TMOP, 6)

Other family members and social acquaintances delight in choosing this particular epithet to describe sightings of Irene and Bosinney together. Mrs. McAnders’s remark which precipitates the rape is phrased in just such suggestive terminology: “...whom do you think I passed in Richmond Park? You’ll never guess—Mrs. Soames and—Mr. Bosinney” (TMOP, 265). Even the servants identify Irene in this manner, so that James, when he calls at No. 62, is told not that Mrs. Forsyte or Irene but that “Mrs. Soames was in” (TMOP, 242). Conventional usage aside, the fact that the names are homophones and the phrases repeated in a liturgical manner in both Clarissa and The Man of Property causes the identification between Clarissa and Irene, as well as between Solmes and Soames, to be made.

While the obvious means of association between Solmes and Soames is an auditory one, the visual identification between the two men is also strong. It is not so much their physical appearance in which they resemble each other, but in their manner, the impression their persons project to the world. The expression on their faces rather
than the features themselves reveal a relationship of spirit not of blood. To Clarissa, Mr. Solmes looks "odious" (Clarissa, Letter 16, 87). She is repelled less by his lack of physical beauty, though she often calls him "ugly" (Clarissa, Letter 21, 113 and again 114), than by his indifference to his own shortcomings. As he attempts to insinuate himself into her family, he approaches them "with 'so much' assurance in his looks" (Clarissa, Letter 16, 87). In The Man of Property, "flat-shouldered, clean-shaved, flat-cheeked, flat-waisted" (TMOP, 14) Soames Forsyte seems unremarkable in appearance except for the "habitual sniff" on his face (TMOP, 2). Physiognomy by will not by nature best describes Solmes and Soames; both show the world at a glance that they are men confident of their place in it. Their confidence arises out of their wealth, their business acumen and their knowledge that they have always been faithful to their duty. A physical presence that suggests such attributes, while rejected by Clarissa and Irene, is appreciated by the other Harlowes and Forsytes. Clarissa's family wants her to marry Solmes for these very characteristics: "'He' an honest man! 'His' a good mind, madam! 'He' a virtuous man" (Clarissa, Letter 16, 92). Soames Forsyte similarly is recognized by all as having an opinion "worth having" (TMOP, 17) and the older members of the Forsyte family see in him their hope for the future for he is "a sure trustee of the family soul" (TMOP, 44), which in the case of the Forsyte family is synonymous with money. Like Solmes he has no vices in the eyes of the world: "It was not as if he drank! Did he run into debt, or gamble or swear; was he violent; were his friends rackety, did he stay out at night? On the contrary" (TMOP, 54).

It is not the physical mannerisms alone that unite the two characters. The manner in which they are perceived by the world is closely allied to the manner characteristic of their approach to it. More than any other quality tenacity defines their conduct. Both men choose to pursue women who are not interested in their proposals and, in fact, are repulsed by the very manner that other people esteem. Neither man is able to express his desire in words that might help to overcome the feminine objections to his suit. Although persistent with their presence, both men are rendered inarticulate in the face of emotion. Roger Solmes, in spite of his attempts at flowery speech, is handicapped by his perpetual, unattractive stutter and Soames Forsyte's taciturn nature reflects the niggardliness of his soul. Mute but undaunted, both continue in their suit in spite of numerous rejections. Soames is determined to marry Irene, although "she refused him five times" (TMOP, 19). Solmes has repeatedly pressed his addresses upon Clarissa in spite of her supplications to him to withdraw them,
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declaring that he "was determined to persevere" (Clarissa, Letter 53, 226). He is continually at Clarissa's home until she is forced to take notice and remark upon it: "A strange diligence in this man! He says he almost lives upon the place; and I think so too" (Clarissa, Letter 86, 352). Soames Forsyte employs the same tactic in his courtship of Irene. For a year and a half "he had besieged and lain in wait for her" and kept "her other admirers away with his perpetual presence" (TMOP, 55). Perseverance, an unwillingness to abandon their objective, and an absolute belief that sheer will alone can ultimately gain their end characterizes these two men.

The behavior of the overzealous lovers is a natural outgrowth of their attitude toward women. This attitude is influenced by one important fact: both men are rich. Their money in the past enabled them to purchase many valuable items. Roger Solmes has centered his covetousness on land and houses, while Soames Forsyte has broadened the scope of his acquisitions to include "pictures." Nevertheless, both men feel that their wealth gives them the right to possess any object other men value—including women. Clarissa and Irene are both desired by other men, a fact which increases their value to Solmes and Soames. Clarissa's had is known to have been sought by a Mr. Symmes, a Mr. Mullins and a Mr. Wyerley, and even the notorious Lovelace's interest in her is well known. In a similar mode, Soames carefully notes the appreciative glances of other men as they regard Irene, "Her power of attraction...[was] part of her value as his property" (TMOP, 55).

Women, to Solmes and Soames, are objects whose worth is basically determined by their popularity in the market place, not their fortune. Mr. Solmes could have married Clarissa's older sister Bella, Clarissa even having offered to settle her grandfather's estate upon them if he did. But Bella obviously lacked Clarissa's beauty and sweet nature, as well as her appeal to other men, and Solmes, therefore, found her unworthy of his consideration. Soames, for his part, is told from the first instant he sees Irene that "she's a nice girl, a pretty girl, but no money" (TMOP, 117). Still he wanted her because he recognized that others wanted her and he is determined to possess her.

The two men of money believe that by virtue of their wealth they have the right to buy anything of value they desire: their money should be able to secure for them a particular woman just as it would a farm or a painting. As Soames Forsyte later thinks when looking around his home and appraising its worth:

Could a man own anything prettier than this dining-table
with its deep tint, the starry, soft-petalled roses, the
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rubycoloured glass, and the quaint silver furnishing; could a man own anything prettier than the woman who sat at it? (TMOP, 29)

While neither man is naive enough to assume that contracting for a wife is as simple a matter as making financial contracts, they both use the same approach to winning the love of a woman as they would to obtain the good will of a business associate. They ply them with gifts. Solmes makes generous settlements on Clarissa’s family (Letter 13, 81) and Soames Forsyte buys Irene gowns and jewels (TMOP, 317). Both assume that since they have displayed their financial prowess and generosity to the object of their affection, love will surely result in time. Neither one has conceived that other factors might be relevant to the arrangement and might influence the women’s decision. It is simply a matter of value for value, and in marriage, the man has the advantage of a buyer’s market. Solmes and Soames are unaware that as far as they are concerned on the stock market controlled by Cupid there is always a depression. Sobriety and wealth are not legal tender in the realm of emotions, a domain where Solmes and Soames are paupers.

Clarissa rejects Solmes as one “whom my heart, unbidden, resists” (Clarissa, Letter 16, 91) and Irene finds that even though she has become Soames’s wife “she had made a mistake, and did not love him, and tried to love him and could not love him” (TMOP, 54). The middle class world finds determination and seeking value for a dollar admirable qualities and fails to recognize the obvious, that in spite of these traits these two men ultimately remain unlovable. The middle class characteristics these men possess are not in themselves necessarily distasteful to Irene and Clarissa, but Solmes and Soames have no other facets to their personalities. They are as much what their money has made them as what they have made of their money. From their viewpoint, wealth belongs to them by virtue of their accomplishments and their upright natures, which are free from vices and characterized by strength of will. Their wealth entitles them to the good opinion of the world, and that general esteem should be sufficient for any woman in particular. It was not enough, however, for Clarissa, for Irene—or for Ada Galsworthy.

In the eighteenth century, Clarissa’s mother identifies Solmes as “a man of probity” (Clarissa, Letter 6, 90). With an echo of that epithet, Soames Forsyte is recognized by all as “the man of property” (TMOP, 23). Galsworthy, for reasons of his own, has managed to muffle this echo with a cacophony of literary false notes, and literary critics have failed to recover it. Readers, however, who hear Galsworthy’s fine
melodic line enriched by the texture of Richardson’s bass should listen secure in the knowledge that they at least are not tone deaf.

NOTES

1 At the time The Man of Property was being written, Ada Galsworthy was the wife of Arthur Galsworthy, John’s cousin. John and Ada were in love. This situation, I intend to argue, impells Galsworthy’s misreading of Clarissa which produces The Man of Property.


4 Galsworthy, author’s note, Candelabra.


10 For a detailed treatment of the subject see The Man of Principle where Dudley Barker reiterates Ada’s official explanation as told to Marrot and augments his discussion of the issue with some other “relevant facts.” (New York, 1963), pp. 56-58.

11 John Galsworthy, The Man of Property (New York, 1918), p. 317. Subsequent references to this edition are included parenthetically in the text and will be abbreviated as TMOP.

12 For an examination of this correspondence crucial to the working out of the plot of The Man of Property in its final form see Galsworthy’s letters to Garnett, ed. Letters from John Galsworthy 1900-1932 (London, 1934), pp. 68-93.
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15 Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa* (Middlesex England, New York, Victoria, Australia, Ontario, Canada, Auckland, New Zealand, 1985), Letter 13, 81. Further references to this edition will be included parenthetically in the text by letter and page numbers.
THE DIALECTIC OF DISCOURSE IN THE SUN ALSO RISES

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Although they have serious reservations of different kinds and degrees, the mainstream American modern novelists—James, Fitzgerald, Wharton, and even Dreiser—consider society to be the inescapable place where the individual must live his life, and as such, it is a presence and force in their novels. Hemingway, in so many respects more exemplary of the modern spirit than any of his literary contemporaries, and hence the most widely imitated writer of the first half of the twentieth century, rejects this traditional perspective to follow the most radical implications of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn; namely, that society—in the sense of a collective public world with its institutions, customs, and values—cannot provide, either physically or metaphorically, the context for individual self-realization. Moreover, society is not any place that matters. While it remains an external antagonist capable of destroying the individual, and a physical backdrop for his activities, it no longer provokes the kind of internal conflict between collective and personal imperatives that Huck experienced.

In keeping with the characters' alienation from society, both responsibilities of ordinary speech—that language mean something and that this meaning be communicated—are atrophied in The Sun Also Rises. Distance from society is exemplified linguistically through an avoidance of institutional meaning, a response to the paradox that language either means too much by involving the speaker in societal commitments or means too little in failing to express the truly significant. The assumption that language is inimical to the discussion of those few matters which are important, i.e., feelings and personal experiences, leads to numerous injunctions not to speak and to verbal behavior which consciously attempts to exclude much of the common conversational fare. In part this attitude springs from a philosophical position that the level of empirical reality, as Alfred Korzybski states, "is not words and cannot be reached by words alone. We must point our finger and be silent or we shall never reach this level."1 The inability of language to reach what Korzybski calls the "objective level" motivates much of the verbal restraint in Hemingway's fiction, but more threatening than this impotence and irrelevance of language is its power to destroy the most valuable experiences. Roland Barthes's distinction between pleasure and bliss is germane to Hemingway's
practice: "Pleasure can be expressed in words, bliss cannot. Bliss is unspeakable, interdicted."² Brett's reiterated plea to Jake after she has sent Pedro Romero away is that they never talk about it, but she constantly returns to the subject until Jake finally reminds her:

"I thought you weren't going to ever talk about it."
"How can I help it?"
"You'll lose it if you talk about it."³

This is the dialectic of discourse in *The Sun Also Rises*: the felt necessity of imposing discipline on speech wars with the desire to express and communicate. Bliss, that which is most worth having and remembering, is asocial and inexpressible, but the characters’ (human) need to speak produces a felt tension in the dialogue. Focusing upon the experience of others, Jake’s narrative voice embodies the writer’s struggle to articulate within the limits imposed by the nature of language. Avoiding large areas of experience and emotionally flattening out others, it creates a smaller, safer, controllable world out of the chaotic and dangerous universe, yet one that points beyond itself to the larger, unexpressed territory.⁴ As narrator, Jake knows what Hemingway knows—the difference between what can and cannot be said—but as character, when he is emotionally involved in events, he intermittently forgets.

The other aspects of language as the enemy is its role as "a space already occupied by the public."⁵ Hemingway characters may disregard societal imperatives to pray, work, or marry, but they cannot totally escape what Locke calls "the great Instrument and common Tyre of Society."⁶ Speaking entails participating in the "reciprocal web of obligations that is the content of the system of conventional speech acts";⁷ hence the content of discourse in *The Sun Also Rises* must be purged of all but certain categories of immediate personal experience in order to escape the burden of social responsibility which it usually carries. Such a policy originates in the distrust of institutionalized meaning that informs the linguistic credo of Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*; namely, that abstractions have been corrupted by societal abuse and only place names and numbers retain semantic integrity.⁸ Language is thus drained of societal coloration or hollowed out so that a denotative meaning remains while ordinary connotations are lost. For example, Brett and Mike are engaged, a word implicated in the basic structure of society, yet they observe none of the protocols expected of an affianced couple. The meaning of engaged in their case is restricted to the stated intention to marry, unsupported by the usual
CONFIRMATORY BEHAVIOR. THE SAME MESSAGE OF DISTRUST IS IMPLICIT IN THE NATURE OF SPEECH THROUGHOUT THE NOVEL:

(Jake) "I got hurt in the war," I said.
(Georgette) "Oh, that dirty war."
We would probably have gone on and discussed the war and agreed that it was in reality a calamity for civilization, and perhaps would have been better avoided. I was bored enough. (17)

THE WAR AS JAKE'S PERSONAL CALAMITY, A SPECIFIC PHYSICAL INJURY, RECedes BEFORE AN ALL-EMBRACING, REMOTE ABSTRACTION, THE WAR AS "CALAMITY FOR CIVILIZATION." AS THE IRONIC UNDERSTATEMENT OF "PERHAPS WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER AVOIDED" EMPHASIZES, THE WAR CANNOT BE TALKED ABOUT WITHOUT FALLING INTO CONVENTIONAL FORMULAS THAT CLOSE OFF THE POSSIBILITIES OF INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSION. SUCH A DISCUSSION SUITS BOREDOM BECAUSE IT REQUIRES NO PERSONAL INVESTMENT OF THOUGHT OR FEELING.

JAKE MAKES LIGHT OF "LARGE STATEMENTS" AND "FINE PHILOSOPHIES" WHOSE EXTRAPOLATION FROM LIVING EXPERIENCE ENGULFS THE MEANINGFUL PARTICULAR. HE GETS BOGGED DOWN IN JUST SUCH A PROCESS WHEN HE MOVES FROM THE SPECIFIC SENSATIONS OF PLEASURE AND DISGUST AT MIKE'S BAITING OF COHN TO A GENERAL FORMULATION OF VALUE: "THAT WAS MORALITY; THINGS THAT MADE YOU DISGUSTED AFTERWARD. NO, THAT MUST BE IMMORALITY. THAT WAS A LARGE STATEMENT. WHAT A LOT OF BILGE I COULD THINK UP AT NIGHT. WHAT ROT, I COULD HEAR BRETT SAY IT" (149). JAKE APPROPRIATELY THINKS OF BRETT BECAUSE HER REFRAIN—"LET'S NOT TALK. TALKING'S ALL BILGE"—EXPressES THE INABILITY OF SPEECH TO DESCRIBE MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE AND THE ANARCHIC SENSE OF ITS POWERLESSNESS TO ORDER THIS EXPERIENCE. THIS PARTICULAR DENIAL OF LANGUAGE COMES AT A PIVOTAL POINT IN A DISCUSSION WHOSE FULL EXTENT REVEALS BOTH THE DYNAMICS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP AND THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD LANGUAGE:

"COULDN'T WE LIVE TOGETHER, BRETT? COULDN'T WE JUST LIVE TOGETHER?"
"I DON'T THINK SO. I'D JUST TROMPER YOU WITH EVERYBODY. YOU COULDN'T STAND IT."
"I STAND IT NOW."
"THAT WOULD BE DIFFERENT. IT'S MY FAULT, JAKE. IT'S THE WAY I'M MADE."
"COULDN'T WE GO OFF IN THE COUNTRY FOR A WHILE?"
"IT WOULDN'T BE ANY GOOD. I'LL GO IF YOU LIKE. BUT I COULDN'T LIVE QUIETLY IN THE COUNTRY. NOT WITH MY OWN TRUE LOVE."
"I KNOW."
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"Isn't it rotten? There isn't any use my telling you I love you."
"You know I love you."
"Let's not talk. Talking's all bilge. I'm going away from you, and then Michael's coming back."
"Why are you going away?"
"Better for you. Better for me."
"When are you going?"
"Soon as I can."
"Where?"
"San Sebastian."
"Can't we go together?"
"No. That would be a hell of an idea after we'd just talked it out."
"We never agreed."
"Oh, you know as well as I do. Don't be obstinate, darling."
"Oh, sure," I said. "I know you're right. I'm just low, and when I'm low I talk like a fool." (55-56)

The dialogue is totally controlled by Brett, who first responds to Jake's urgings negatively, then, after the assertion that "talking's all bilge," announces her own plan of action which does not include him. By "talking" Brett means "talking about" or exchanging views; she is willing to use speech to communicate her plans or desires, not to discuss them. For Brett discussing or arguing is futile because her determination to do what she wants to do, regardless of what might be said about it, repudiates the societal bonds embodied in language, the recognition of responsibility to subordinate individual impulse to a larger, social concern and to rules of meaning inherent in language itself. As John R. Searle writes, "The retreat from the committed use of words ultimately must involve a retreat from language itself, for speaking a language...consists of performing speech acts according to rules, and there is no separating those speech acts from the commitments which form essential parts of them."9 Brett's telling Jake "there isn't any use my telling you I love you" means that this conventionally powerful assertion actually has no power to affect her behavior or their situation and thus might as well remain unsaid. When Jake tries once more to impose his fantasy of their going away together on Brett, she responds more sharply, without the palliations of the first part of the dialogue. His maintaining that no agreement has been reached prompts her to say "you know as well as I do"—know through
an acquaintance with the brute facts, the givens of his wound and her nature, rather than through their speech together.

Brett’s language conforms to the world while Jake’s unsuccessfully attempts to get the world (Brett) to conform to his words. Given the gulf between desire and reality in Jake’s life, it is difficult for him to achieve a disciplined language, and he does so only through the kind of conscious effort seen in his self-mocking rejection of “fine philosophies.” Initially, his overtures to Brett represent attenuated forms of societal commitment, first in the idea of their living together, then in the absolute assertion of his love for her, while Brett’s mode of declaring love effectively cancels it. When Brett takes the initiative by announcing her decision to leave, Jake is reduced to asking for details of her plan rather than proposing a plan of his own. Significantly, he fails to ask or learn the critical fact that Brett is going away with Robert Cohn. Although Jake’s part of the dialogue reveals his yearning for some version of commitment, the conversation ends with his acknowledgment that he has been “talking like a fool,” i.e., verbalizing fantasies of conventional behavior, the linguistic relics of a society that no longer embodies value or authority for the war survivors.

Linguistic authority, as the famous Farewell to Arms passage asserts, resides only in the simple factuality of numbers and names. Thus Jake returns to his apartment after a frustrating encounter with Brett to find two letters, both common institutional forms of communication, one a bank statement, the other a wedding announcement. In terms of content the first is relevant to Jake, who uses it to balance his checkbook; the other is irrelevant because the people involved in the announced marriage are unknown to him. The form of the second message communicates in spite of the inappropriateness of the content to this particular receiver just as, if the bank’s figures were in error, the form of communication known as a bank statement would not be invalidated. But when Jake thinks about Brett, he can find no satisfactory linguistic form and therefore abandons the effort to order his thoughts about her in language: “Lady Ashley. To hell with Brett. To hell with you, Lady Ashley….I suppose she only wanted what she couldn’t have. Well, people were that way. To hell with people” (80-81). Jake’s speculative initiatives are always broken off with an expression of dismissal or passive resignation in the face of the human dilemma that “nobody ever knows anything” (27).

Like Captain Ahab, the Hemingway protagonist confronts the inscrutability and seeming malice of the universe, but he sees no way of conquering or making sense of it, even through the ordering process of language. As Jake says about his wound, “I was pretty well through
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with the subject. At one time or another I had probably considered it from most of its various angles...” (27). Because he also sees no way of influencing the behavior of others, Jake tends to accept their assertions of will passively: “I try and play it along and just not make trouble for people” (31). All of these positions diminish the efficacy of speech and consequently circumscribe its territory, but it is necessary to distinguish the experience itself from the report. When Jake sums up his relationship with Brett, his words impose only a minimal degree of linguistic order because, as the emphatic closure reminds, to go beyond an austerely defined factuality is to risk the betrayal of experience through falsification: “That was it. Send a girl off with one man. Introduce her to another to go off with him. Now go and bring her back. And sign the wire with love. That was it all right” (239). The framing comment places sharply defined boundaries around actions which are depersonalized and schematically presented, evidence of conscious discipline, yet as a sequence the actions bear an emotional charge that is also rigidly delimited by the frame.

Nevertheless, the severe economy and control do not diminish the experience in the interest of avoiding self-justification and subjective distortion. William Barrett, among others, implies that the price Hemingway pays for such avoidance is inconsequentiality; he characterizes the “real feelings” presented as “humble and impoverished,” although he goes on to laud Hemingway’s style for “its ability...to see what it is one really senses and feels.” To reverse the sequence of Barrett’s remarks, what one really senses and feels is humble and impoverished, but since it is truth, Hemingway deserves acclaim for representing it. Such a reading seems to be based entirely upon a highly restricted and literal reading which ignores the creative space between narrator and text, and correspondingly between text and reader. This darkness visible is a dynamic silence, a consciously contrived artifact of restraint. The expression may be considered “humble and impoverished” insofar as it is strongly monosyllabic and unembellished, but the feelings evoked by passages of this sort are neither—nor are they “exposed,” to use Barrett’s word, so much as palpable.

Simply not speaking about what matters, as Jake and Brett try to do, is one form of linguistic alienation; another extends the abstract rhetoric of social discourse beyond its customary sphere because it is too vague and clichéd to have retained more than the crudest kind of
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signification. Having no color of its own, this vapid, timeworn language is made to yield a number of different effects, “one phrase to mean everything,” as Jake says about English speech. On being introduced to Brett Count Mippipopolous uses the standard rhetoric of such an occasion straightforwardly while she passively responds in kind:

“Well, does your Ladyship have a good time here in Paris?”...
“Rather,” said Brett.
“Paris is a fine town all right,” said the count. “But I guess you have pretty big goings yourself over in London.”
“Oh, yes,” said Brett. “Enormous.” (28)

This kind of perfunctory response which requires no effort, meaning, or commitment simply fills up what would otherwise be a socially awkward linguistic vacuum when two people are introduced—although the extreme lack of effort Brett exhibits could be construed as mockery. Between intimates like Jake and Brett the same sort of dialogue acquires meaning through irony transmitted and received:

“It’s a fine crowd you’re with, Brett,” I said.
“Aren’t they lovely? And you, my dear. Where did you get it?”
“At the Napolitain.”
“And have you had a lovely evening?”
“Oh, priceless,” I said. (22)

This vocabulary is also used to convey genuine feeling. When Jake and Bill prepare to leave Burguete, Jake and Harris mutually regret that their fishing together is over:

“What a rotten business. I had hoped we’d all have another go at the Irati together.”
“We have to go into Pamplona. We’re meeting people there.”
“What rotten luck for me. We’ve had a jolly time here at Burguete.” (127)

Elsewhere Jake tells us that Harris was “very pleasant” and “nice,” and Harris himself says several times that Jake can’t know how much their fishing together has meant to him: “’Barnes. Really, Barnes, you can’t know. That’s all’” (129). After this emphatic closure, Harris expresses his feelings by giving each man an envelope containing trout flies he
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has tied himself. Affective experience can be referred to and categorized by means of the familiar basic vocabulary Hemingway has appropriated—fine, nice, lovely, rotten—but it cannot be described or assessed beyond the elementary distinction between positive and negative.

What happens, as opposed to what is felt, can be rendered in language but is rarely worth the trouble, given the narrowing of value to certain immediate personal experiences. Jake’s work is referred to only in passing, Paris exists as a topos of streets and cafés, and the novel’s typical discourse is about movement and liquor—what has been, is, or will be drunk, and where. In other areas conversational inertia obtains either because the subject isn’t worth pursuing or because it falls beyond the pale of what can be spoken about at all:

Cohn looked at the bottles in bins around the wall.
"This is a good place," he said.
"There’s a lot of liquor," I agreed. (11)

* * *

"Do you know that in about thirty-five years more we’ll be dead?"
"What the hell, Robert," I said. "What the hell." (11)

Jake’s first reply is reductive. His second characteristically dismissive. In neither case does he want to contribute content to Cohn’s thought; he speaks for the usual social reason that he must acknowledge being spoken to. Such rules of polite conversation still govern speech in The Sun Also Rises although the province of speech has been radically curtailed to eliminate what cannot be profitably expressed; like the vocabulary of social discourse the form of communication persists without the message of societal commitment it usually carries. In speech act terms the regulative rules are observed, but not necessarily the constitutive.

Given their lack of interest in living through words, each of the members of Jake’s group except Bill has only a single verbal style; Bill has a repertory of voices and a sense of linguistic fun that the others lack. Rather than genuinely witty, he is facile and playful; when Jake describes him to Brett as a taxidermist, he replies: "That was in another country...and besides all the animals were dead" (75). The allusion is not functional; it is simply a clever rejoinder in the spirit of Jake’s sportive identification. Bill mocks collective values relentlessly from his initial appearance recounting the story of the “big sporting
evening" in which a Viennese audience throws chairs at a black boxer who dares to knock out the local boy:

Injustice everywhere. Promoter claimed nigger promised let local boy stay. Claimed nigger violated contract. Can't knock out Vienna boy in Vienna....All we could get was nigger's clothes. Somebody took his watch, too. Splendid nigger. Big mistake to have come to Vienna. (71)

The unsportsmanlike behavior at the fight with its suggestion of racial as well as national chauvinism, the promoter's attempt to fix the fight and then to avoid his obligation to pay, the theft of the watch, all characterize society as unjust while Bill's extravagant praise of the boxer—wonderful, awful noble-looking, splendid—establishes him as heroic. The simplified vocabulary and syntax which are hallmarks of the group's verbal style are suited to the starkly polarized terms of conflict which, in Bill's telling, are transvalued. Black becomes superior both physically and morally; white is weak ("That white boy musta ruptured himself swinging at me," the fighter says), conniving, and treacherous. "Big mistake to have come to Vienna" stands for any societal involvement.

In a joking banter that looks forward to Nathanael West's character Shrike Bill also parodies religious commonplaces and the ritualistic form such utterances take: "Let us not doubt, brother. Let us not pry into the holy mysteries of the hencoop with simian fingers. Let us accept on faith and simply say—I want you to join with me in saying—What shall we say, brother?" (122) Bill hesitates momentarily because there is no prescribed dogma to insert in his parodic ritual. He similarly mocks consumerism with a sales pitch to buy a "nice stuffed dog" and the New York literary establishment with his litany of the latest catchwords, "irony and pity." Historical figures and contemporary public men receive fancifully irreverent treatment: "Abraham Lincoln was a faggot. He was in love with General Grant" (116). In this respect too, uttering nonsense meant to beguile and entertain through its outrageousness, Bill is a singular character in the novel. Uninvolved with his material, as Jake cannot be, he allows his imagination verbal expression without inhibition. His ability to use language satirically provides Bill with an organizing approach to experience that shields him from the destructiveness of Brett but also keeps him from the deeper enjoyment of afición that Jake feels.

Mike is the least conscious member of Jake's group, his disvaluing of society more a blend of the casual contempt and lack of personal
discipline of someone who has inherited wealth. Whereas Bill’s criticism of society is the basis for consciously contrived and polished verbal performances, in Mike’s one extended speech, a long anecdote about some medals he borrowed and gave away, disdain for such prestigious symbols as badges of valor and formal dinners attended by royalty is part of the narrative texture, not the point of the story. In contrast to Bill Mike is an uncertain narrator who continually explains or seeks reassurance that his audience understands his story and who has no real sense of its shape. Yet both their long anecdotes, like the narrative that contains them, belong to the same paradigm in which the narrator is distanced from his own participation in the events recounted by his detachment from the societal code that structures them. There is a drama within each story concerning people who operate within the code, but no meaningful involvement for Bill or Mike.

Mike’s opening assertion, logically and grammatically one sentence but conveying more emphatic rejection as two, sets the tone of offhand dismissal of society’s values: “I suppose I’ve the usual medals. But I never sent in for them” (135). When Mike’s tailor wants to provide him with the medals he has rightfully earned, Mike protests that any medals will do. Justifying his ignorance about his own medals, Mike interrupts his story at this point to solicit agreement from his likeminded audience: “Did I think I spent all my time reading the bloody gazette?” (185) Once the tailor has given him some medals, he puts them in his pocket and promptly forgets them:

“Well, I went to the dinner, and it was the night they’d shot Henry Wilson, so the Prince didn’t come and the King didn’t come, and no one wore any medals, and all these coves were busy taking off their medals, and I had mine in my pocket.”

He stopped for us to laugh.

“Is that all?”

“That’s all. Perhaps I didn’t tell it right.”

“You didn’t,” said Brett. “But no matter.”

We were all laughing.

“Ah, yes,” said Mike. “I know now. It was a damn dull dinner, and I couldn’t stick it, so I left. Later on in the evening I found the box in my pocket. What’s this? I said. Medals? Bloody military medals? So I cut them all off their backing—you know, they put them on a strip—and gave them all around. Gave one to each girl. Form of souvenir. They thought I was hell’s own shake of a soldier. Give away medals in a nightclub. Dashing fellow.”
Mike's audience laughs first at his naiveté as a fabulist; what he perceives to be the climax of his story is the least dramatic of three illustrations of opposition to the societal valuing of medals. Actually, since the ironic intersection of Mike's bungled attempt to follow protocol with the unforeseeable circumstance that medals are not worn after all occurs in a context of high seriousness and formality, whose magnitude intensifies the divergence of values, Mike's intuition of its thematic weight is valid. The true climax is the scene in the nightclub, a sudden drop from the official world of pomp and ceremony into a milieu of hedonistic gratification and social fluidity where Mike can be himself, impulsively desecrating the medals and dispersing them among girls casually encountered, yet still passing for a socially respectable figure—the dashing soldier who generously gives away the tokens of his bravery and patriotism.

The epilogue to the story, which Brett must also elicit, reveals Mike without the misleading public personae of the earlier events. In the privacy of his relation to a tradesman he is seen to be a man whom society can neither approve nor trust, but since speaker and audience do not share the societal values symbolized by the medals, the "serious discrediting" of Mike is inverted to become a tripartite demonstration of Mike's superiority to those who accept the official valuation. At the dinner he is spared the awkwardness of the others, who must publicly remove the medals he has forgotten to put on, and in the nightclub he is taken for a "dashing fellow" when he gives them away. Finally, in the aftermath of the evening Mike's aplomb compares favorably to the importunings of the tailor and the consternation of the medals' owner, caricatured as a "frightfully military cove."

Like Mike, Robert Cohn behaves badly, but according to another standard of conduct altogether, one predicated upon the assumption that the ordinary, socially approved ways of conferring value are worth while. Because he has not had the defining experience of the war, which all of Jake's circle have in common, his is the only personal history Hemingway presents in detail; for the others the war has deprived the past of relevance. His protected and in a way make believe
experience—his wealth, the elitist world of Princeton, amateur boxing, literary magazines—leads him to want the conventional existence of professional success, love, and going home that the others have repudiated. In Pamplona he is briefly able to live the romantic fantasy that eluded him in Paris, "ready to do battle for his lady love," but he is ultimately defeated by the realization that his affair with Brett had no meaning for her and has no future. This denial of the world of commitments and significances that Cohn perhaps unwillingly embodies is his true initiation into the expatriate circle, one that sends him back to a more conventional existence.

In keeping with his embodiment of traditional social values beneath a bohemian exterior, Cohn uses language with its societal freight of responsibility. Although he now finds Frances a burden, to Jake's suggestion that he break with her, he replies: "I can't. I've got certain obligations to her" (88). When Cohn takes umbrage at Jake's description of Brett and Jake tells him to go to hell, Cohn rises from the table in anger:

"Sit down," I said. "Don't be a fool."
"You've got to take that back."
"Oh, cut out the prep-school stuff."
"Take it back."
"Sure. Anything. I never heard of Brett Ashley. How's that?"
"No. Not that. About me going to hell."
"Oh, don't go to hell," I said. "Stick around. We're just starting lunch." (39)

For Cohn, Jake's "go to hell" is a personal insult, seriously meant and provocative; its constitutive rules require that offense be taken.\(^\text{17}\) For Jake, this interpretation is immature romanticism, but when Cohn persists, Jake becomes so extravagantly accommodating that his retraction is clearly as casual as the original provocation had been. Through mockery the act of capitulation is rendered harmless, more meaningless language. Cohn is placated, however, because he is operating according to the conventional rules of language use whereby the imagined offense has now been nullified by Jake's "taking it back." He wants no trouble with Jake, his "best friend," but his espousal of the standard linguistic code demands that the form of retraction and apology be carried out before the conversation can be resumed.

The scene is reversed in Pamplona when Cohn truly insults Jake by calling him a pimp and Jake responds by swinging at him. For the moment Jake's personal code and that of society converge although later
Jake reverts to his customary passivity by distancing the insult and foregrounding an incident in his past. The two episodes are equally submerged in his desire for the physical gratification of a hot bath. Although in this instance it is Cohn who apologizes, Jake who accepts the apology, linguistically and emotionally the outcome replicates the earlier scene. In both cases Cohn is the one to insist upon conventional social rituals, the verbal apology and shaking hands, and to obtain relief and a sense of closure through their performance, no matter how devoid of genuine substance. Jake appears indifferent throughout in contrast to Cohn’s obvious emotion; neither a verbal formula nor a social gesture has meaning for him. What matters, Brett’s affair with Pedro Romero and his own part in it, is like other things that matter—outside the domain of words.18

If Robert Cohn represents conventional values neurotically displaced to the expatriate circle, Pedro Romero is the ideal man of a simpler world, one whose successful functioning within society does not preclude living his life “all the way up.” This firm social grounding, which buttresses rather than counters his individuality, allows him to be a serious person; even when making a joke he speaks soberly, and even at a table full of drunks he politely shakes hands and takes their toast “very seriously,” surely without any idea that they could make such a ritualistic gesture frivolously. Among Spaniards Romero conceals his knowledge of English because it would not be proper for a bullfighter, a figure of the national mythos, to know a foreign language so well. Where Jake must retreat from speech about himself because it brings him too close to the pain of his condition, and Cohn boasts about his prowess as a writer and a bridge player out of insecurity, Romero can discuss his work dispassionately and unselfconsciously because he does not rely on speech to establish his identity. Although he meticulously observes the proprieties of language, employing words as meaningful signifiers, he does not confuse sign and substance. He communicates personal authority silently: “He seated himself, asking Brett’s permission without saying anything” (185). His mastery of the bulls, which also becomes a communication to Brett, is equally wordless.

Only Romero has dignity in the confrontation over Brett. Both Jake and Cohn consign it to meaninglessness, Cohn by imposing the social ritual of closure, a perfunctory handshake, Jake by simply shrugging it off. Romero refuses to shake hands in order to invest the fight and the social gesture with significance: to acquiesce would be to forgive or dismiss Cohn’s attack as unimportant. Because he draws certitude from traditional sources as well as from his own power,
Romero alone is capable of loving Brett without diminishing himself.\textsuperscript{19} Adhering to the prescribed masculine and feminine roles that have become blurred in the postwar expatriate circle, he wants to place her within the conventional context of womanliness and marriage.

For the free floating expatriate existence Paris and Burguete are topographies of self-gratification abstracted from social context.\textsuperscript{20} Pamplona, on the other hand, is a harmonious whole whose pleasures are generated by the communal fiesta rather than egocentrically pursued. This setting presents society in its traditional forms: rituals of celebration and mourning, edifices like the cathedral and the bullring, collective purpose. In Pamplona, the veneer of decorum which vestigially cloaks the expatriates’ irresponsibility wears thin, and they are all diminished by juxtaposition with the explicit standards of an enduring, established world, one that offers an ideal in Romero, a judge in Montoya. Romero is the catalyst who causes Brett to be most flagrantly a bitch, Mike and Cohn to behave badly, and even Jake—who is at first “forgiven his friends” by Montoya—to forfeit Montoya’s approval. Early in the stay Jake had advised Montoya not to give the bullfighter a message to mingle with potentially corrupting foreigners at the Grand Hotel, essentially the same message Jake himself later delivers for Brett. Like her other admirers Jake, too, is transformed into a swine albeit one who refuses to distort or sentimentalize his situation.

In Madrid the sense of society as a world apart is reinvoked by Jake’s comment to Brett: “Some people have God....Quite a lot” (245). As Brett and Jake’s unsuccessful efforts to pray have demonstrated, even with the disposition to do so they cannot respond to institutional systems of valorization. Societal rituals fail to work for them; their own rituals are personal and nonverbal. Jake confirms this when he prefers Brett’s self-indulgence to the institutional obligation concerning the bullfighter that he had earlier subscribed to. Although in leaving Romero Brett atypically renounces something she wants, she, too, rejects societal commitment in the traditional forms of womanliness and marriage that Romero seeks to impose upon her. In closing the Romero episode Brett and Jake reestablish their familiar world—the rituals of eating and drinking well, the reassuringly empty social discourse interspersed with the painful talking around what is significant, and finally, the taxi ride which emblematically restores them to their habitual ambience, a moving vehicle passing through
society, subject to its language and laws (the policeman raising his baton) but removed from involvement with it.

As the novel’s last exchange between Brett and Jake confirms, the narrow private space of the taxi is further emblematic of their linguistic confinement:

“Oh, Jake,” Brett said, “we could have had such a damned good time together.”

... 

“Yes,” I said. “Isn’t it pretty to think so?” (247)

The suppressed protasis of Brett’s assertion recapitulates the dynamic of silence in Hemingway discourse while the past tense potential incapable of fulfilment typifies the situation of the Hemingway protagonist, whose theoretically manageable hedonism is brought down by whatever real life condition the protasis contains. In The Sun Also Rises Barthes’s idea that a narrative is a long sentence applies equally to life.21

The last bit of dialogue thus encapsulates the dialectic of discourse that structures the entire novel. Like all of the characters at various times, including Jake, Brett cannot stop herself from “talking rot.” Jake, who elsewhere was admonished to silence by Brett, is here able to resist the temptations of verbal fantasy, yet his rhetorical question also reminds us once more of the interface between what can and what cannot be said—the need for restraint versus the desire to embody thought and feeling in words. While Jake’s response ironically emphasizes the inherent foolishness of any contary-to-fact speech, it affirms unironically the autotelic nature of language and the seductiveness of its power to create sustaining and consoling fictions.

NOTES


3The Sun Also Rises (New York, 1926), p. 245. Further references are to this edition of the text and will be given parenthetically after quoted passages.

4As Hemingway wrote in Death in the Afternoon (New York, 1932), p. 192: “If a writer of prose knows enough about what he
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is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writing is written truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them."


7Fish, pp. 994-995.

8This is the thesis of Larzer Ziff's "The Social Basis of Hemingway's Style," Poetics, 7 (1978), 417-423. However, I disagree with Ziff's conclusion that this style "works effectively only in conjunction with material that supports the view that public ideals are false and truth resides solely in unverbalized private experience" (422). Once again Barthes's distinctions seem more accurate and, I believe, more applicable to Hemingway. Unlike the isms and abstractions Hemingway eschews, simple specifics enforce "the final state of matter, what cannot be transcended, withdrawn" (45). Whether public ideals are "false" or "true," the language that refers to them is by nature denied this kind of meaning.


10Cf. Huck Finn: "I never said nothing, never let on; kept it to myself; it's the best way; then you don't have no quarrels and don't get into no trouble." Mark Twain, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Boston, 1958), p. 106.


12Cf. David Lodge's discussion of wonderful as just such an all-purpose word in The Ambassadors: The Language of Fiction (London, 1966), pp. 210-212. Hemingway, too, finds it a useful word for a range of situations. When an American tourist asks Bill if he's having a good trip, Bill replies, "Wonderful." Jake's comment—"he's wonderful"—when Brett tells him that Cohn is looking forward to joining the group in Pamplona is typically Jamesian.

13Even at the minimal level of obligation the characters recognize, their arrangements to meet each other, commitments are frequently broken (notably by Brett and Mike).
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14 Jake sometimes feeds Bill lines, but he tends to model them after Bill's and to participate only to the extent of stimulating Bill's inventiveness.

15 Mike may subconsciously wish to end his story here in order to hold back what is truly discrediting—the mutilation and disposal of property belonging to and highly valued by someone else.

16 In a world which has left such values behind, Cohn's embodiment of socially acceptable behavior and goals is represented pejoratively as infantile, in Harvey Stone's words, "a case of arrested development." Jake says that Cohn had a "funny sort of undergraduate quality about him," and he wears polo shirts, "the kind he'd worn at Princeton" (194).

17 Distinguishing between personal and ritualistic insults, William Labov writes: "The appropriate responses are quite different. Ritual insults are answered by other ritual insults while a personal insult is answered by denial, excuse or mitigation." Language in the Inner City (Philadelphia, 1972), p. 335.

18 Jake's only immediate thought when he confirms that Brett and Romero have gone off together is that "it was not pleasant."

19 While both Jake and Montoya invoke the stereotype of the young man corrupted by the older woman, Hemingway makes clear in an embarrassingly overwritten passage (the only one of its kind in the novel) that this does not happen to Pedro Romero: "Everything of which he could control the locality [in the bullring] he did in front of her all that afternoon. Never once did he look up. He made it stronger that way, and did it for himself, too, as well as for her. Because he did not look up to ask if it pleased he did it all for himself inside, and it strengthened him, and yet he did it for her, too. But he did not do it for her at any loss to himself. He gained by it all through the afternoon" (216).

20 As such they are completely different, however. Burguete is a pastoral environment free of the excesses of Brett, Mike, and Cohn. Paris is an urban world where the expatriates are most at home.

THE TALES OF THE FOLIO CLUB AND THE VOCATION OF EDGAR ALLAN POE AS HUMORIST

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On 2 September 1836, Edgar Allan Poe submitted to the Philadelphia editor Harrison Hall the plan of a work which never saw the light of day:

At different times there has appeared in the Messenger a series of Tales, by myself—in all seventeen. They are of a bizarre and generally whimsical character, and were originally written to illustrate a large work "On the Imaginative Faculties." I have prepared them for republication, in book form, in the following manner. I imagine a company of seventeen persons who call themselves the Folio Club. They meet once a month at the house of one of the members, and, at a late dinner, each member reads aloud a short prose tale of his own composition. The votes are taken in regard to the merits of each tale. The author of the worst tale, for the month, forfeits the dinner and wine at the next meeting. The author of the best text is President at the next meeting. The seventeen tales which appeared in the Messenger are supposed to be narrated by the seventeen members at one of these monthly meetings. As soon as each tale is read—the other sixteen members criticize it in turn—and these criticisms are intended as a burlesque upon criticism generally.¹

It was the last time that Poe would try to publish a work that had long been close to his heart. On 4 May 1833, he had proposed to Joseph T. and Edwin Buckingham that they publish in the New England Magazine one of the eleven tales ("Epimanes") that "the eleven members of a literary club were supposed to read at table..." (Letters, 1: 53). In October 1833, the publication of the volume was announced in the Baltimore Saturday Visiter.² In November 1834 the manuscript was in the hands of the illustrious Philadelphia publishers, Carey and Lea, and, much later, after their refusal, White, the proprietor of the Southern Literary Messenger, agreed to print this anthology if
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Carey and Lea were willing to bestow the prestige of their name (Letters, 1: 54, 74).

Thus the project of September 1836 is not a premature "replastering" of independent texts artificially united in a unique work, but a perfected, coherent plan in which the aim is essentially satiric. Several times, in fact, Poe explicitly declares his satiric intentions and the introduction which prefaces the work confirms his plan. The members of this club are "as ill-looking as they are stupid" and their intention seemingly "to abolish Literature."

This little known text was seriously neglected by researchers disinclined to recognize the comic value of the works of Poe and yet more seriously by the "psychological" critics or psychoanalysts who appeared to ignore the parodic intention of many of Poe's tales or to consider that the literary intention changed nothing of the fundamental structure revealed by the scientific point of view. But, one hopes to demonstrate here, these structures—particularly the situations—are dictated by the imperatives of the parody and the intervention of the creative spirit cannot be measured in the narrow domain where the parodic transposition occurs.

As James Southall Wilson—who was the first to emphasize this parodic intention—remarked, many of the commentaries about the comedy of Poe which ignore, deliberately or not, the plans of the Folio Club, become—unwittingly—amusing. The great misunderstanding of Poe’s intentions by his contemporaries (perpetuated by the indifference of Americans and the French school of psychoanalytic critics toward Poe’s comic works) eventually culminated in Edward H. Davidson’s declaration that the sources and the objects of the satire of Poe show us nothing of the spirit of Poe himself. We have, on the contrary, everything to learn about Poe by unmasking the victims of this twenty-four-year-old poet forced to try prose in order to survive.

To do so we should have a complete list of the tales of the Folio Club, but we do not. It will become apparent that on one hand the work entitled The Tales of the Folio Club represented a manifest aesthetic of considerable importance in the literary history of the United States, while on the other hand the criticism, though brilliant, was annihilated by attempts to defend the "humor" of Poe. Poe was never a humorist in the sense of Sterne—his admired master—and less still in the sense of Thackeray or Dickens. It is constructive to compare the Folio Club neither to Tristram Shandy nor to the Book of Snobs but rather to the Dunciad. Because the same passion animated Pope and Poe, the stupid persons who gathered round the author of the new
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thronc of Dullness were, in the nineteenth century, the British novelists and their unimaginative American imitators.

It is important, in order that we read correctly the comic tales of Poe and to illuminate the entire genesis of the preceding work, to seize the key of the jest by identifying the supposed author of each of the tales among the members of the club and the work that was ridiculed in the ironic pastiches which comprise The Tales of the Folio Club. To endeavor to comprehend the comic vein of Poe without this preliminary work would be equivalent to reading the Dunciad ignorant of the name Colley Cibber or the comment "Bentley sleeps in port" without knowing anything of Bentley.

Leon Lemmonier alone [in citing analogues] was engaged in the right way in singling out two forgotten tales by Bulwer-Lytton to whose celebrity, in the 1830's, nothing comparable can be found. But he did not trace the precise parallels for each of the tales and his list of pieces included in the series of the Folio Club is rather inconclusive.

Scholars generally agree that the five tales submitted to the competition sponsored by the Philadelphia Saturday Courier should be part of this list. Poe added, as I have attempted to indicate elsewhere, "On Diddling Considered an Exact Science," despite its belated publication. They also agree that "Siope" ("Silence—A Fable") belongs to the manuscript of the Folio Club, "Epimanes" ("Four Beasts in One; The Homocameleopard" submitted by Poe to the New England Magazine in 1833), "MS. Found in a Bottle," which won the prize in a Baltimore Saturday Visiter contest, "Lionizing" (in its first form), which Poe mentioned in an 1835 letter to White. "Berenice," "Morella," "King Pest," "Shadow" and "Mystification" are also generally accepted on grounds of their dates of publication and on the basis of internal proofs.

To analyze the "humor" of these tales one must look for the preferences and the methods of the young Poe in order to censure a gross misinterpretation. Each piece, presumably the work of one of the members of the club, is written "in the manner of" and should be read as a pastiche—exaggerated to the point of ridicule—of tastes and mannerisms of certain of Poe's contemporaries.

The most characteristic example is "King Pest," wherein the macabre grotesque that was so repugnant to Robert Louis Stevenson is no more than the powerful weapon of the satire. Poe made, in effect, a comparison to one of the most celebrated episodes of the novel of Disraeli, Vivian Grey, which achieved an unheard-of success in the United States. In Ch. 6, Vivian Grey and his faithful servant Essper

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George, lost in the Bavarian forest, evoke the traditional legend of the "Wild Hunter." It is midnight. After the terrifying account of Essper George, which revived the ancestral myth, the two cavaliers reach the postern of an enormous castle whence come shouts and songs. There they encounter eight strange individuals, each of whom has the name of a wine of the Rhine, gather round the Grand Duke of Johannisberg, their host. After many prodigious libations, under a grand crystal chandelier, the grand duke and his peers reassemble in this hall to render their cult to the *nare* of the Rhine wines and to entreat Vivian to drink three liters of champagne in a luxurious cup made from elk horn, in hommage to their *Fairy King*, the wine. Upon his refusal and discourse on the virtues of abstinence, they cry "treason," and attempt to drown him in a cask of exquisite Moselle wine. Vivian was saved by his valor and the ingenuity of Essper George.

One is in the right to question what possessed Disraeli to introduce this extravagant fantasy into the body of a narrative where the episode is poorly integrated. First, Disraeli saw a new occasion to indulge his practice of word-painting the luxurious lists and sumptuous scenes in which he took pleasure: the halls, the colors, the chandelier, the glasses and carved cups of the castle are described with a profusion of marvellous detail. He does not, however, omit to weave into these extravagances a moral: To the thread of the monstrous drinker, each of the hosts saw the bestial trait that he defined encroach little by little upon his physical and moral personality. Under the influence of wine, the Bavarians were made elephant, dog, ass or wild boar. No romance of this day dared give itself over to fantasy without interspersing didactism, albeit extravagant didactism here, in regard to the grotesque. An anonymous critic in the *New Monthly Magazine* warmly approved the grotesque in the Palace of Wines episode, under the pretext that this grotesque is "classic" in that it served "a purpose."10 If we could not prove formally that Poe had consulted this article, one knows nevertheless that the *New Monthly Magazine* was among his regular readings and that the complacent didactism of this journal irritated him. In the first version of "Lionizing"—dating from the same period as "King Pest"—he turned in derision against the alleged seriousness of the critics from the *New Monthly* who frowned upon the physiological talents of Thomas Smith, author of a treatise on nosology. Poe therefore apprehended that the incongruity of the presence of a moral lesson in an episode of unbridled fantasy had no point of escape, and he had little intention of transposing the royalty of the divinity within the fairy domain group to that of the plague to mask Disraeli's didactic pretensions.
This conjecture is reinforced by the subtitle in the September 1835 *Southern Literary Messenger* version: “A Tale Containing an Allegory—By ______.” James S. Wilson suggested that Poe intended to replace the dash by the name Ben Disraeli (p. 218). But he omitted commenting upon the precise sense that Poe always gave to the word “allegory”: that of moral or moralistic fable. Thus, when one recalls that this tale is a work by a member of the Folio Club—a stupid admirer of the moralistic art of Disraeli—it appears that “King Pest” is not the work of a novice prose writer who imitated a fashionable novel but a parodic essay about the exaggerations and the artificialities in this novel. As soon as the new tale appeared, it justified a most attentive examination of the parallelisms with the Disraelian episode, for each deformation revealed not only the precocious manner of Poe but the artistic criteria by means of which he turned derisively against the most celebrated among British novelists.

Two sailors on watch—Legs and Tarpaulin—are driven back toward the borders of the plague-stricken sector of a great city, and to a hovel where they are queued in the English style. They overcome the barriers and find before them a “great edifice” whence arise clamors and cries. They knock at the door—in a style less fitting than that of Essper George—and are admitted to the presence of a strange company resembling that in *Vivian Grey*. This group is also organized in a hierarchical council and thus seats the newcomers at a table laden with wines, under a baroque chandelier. Each member of the odd group, like the personages of Disraeli, possesses an inordinately large physical characteristic (face, ears, nose) which defines his or her bestial personality. For an insult similar to the one committed by Vivian Grey—refusing to pay homage to a gallon of *grande ordinaire* the local divinity—Legs and Tarpaulin are condemned to be drowned in a barrel of October beer. Their escape shares common points with the set-to between Vivian Grey and the German barons. The basic situation is thus manifestly borrowed from *Vivian Grey*, but one should look to the transposition for the particular intention of Poe. We note above all the irony of the subtitle—sly irony, too sly to be grasped by everyone—as James K. Paulding was to remark. There is not, in effect, the least trace of moral lesson or allegory in “King Pest” except in the sarcastic mode, the absolute gratuity of the farce. But we attach chiefly to the minute transposition of intonation: the master-valet pair, an association banalized by two centuries of picaresque literature, is vulgarised by the traits of Poe’s two slightly drunk sailors. The conventional Germanic legend of the *Wild Huntsman* devouring youngsters was actualized in the presence of the plague which had left
to Poe’s Baltimore recent memories of its ravages; the horror thus lost its character of exotic distraction. The Bavarian castle of legend, where the accumulation of splendid riches was paramount, became the sordid shop of a mortician. The bottles of fine wine were transformed into barrels of vile liquor, the finely chiselled cups into half skulls, the elk horn into a vulgar gourd, the casks of Moselle into crude barrels of October beer, and the sparkling chandelier into a disjointed skeleton. Poe effected the systematic vulgarisation of the situation and the decor of Disraeli, as well as the refined language of the novel: the bouquet (nare) of the fine wines—exotic word of the snobism in British romances—becomes the prosaic and popular “nose,” which is in turn singularly fantasized into comic takeoffs related to Roman, or aristocratic, noses. In short, the enchanting perfumes are no longer anything other than vulgar odors and the homage that Disraeli rendered to the enchantments of luscious wines is addressed now to the disproportionate proboscis of the triumphant plague.

Thus, in vulgarizing the Disraelian episode, although he carefully conserved the structure,11 Poe attained a double goal: first, the grotesque lost its exotic character and quit the forests of legend in order to insinuate itself in the quotidian (and, he made note, in the quotidian life of London snobs, because the river which flowed through the city of “King Pest” was called la Tamise); second, a certain snobism of the terror disappeared, dispelled in the grotesque parody that finally explained the mysterious citation placed in the epigraph of the first version of the tale:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The Gods do bear and allow in kings} \\
\text{The things that they abhor in rascal routes.} \\
\text{(Mabbot, Works, 2: 240)}
\end{align*}
\]

“King Pest” therefore now appears as a triple protestation conducted against the art of the English novel as represented by Disraeli: at the first level is the parodic objective, the affirmation of the legitimacy of the pure grotesque and the denunciation of the incongruity of Disraeli’s justification of an “allegory” artificially introduced into the web of the narrative. Such a lesson echoes in the antididactic declarations of Poe’s “Letter to B—.” At the second level, the parodic aim derides conventional use of traditional themes in German fantasy. Poe’s protestation that terror came not “from Germany, but from the soul,” has apparently more relevance. Finally, at a third level, the parodic vulgarisation brings proof that, far from aping the elegances and the conventions of the post-romantic tradition, Poe waxed indignant against
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the romantic stereotype (such as it appeared in the novels then in vogue—those of Bulwer Lytton, Disraeli, Lady Morgan and Ainsworth12) and above all against the artificial and unjustified use of fantastic convention: diabolical medieval legends, gothic and fog-enshrouded German castles, somber country squires and cunning revellers in the secret halls of phantasmic residences.

Thus we may read anew Poe’s explanatory remark, according to which the Folio Club “was written originally in order to illustrate a work of importance on the imaginative faculties.” The first tale illustrates the defect of creative imagination and systemization of conventional archetypes in the contemporary British novelists and their emulators who, assembled as clubs in the mode of the eighteenth century (Poe probably evoked the spirit of the Tuesday Club of Baltimore, which he had known through William Gwynn), perpetuated the conventions of a dead literature. The comic Poesque already appeared therefore like the favorite arm of a literary critic who did not have the leisure to publish the manifestos in which he would contradict more clearly Willis, Fay, Mattson or Stone, who foolishly aped the pseudo-distinction and the mannerisms of British fiction-writers.

Among the most established conventions of the British novel, the narrative of a fictive voyage enjoyed an incomparable vogue under the illustrious impulsion of Swift and of Defoe. But the imitators of Gulliver and of Robinson did not devote themselves to the exterior appearance of the narrative, did not attempt scarcely anything other than the plausible presentation of an extraordinary series of adventures with the sole concern, often ineffacacious, to convince audiences of the veracity in their narratives. They had, naturally, among the members of the Folio Club, an American imitator: Solomon Seadrift, presumed author of “MS. Found in a Bottle.”13 Seadrift appeared to owe his name to two equally celebrated personages in the United States: Sir Edward Seaward, author of Sir Edward Seaward’s Narrative and Captain Adam Seaborn, author of Symzonia.14 These two immensely popular works were both imaginary narratives. The narrative of Seaward, a gigantic affair of mystification in three volumes, edited by Miss Jane Porter, the English novelist, and the utopia of Seaborn (probable pseudonym of John Cleve Symmes) described the fictive voyage of the Explorer into the depths of the earth. But, despite their improbabilities, the two works were believed not only by a credulous public but by numerous serious and knowledgeable critics as well. The findings of a critic published in the London Quarterly Review expose the mystification.15 Likewise we must attend the communications of
Reynolds, Poe's friend and old disciple of Symmes, in order to counter Symmes's theories about the structure of the earth. Poe knew the two works well, and he realized their fictive character and had not failed to criticize the multiple improbabilities in the narrative and the gratuity in the mystification. Therefore "MS. Found"—which is simultaneously founded upon the narrative of Seaward and upon the theories exposed in Symzonia (as in the case of the Explorer, the bottle in Poe's tale, thrown into the sea on a voyage to the center of the earth transmitted the message of shipwreck to the world)—appears now like an ironic commentary upon the imperfections of narratives of imaginary voyages. If, at first reading, "MS. Found" perhaps appears as a realistic narrative of extraordinary events, certain contemporaries had to be used up by means of a scientific theory (Symmes's), seriously valued by Congress, which upon more sustained attention soon disclosed the whimsical character habitual in Poe's narratives of voyages of certain events.

One forgets too often that the narrator in the tale is gifted with an acute sense of observation and an "arid scientific spirit." Adept of "physical philosophy" he had "the habit of referring occurrences, even the least susceptible of such reference, to the principles of that science." After this presentation, one expects a scientific exposition of the voyage with appropriate technical commentaries and logical explanations.

If the precision with which the narrator described the cargo-hold of the ship seems to be plausible, then the shipwreck seems above all to confirm his character, and if this rigor of detail (all of the provisions stocked on board really come from the Lacquedive Islands—the list is found, moreover, in the Encyclopedia Britannica—) appears to parallel the narratives of fictive voyages like that edited by Miss Porter, some astonishing incidents come ere long to change radically the tone in this tale.

The gigantic swell that carries the narrator and the old Swede to the domain of the albatross, where the air was rarefied, quickly makes us skeptical. Yet, the "scientific" narrator hardly appears astonished. But when he tells us without winking the amazing number of trapezian graces which performed his tranship, we finally refuse to play the game: the episode is too comic. With this burlesque episode, Poe revealed his parodic intentions: What appeared an exercise of style in the manner of Defoe, of Swift, or of Miss Porter becomes then, by the exaggeration of details, by the constant repetition of the words "horror" or "horrible," a bantering parody of pseudo-realistic improbabilities of contemporary British storytellers. Calling upon the "scientific" theories of Symmes.
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permitted him to explicate "logically" the final return of the manuscript after a voyage to the center of the earth.

Thus this tale that had appeared as a tour de force in the manner of Miss Porter and of Symmes furthermore betrayed in reality a critical intention that Poe revealed in his sly manner: the "MS. Found" was to be the first of the "Tales of the Folio Club" at the time of their publication in volume form. It therefore immediately followed the introduction, which ended with these words: "Here Mr. Snap, having pushed the bottle, produced a M.S. [and read as follows]." This wordplay was not able to escape the narrator in the "Prologue," come to give the key to Poe's intentions: He proceeded, in effect, to suggest that the manuscript of Solomon Seadrift had been found after all in a bottle of wine upon the table; that is to say the tale was not a work of pure imagination (Mabbott, Works 2: 205-206).

"MS. Found" should therefore be considered as an ironic pastiche: weary of the improbabilities of British storytellers, Poe there affirmed the doctrine that he made his own: that of verisimilitude acquired through patient work of documentation by the artist. But he also affirmed (there) in the ironic mode the poverty of imagination of his predecessors and announced the renewal of the narrative of the voyage which became with Pym the support of a symbolic message.

We are far from the unconscious fascinations of the chasm described by the psychologists who ignored all of Symmes and—let it be said—Mercator. But, once again this circumstance does not nullify the humor. Poe's intention is manifestly critical. His veritable subject is the exercise of the creative imagination, first stage of a reflection upon the writing which nourished his entire oeuvre and culminated in the vast metaphor of Eureka.

It is this reflection that appeared to underly "Loss of Breath," the most decried of Poe's grotesque tales and the playground of the psychoanalytic critics. Without making light of what these critics have supplied us about this tale, it seems imperative to place in relief the other aspect of the piece, the level at which Poe fashioned one of the most convincing protestations against the gratuity of the tales of horror which littered the pages of the British periodicals, notably Blackwood's. It does not suffice to talk of jest at the expense of popular genre without further analysis of what was parodied and to pass the test of relative strictures, as did Marie Bonaparte (373-410). For these strictures do not appertain to Poe but to the same tale which he made the object of the satire. I do not know if psychoanalysis will confirm that the linking of certain situations (impotence in "Loss of Breath") with others is also relevatory of the direct creation of the situations
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(194) This was naturally the function of diurnal rest, but I fear that in "Loss of Breath" it was grave negligence to neglect "The Buried Alive" and "Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician," where all of the situations which were made the object of the artist's derision in "Loss of Breath" appeared.17

It is not a question here of vague conjecture: Poe himself subsequently, in "How to Write a Blackwood Article," cited these tales of Blackwood's as examples of typical marketable fiction in the imaginary conversation between Psyche Zenobia and the editor-in-chief of a sensational journal (quite evidently Blackwood's). One knows also that Poe described "Loss of Breath" in the following terms: "'Lionizing' and 'Loss of Breath' were satires properly speaking—at least so meant—the one of the rage for Lions...—the other of the extravagancies of Blackwood" (Letters, 1: 84). It is therefore legitimate to search the pages of Blackwood's—with which he was familiar—for basic elements and structures of Poe's tales. One will find there, without difficulty, the same type of passage that he cited.

The basic situation (the apparent death of a being who survives) itself was furnished to him by "The Buried Alive," published 21 October 1821 in Blackwood's, and he found in "Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician," published nine years later, just before "Loss of Breath," many examples of loss of respiration by a malady, who risked thus to be buried "before the breath was out of his body."18 Poe observed the simple use of this pathological trait in dramatic conclusions. The transposition of an excessive situation onto the comic plan is a traditional element of satire. But the great aim of Poe is a jocular denunciation of the pusillanimity and awkwardness of the tales of horror of Blackwood's.

In "The Buried Alive" the anonymous author accumulated, in disorder, the horrible details (like the hissing sound rising toward the assault of a faux cadavre) in a tone which has as its objective the creation of an altogether gratuitous sentiment of horror (p. 263). The hero is presumed dead, buried alive, disinterred and taken to the hospital in order to be dissected. Under the scalpel of the professor and the effects of a galvanic battery, he abruptly stands straight up and an hour later he is walking again. All's well that ends well: The timorous storyteller did not dare to go to the extremity of the horror that he created. Poe caught the exact counterbalance of each of these incidents. The tone of farcical witticism that he adopted in order to describe the multiple avatars of his hero was already in itself an ironic commentary on the ponderous pseudo-realistic descriptions of the Scottish storytellers. But in putting his hero to death—killed by the same
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galvanic battery that saved the personage of the Scottish tale—he exactly inverted the original tale and thus mocked the pusillanimity in addition to the maladroitness of the storyteller who, having pointlessly accumulated the most horrible details, brusquely dispelled the effects of horror by a happy and perfectly artificial conclusion. Thus “Loss of Breath,” seen from this angle, is not only an argument in favor of the legitimacy of the sentiment of terror but an ironic commentary (by dint of the slant in the pastiche) upon the pseudo-realistic and pseudo-scientific narrative methods of the Scottish school to which one connects the tale a little too easily.

Therefore it appears that ultimately the central subject of the “Tales of the Folio Club” is the creative imagination itself and that the comic Poeque is not the arm of the critic, the arm that he had used at leisure in the sarcastic reviews of contemporary novels: Fay’s Norman Leslie, Stone’s Ups and Downs, Mattson’s Paul Ulric. In the “Tales of the Folio Club,” Poe focused the critical method which made him a celebrity and affirmed by diverse means his essential classicism. In effect, when one returns to the source of each of these tales, one discovers the same uniform technique of the ironic pastiche.

When one compares it to “The Metempsychosis,” a tale published in Blackwood’s, one discovers that “Metzengerstein” becomes a clear-cut exercise of style in ironic imitation of the multiple tales of German inspiration which rest upon the themes of this philosophy that Poe judged “absurd.” The “Duc de l’Omelette” is an obvious satire on the linguistic, vestimentary and gastronomic affectations of Nathaniel P. Willis, the American dandy who aped the extravagances of the fashionable novelists. “A Tale of Jerusalem” is—one knows it—an adroit parody of Horace Smith’s Zilla, A Tale of the Holy City (Wilson, p. 218). “The Bargain Lost”—probably based on the unfruitful conduct of Maturin’s Melmoth, who can not inveigle anyone into taking his place as the devil’s victim—is a virulent satire on ancient philosophers and German metaphysicians. “On Diddling Considered as One of the Exact Sciences” adroitly parodies the intentions of Yankee writers—John Neal and Thomas Ward—whose heroes—the hawker Yankee and the crook Sam Patch—tended to conform to a popular type in the creation of which the imagination did not have much of a role (Richard, 93-109). James S. Wilson (p. 215) has shown that “Siope,” often considered as the only transcendentalist work by Poe, was a very clever pastiche of the style of Bulwer-Lytton’s “Monos and Daimonos” and probably of Coleridge in “The Wanderings of Cain.” “Lionizing” is another emphatic satiric parody of a lame jeu d’esprit by Bulwer entitled “Too Handsome for Anything,” and
"Epimanes" contained coded satires of the Jacksonian political milieu—as did, later, "The Man That Was Used Up." Finally, Clark Griffith has convincingly analyzed the sly satiric current that animates "Ligeia."20

In the opening of this study it appeared impossible to speak of Poesque humor. The comic of Poe is engaging. A voluble American, in pursuit of English modes, the twenty-six-year-old poet looked to affirm the originality of his artistic vocation. His manifesto—already satiric—"Letter to B_

passed relatively unnoticed, and it did not have the means to express his discord with the prevalent conventions that he unburdened in the columns of the Southern Literary Messenger. Therefore he used the arm of parody—often with a certain maladroitness—in order to protest the decadent Romanticism and the didactism of British fiction, the deficiency of creative imagination of the Yankee imitators and the verbal obscurities of a nascent Transcendentalism. Doing this, he imposed the discipline of the ironic pastiche and learned to measure the most delicate effects, the words and phrases which managed to tip the serious into the comic. If the present century can hardly appreciate this artful handling of words and themes, and if the times hardly permit the perceiving of the line separating [Poe] from those whom he mocked, it is not a grievance to be levelled at Poe but instead toward an epoch that had placed at its literary pinnacle Lady Morgan, Disraeli, Bulwer Lytton or John Neal—which artifices Poe was the first to denounce. He was not the mechanical and ponderous humorist that some modern critics reject, but already the exacting critic, the master artist of his effects, and the epitome of the obscure patience of the genius who denounced by his work the decline of the creative imagination.

NOTES

*Thanks to Minard of Paris, who published the original version of this essay, in French, in Configuration Critique de Edgar Allan Poe, 1969, for permission to use Richard's study. Bracketed notes supplement the work of the late Professor Richard. The translation is not literal, but it in no way alters Richard's intents. References to Poe’s works are also revised to cite editions that supersede Harrison's 1902 texts.


1John C. French, "Poe and the Baltimore Saturday Visiter," MLN, 33 (1918), 262.
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5Stephen Mooney, “The Comic in Poe’s Fiction,” AL, 33 (1962), 433-441; cf. Poe’s review of Longfellow’s Hyperion, in Edgar Allan Poe: Essays and Reviews, ed. G. R. Thompson (New York, 1984)–Library of America–p. 670. Is it not characteristic that, in his accounts of the works of Boz, Poe never discussed—or perceived—the humor and that he cited as “ideal” passages (in the sense of “representing an idea”) those scenes where humor is absent. [Richard’s observation, we should remember, includes nothing in regard to Poe’s undoubted familiarity with Dickens’s grotesque endeavors, such as “The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton” or “The Baron of Grogzwig.”]


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18 (1972), 154-165—which is supplemented by Fisher’s opinion that “King Pest” might just as well served as the concluding piece of the Folio-Club scheme: The Very Spirit of Cordiality, pp. 9-10; and his comments (pp. 5-7, 19-32) on “MS. Found” as part of that same work. Most recent scholars do not include “Berenice,” “Morella,” or “Mystification” as Folio-Club tales, although “Shadow” is numbered among them by Hammond and Fisher, as well as by Thompson in Poe’s Fiction, pp. 168-169.]


11The commentary of Marie Bonaparte upon “King Pest,” one of the tales in which “the sins of the father are punished” (p. 514), becomes amusing if one thinks here of the personality of the father of Ben Disraeli, to whom belonged the structures she analyzed—The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation, transl. John Rodker (London, 1949).

12Poe mocked these stereotypes in “Lionizing” (Bulwer), “Why the Little Frenchman Wears His Hand in a Sting” (Lady Morgan), “The Duc de l’Omelette” (Willis) and “[On] Diddling Considered as One of the Exact Sciences” (John Neal).

13It is the one identification upon which all commentators agree.


15Cited by Allibone, A Dictionary of English Literature... (London, 1877), 1: 1646.

16In 1823, when Symmes demanded from congress a subvention destined to finance a voyage which might prove the accuracy of his theories, he received 25 favorable votes to his request (Bailey, Symzonia, “Introduction,” n. p.)

17“The Buried Alive,” Blackwood’s, 10 (1821), 262-264; and “Pages from the Diary of a Late Physician,” 28 (1830), passim.

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19 In a “Letter to B—,” Poe is astonished that the devil in Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1824) takes such pains to secure just one soul (the protagonist’s) when, with little effort, he could have gained thousands.

EDGAR’S DOVER CLIFF SPEECH AND TRAGIC SEXUALITY

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One of the great bravura passages in Shakespearean drama, Edgar’s spectacular recreation of the view from Dover Cliff has, for many viewers, captured the essence of the tragic experience in King Lear. A brief examination of this claim provides a context for appreciating the new reading offered by this essay. We might begin by noting that, in the early acts of the play, visual metaphor regularly conveys relative depths of intellectual or spiritual insight. “See better, Lear, and let me still remain/ The true blank of thine eye,” Kent replies to Lear’s command “Out of my sight” (I. i. 157-59).1 “I will look further into ’t” (I. iv. 71), Lear says regarding Goneril’s servants’ coldness toward him and his knights. “How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell” (I. iv. 345), Albany tells Goneril, who has just dispossessed her father. “Thou canst tell why one’s nose stands i’ th’ middle on’s face?” the Fool asks Lear. “No,” the latter replies; “Why, to keep one’s eyes of either side’s nose, that what a man cannot smell out, he may spy into” (I. v. 19-23). These and similar remarks establish the relative depth of visual perception as the play’s chief metaphor for moral or intellectual wisdom.2 Edgar’s Dover Cliff speech represents the culmination of this pattern of visual perception as moral insight.

Edgar’s dazzling poetry draws us to an imagined height, where, along with blind Gloucester, we regard (in our mind’s eye) a tremendous scene with a common center upon which depth lines artistically appear to converge:3

Come on, sir, here’s the place; stand still. How fearful
And dizzy ’tis, to cast one’s eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles. Half way down
Hangs one that gathers sapphire, dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
The fishermen that [walk] upon the beach
Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark,
Diminish’d to her cock; her cock, a buoy
Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge,
That on th’ unnumb’red idle pebble chafes,
Cannot be heard so high. I’ll look no more,
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Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong.

(IV. vi. 11-24)

In this speech, Edgar’s images are generally comparisons: the crows and choughs present themselves as beetles; the fishermen appear like mice. And yet strong identity-forging powers are also at work in the passage. A demeaning fall occurs with an accompanying lessening of value; the “tall” (“proud,” “noble”) bark abruptly becomes a small boat and the boat a minuscule navigational aid—almost beyond the range of vision. By means of Edgar’s poetic perspective, Shakespeare metaphorically reflects the impression registered elsewhere in the play of mankind’s shrinking status. When Gloucester says, “I’th last night’s storm I such a fellow saw./ Which made me think a man a worm” (IV. i. 32-33), he reveals a newly acquired inward vision of mankind for which Edgar’s Dover Cliff speech provides the symbolic correlative. For Lear as well as for Gloucester, terrible suffering develops an awareness of the sorrowful human condition. Understood metaphorically, Edgar’s lessening perspective redescribes Lear’s tragic education on the heath, in which mankind, that glorious creature, shrinks until he becomes “a poor, bare, fork’d animal”—“the thing itself” (III. iv. 106-08).

Not surprisingly, Edgar’s Dover Cliff perspective reflects other values inherent in Lear’s tragic experience. For example, Lear’s decline into madness yields his precious insights into the nature of justice and authority (IV. vi. 149-66). This paradox within the tragedy of King Lear is represented in Edgar’s image of the samphire gatherer, hanging perilously by a rope halfway down the sheer cliff. That image reminds us that the gatherer of a rarity (here a medicinal herb) must bravely take risks and make the descent. From Edgar’s (and our) perspective, the gatherer’s being concentrates in his head (l. 16), even as Lear’s progressively does as he abandons the trappings of royalty and the outward reverence due his person and displays his profound reason-in-madness. Nonetheless, the ultimate nothingness at the end of the tragic descent exists; the “idle” pebble at the cliff’s base is “unnumb’red”—uncounted and hence unregarded and meaningless, unmoved and hence part of no dynamic, possibly redemptive world. Thus mankind recoils, fearing that a consideration of both the literal and metaphorical perspective opened up by Edgar’s speech and the play as a whole will result in madness as well as blindness. A great perspective—that offered by the view from Dover Cliff and by King Lear as a whole—challenges mankind’s capacities for perceiving, for
understanding, only to drive him terrified within himself by
demonstrating some dark facts not only about the human condition but
also about the inherent weakness of the senses through which he dimly
grasps truths about unaccommodated man.

Despite the thoroughness of interpretive efforts, a surprising feature
of Edgar’s speech has eluded critical commentary. No one—to my
knowledge—has explained how Edgar’s description indirectly
illuminates Regan and Goneril’s self-destructive sexuality. It is worth
noting that Shakespeare explicitly evokes the idea of male sexuality in
Edgar’s term for the bark’s small boat. By making the tall (“proud”)
bark feminine, Shakespeare transposes that sexuality when Edgar coins
an oxymoronic, hermaphroditic term for the bark’s dinghy (“her
cock”). Moreover, in the sixteenth-century, possibly both “buoy” and
“boy” were homophones with the common spelling “boy” (OED
“Buoy” #1); in this respect, the Jacobean actor’s pronunciation of the
phrase “her cock, a buoy” may have reinforced (by renaming) the
masculine value of “cock” and thus intensified the total phrase’s
potential for hermaphroditic meaning. While Eric Partridge and E.
A. M. Colman (among others) have extensively documented the bawdy
pun in Shakespearean drama, a more subtle sexual wordplay, often
created by the conflated meaning of proximate words, has not received
equal attention. And yet Frankie Rubenstein has recently demonstrated
that the less obvious, more finely subtle kind of Shakespearean bawdy
is present throughout the canon. Love’s Labour’s Lost provides a
representative example of the ingenuity behind this kind of bawdy:

Boyet. I was as willing to grapple as he was to board.
Kath. Two hot sheep, marry.
Boyet. And wherefore not ships?

(II. i. 218-19)

Concerning these lines, Rubenstein remarks that Boyet’s
interlocutor “chooses to hear the two nautical terms GRAPPLE and
BOARD as puns on the coital mounting or boarding of two knaves,
two SHIPS (L. naves); and compares the men to two hot sheep, in
sexual heat or oestrus. Boyet asks why she changed his metaphor,
since ships, too, MARRY, i.e. Fr. marer, moor, get tied or fastened”
(p. 238). The nautical nature of such sexual wordplay becomes a
precedent for that of Lear. Nonetheless, one of Isabella’s speeches in
Measure for Measure, unchronicled by the previously mentioned
compilers, contains the kind of conflated sexual wordplay that we hear
in a more condensed form in Edgar’s speech. Explaining how as a
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novitiate she would bribe Angelo to save her brother Claudio’s life, Isabella states,

       Not with fond sicles of the tested gold,
       Or stones, whose rate is either rich or poor
       As fancy values them; but with true prayers....

       (II. ii. 149-51)

Bertrand Evans glosses “sicles” as “shekels, i.e. coins” (p. 561), presumably Isabella’s intended meaning. In the sexually repressed imagination of Angelo, however, Isabella’s words “sicles” and “tested” conflate to “testicles,” mainly because her subsequent word “stones” (by which she means “jewels”) was a familiar Renaissance euphemism for “testicles.” For a fleeting moment, Angelo hears a different message in Isabella’s words. This subtle kind of bawdy pervades Shakespeare’s works, substantiating the analysis of sexual wordplay in Edgar’s Dover Cliff speech.

Winfried Schleiner, in her analysis of Edgar’s speech, describes a dramatic principle of “sequential understanding which involves a reinterpretation in terms of a negation” (pp. 340-41). For example, Edgar mentions the noise of the surf only to deny that it can be heard from the cliff’s top: “The murmuring surge,/ That on th’ unnumb’red idle pebble chafes,/ Cannot be heard so high.” Schleiner argues that Edgar’s statement “thus requires a sequential understanding, with the third line in some sense taking away what has been asserted before.” Granted Schleiner’s principle, we hear the utterance “yond tall anchoring bark,/ Diminish’d to her cock; her cock, a buoy,” interpret the words in straightforward nautical terms, and then reinterpret in light of a negation when we realize, on another level, that a feminine entity cannot possess the feature attributed to it. Of all the play’s characters. Edgar’s phrase “her cock, a buoy” best fits Regan and Goneril. Like the surf which can and cannot be heard, Regan and Goneril during the course of the play seem to possess and not to possess a physical trait stereotypic of their idea of power.

A forerunner of Lady Macbeth and Dionyza, Goneril appropriates in King Lear the cliché male characteristic of ruthlessness; she does so in part by foisting traditionally non-masculine epithets upon her husband Albany. When Albany objects to Goneril’s harsh treatment of Lear, she protests:

       This milky gentleness and course of yours
       Though I condemn not, yet, under pardon,
       [You] are much more [attax’d] for want of wisdom
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Than prais’d for harmful mildness.

(I. iv. 341-44)

Later in the play, hearing that a morally awake Albany openly castigates her cruelty, Goneril mistakenly blames his protest upon timidity. “I must change names at home, and give the distaff/ Into my husband’s hands” (IV. ii. 17-18), she scornfully tells her lover-to-be Edmund. By calling Albany “milk-liver’d” (IV. ii. 50), Goneril indict her husband for failing to measure up to her stereotype of courageous manhood. Cordelia’s bravery in remaining alone in Britain with France’s army sufficiently reveals the limitations inherent in Goneril’s cliché of gender. In fact, as Oswald reported, Albany is marvelously changed into a dynamic foe of vice (IV. ii. 3-11).12 Incarnating the brutal will that Regan and Goneril admire, Edmund belongs to the sexual gender that the sisters arbitrarily identify with savage force—the gender that each woman unconsciously yearns to incorporate somehow within herself. That each sister should desire to make Edmund hers thus should not surprise the viewer. In their fatal courtship of Edmund, both sisters assume the stereotypic masculine role of wooing a passive love object—a passive beloved ironically, painfully at odds with the ravager each hopes to possess (and herself become). With poetic justice, each sister’s adoption of the aggressive behavior that she admires converts assertive Edmund into the polar opposite of her idea of desirable manhood.

Moreover, Regan and Goneril’s simplistic reduction of Edmund’s identity to his male sexuality echoes the play’s opening with a fierce irony; there, an embarrassed but callous Gloucester defines his bastard son for Kent mainly in terms of the dehumanizing “sport” attending his adulterous conception. In his Dover Cliff speech, Edgar reformulates this reduction of value so that we predict the reduction’s tragic outcome. By speaking of “yond tall anchoring bark,/ Diminish’d to her cock; her cock, a buoy/ Almost too small for sight,” Edgar reminds us that Regan and Goneril have staked their lives on something that they do not (and never will) possess. In truth, the sisters’ unnatural desires make them ripe for death—for nothingness. The sexual jealousy fueling Regan’s poisoning and Goneril’s suicide testifies to the force of the backlash of female feelings long repressed and denied; overwhelmed by jealousy over the “other woman,” Goneril manifests a stereotypic female identity—one which literally destroys her twisted version of a male woman.

The complex suggestion inherent in Edgar’s metaphor thus validates Lear’s awful curse on Goneril:
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Hear, Nature, hear, dear goddess, hear!
Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend
To make this creature fruitful,
Into her womb convey sterility,
Dry up in her the organs of increase,
And from her derogate body never spring
A babe to honor her!

(I. iv. 275-81)

By choosing to express their sexuality as vicious power rather than as parenthood, Regan and Goneril ironically fulfill Lear’s curse. “The organs of increase” designed for perpetuity become, in Regan and Goneril’s distorted thinking, emblematic of the brutal means for acquiring material possessions and land—“increase” in the quantitative sense often deadly in King Lear.13 In a more general sense, Edgar’s metaphor of sexual reduction reflects all the play’s accounts of self-destructive sexuality—from the Fool’s song about “the codpiece that will house/ Before the head has any” (III. ii. 27-28)14 through Tom O’Bedlam’s story of lust driving a servingman to insanity (III. iv. 85-100) to mad Lear’s vivid portrayal of the stinking venereal pit below an angelic countenance (IV. vi. 118-31).15 In short, Edgar’s reductive metaphor reminds us of the Fall—both those of Lear’s hard-hearted daughters and of Gloucester (“The dark and vicious place where thee he got/ Cost him his eyes”). And since Lear fathered the terrible children who seek his life, he too qualifies for inclusion in the list of characters subject to Edgar’s metaphor. While one could argue that Gloucester’s and Lear’s falls prove “fortunate” in the ethical insights attending their suffering, the fact that their deaths can be ultimately traced to deeds of sexuality certainly qualifies the value of gained wisdom. The beginning of Gloucester’s and Lear’s ends can be found in the most familiar consequence of original sin—corrupt sexuality.

In summary, Edgar’s image of bark/cock/buoy appears to be yet another instance of Shakespeare’s remarkable ability to condense an ideational macrocosm in a poetic microcosm. Such compression seems incidental to characterization, or to a character’s imagined motives for speaking. The phenomenon most likely amounts to creative sparks thrown off in the white heat of inspired composition—a brilliant poetic effect of which Shakespeare himself may not have been fully aware. Nonetheless, it often adds to both our understanding and enjoyment of a particular play, constituting a legitimate topic of study in Shakespeare’s art.
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NOTES

1 All quotations from King Lear are taken from The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston, 1974).

2 For an exhaustive analysis of visual imagery in the tragedy, see Robert Heilman, This Great Stage: Image and Structure in "King Lear" (1948; rpt. Seattle, 1963), pp. 41-64.


4 In Through the Vanishing Point: Space in Poetry and Painting (New York, 1968), Marshall McLuhan and Harley Parker identify five receding planes of vision in Edgar’s speech: Plane 1— “crows and choughs”; Plane 2— “halfway down”; Plane 3— “the fishermen”; Plane 4— “and yond tall anchoring bark”; Plane 5— “her cock, a buoy” (p. 75). McLuhan and Parker remark that this “formal perspective in Lear is presented as a very unpleasant experience—the breaking out of the warm, familiar multi-sensory space into fragmented visual space.” For more on the perspectivism of Edgar’s speech, see John B. Bender, Spenser and Literary Pictorialism (Princeton, 1972), pp. 95-98.

5 Kenneth Muir, in his New Arden edition of King Lear (London, 1952), glosses samphire as “an aromatic plant used for pickles” (p. 170). David Kaula, in “Edgar on Dover Cliff: An Emblematic Reading,” underscores the rarity of the herb samphire by explaining its association with St. Peter (herbe de Saint Pierre). Its considerable medicinal properties were described by the herbalist John Gerarde in The Herball or General Historie of Plants (1597). See Kaula, pp. 379-380. The medical connotations of samphire (unlike the preservative ones) suggest an analogy with the risk involved and the costs in addressing human vulnerability—a motif of King Lear.
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6 See Heilman, pp. 173-222.

7 Shakespeare’s characters frequently use “bark” as a metaphor for the human body (3H6 V. 25-28; R3 III. vii. 161-62; Tro. I. i. 101-04), on occasion the female body (R3 IV. iv. 230-35; Rom. III. v. 130-37).


9 Also see Fausto Cercignani, Shakespeare’s Works and Elizabethan Pronunciation (Oxford, 1981), pp. 244-247, esp. p. 245.

10 Frankie Rubenstein, in A Dictionary of Shakespeare’s Sexual Puns and Their Significance (London, 1984), notes that in Shakespeare’s plays “boy” sometimes carries the burden of passive homosexual (pp. 32-33). This dimension of the word interacts with “cock” in the utterance “her cock, a buoy” to intensify the paradoxical sexuality of the phrase. In this sense, “her” masculinity, her “cock,” is really not ordinarily understood masculinity at all but the homosexual substitute for the female pudendum. As we shall see, this paradoxical reading of the phrase (a conflating of male and female) especially applies to Goneril and Regan’s complex sexuality.

11 For Shakespeare’s sexual quibbles on nautical terms, see especially Stephen Booth, Shakespeare’s Sonnets (New Haven, 1977), pp. 273-274 (80. 5-13); pp. 391-392 (116); p. 474 (137. 6). For sexual joking on “boat” and “leak” in Lear, see III. vi. 25-28.

12 Warren Stevenson, in “Albany as Archetype in King Lear,” MLQ, 26 (1965), 257-263, summarizes the critical history of the stereotypically non-masculine Albany (pp. 257-58) before describing the character’s sudden conversion at the beginning of IV. ii into a determined, active revenger of evil. By V. ii, Albany has assumed the traditional male role of warrior while his wife Goneril has been overcome by scarcely manageable sexual feelings that, in her cold, mechanical efficiency, she has long repressed. Leo Kirshbaum also stresses Albany’s initial weakness and later conversion into a strong character in “Albany,” ShS, 13 (1960), 20-29.

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13 An interesting, detailed account of the birth and growth of evil in Goneril and Regan is given by Stephen Reid, "In Defense of Goneril and Regan," _AI_, 27 (1970), 226-244.

14 John F. Danby explicates the self-destructive sexuality in the Fool's song (III. ii. 25-36) in _Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature: A Study of "King Lear"_ (1948; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1961), pp. 110-12. Danby notes that the "Rake's Progress" condensed in the Fool's song "is repeated, of course, in Poor Tom—the courtier whose vices had just been those that set the wheel turning and who becomes a naked Bedlamite" (p. 111).

15 Destructive sexuality in the tragedy has been generally analyzed by Robert H. West, "Sex and Pessimism in _King Lear_," _SQ_, 11 (1960), 55-60; and by Colman, pp. 126-131.
ANOTHER VIEW OF FAULKNER'S NARRATOR IN "A ROSE FOR EMILY"

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In a recent article, Hal Blythe discusses the central role played by the narrator in William Faulkner's gothic masterpiece "A Rose for Emily."¹ Focusing on Miss Emily's bizarre affair and how it affronts the chivalric notions of the Old South, the narrator, according to Blythe, attempts to assuage the grief produced by Miss Emily's rejection of him by relating her story; telling her tale allows him to exact a measure of revenge. Faulkner's speaker, without doubt, serves as a pivotal player in this tale of grotesque love. Although Blythe grasps the significance of the narrator's place in the story, he bases his argument on a point that the story itself never makes completely clear. Blythe assumes that Faulkner's narrator is male. The possibility exists, however, that Faulkner intended his readers to view the tale-teller as being female.

Hints in the text suggest that Faulkner's speaker might be a woman. The narrative voice (the "we" in the story), a spokesperson for the town, appears very concerned with every detail of Emily's life. Faulkner provides us with an important clue concerning the gender of this narrator when he describes the townspeople's reaction to Emily's attachment to Homer Barron: "The men did not want to interfere, but at last the ladies forced the Baptist minister...to call upon her."² Jefferson's male population seems apathetic regarding Emily's tryst; the men are not the least bit scandalized. The females in town (the "we" in the tale) are so concerned with Emily's eccentricities that they force their men to act; one very interested female in particular, the narrator, sees to it that Emily's story is not forgotten.

This coterie of Jefferson's "finer" ladies (represented by the narrator) seems highly offended by Emily's actions. This resentment might stem from two primary causes. First, the ladies (the phrase "the ladies" appears throughout the tale and might refer to the "proper" Southern belles living in town) find Miss Emily's pre-marital relationship immoral. Second, they resent Emily's seeing a Yankee man. In the eyes of these flowers of Southern femininity, Emily Grierson becomes a stain on the white gown of Southern womanhood.

Despite their bitterness toward Emily, the ladies of Jefferson feel some degree of sympathy for her. After her father's death, the ladies reminisce: "We remembered all the young men her father had driven away...." Later, Homer Barron disappears, prompting this response:
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"Then we knew that this was to be expected too, as if that quality of her father which had thwarted her woman's life so many times had been too virulent and furious to die." These intensely felt statements suggest how a woman might react to another woman's loneliness; the narrator seems to empathize with Miss Emily on a woman-to-woman basis. Faulkner himself sheds interesting light on this matter when he describes Miss Emily as a woman "that just wanted to be loved and to love and to have a husband and a family."³ The women of Jefferson know that Emily, a fellow woman, possessed these feelings, and as women they feel as if some sort of biological bond links them to "the last Grierson." Unlike the majority of the ladies in town, Miss Emily experienced neither the joys of marriage nor the fulfillment of childbearing. If the ladies did not view Emily in a sympathetic way, would they have sent their daughters to her house for china-painting lessons?

Another possible reason exists for the speaker's sympathetic view of Emily. Our narrator knows (perhaps from the druggist) that Emily purchased poison, ostensibly to kill "rats." One slang use of the term "rat" applies to a man who has cheated on his lover. Perhaps Faulkner's tale-teller suspects that Emily feared that Homer would not remain faithful to her. In order to "keep" Homer by her side, Emily poisoned him. The speaker might sympathize with Emily somewhat because she believes that Emily did what she could to retain Homer's companionship and insure that he would not give her up for another woman. Faulkner's female narrator does not approve of Miss Emily's methods, but she understands what prompted them: Emily's weariness of being alone.

An additional clue regarding the narrator appears toward the end of "A Rose for Emily" when Faulkner's speaker emphasizes the first-person pronoun "they." Previously, our narrator has used "we" to indicate the town's collective female element. After Miss Emily is buried, the tale-teller relates how the residents of Jefferson learned of the gruesome secret lying upstairs in the long-closed bedroom. She makes one point very clear: "They waited until Miss Emily was decently in the ground before they opened it [my italics]." The "they" in this sentence are people strong enough to break down the door of this death chamber. Since most ladies in Jefferson would not be strong enough to force in a door, might not the reader assume that these initial intruders are men? The ladies follow the men into the room and make their ghastly discovery: "For a long while we [my italics] just stood there looking down at the profound and fleshless grin."

The reader is left with a very important question: why would a lady desire to repeat Miss Emily's story? The narrator's "dual vision"
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(as Blythe calls it) provides a clue. As a woman offended by Emily’s actions, the speaker relates this tale of necrophilia in an attempt to vindicate Southern womanhood. She wants her listeners to understand that Emily was not representative of the typical “Southern Lady.” Perhaps familiar with Caroline Bascomb Compson, Joanna Burden, and Rosa Coldfield, other infamous females living in the Jefferson vicinity, the narrator wants to convey to her audience that virtuous women (such as herself?) do still live in Jefferson. On the other hand, the speaker’s sympathy for Miss Emily, a woman lost in her own particularly lonely world, also prompts her to recall the tragic events of Emily’s sterile life. As a woman, the tale-teller allows her heart to go out to “poor Emily.”

Viewing the narrator of “A Rose for Emily” as a woman allows the reader to enjoy Faulkner’s tale from a unique perspective. Indeed, such an interpretation offers an interesting alternative reading that emphasizes the important role women play in the fiction of Oxford, Mississippi’s Nobel laureate.

NOTES


2My text is Collected Stories of William Faulkner (New York, 1950), pp. 119-130.

3See Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, eds., Faulkner in the University (Charlottesville, 1959), p. 185.
THE GENRE OF THE ARCADIA

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The relationship of Sir Philip Sidney’s *New Arcadia* to convention continues to challenge critics. Sidney’s specific but indirect plea to his sovereign for more active political involvement may fatally flaw any mere aesthetic quest. Annabel Patterson reasons that “mystification was central to Sidney’s intentions from the start and that the obfuscatory textual history of the *Arcadia* is not unconnected to its genre.”\(^1\) The diversity of Elizabethan critical statements precludes its offering definitive guidelines for later readers. Alan D. Isler would reject precise identification of the work with any particular genre: “We must be prepared to ignore preconceived distinctions between epic and romance, between sub-genres or conlusions like pastoral romance and epic-romance. All such categories must be subsumed under the single, inevitably vague term ‘heroic poem’, for the heroic poem was free to draw upon any or all of them.”\(^2\) Stephen Greenblatt sees the work as an example of “the mixed mode, that strange conjunction of literary kinds which Polonius might have termed ‘tragical-comical-historical-pastoral.”\(^3\) In any event, readers generally agree that Sidney’s artistry transcends the materials which he received. Despite the extensive revision of the *Old Arcadia*, the *New Arcadia* seems to be unified,\(^4\) even if somewhat eclectic.\(^5\)

Since neither the *Astrophil and Stella* nor the *Old Arcadia*\(^6\) clearly present a “golden world” of delightful morality, Sidney’s *New Arcadia* must bear the burden of justifying the lofty claims of *The Defence of Poetry*. Placing extravagant demands on both the poet and the reader, this critical treatise emphatically links ethics with esthetics. Superficially, no creative work could come close to fulfilling these high standards. Sidney’s theory of “delightful teaching” demands that didactic allegory constantly interact with pleasing ambiguity.\(^7\) As a literary craftsman, Sidney constantly seeks coherence and symmetry in his imaginative work. Nevertheless, “the centrifugal forces of the imagination that challenge all teleology” constantly disrupt this process.\(^8\) Even if he had been entirely successful, he must still rely on the slothful brazen reader’s proper interpretation of his purposeful golden work.

Explicitly indifferent to purity of genre, Sidney relies on *energia* to lift the episodes of the *New Arcadia* into the golden world of true poetry. He does criticize the drama of his contemporaries for its failure
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to observe the unities and for its “gross absurdities” in merging comedy and tragedy (MP 114). Nevertheless, he reasons that tragedy and comedy, verse and prose, as well as “matters heroical and pastoral” may legitimately be either severed or conjoined (MP 94). His ethical linking of the right poet’s *energia* with the responsive reader makes local discontinuities between genres and episodes integral to the *Arcadia*. Inherently meritorious, delight—a focus on immediate physical beauty—bypasses humanity’s natural resistance to moral improvement. Moreover, this energy helps overcome inappropriate intellectual fixation on episodes of literature. Intensification of the speaking pictures, usually of love or physical valor, allows the reader to see through the surface of each episode of poetical justice to distinguish virtue from vice consistently. Sidney recognizes that virtue and vice are often close in the brazen world—the totality of episodes in the *Arcadia*. Nevertheless, the heightened perceptions of the golden world—the immediate episode before the reader—invariably offer an unflattering glass of reason to challenge the reader to identify the poetic justice.

I

Allegory and Didacticism

Both the ethical ideals of the *Defence* and the heroic amplification of the material of the *Old Arcadia* indicate a didactic purpose in the *New Arcadia*. Using the *Defence of Poetry* as a guide to Sidney’s artistic aims leads us to interpret Arcadian characters as instructive images of vices and virtues.\(^9\) The *New Arcadia* is not just an esthetic revision of structure and character. Sidney’s new expressive purpose grew out of his assumptions about social and political responsibility.\(^10\) Although the *Arcadia* does not explicate any particular value system, “we cannot deny the didactic component of the work.”\(^11\) Critics might question the clarity and consistency of Sidney’s value system; the complexity of his attitude toward authority might suggest “an unconscious preference for these conditions.”\(^12\) Nevertheless, at least on the surface, Sidney sees in the universe “perfect order, perfect beauty, perfect constancy,”\(^13\) all joined in “an unexpressable harmony” (NA 361).

The *Arcadia* does not, of course, need to fulfill perfectly the expectations of Sidney’s critical statement. As theory, the *Defence* holds a privileged status as a “golden” work (MP 78), a statement of “what may be and should be” (MP 81). Sidney’s moral purpose, then, forms his intellectual “fore-conceit” (MP 79) for the actual *Arcadia*. 
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Where parts of the Arcadia fail to rise to golden heights, the fault remains with the poet. Occasional triviality in the Arcadia has the precedent of the otherwise noble Pindar (MP 97). Some unevenness of technique simply causes those parts of an otherwise golden work to remain in the brazen world of nature. Sidney admires More's partly flawed Utopia: "that way of patterning a commonwealth was most absolute, though he perchance hath not so absolutely performed it" (MP 86-87). Sidney also needs an esthetic ground-plot, a profitable invention, to embody his theory. Although he diminishes the centrality of prophesy and superstition in his revision of the Old Arcadia, the oracle, on one hand, internally generates the main action and, on the other, "it stands outside of this fictive world, summarily recording Sidney's own fore-conceit of the work." Sidney's theory of poetic justice depends both on the clarity of an episode and on the subsequent resolution of the action. Complex action forces the reader to look past the often ugly means to the distant end of golden virtue. "If evil men come to the stage, they ever go out (as the tragedy writer answered to one that disliked the show of such persons) so manacled as they little animate folks to follow them" (MP 90). The end, whether in the poet's mind or in the actual work, justifies the means. Since the inappropriate withdrawal of Basilius has complicated the princes' wooing of his daughters, the immediate morality must wait on the just conclusion: "for though the ways be foul, the journey's end is most fair and honourable" (NA 109). Parthenia's disfigurement (NA 30) eventually finds resolution (NA 43-45); her triumph and the resulting idyllic domesticity (NA 371-374) must serve to diminish the impact of her tragic demise at the hands of Amphialus (NA 395-399). Juxtaposition of the more appropriate ends—the execution of the disguised Artesia (NA 431) or the accidental death of Cecropia (NA 440)—would help mitigate more ambiguous conclusions.

Simpler representations of good and evil have more immediate and direct implications for the reader. Respecting the poet's "pure simplicitie," the reader need not use "allegorie's curious frame" (AS 28.1). Just as the divine essence of the soul differs sharply from the dungeon of the body (MP 82), so virtues stand clearly opposed to vice. Sidney does tend to propose rigid moral categories of virtue and vice. His Platonic linguistics insures that the reality of these traits does not depend on their verbal realization: Aesop's fables "make many, more beastly than beasts, begin to hear the sound of virtue from these dumb speakers" (MP 87). The self-denying ardor of such figures as the female Zelmane and Palladius contrasts with the possessive longing of such
figures as Amphialus and Basilius: "The clearly discernable division between the heroic and self-destructive lovers becomes the division within the central figures." 17 The appropriately didactic end may appear immediately—Cremes is hanged shortly after his misdeeds (NA 248), Clinias executed later (NA 389-390). Superficiality itself may detach the reader from indignation at Sidney's relishing the cruel deaths of the rioting commoners (NA 280-282). The stylization of the violence and the ironic caricatures of the participants provide some measure of esthetic distance. Thus the scene may generate intellectual amusement instead of emotional involvement. 18

The optimistic Sidney asserts in his Defence that the true perception of virtue ravishes the beholder with love of its inherent beauty (MP 98). Deanne Bogdan reasons that Sidney's concept of poetry's ability "to instruct in virtue through delight arises from his belief in the intrinsically moral nature of the imagination." 19 Whereas the random action of Fortune is merely casual, virtue has a concrete authenticity. "Poetry ever sets virtue so out in her best colours, making Fortune her well-waiting handmaid, that one must needs be enamoured of her" (MP 90). Cyrus, Aeneas, and Ulysses are wholly to be admired (MP 88); the tales of Hercules, Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas give the right description of "wisdom, valour, and justice" (MP 92). Whatever the ambiguities associated with the enamoured princes, Euarchus, Pamela, and Philoclea present clear models of Sidney's concept of noble behavior. Moreover, the initial idyllic setting of Arcadia (NA 10-11) gives a bench mark for subsequent deterioration.

Vice possesses a similar clearly recognizable quality. The destruction which threatens Arcadia finds a precursor in the civil war which devastated Laconia (NA 11). Characters can have a one-dimensional exemplary nature. Figures such as Tantalus and Atreus give us "nothing that is not to be shunned" (MP 88). Anaxius has scarcely any substance besides pride, just as Plexirius represents malevolence, Cremes greed, Antiphilus selfishness, and Dametas stupidity. We should see in poetry "all virtues, vices and passions so in their own natural seats laid to the view, that we seem not to hear of them, but clearly to see through them" (MP 86). In Sidney's aureate world of "delightful teaching" (MP 81), one reads the dark side of reality allegorically while interpreting the virtuous aspect literally and directly. The controlling poet inserts emphases which automatically evaluate the merits of an episode. The historian, on the other hand, must "show doings, some to be liked, some to be misliked" (MP 88).
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The success of Sidney’s attempt—which Fulke Greville interpreted to be an effort “to turn the barren philosophy precepts into pregnant images of life”—depends on philosophical abstractions finding a local habitation in a series of discontinuous episodes or “speaking pictures.” We are “asked to look within individual pictures (in ‘outward’ setting, dress, armor, or fixed tale) to see their inward significance, and then to move processionally with them and among them.” No mere verbal construct, the golden world of poetry has a “substantial ontology.” The precept of the philosopher, on the other hand, is but “a wordish description” (MP 85). Moreover, the raw data of history may deter virtue by fixing the mind on a partial truth (MP 90). Of course, esthetic merit may conflict with ethical power. Samuel L. Wolff observed that “such marvellous involution and complexity defeat their own artistic ends.” Digressions leave loose ends to be resolved or forgotten. Aristotle’s theory, “which demands unity and necessity only for the central action while allowing great freedom for episodic elaboration, explains in part how a work like the New Arcadia could fulfill Renaissance formal expectations for the epic.” If the poet does “his part aright” (MP 88) by intensifying brazen nature into golden poetry, the reader will respond with immediate delight, not static contemplation. The pastoral shepherds are resolutely apolitical where the Arcadian peasants seethe with rebellion. Life in Arcadia consists of “a series of illogical reversals, coincidence, and sudden revelations.” The forcible juxtaposition of these extremes creates the “divine force” (MP 77) Sidney values in poetry.

By forcing the reader’s attention away from the notable example, the digressions interrupt identification with any particular character. The reader must constantly return to an “inward light” (MP 91) to separate good from bad in the example, to formulate and to apply the poem’s precept voluntarily. Distancing generates a challenging energy in the example. Each momentary perception constantly conveys the reader into a world of benign improvement. “For as the image of each action stirreth and instructeth the mind, so the lofty image of such worthies most inflameth the mind with desire to be worthy, and informs with counsel how to be worthy” (MP 98). Love of nation creates powerful emotions in us (MP 86). The golden example has a power to “strike” and “pierce” as it possesses the sight of the soul (MP 85).

Agreeing with Spenser that example has priority over precept, Sidney stresses immediate physical proximity. The presence of beauty contributes to the effect of virtue. Reflecting a common theme of Sidney, Pyrocles declares: “it likes me much better when I find virtue
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in a fair lodging than when I am bound to seek it in an ill-favoured creature, like a pearl in a dung-hill" (NA 73; see also AS 25.9-11; 56.5-6). The absence of Erona, Helen, and Basilius encourages rebellion whereas the presence of Euarchus gives "a fatherly example unto his people" (NA 160). The Helots follow Pyrocles "as if their captain had been a root out of which, as into branches, their courage had sprung" (NA 37). A place may focus the powers of the mind. Clauis says of the spot from which Urania departed: "as this place served us to think of these things, so those things serve as places to call to memory more excellent matters" (NA 4). Pictures may also stimulate the imagination. Queen Helen gazes at a portrait of Amphialus (NA 58), and the picture of Philocleia rekindles the affection Pyrocles had for Zelmane (NA 97-98).

Imitation teaches best. Pyrocles says of Musidorus: "He taught me by word, and best by example, giving me in him so lively an image of virtue as ignorance could not cast such mist over mine eyes as not to see and to love it" (NA 235). Even the recalcitrant may find improvement. Although Erona is too weak to have a lastingly benign effect on Antiphilus, the presence of the noble princes improves even this despicable character. The princes' "virtues, while they were present good schoolmasters, suppressed his vanities" (NA 298-299). Military crises likewise demand exemplary leadership. Amphialus succeeds explicitly through instructing by example rather than by precept (NA 328, 339). On the other side, Philanax is the fountain of valor for the troops of Basilius against Amphialus (NA 344).

II

Inherent Ambiguity

Ambiguity arises here from the disparity between theory and practice. Not only does delight often depend on complexity, but Sidney knows that "good lie hid in nearness of the evil" (MP 100). Thus, the religious Sidney agrees with Richard Hooker's observation that "there is no particular evil which hath not some appearance of goodnes whereby to insinuate itself." Sidne26 y follows Aristotle in exploiting "the idea that specific virtues and vices are potentialities of each other." Moreover, citing Aristotle, Sidney proposes that art's distancing transforms ugliness into beauty (MP 92; see also AS 34.4).

Relying heavily on physical attractiveness, Sidney tends to make all beauty meritorious. Sidney feels that man alone has "that gift to discern beauty" (MP 104). Some superficiality of beauty is perhaps
inevitable in the contrast with internal content. The “inside strength” of Plato’s work is philosophy, but the skin and beauty depends on poetry (MP 75). Andromana is “a woman beautiful enough, if it be possible that the outside only can justly entitle a beauty” (NA 215). Basilius, Gyncia, Artesia, and Cecropia—despite their diverse ages and moral states—possess some degree of beauty. Daniel Traister points out that although Sidney flatters Stella for her beauty, his “anamorphic manipulation” of her figure puts her into the tradition of “the deformed mistress.”

Successful and truly good characters are quantitatively more beautiful than the failures; the triumphant Philoclea has more beauty than the doomed Zelmane (NA 268).

Sidney’s intense appreciation for physical beauty encourages him to prefer innocence over moral authority. He makes the beautiful Philoclea instead of the majestic Pamela central to the Arcadia. Perhaps involuntarily, Sidney exclaims: “and alas, sweet Philoclea, how hath my pen till now forgot thy passions, since to thy memory principally all this long matter is intended? Pardon the slackness to come to those woes, which having caused in others, thou didst feel in thyself” (NA 143). The characters in the New Arcadia exemplify Sidney’s own thematic focus. Besides enchanting Pyrocles and Amphialus, Philoclea has Pheblius (NA 342) and an unnamed knight (NA 371) to serve her. Likewise the martial Pyrocles rather than the politic Musidorus is the masculine center. The appearance of Pyrocles at the house of Kalander eclipses the attention paid to Musidorus (NA 42). Besides beguiling Dido, Andromana, and Zelmane with his masculinity, the transvestite Pyrocles not only attracts Philoclea and Gyncia but also wins almost as many masculine hearts as Philoclea. Basilius, the rebel farmer, and Zoilus fall for his/her charms; Musidorus nearly does so as well (NA 68-69). Thus Mark Rose probably over-states Sidney’s intent for his readers to find the disguised Pyrocles offensive. Pamela certainly justifies the actions of Musidorus. His intellect, beauty, wealth, and accomplishments make his self-abasement for her sake all the more meritorious. She cannot, therefore, “without the detestable stain of ungratefulness abstain from loving him” (NA 152).

Following Plato, Sidney emphatically yokes virtue with beauty. Turner says the central motif in the Arcadia is “that beauty is a reflection of virtue and the ‘divine sparke’ descended from heaven.”

Sight of virtue inspires “strange flames of Love” (AS 25.4); Amphialus proposes that looking “through love upon the majesty of virtue shining through beauty” captivates one (NA 401). An example
like Stella may combine Nature and the infinite (AS 35.3-4) or virtue and beauty (AS 56.6; 25.13; 71.2). She throws reason on the desires of Astrophil (AS 25.4; 42.4). Similarly, the beauty of Urania teaches the beholders chastity (NA 5). Glorification of beauty may result in essentially shallow relationships. Musidorus falls hopelessly in love with Pamela before knowing of her values or even hearing her speak (NA 107); Amphialus obviously has no mutual relationship with Philoclea.

The presence of inherently ambiguous characters tests the limits of Sidney’s theory. Where even the ridiculous Basilius is “a comely old man” (NA 15) who possesses courtly behavior (NA 81), the dedicated and clever Amphialus can be neither scorned nor admired. His voyeurism finds an immediate parallel in that of Pyrocles/Zelmane (NA 195), and Philoclea’s rejection of him in favor of Pyrocles rests on no demonstrable difference of merit. A far more skillful political leader than Basilius, Amphialus not only orders his defence with Machiavellian skill but can also fight Musidorus to a stand-still. Nevertheless, Amphialus fails to reconcile his political responsibilities with his passion for Philoclea. His misfortunes in love over-ride his inherent nobility; ultimately his internal conflicts lead to self-destruction.32

The personal and political destruction attending this character through his participation in the schemes of his mother, Cecropia, helps justify the intense but limited focus of Pyrocles and Musidorus. Despite a residue of ironic scorn in the Old Arcadia adhering to their actions in the New Arcadia, the innocence of the princes towards love contrasts with depravity (Pamphilus, Plexirtus, Antiphilus) elsewhere in the work. “If in the comedy of the central love plot Pyrocles and Musidorus abandon themselves to the ambiguous despair and griefs of a love at once lustful and heavenly, they also have their moments of recovery in which they regain that internal balance which gives ‘a majestic to adversitie.’”33 Sidney’s heroic heightening of his ironic Old Arcadia sanctions the Countess of Pembroke’s deletion of Musidorus’s proposed rape of Pamela and Pyrocles’s premartial intercourse with Philoclea. Indeed, the intimacy between the talented brother and sister may even have encouraged Sir Philip to provide his sibling with explicit instructions for such revisions. The simple ignoble and degrading disguise of Pyrocles in the Old Arcadia finds some psychological justification and depth in the prior sentimental actions of the female Zelmane. The unfinished state of the New Arcadia will leave unanswered the extent to which Sidney intended to move his heroes towards a redemptive ending. Their behavior during the captivity
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episode of the New Arcadia has certainly elevated the princes far beyond their status as the frustrated Petrarchan heroes of the Old Arcadia. Nevertheless, the great trial in the last book has a dignity of its own, and the awakening of Basilius may be seen as representing "the triumph of equity over law, the accomodation of justice to the actual circumstances of the world."35

III

Fixation and Transformation

The dangers and glories of emotional fixation pervade Sidney's work. The theme probably arises in his own tendency towards melancholy. Not only was Sidney's father melancholic, but Languet warns Sidney himself constantly about his over-seriousness. Sidney responds: "I readily allow that I am often more serious than either my age or my pursuits demand: yet this I have learned by experience that I am never less a prey to melancholy than when I am earnestly applying the feeble powers of my mind to some high and difficult object."37 Passion constantly interferes with the moral sense of duty. Although both the inward light (MP 91) and a natural inclination towards poetry (MP 75) constantly push and challenge the will, the pull of some external stimulus gives a necessary direction. Ficino had revived the Aristotelian concept of heroic melancholy. Not surprisingly, then, two of Sidney's Arcadian heroes, Argalus (NA 27) and Amphialus (NA 92, 403) must fight against depression to achieve their military exploits. Sidney expresses only a mild disapproval of the trivial and aimless Philantus. This placid individual, "not given greatly to struggle with his own disposition, followed the gentle current of it" (NA 91). He even loves casually, "if that may be called love which he rather did take into himself willingly than by which he was taken forcibly" (NA 215).

Sidney's piety insured a benign universe which offers "new-budding occasions" for poetry in the observation of virtually everything (MP 116). Ordinary individuals have an "inward light" (MP 91; see also AS 5.1-2; 88.10-11) whereas heroic minds have an "inward sunne" (AS 25.8). Musidorus asserts (via Mopsa) that Pamela has "a divine spark" (NA 130). Nevertheless, without some external energy, precepts tend to lie lifeless in the memory (MP 85-86). Our erected wit informs us of perfection, but "our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it" (MP 79). "Unworthy objects" may infect the fancy (MP 104).
Emotional fixation remains inexplicable. A small annoyance simply confirms the will, and “so perchance of a changeable purpose make an unchangeable resolution.” Sometimes passivity is not only inevitable, but appropriate. Sidney writes to Walsingham that one should rely primarily on a higher power: “It is no greater fault to have confidence in man’s power than it is too hastily to despair of God’s work.”

Intense personal commitment runs throughout Sidney’s works. Despite Stella’s final denial of his suit, Astrophil cannot accept alternative feminine consolation (AS 91.97). Argalus rejects even a perfect replica of the Parthenia he thinks deceased. He observes: “it was Parthenia’s self I loved, and love, which no likeness can make one, no commandment dissolve, no foulness defile, nor no death finish” (NA 44). Amphialus pursues the unavailable Philoclea instead of the far more appropriate Queen Helen, thus staining his glory with unkindness (NA 66). Musidorus finds active resistance to love counterproductive (NA 108). Erona has had nude statues of Cupid defaced. Shortly thereafter, she is “stricken with most obstinate love” (NA 205) for the base-born, worthless Antiphilus. King Tiridates feels the same passion for her as does Plangus (NA 301). The noble Tydeus and Telenor blind themselves to the clear treachery of Plexirus. The admirable loyalty of Philanax to Basilius early in the work (NA 20) degenerates into a dangerous persecution of the surviving Arcadian nobility at the supposed death of his king (in the ending supplied by the Old Arcadia, of course).

Some intense commitment is meritorious. History deserves respect, for “in itself antiquity be venerable” (MP 74) Indeed, Chaucer’s failures are to be “forgiven in so reverent an antiquity” (MP 112). Moreover, attention to conventions and to observable reality keeps poetry eicastic instead of phantastic (MP 104). Astrophil need only to copy Stella (AS 3.14) to express his entire being (AS 6.13-14). The written expression of her name justifies a poem (AS 50). Writing inspired by the sight of Stella will insure fame (AS 15.13-14). Just as the Arcadian princes constantly embrace and evaluate experience as they begin their active careers (NA 163-165), so must the poet respect “art, imitation, and exercise” (MP 112). Although discipline will not make true poets, such diligence may prevent bad poetry.

Despite its fallen, often corrupt, state, reason challenges the lethargic will. Even when his wit strives to defend passion, Astrophil faces the sharp check of “Reason’s audite” (AS 18.2). Proud of being “a piece of a logician” (MP 73), Sidney suggests that “an unflattering
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glass of reason” (MP 111) may improve the poet’s skills. Lack of
discipline results in premature statements. He declares, “where we
should exercise to know, we exercise as having known; and so is our
brain delivered of much matter which never was begotten of knowledge”
(MP 112). Good poetry has a prose foundation anchored in fact.
“When he did not otherwise have a compelling satiric or moral point
which he thought could be most effectively made by departing from
geographical fact, Sidney sought geographical accuracy as part of his
overall insistence that every place, even a land called Arcadia, need at all
times to be actively governed by a responsible ruler.”42 The
counterpart to lethargy and fixation is radical transformation. Although
Sidney accepts the Calvinist emphasis on the corruption of the natural
will, he agrees with the Neoplatonists that poetry provides a link
between fallen humanity and the divine.43 Musidorus and Pyrocles
give us examples of heroic humiliation by changing status and sexual
appearance. Elizabeth Dipple sees these transformations as noble: “In
the New Arcadia it is an infinitely elastic theme which serves the ideas
of love, faithfulness, and unity of being, whereas in the Old Arcadia it
had served the idea of fragmentation and failure.44 Strephon and Claius
certainly open the New Arcadia with a statement of their benign
transformation. As shepherds (disguised gentlemen in the Old Arcadia),
they have limits on their growth that the princes will not have.

Although Hazlett—like many readers today—disliked the rhetoric
of the Arcadia, the heightened style is essential to Sidney’s purpose.
“The rhetorical dimension of Sidney’s text conveys much of its
essential meaning. This meaning for Sidney, and for the reader in the
process of reading the Arcadia, is that there is simply no reality that is
not verbally, that is rhetorically, structured.”45 Aristotle’s
psychological thrust guides Sidney in constructing the formal oratory of
his characters; dramatic effectiveness demands that his heroes have some
sensitivity to the motives of their audience.46 Nevertheless, Sidney’s
overall rhetoric generally detaches us from the action, “so that tragedy is
turned into spectacle and admiration aroused in place of pity and fear.”47
The artifice of oratory mutes the effect of such risky human topics as
incest, homosexuality, and transvestism which run throughout the
Arcadia.

An energy resides within the golden object. The heroic “maketh
magnanimity and justice shine through all misty fearfulness and foggy
desires” (MP 98). The external example challenges the intellect as well
as the emotions; we should see if examples of wisdom and temperance
“even to an ignorant man carry not an apparent shining” (MP 86).
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Even a child can interpret drama correctly. The brilliant surface entices rather than threatens. Plato and Cicero say that "who could see virtue would be wonderfully ravished with the love of her beauty" (MP 98). Stylistically, "forcibleness or energia" (MP 117) joins with the discontinuous plot to move us from one episode to the next, thus shifting the attention from immediate bad deeds. Puttenham defines energia as "a sence of such wordes & speaches inwardly working a stirre to the mynde." 48 The poet’s industry and sincerity have charged the poem with authenticity. Bypassing verbal understanding, this force "confirms the sincerity of the poet’s conceit by persuading the reader of its clarity." 49

To conclude, in a bold attempt to elevate romantic love to heroic dignity, the Arcadia indirectly unsettles the reader with multiple genres and an episodic plot. Radical disguise obliterates names and identities as love detaches the characters from their political and military duties. Equating contemplation with lethargy, Sidney justifies poetry on the grounds of its ability to move the soul. As a Neoplatonist, he would insist that persons immediately detach themselves from each perception of a particular beauty. Constant striving towards moral virtue helps free the individual from the tyranny of the physical example. The golden world of true poetry—always an original creation—depends on the right poet’s transmitting a divine force to the responsive reader. Ultimately, however, Sidney must rely on the reader’s inward light as well as the poet’s energia to detach the focus from the questionable morality of any particular episode.

NOTES


3Sidney’s Arcadia and the Mixed Mode,” SP, 70 (1973), 269.
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7Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten (Oxford, 1973), p. 81. Further references to The Defense of Poetry will be cited in the text as MP.


15"Astrophil and Stella" in The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney. ed. W. A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford, 1965), 28.12. All further references to this work will be cited in the text as AS.


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37 Wallace, p. 135.


41 This distinction comes, of course, from Plato’s *Sophist.* See my “Sir Philip Sidney and the Renaissance Knowledge of Plato,” *ES,* 51 (1970), 411-424.


44 “Metamorphosis in Sidney’s Arcadias,” *PO,* 50 (1971), 62.


THE RADICALNESS OF THESE DIFFERENCES:
READING “THE PURLOINED LETTER”

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Dupin, master sleuth, has paid a visit to the fiendish Minister D_, in search of a stolen letter. He sees a letter “radically different from the one of which the Prefect has read (us) so minute a description.”1 It is, he says, “the radicalness of these differences” which leads him to the conclusion that this soiled and dirty letter can be no other than the one he is in search of. In point of fact, he knew this at first glance but “the radicalness of these differences” is the strongest corroborative evidence necessary to put the matter beyond all doubt. Here, in brief compass, we find an analogy to the act of reading readings of “The Purloined Letter,” the text in which the scene outlined appears.

Whether we read Daniel Hoffman’s Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe and discover “the primal truths and anguish of our being,” or, with David Halliburton, find an anticipation of “the procedures of Martin Heidegger,” we know, at first glance, that we are dealing with the very same “Purloined Letter.”2 Further, it is “the radicalness of these differences” in the various interpretations which precisely corroborates our knowledge. This is because we expect a richly textured and multi-layered artwork to generate variegated critical readings. It is important to canvass these readings, both for their intrinsic value in helping us better appreciate what can be posited of the text, and for the light they shed on what happens when any one reading attempts to appropriate Poe’s tale. We shall then be in a better position to consider: 1) “The Purloined Letter” in relation to Poe’s work as a whole; 2) its relative status in the context of the literary world; and 3) one more re-reading of the story itself, hopefully excluding the extravagances of certain interpretations, while incorporating the most fruitful features of each individual interpretation. To this end, we might begin with a consideration of one particularly outré critical school, the psychoanalytic.

Jacques Lacan’s reading of Marie Bonaparte’s reading of Baudelaire’s, apparent, misreading of the text became part of a campaign to effect a coup in the palace of French psychoanalysis. Bonaparte had seen “The Purloined Letter” as representing “in effect, the Oedipal struggle.”3 The vision had had Freud’s venerable blessing. Bonaparte, then, could be viewed as King Freud’s French Queen. When Lacan attempted to undermine her position and usurp her authority, he was, from the tale’s standpoint, acting as the unscrupulous Minister D_.

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Parodically, and aptly enough, Jacques Derrida thereupon entered the interpretive arena as Dupin. His "The Purveyor of Truth" showed that, while Lacan’s method of interpretation differed radically from Bonaparte’s, the truth of the text for both was located in an Oedipal triad. Thus, Derrida revealed that Lacan had stolen Bonaparte’s, ultimately Freud’s, truth for his own self-glorification. In doing so, however, Derrida re-enacted that very triadic structure. Hence, the parodic nature of the Derridean enterprise. While proving the falsity of the psychoanalytic readings of "The Purloined Letter," Derrida himself became the Dupin of this false reading, while Bonaparte played the Queen, and Lacan, the fiendish Minister D_. Such is the bizarre nature of what reading readings of "The Purloined Letter" may result in.

Nor did psychoanalytic, and deconstructive psychoanalytic, readings end there. The whole question was taken up again by Barbara Johnson in an essay entitled "The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida." She showed that whoever oversaw the interpretation of the text would automatically assume the Dupin position. Ironically, as her title indicates, her discussion too inevitably revolves around three terms, as had Bonaparte’s, Lacan’s, and Derrida’s.

One final off-shoot of the psychoanalytic branch might be cited for it will lead us back to the problems involved in readings of "The Purloined Letter," and help us determine their common roots. That off-shoot is Shoshana Felman’s "On Reading Poetry." Viewing Lacan’s contribution as having a liberating effect in its insistence on "the unreadable in the text," Felman concludes that the tale should be treated as "not just an allegory of psychoanalysis but also, at the same time, an allegory of poetic writing." It is Felman’s own insistence, with no explanation whatever, that "The Purloined Letter" be viewed as an allegory of, at least, some kind that makes her work exemplary. No matter which critical reading we approach, we shall find a tendency to allegorize the story’s meaning to make it fit into some preconceived pattern of the critic’s own devising. We shall find, also, that the more universalizing and all encompassing any particular critic’s schema is, the greater will be the deviation from the text itself. In short, "The Purloined Letter" is itself constantly being purloined for the sake of critical power bids.

Before moving on to more sober analyses of "The Purloined Letter," it is as well to confront the psychoanalytic readings to clear the text of their shadow in the hopes of achieving some critical insights. Bonaparte, as we have seen, considered the story to be essentially Oedipal. The story, then, was really about a father and son’s struggle
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“over the mother’s penis” (Bonaparte, p. 483). Her analysis stemmed from the fact that Freud held that the realization of the mother’s lack of a penis is “the greatest trauma” (Derrida, p. 87). Given Bonaparte’s desire to find a triadic structure in the work, it is not surprising that she indeed found one. Lacan too found what he wished to find, though he complicated his analysis by making explicit the repetition scene which Bonaparte had taken for granted. Felman, following Lacan, also highlighted the two scenes in which the letter is stolen, but extended her conclusion to the role of the literary critic, because she is one.

It is difficult to believe that any of these interpreters ever actually read the story. Even a cursory inspection would show that the two “dispossessing the possessor” scenes are radically different. In the first, there are two “exalted personages,” and the Minister D_. In the second, there are only two people, Dupin and the Minister. In the first scene, the King, so he might be dubbed solely for convenience, is not “not seeing,” as Lacan and Felman maintain, but not even looking. In the second, again contra Lacan and Felman, there are no police who are “not seeing” but simply no police at all. The only third character in the recovery episode is “the pretended lunatic,” actually a man in Dupin’s pay, who is not in the room at all.

Little or no attention has been paid this character for he is as disturbing to the Paris crowd as he would prove to be to any wide-ranging critical interpretation. Yet, his role is vital to the outcome of the tale. Without him, as Dupin remarks, he “might never have left the Ministerial presence alive” (697). He has, moreover, a piquant rightness, and an artistic significance. In the midst of a defenseless “crowd of women and children,” a madman appears with a musket. The clamor disturbs the Minister, who, it should be noted, is a moral madman, a monstrum horrendum, a threat to civil order. The “lunatic” is found to be harmless, the musket “without ball,” at precisely the moment that D_ himself is rendered harmless by Dupin’s stealing the letter. What, unknown to him, the Minister actually witnesses from his window is a pantomime of his own predicament, a staging of his true identity and fate. The brief drama, designed by Dupin, is as integral to the tale as Hamlet’s The Mousetrap is to Hamlet, while it also adds to the rich doubling motif that runs throughout “The Purloined Letter.” Further, the exalted female personage, who was threatened “in her boudoir” in the first scene, has become a whole crowd of women and children threatened in a public place. Thus, Poe points up the societal and general implications of the Minister’s outrage against a single woman. As in a Greek Tragedy, what endangers the Queen has repercussions throughout the entire body politic. Dupin’s
immediate reference to “the good people of Paris,” on recounting this episode, is then, not totally ironic, nor is it without resonance in terms of the text as a whole.

Our overview of psychoanalytical interpretations, therefore, has revealed, in their starkest form, certain general features of critical readings as these pertain to “The Purloined Letter.” There is a tendency for a generative reading, such as Bonaparte’s, to perpetuate its own focus of vision, the triadic structure, in all subsequent readings to which it gives rise, regardless of that vision’s incompatibility with the elements of the text. Also, there is a tendency to allegorize the characters and significance of the text. The work, once appropriated, is used as a source of power, rather like the purloined letter itself, to undermine, or enhance, the authority of one favored critic, or critical reading, within the same school. There is an absolute disregard of the “minor” details of the tale since these cannot be assimilated to, and would prove disruptive of, the totalizing vision. To such critical schools, to actually read the story would be a veritable Herbert Spencerian tragedy; “a hypothesis destroyed by a fact.” The four aspects here noted, to a greater or lesser degree, characterize all exhaustive critical readings of “The Purloined Letter.”

Thus, to address only the last of these aspects, in no interpretation do we find any reference to the “pretended lunatic,” cited above, even though madness pervades Poe’s entire oeuvre, and many words have been expended, by Richard Wilbur, for instance, on the significance of the Orang Outang in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” Again, little has been said of the narrator. The general verdict on him is captured by Joseph Moldenhauer’s observation that “the voice of the ratiocinative tales is that of the apprentice figure.” The only significant advance on this judgement is to be found in Brander Matthews’s “Poe and the Detective Story,” written as early as 1907. Matthews argued that the narrator mediates between us and the staggering genius of Dupin, and suggested he be viewed as a Greek chorus who incites us to astonishment. In this light, the narrator would fit in neatly with the Greek parallel we noted in connection with the public implications of the act against the Queen. Nevertheless, suggestive as this Grecian motif is, it leaves out of account the importance Poe generally gives his narrators and, more specifically, fails to see any development in the narrating persona, from “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” through “The Mystery of Marie Roget,” to “The Purloined Letter” itself.

By the time of the latter, the narrator is no longer just a voice or chorus but has become a shrewd, critical intelligence, capable of
laughing with the Prefect G_, and at Dupin and itself. These brief incursions into almost virgin critical territory will be important when we finally come to a re-reading of the text. They point to the uniqueness of "The Purloined Letter," a uniqueness too often sacrificed to some abstracting critical scheme.

Together with the narrator and the hired man, the Prefect G_ has received scant regard from critics, though he has attracted an unfair amount of abuse. None of this abuse is warranted by the text. He is pompous, over methodical, plodding, and even given to cant but, on the Prefect's arrival "au troisième, No. 33," the narrator distinctly states: "We gave him a hearty welcome" (680). He risks losing his job by confiding in Dupin. He has his human side too. He owns, "my honor is interested, and...the reward is enormous." Here, his motives for redeeming the letter exactly reduplicate those of Dupin. Dupin, we remember, is quick to produce his cheque book for the fifty thousand franc reward, while his deeper motivation is a matter of honor, revenge for the evil turn that the Minister D_ did him at Vienna.

Nor is this all. The very title of the story is taken from the Prefect's coinage (681). That the other characters adopt his linguistic usage, at least, suggests they all share a community of values. This impression is enhanced by the fact that G_'s description of the Minister, "the thief...who dares all things, those unbecoming as well as those becoming a man" (682), is a preformulation of Dupin's own evaluation of D_ as "that monstrum horrendum, an unprincipled man of genius" (697). Like the peasants who linguistically fused both the mansion and the family into "The House of Usher," in "The Fall of the House of Usher," G_'s language usage is a guarantee to the reader that a value system obtained beyond the walls of any one individual's self enclosed world, be it Roderick Usher's "Palace of Art," or the Minister D_'s attendant infested hotel. Even when Dupin had been at his most dismissive of the police, in "The Mystery of Marie Roget," he had twice dubbed them "myridions" (519, 549), though he, presumably, does so for their uniform, ant-like qualities, by so doing, he implies that the Prefect must be considered as Aeneas, Achilles, or, at the very least, Patroclus.

Far fetched as this may be, in "The Purloined Letter," if nowhere else, G_ should be considered as one of "the musketeers" fighting to protect the Queen's honor; a little slow, a little conceited, but the very embodiment of the norms of honor shared by the narrator and Dupin. We shall return to this theme later.

All the most influential, and, in fact, the best, readings of "The Purloined Letter" have been embedded in studies that have treated the
story in the context of Poe’s work as a whole. In reviewing them, therefore, we may, rather economically, assess the importance of the tale in the context of Poe’s total achievement and development. Thus, Joseph Moldenhauer sees the tales of ratiocination as expressing the active/manic pole of Poe’s sensibility, the other pole, the submissive/depressive, being represented in the poems and the tales of terror. In the Dupin stories, he points out, the “materials of moral experience are rendered beautiful by the detective’s superhuman, aesthetic, intelligence” (Moldenhauer, p. 287). Dupin, then, is, like a god, or demigod, a master artist forming coherent order from discordant experience. Moldenhauer, further, makes Dupin into an analogy of the Poe critical persona. In doing so, he anticipates David Ketterer’s point that the detective stories, with their emphasis on intuition and reason, are an essential step on the road to “Eureka.”

Robert Daniel, in one of the finest studies, shows how Dupin unites, in one character, three of Poe’s most treasured personae: Poe, the puzzle solver, as in the Graham’s Magazine challenge; Usher, the decadent aristocrat; Poe, the critic and lover of paradox. He mentions that Dupin, in explaining how the Prefect is misled by simplicity, echoes Poe’s discussion of prosody in “The Rationale of Verse.” Where Daniel is most suggestive, however, is in his treatment of the detective story as a genre. He sees it as having close connections with the rise of the city, coupled with the public demand for a new realism, in the 1840’s. He also underlines two fantastic elements in the detective story, which militated against the new realism; the bizarre nature of the crimes to be solved, and the intuitive solution by an amateur. These points, though we should have to modify the word “bizarre” in relation to “The Purloined Letter,” are extremely suggestive for they emphasize the very public nature of the genre.

Finally, we should look at the works of Richard Wilbur and Daniel Hoffman since both are expertly acute critics of the Dupin stories. Moreover, as both critics cover Poe’s total oeuvre, their works help us to better locate the importance of the tale. Wilbur views all of Poe’s work as ultimately tending to an embodiment of visionary truth. He considers Dupin as an early version of Poe’s Kepler, in “Eureka,” who understands the meaning of the universe “through mere dint of intuition” (Wilbur, pp. 62-70). He, further, says, of “the Purloined Letter,” “despite its adequacy as a detective tale, and as a vindication of pure intuition, (it) is also an allegory of conflict within a single soul” (Wilbur, p. 62). He then goes on to show the many parallels between various characters in the tale and those in other Poe stories. Thus, the Queen is like Ligeia, and should be considered as “that sense of beauty
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which must not be the captive of our lower nature.” The Prefect is “that methodical reason which creeps and crawls.” The Minister D_ is like William Wilson, the orangutan or Fortunato. That is, he is the double and our bestial nature. (Wilbur, pp. 61-63). In short, while Wilbur encourages us to consider “The Purloined Letter” as combining many of Poe’s preoccupations, his tendency to allegorize the work robs it of all specificity and uniqueness. Like his “The House of Poe,” the studies here referred to often leave the re-reader wondering, “if the stories can be so readily schematized, are they worth reading at all?”

No such response will be elicited from Hoffman’s reading of “The Purloined Letter.” Beneath the pyrotechnics and ellipses of his style, Hoffman offers a reading which is fully consonant with all the features of the text. He detects a love story in which the original letter to the Queen was penned by her lover, Dupin. In Dupin’s replacing of this letter with a facsimile, also written by Dupin, Hoffman espies the perfect revenge, and accounts for the significance of the Crebillon quotation which ends the tale. In Crebillon himself, Hoffman notes a precursor of both Poe and Dupin; an artist fallen on evil days, slandered at court, and living in “a garret with dogs, cats, and ravens” (Hoffman, p. 133). Further, unlike Wilbur, he takes seriously Dupin’s revenge motive and relates it to his repaying Le Bon in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” This is an important point for it underscores the humanizing of Dupin, which Wilbur’s allegorizing formalism overlooks, and which, moreover, was to become a part of Poe’s legacy to Conan Doyle, in whose works the Minister D_ was transmogrified into the diabolical Moriarty. Hoffman makes two more important contributions. Firstly, he links “the unscrupulous genius of D_” to “the resolvent genius of Dupin” and equates this link with “an indictment” of the system which has no place “for intellectual distinction, for genius” (p. 121). He thereby, reinforces the artist criminal theme beloved of the romantics. Although I believe he is wrong to do so, after all the smart boy in the marble game was able to identify with a dullard, yet this placing of the story in a wider societal context will be crucial when we come to our reading of “The Purloined Letter.” Finally, and no mean contribution, Hoffman dubs the story, “this masterpiece of ratiocination” (p. 136).

The reason why this last is both welcome and somewhat surprising is that few of the readings scanned have felt called upon to make any evaluative aesthetic pronouncement on “The Purloined Letter.” This is odd, in light of Poe’s intense consciousness of purely aesthetic value, in such critical works as “The Rationale of Verse” and “The Philosophy of Composition.” The critics enable us to address “The Letter” as an
essential step towards “Eureka.” They give us insight into important aspects of the tale, such as the function of the Queen, the role of Dupin, the “eternal triangle” configuration, the detective genre, the typical Poe preoccupations, and the like. What they fail, or, perhaps, do not attempt, to assess is whether or not “The Purloined Letter” works as art. Doubtless, they imply that it, self-evidently, does. Nevertheless, the fact that it conforms, almost perfectly, to Poe’s strictures on poetic composition, in its suggestiveness, its structural compactness, its single, well-wrought theme, and its economy of language: this is seldom explicitly formulated. Again, while Ketterer, admirably, indicates how the criminal motivation becomes increasingly rational, in the Dupin trilogy, “from the irrationality of the orangutan, the crime passionel...to political advancement,” he does not give any aesthetic grounds for this shift in emphasis (Ketterer, p. 251).

Yet, what strikes the reader of “The Purloined Letter” is its near perfection of form and the inevitability of the action. It does not verge on the ludicrous, as “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” does. In the former, “Dupin’s fancy reasoning” is not “made supererogatory by his possession of the tuft of hair,” as it is in “The Murders” (Daniel, p. 50). Neither is the narration over-prolix, as “The Mystery of Marie Roget” tends to be. “The Purloined Letter” is about one half the length of “The Murders,” and one third that of “The Mystery.” In the first paragraph, the scene is set: some self advertisement, by allusion to “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” and “the Mystery of Marie Roget,” is accomplished; and the three principal actors of the drama are presented. By page three, the reader knows the crime, the criminal, and the motive. By page eight, the case is solved. The remaining ten pages recount the subdued titaic struggle between Dupin and the Minister D_. The theorizing is minimal. What makes this density and economy the more remarkable is that all the characters, save Dupin, are merely letters. Using only the smallest unit of the literary artist’s tools, the “I” narrator, two “exalted personages,” D_ and G_, Poe succeeds in evoking complex relationships and a subtle web of conflicts. “The Purloined Letter” is surely a triumph of artistic accomplishment; some letters purloined from the language have been made to yield up a fused unity which can arouse our sympathies, touch our moral sensibilities, and cause an immense proliferation of critical readings.

Of the detective stories, “The Purloined Letter” is by far the most perfect of Poe’s achievements. He himself recognized this, with uncharacteristic modesty, when he wrote to Lowell, in 1844, that it was “perhaps the best of my tales of ratiocination.” Part of what makes
it the best is that very rationality which Ketterer noted. As Mabbott expressed it, “its great merit lies in the fascination of the purely intellectual plot, and in the absence of the sensational.”¹⁵ In this respect only “The Gold-Bug” even approximates it. In terms of Poe’s entire oeuvre, it not only most nearly approaches Poe’s own high aesthetic standards but would meet the demands of almost any conceivable appraiseive criteria; be those realist, symbolist, or whatever. Its ability to accommodate incompatible schools is exemplified in the very title itself. “The Purloined Letter” is as descriptively literal of the story’s content as anyone could wish. And still, that strange word “purloin” (Norman Fr, purloigner: pur, away + loign, far), pompous in any other context, is here so pregnant of allusions to folk tales and the long ago, to French court intrigues, to displacements, and to dreams.

R. M. Fletcher has distinguished three distinct idioms which go to form Poe’s style: “his mechanically stereotyped vocabulary; his vocabulary of momentary inspiration; his vocabulary based on allusion and analogy.” He showed that, when these vocabularies are working in harmony, as they indeed are in “The Purloined Letter,” Poe is “writing at his very best.”¹⁶ Here we find a serious and detailed stylistic appraisal of Poe’s tale also bearing out the high praise this short story surely deserves. The self-sufficiency of the plot, and the succinctness of the presentation, which we have examined, are also Poe “writing at his very best.”

Among the many intriguing obiter dicta which Derrida let drop, there is a mention, but only a mention, of the story’s “framing” (Derrida, p. 102). A scrutiny of this feature of the work will reveal a remarkable dexterity in narrative technique, just one further instance that “The Purloined Letter” is Poe “at his very best.”

The “I,” as we have seen, recounts the arrival of G_. The time is evening. The season is autumn. The year is 18___. The saga continues with some brisk, realistic dialogue, in the course of which G_ tells of the Minister D_’s action initiating act. One month elapses, and again, G_ arrives to find “I” and Dupin “occupied very nearly as before.” Dialogue ensues. G_ leaves with the letter. Dupin then details, in the past tense, his successful ploy to out-manoeuvre the Minister D_. Thus, we have three narrators, three tales told in the past, three tales told in a library. It is as if time past only lives to be recaptured in time present, in a library. The effect is to confer an eternal significance on the events narrated. “The Purloined Letter” is the perfect realization of the goals of the early “Folio Club,” the culmination of what Poe could achieve in, and with, letters, when not simply using them to “X Paragrabs.”
Should such an assessment of "The Purloined Letter," in relation to Poe's artistic evolution seem valid, it would certainly make the story an eligible candidate for high office in the literary world. As a short story, it is a prototype of that specialty of American short story writers from James through Hemingway to Barthelme; the art of leaving things out. So, we do not know what indiscretion the Queen was guilty of. For the matter of that, we do not even know she is the Queen. We do not know what relationship obtains between Dupin and D_. We do not even know if there is one. We do not know the contents of the letter. In fact, we do not know much at all. Hence, the radicalness of the differences in readings which we have traced. If it is one of the aims of the greatest modern short stories to make the reader work, "The Purloined Letter" is a tyrannic master of a precursor.

In the literary annals, of course, Poe has a peculiar position as the inventor of the detective genre, or sub genre. This is a peculiar position because, although the acknowledged experts from Conan Doyle to Dorothy L. Sayers would agree that Poe is the founder, most critics are not very happy with such a sub genre being considered literature at all. What rankles is that the detective story is an immensely popular literary form. Somewhat like the Prefect G_, literary critics are usually guilty of a non distributo medi. Believing that "bad art" is popular, they thence infer that "popular art" is bad. It was because of this bias that we likened G_, not fortuitously, to one of the three musketeers; the historical romance is second only in popularity to detective fiction, and Dumas' romance is contemporaneous with "The Purloined Letter."

Elements of the detective story are hinted at in Voltaire's Zadig and Godwin's Caleb Williams, but it is Poe who established all the basic ingredients in one type of tale. "The Purloined Letter" is, moreover, the perfection of the type, and so its literary standing depends, in large part, upon the way popular fiction, especially detective fiction, is viewed.

We could argue, as was done in "The Detective and the Boundary," that all modern fiction tends to the condition of the detective story, but this seems to overstate the case. On the other hand, it seems true, as Daniel stressed, that detective fiction is intimately connected with the rise of the city, and with the urban consciousness. Hence, it is not surprising that Dickens' best works have a strong element of the detective tale in them. Here, it might be added that while Boffin, in Our Mutual Friend, possesses omniscience as great as any Dupin attains to, no critic has seen fit to label Boffin, God, or accuse Dickens of megalomania, as so many have so labelled Dupin, and accused Poe.
To a large extent, I believe, Poe and Dupin have suffered needlessly because so few critics have bothered to notice the narrator.

However that may be, the detective genre deals with the city and with crime. Since both are present in our lives to, at least, a fair extent, to dismiss such fiction as somehow marginal is preposterous. As we have already found, "The Purloined Letter" is a major artistic achievement. We might therefore, consider what a perceptive critic and artist, W. H. Auden, says of the genre to which it gave rise. Auden considers it the task of the private eye to restore "a fallen world to its prelapsarian innocence by solving the crime...and thus make possible the restoration of order under justice" (Hoffman, p. 132). This view will prove valuable for our discussion of "The Purloined Letter." First, however, let us clarify the obvious in the text.

To re-read "The Purloined Letter," after re-reading readings of "The Purloined Letter," is a refreshing experience. Here we have a very short story. It is set in Paris. The Minister D_ has stolen a letter from a lady, and is using it to blackmail her. The Prefect of Police knows that D_ must have the letter close by, for he must have access to it at all times. Nevertheless, after three months of exhaustive search, including the use of police disguised as footpads, the Prefect has been unable to find the letter. He turns to Dupin for help. Dupin advises him to look again. After a month, the Prefect returns. He has not found the letter. Dupin hands it to him. The Prefect leaves, and Dupin explains to his friend how he had been to visit the Minister. From behind his tinted glasses, he had seen the letter left in the most obvious place, though it was disguised. Dupin left the apartment and his gold snuff box. Next morning, he returned. While talking to the Minister, a shot is heard in the street. The noise came from an empty gun, fired into a crowd by one of Dupin's men, pretending to be a lunatic. D_ goes to see what is happening, and Dupin re-steals the letter, leaving a duplicate in its place. In the letter which he leaves, Dupin has written some lines, from a tragedy, which he is sure will enable D_ to know who has tricked him. This he does because D_ had once done him "an evil turn" in Vienna.

The above is a bald plot summary. It is a naive, possibly, a banal, reading. We must remember, however, the Prefect himself was fooled by simplicity. It is an attempt to give an outline of all the surface features of the text in as non-tendentious a manner as possible. What immediately stands out? There is certainly a lot of disguising going on. The police disguise themselves as footpads; in doing so, they behave like criminals, as Dupin must think like the criminal D_ in order to outwit him. Dupin dons a type of disguise by wearing his
green glasses. The purloined letter is disguised. Dupin’s man in the street is disguised. Dupin leaves a disguised letter.

Closely connected with disguise, there is a lot of “doubling” taking place. The Prefect visits Dupin twice and searches D_ twice. Dupin visits D_ twice. The same letter is purloined twice. There are two “evil turns,” two D’s, two robberies, and two “gangs”; the police and D_’s attendants. The Prefect has two motives for trying to protect the lady; honor and money. Dupin shares these two motives. The lines, which Dupin quotes in the facsimile letter, refer to two brothers, Thyestes and Ateus, who shared the same Queen. What does so much doubling, so much disguise, suggest? One way to approach the question might be to trace what is not doubled in the text.

There is only one lady, only one city, only one crime, only one overall narrator, and only one male “exalted personage.” The Minister D_, too, has only one motive, power. The crime which precipitates the action is blackmail. Blackmail presupposes social conventions. It is pre-eminently a social crime. Again, it makes little sense to blackmail anyone other than “an exalted personage” of some kind. Once you do, the repercussions are felt throughout the whole social sphere she moves in. Should the “personage” occupy a sufficiently exalted station, an entire city, or nation, may suffer. Our discreet entities now begin to merge. The lady becomes Paris, or, as noted earlier, she is at one with the defenceless women of Paris, threatened by a lunatic D_.

We are left then with but four monads. Blackmail certainly confers power and so these two terms might, provisionally, be merged. That leaves the narrator and the male “exalted personage.” The male, the “King,” “from whom it was her wish to conceal” the letter (682), is the representative of whatever conventional code the lady has violated. The narrator is that other code, elemental human sympathy or love, that champions the lady and sets a new moral standard by which the reader must judge the affair, if he hearkens to the story at all,. This moral standard is not conventional, but, rather, aesthetic; it is part of the narrative presentation.

We left blackmail and power temporarily linked because dyads seemed especially promising in light of the obvious pairings in the text. The instrument of blackmail is, of course, the purloined letter itself. Of this letter, the narrator remarks, “it is this possession, and not any employment of the letter, which bestows the power” (683). This is, obviously, always true of the instrument of blackmail. Of what else is it true? Deterrence at once springs to mind. Deterrence, however, is simply one form of power politics. The letter is an exact analogue of the very essence of political power itself. Take the
punitive power of the State, for example. The ultimate threat the State reserves for its recalcitrant members is death. Should the State ever exercise the death penalty, however, it loses all control over the erring one forever. This is an extreme instance but it lies at the basis of all power.18

Political power is always conventional, though it masquerades as the natural. The King represents this power, the Minister D._ manipulates it, the Queen suffers under it. From an analysis of blackmail, which like power involves three terms -wielder, instrument, and victim—we can see how the numerous triads reviewed, in relation to psychoanalytic readings and narrative technique, are readily accommodated in our reading. Nor should such a reading be confused with Adlerian power principles; we are not dealing with any subconscious drives, in either Poe or the characters, but with an interpretation of the text. Political power is always conventional, it always masquerades as the natural. Wherever it does, the unconventional, which is freedom, must go in motley.

We are now in a position to see what the doubling and disguises suggest. The only way to combat power, while its instruments are in the possession of the tyrant, is to adopt a disguise, to practise duplicity. This is a truth Kent and Edgar, in King Lear, recognize from bitter experience. The difference between the world of Shakespeare and that of Poe is that there is no “order under justice” to be restored in the latter’s. Morality is no longer theology bound, as Auden’s acute observation misleadingly implies. In the city, morality is a matter of individual choice. There are no divine sanctions but there is, occasionally, profound human sympathy, especially of victims for a victim; “the good people of Paris” for the Queen. It is indeed noteworthy that neither of these innocent parties are able to adopt disguise.

What moral code does exist in the city is the code of honor of the Dupin’s and the Prefect G._’s. These are men capable of manipulating power structures for the public good. Their code is not incompatible with money. Money, after all, unlike power, requires social intercourse and, at least, a minimum of trust. It can, of course, become a power fetish. Gold, however, more easily assumes this role. And, does not Dupin leave a gold snuff box on D._’s desk?

Finally, there is another code in the city; this is the aesthetic morality embodied in the narrator’s narrative. What is restored, along with the purloined letter to the Queen, is not, in Auden’s formulation, “prelapsarian innocence” but rather that balance between the conventional and the play of freedom which we might regard as a kind of order.
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The police duplicate, even act like, D_'s henchmen for they represent one configuration of political power. They would follow the King, they would follow D_. It is the good luck of the city that they, at the moment, follow G_, and that G_ has chosen to identify himself with the Queen, with the oppressed. On a plane unrecognized by Hoffman, when he equates the artist with the criminal, Dupin never identifies with the Minister D_ (Hoffman, p. 124). This is the plane of morality. Thus, Dupin clearly states, "I have no sympathy, at least no pity, for him who descends" (697). He may have sympathy for (can think like) D_, since both are outside the rule imposed conventions personified in the King. He has no pity, for pity, as Aristotle reminded us, is quintessentially an aesthetic/moral fellow feeling.

Like the end of Poe's tale, we are back with the Greeks, as we were when detailing the public repercussions of the crime against the Queen, the relationship between G_ and Patroclus, the narrator and the classical Greek chorus. Nor is this strange. The Greeks created, and perfected, the city, just as Poe created, and perfected, the art form of the city, the detective story. In its finest form, in "The Purloined Letter," how could it help but be policial and political? How could it help but reveal its debt to Greece?

We have canvassed various readings of "The Purloined Letter." We have attempted to situate the story within the corpus of Poe's work, and within the wider literary world. Finally, we have set forth a simplistic reading of "The Purloined Letter," and but one more interpretation of that text. In doing these things, we have noted what "bizarre" may result from attempting to appropriate the work, perhaps, we too have even fallen victim to them. No readings exhaust the rich mine that is the text, though certain readings inevitably exhaust the reader. In "the radicalness of their differences," however, we find sufficient testimony to the unique greatness which is "The Purloined Letter."

NOTES

1 All references to Poe's work are to Edgar Allan Poe: Poetry and Tales, ed. Patrick F. Quinn (New York, 1984). All future quotations will be followed by page number in parentheses.

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5To be fair to Derrida, it should be stressed that he knew exactly what he was doing.


7Here, it might be remarked that the whole theory of “the oedipus complex” has been successfully called into question by Robin Fox. Fox shows that what Freud saw as a universal human phenomenon was, more likely, a very rare, parochial condition only obtaining, if at all, in Upper Middle class, late 19th century Vienna. It is therefore, perhaps, no surprise that psychoanalytic critics find it impossible to read a specific text without generalizing it out of all recognition. See Robin Fox, *The Red Lamp of Incest* (New York, 1980).


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18A full discussion of power, especially political power, would be inappropriate here. The interested reader may consult Elias Canetti’s Crowds and Power (Harmondsworth, 1976), for a detailed account of the view informing this paper.
THE VAMPIRE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE

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The myth of the vampire has fascinated people for ages. Superstitions and folktales about the undead have been documented at least as far back as the fifteenth century, and even today there are still some who believe that these creatures rise from their graves at night to suck the blood of their hapless victims. Whether or not one believes the tales, the vampire has been one of the most frequently used supernatural characters in literature. At the beginning of the twentieth century, interest in the supernatural seemed to die as writers turned to more serious and realistic topics. In the past two decades, however, numerous short stories and novels have been written about vampires, perhaps indicating a shift toward what some might call escapist literature. Some of the recent works, including Stephen King’s ‘Salem’s Lot and Anne Rice’s Interview with the Vampire, The Vampire Lestat, and Queen of the Damned, have enjoyed a widespread, if somewhat cultish, audience.

Although tales of the undead circulated for many years, it was not until the nineteenth century that writers began to use the vampire in literature. According to Arthur H. Nethercot, “the vampire, in fact, was surprisingly slow to forge its way into literature; by the end of the eighteenth century it had hardly got even a precarious foothold.”1 James B. Twitchell says, “As we have seen, around the turn of the nineteenth century the English and German Romantic poets were experimenting with the vampire myth as a metaphor for the psychology of human interactions.”2 Many of the major Romantic poets used the vampire in poems, and the nineteenth century can be seen as the heyday of the vampire story, for the most influential works about vampires, including the most famous, Bram Stoker’s Dracula, were written in that century. Thus, during the nineteenth century, the model for vampire literature became fixed. As it moved from its beginnings with Samuel Taylor Coleridge to its peak with Bram Stoker, the myth of the vampire became solidified, each writer influencing those who came after him. The trail of influence can be traced to Stoker, and there the trail stops for many years.

The figure of the vampire, which most people identify as the sole creation of Bram Stoker, was first used by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in a poem he began writing in 1798, 100 years before the publication of Dracula. Coleridge was not an innovator with the figure of the
vampire, either. One source which Nethercot says influenced Coleridge was the *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester*. John Ferriar, one of the contributors to this journal, devotes part of his article “Observations concerning the Vital Principle” to a discussion of vampires. This source provided Coleridge with information for “Christabel” and the vampire Geraldine, as did Southey’s poem “Thelaba and the Destroyer” (which Coleridge read in draft form and commented upon) and Goethe’s “The Bride of Corinith.” Nethercot further says that if he is right about the research and thought processes Coleridge went through in writing “Christabel,” “then Coleridge must go the additional distinction of being the first to introduce the vampire into English literature” (Nethercot, pp. 59-70, 78).

Coleridge’s poem deals with at least three aspects of the vampire myth with which readers have become familiar. In the early lines of the poem, the reader is given two hints that Geraldine is evil. She appears to faint as she is about to step over the threshold of the castle, but Christabel helps her across. The inability of a vampire to enter a potential victim’s home without an invitation has become an integral part of vampire lore. Once Geraldine is in the house, the old mastiff moans in her sleep. Again, the fear and agitation of animals when a vampire is near has become a part of the vampire legend. The morning after her rescue by Christabel, Geraldine appears to be a different woman. In lines 370-376, the reader finds that Geraldine is no longer haggard and withered. She is now “fairer yet! and yet more fair! / for she belike hath drunken deep / Of all the blessedness of sleep!” Another piece of vampire lore, the rejuvenation of the vampire after it has fed off its victim, can be seen here.

The romantic poets are not the only literary artists of the nineteenth century to use the vampire. Many prose writers of the nineteenth century used the undead figure in their works. Those who followed Coleridge took the basic pattern the poet had used, and each successive prose writer altered the material, influencing those who came later, mainly Stoker, who is remembered as the greatest writer of vampire literature. While two of the works which preceded *Dracula* are largely forgotten today, it is interesting to note the influences they had on Stoker.

In his book *The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature*, James B. Twitchell comments:
A friend of Lord Byron’s, Polidori traveled with Byron and the Shelles in Switzerland. He began his tale the same weekend that Mary Shelley began writing Frankenstein. The Vampyre has often been attributed to Lord Byron, but it is Polidori’s work. The book is difficult to obtain now, but Phyllis Roth mentions The Vampyre as a work that surely influenced those writers who came after Polidori. She posits that Count Ruthven “prefigures the cold aristocratic fascination exercised by Count Dracula.”

The next work to influence the myth is Thomas Prescott Prest’s Varney the Vampyre, or the Feast of Blood, published in 1847. Twitchell has little good to say about Varney, but he does say that the author of Varney is responsible for many of the innovations which readers traditionally attribute to Bram Stoker. These include “the initiation of the heroine through sex, the vampire’s middle-European background, the quasi-medical-scientific explanations, the midnight vigils, the mob scene...[and] the hunt and the chase” (Twitchell, p. 124). Daniel Farson, Stoker’s great-nephew and biographer, also points out some similarities between Varney and Dracula. He writes: “There are hints of Dracula here: the white face; the fanglike teeth; the angelic victim; the male vampire at his ‘hideous repast.’” This description could fit Stoker’s Count as easily as it does Prest’s Varney.

In 1872 Joseph Sheridan LeFanu added to the breadth of the vampire story. His story “Carmilla” is much better known than either Polidori’s or Prest’s works. “Carmilla” parallels Coleridge’s “Christabel” in many ways. Actually, “Carmilla” seems to be “Christabel” in its finished form. LeFanu takes Coleridge’s story and follows it to its conclusion where Carmilla is unmasked as the fiend that she really is and finally destroyed.

“Carmilla” is probably the last great vampire story to come along before Dracula. Unlike Polidori and Prest, LeFanu uses a female vampire, and the eroticism evoked by the demon Carmilla has prompted many critics to comment on what Michael H. Begnal calls the “aberrant sexuality” of the vampire story. Ivan Melada points out that “Carmilla” has a strong connection to the vampire literature that came before it. He writes:

LeFanu uses some aspects [of the old tales] directly; such as the usual method of destroying a vampire; some he
modified, he avoids the crudeness of the vampire's shrinking from a crucifix, for example. Still others he changes completely; instead of the traditionally hideous cadaverous female vampire, Carmilla is pettily feminine and beautiful.\textsuperscript{7}

With the publication of "Carmilla" the legend was well on its way to being formalized. The greatest of the vampire stories, which established the legend for about eighty years, was published in 1897. Bram Stoker's \textit{Dracula} has frequently been overlooked as a piece of literature, as Twitchell points out (p. 132):

\begin{quote}
\textit{Dracula}, the greatest vampire novel, is the work of fiction that takes the vampire out of literature and returns him to folklore. As a literary work, \textit{Dracula} has suffered from this achievement, for although the novel has been exceedingly popular, there have been few critical commentaries about it. This is certainly because the vampire and Dracula have become synonymous, and the vampire is hardly considered a scholarly subject, but also because the book appeared in 1897, at the height of literary Realism and Naturalism. Had it been written in 1820, I suspect that it would have been hailed, as Frankenstein is, as a Romantic milestone.
\end{quote}

Instead, \textit{Dracula} became widely read. Although it is largely a critically ignored book, the novel has never been out of print since it was first published. Numerous theories have been bandied about concerning \textit{Dracula}, including psychosexual and political ones, but it seems more likely that \textit{Dracula} is "the culmination of the Romantic interest in the vampire" (Twitchell, p. 140).

With \textit{Dracula}, Stoker wrote what might well be called the definitive work of literature dealing with vampires. From the notes preserved in the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia, Phyllis Roth says that Stoker's sources for the novel are obvious. As well as the vampire works discussed earlier, Roth cites Mary Shelley's \textit{Frankenstein}, Byron's "Manfred" and "Cain," and Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Merci" and "Lamia" as sources, also (Roth, p. 97). One of the most obvious sources for the novel, however, is "Carmilla." According to Roth (p. 98):

...[I]t ["Carmilla"] is demonstrably the precursor to a chapter excised from the final version of the novel \textit{[Dracula]}, a chapter entitled "Dracula's Guest." Indeed, Transylvania was not the original location of Castle
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Dracula, rather that replaces “Styria” in the notes, a name which Stoker lifted from Carmilla.

In “Dracula’s Guest,” Stoker also lifts the character of a countess who has committed suicide and thus becomes a vampire. Roth states (p. 98) that “the focus in Carmilla exclusively on female vampires provides an important key to the emphasis in Stoker’s novel.”

In researching Dracula, Stoker also became aware of the legend of Vlad the Impaler, or Vlad Dracula. Vlad the Impaler, a fifteenth century Wallachian ruler, was a man of very sadistic tastes. In researching the historical basis for Stoker’s character, Raymond T. McNally found underlying the local traditions...an authentic human being fully as horrifying as the vampire of fiction and film—a 15th century prince who had been the subject of many horror stories even during his own lifetime....

The notes for Dracula indicate that Stoker was familiar with the legend of Vlad the Impaler. One such indication, according to Roth, is that “he observes one of several meanings of ‘Dracula,’...‘Dracula’ in Wallachian means Devil. Wallachians were accustomed to give it as a surname to any person who rendered himself conspicuous by courage, cruel actions or cunning.” Roth goes on to conclude (p. 94):

Thus, from Dracula, the Impaler whose greatest pleasure derived from the prolonged draining of the victim’s blood, through dragon, to Devil, to the vampire was not a very long stretch of the imagination, though Stoker may have been the first to make the connection.

Dracula was the culmination of a century’s work on the vampire myth. As Twitchell so rightly points out, Realism and Naturalism did put an end to supernatural stories, and interest in the vampire appears to have died out in the early twentieth century. Coleridge, Polidori, Prest, LeFanu, and Stoker, however, have not been forgotten. The current trend toward the use of the vampire in literature makes one wonder if the pendulum is swinging back toward the Romantic and away from the Naturalistic and Realistic. Current authors who deal with the vampire in literature tend to abide by the rules nineteenth century authors created in their works, although Anne Rice has made some changes in the myth, updating and sophisticating the legend in her works which deal with the origin and history of the vampire. Only time will tell if this swing means that King’s and Rice’s stories will hold the future’s
interest the way LeFanu’s and Stoker’s have captivated two centuries of spellbound audiences.

NOTES


4Phyllis A. Roth, Bram Stoker (Boston, 1982, p.) 95.


6Michael H. Begnal, Joseph Sheridan LeFanu (Lewisburg, Pa., 1971), p. 44.

7Ivan Melada, Sheridan LeFanu (Boston, 1987), p. 100.

Arthuriana, Alive and Well at Memphis State

[Essay Review]

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The Arthurian legend—that mixture of myth, enchantment, adventure, love-story, and tragedy—has developed into perhaps the largest single body of imaginative literature ever produced. Furthermore, this medieval best-seller remains relevant. It speaks to mankind's enduring need to recognize personal integrity, to cherish true love, and to create a good society. Consequently, it continues to haunt the imagination of writers, and hardly a year passes without some retelling of the legend. This lasting enthusiasm for the Arthurian tales is promoted at Memphis State University, where a topflight journal, Arthurian Interpretations, is published twice a year by the English Department. This multidisciplinary journal of Arthurian studies that span the beginnings to the present attracts worthy contributors throughout this country and abroad. The range of their interests in the legend is also broad, as is reflected in the following random sampling from past issues.

In “The Image of Arthur and the Idea of King” (Spring 1988), Mark Allen, from the University of Texas at San Antonio, summarily states what the legendary King Arthur has meant to English-speaking people. He notes that Arthur is the representative figure of the idea of king for Anglo-American culture and that as the role of king changed historically, the Arthur of literature changed accordingly, “reflecting social and political developments in metaphorical, literary portraits.” Allen, however, credits Arthur with more than just encapsulating the social and political past: “he also reflects interpretations of the past, providing means both to survey historical kingship and to epitomize modern understanding of what kingship implies” (p. 1).

Initially, King Arthur was not a king. Allen says that the Arthur of history, “the best surmises tell us,” was not born to royalty but was a romanized Celt warrior, who defended Britain against invading Anglo-Saxons in the late fifth or early sixth century. Some three hundred years later, Nennius, a monk, in his history of Britain, introduces the Arthur of literature, also a warrior. The regal Arthur first appears in the twelfth century in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s fanciful history, when the age of feudal barons and their warriors has slipped away and the age of kings is dawning. Geoffrey looks back on Arthur not only as Britain’s greatest king but also as a king whose ability to rule is derived from
mysterious forces. By the fifteenth century when Thomas Malory writes *Morte Darthur*, this mysterious power undergirding Arthur’s kingship has solidified into the tradition of the divine right of kings, a tradition that was to be held for at least two centuries.

Allen observes that “as the idea of king went, so went the image of Arthur” (p. 7). Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King*, for example, presents the high idealism of Victorian times. Likewise, in the present century, President John F. Kennedy’s administration was dubbed *Camelot* after the stage and screen musical, with its opulent and youth oriented society—so prized by modern Americans. Allen commends T. H. White for his ability in *The Once and Future King* to bridge “the distance between ourselves and the idea of king,” and its rich mixture of history, mystery, majesty, and nostalgia. The idea of kingship is in prominent use from children’s games to heads of state; moreover, its cultural importance is evident by the continued popularity of Arthurian literature (pp. 12-13). More Arthurian materials have been published since 1950 than in any other comparable period in the history of the legend.

The years have yielded much speculation on the fall of the Round Table, and the blame for the failure of this great society has been assessed many times. David V. Harrington, from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, challenges some long-standing opinions on this subject. In “The Conflicting Passions of Malory’s Sir Gawain and Sir Lancelot” (Spring 1987), Harrington contends “that Malory does not blame the fall of the Round Table on the decline of chivalry; nor is the fall because of the immorality of Sir Lancelot and the Queen...nor is it unavoidable fate....” On the contrary, Harrington sees the major characters of *Morte Darthur* “fulfilling in their own ways the values, obligations, or commitments that mean the most to them both individually and in their special relationship with each other.” Harrington credits the knights with, as a rule, respecting the chivalric code. He believes the Table toppled “mainly from indomitable passions growing out of their individual forms of chivalric idealism” (p. 66).

Harrington bases his theories on the actions of Sir Gawain, Sir Lancelot, and King Arthur. He says that although Malory, in the concluding sections of *Morte Darthur*, presents Gawain, Lancelot, and Arthur in seemingly contradictory behavior, they are really just being true to their own chivalric standards. These noble characters fulfill themselves by adhering to the best forms of noble idealism in fifteenth-century chivalry.

Harrington says that even though Gawain’s implacable vengeance is a dominant factor in the fall of the Round Table, his earlier, steadfast
loyalty should not be overlooked. For example, he defended Lancelot against the King’s charges of disloyalty even after Lancelot had escaped the trap laid for him in Guenevere’s bedroom and had slain Gawain’s sons and his brother. Gawain admits that he had warned them not to contend with Lancelot, and he further concedes that Lancelot’s intentions may have been honorable.

Gawain is obviously willing to make allowances for Lancelot up to a point, and that point is reached when Lancelot unintentionally slays Gawain’s beloved brothers, Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris. Thereafter, Gawain’s heart is forever hardened against Lancelot. Harrington says: “One might say that he cannot forgive Sir Lancelot for being less than perfect in his chivalry” (p. 65).

Lancelot’s behavior also appears contradictory. His rescue of Guenevere, when she is about to be burned at the stake on a charge of adultery, is the epitome of knightly valor. He is invincible as he gallops in, swoops her up, and speeds away, “a fearless and irrepressible champion.” Nevertheless, when Arthur and Gawain come to Lancelot’s castle seeking vengeance, Lancelot avoids a confrontation with them. His closest friends are humiliated because they feel that he appears to be a coward. Likewise, at the siege of Benwick when Arthur and Gawain burn his lands, Lancelot again refuses to fight them. It seems that Lancelot cannot bring himself to fight the King, not because of fear but from the love and respect he holds for him.

Arthur’s behavior is also at times contrary to what would be expected from the King. Arthur had no desire to investigate the relationship between Lancelot and Guenevere and does so only at the insistence of Aggravayne and Mordred. After the situation has deteriorated to the point that Arthur is compelled to take action, he weeps “with regret at his obligation to pursue the man he most admires in the world.” Harrington points out that Arthur’s inability to stand up to Gawain “conflicts with his more commonly expressed admiration for Sir Lancelot and with his desire to preserve a unified kingdom” (p. 65).

Harrington feels that each of these characters is “torn between obligations to the people he most admires and the codes of behavior by which each of them lives.” These contradictions in character do abet the failure of the great fellowship, “but not because of degeneracy or immorality or weakness” (p. 69). Harrington credits them with following the best forms of noble idealism in Malory’s day.

In contrast with Harrington’s scrutiny of the King and his knights, Harold J. Herman, from the University of Maryland, compares Arthurian women in a modern work with those in earlier works. In “The Women in Mary Stewart’s Merlin Trilogy” (Spring 1984), he says
that Stewart’s concept of women distinguishes the Merlin trilogy from earlier Arthurian works. Her women are strong and self-sufficient, unlike the frightened, submissive creatures in the analogues, existing to please a man. A prime example is Igerne, the Duchess of Cornwall, destined to be Arthur’s mother.

In both Geoffrey’s and Malory’s versions, Igerne is a weak, innocent dupe of Uther and Merlin. Uther lusts after Igerne, a guest in his home, and he has Merlin, an expert in shapeshifting, arrange a rendezvous with her. Believing herself to be in the arms of her husband, Igerne conceives Arthur. Soon after, Uther desposes of the Duke of Cornwall, similar to the way in which David destroyed Uriah in order to possess the beautiful Bathsheba. And like David, Uther marries the ill-obtained beauty, who wisely registers no objections.

Stewart, however, neatly turns the tables by making Igerne have designs on Uther. Igerne enlists Merlin to help her, because she believes he is wise, cold, and committed to no one—thus able to understand her situation. She was married at sixteen to the Duke of Cornwall, a worthy old man, whom she was relatively contented with until she saw Uther. She describes herself as a lovesick woman but “no trashy Helen for men to fight, die, and burn down a kingdom for” (p. 104). Her terms at all times are regal. Merlin pays her a supreme compliment by saying that he can speak with her as he would with a man. She is not duped into having sex with Uther transformed as her husband. On the contrary, she arranges for the king to come to her disguised as Gorlois, her husband, because she does not want to dishonor her husband.

Herman says that Stewart’s trilogy abounds with strong women, from commoners to nobility, from servants to queens. And Stewart’s disdain for women who live solely to bear and rear children is apparent. An example is Branwen, Arthur’s wet nurse, “whose devotion to the baby, following the loss of her own, blinds her to all else” (p. 107). Merlin describes her as the kind of woman whose life is devoted to the bearing and rearing of children. He says she is “weak and biddable to the point of stupidity” (The Hollow Hills, p. 149). Herman provides numerous other examples supporting Stewart’s overall theme of strong women who reject traditional feminine roles.

Whether one’s interest lies in Arthurian ladies or gentlemen, in early or late versions of the legend, in a traditional viewpoint of the legend or a controversial one, in conducting research or reading for pleasure, this interest has been addressed and is apt to be again in Arthurian Interpretations. In the words of Valerie M. Lagorio, guest editor for the inaugural issue in 1984: “Let it be known that Camelot
U.S.A. is now located at Memphis, Tennessee.” A subscription to this journal ($10.00 annually) is a must for anyone who likes to escape into a world of romance, a world of heroes whose integrity shines as brightly as their armor, and a world of heroic exploits and lovely ladies. Arthurian literature serves as a reminder to all that mystery and majesty are grand memories for anyone.
Recent Developments in Kate Chopin Studies

[Essay Review]

Deborah Pope

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When Kate Chopin died in 1904, she had all but ceased writing, her career in decline following publication of The Awakening in 1899. It was not until after 1964 when The Awakening was reissued that her reputation entered a period of revival and new appreciation. Today, no longer an obscure or marginalized author, Kate Chopin receives considerable scholarly attention. Two recent publications stand out as excellent examples of current Chopin scholarship: Barbara Ewell’s Kate Chopin (Ungar, 1986), and Thomas Bonner, Jr.’s The Kate Chopin Companion (Greenwood, 1988).

Ewell’s critical-biographical study provides a comprehensive and balanced handling of Chopin’s entire career. In her introduction, Ewell states her purpose: “to view the work of Kate Chopin in its entirety, so that her famous novel appears as an inescapable climax, but not the sum of her achievement as a writer” (13). Toward that end, Ewell proportionately distributes her one-hundred-and-eighty-three pages of text to a discussion of Chopin’s life and all of her works. In addition to insightful analysis of Chopin’s masterpiece, The Awakening, Ewell provides thorough and illuminating discussions of At Fault, Chopin’s first novel; her three collections of stories, Bayou Folk, A Night in Acadie, and A Vocation and a Voice; as well as treatment of her few stories and poems which followed The Awakening.

Ewell opens her study with a detailed chronology which orients the reader to the sequence of significant events in Chopin’s life and career. This feature is especially useful because Ewell opts not to follow a strict chronological order in her discussions of Chopin’s story collections. Ewell explains this decision of organization as an effort to prevent “obscur[ing] the relative integrity of [Chopin’s] three collections...” (3). Ewell chooses to look at the collections of stories, especially Bayou Folk, as whole units, “successful book[s]” rather than as series of stories because to do so demonstrates more effectively the impact and influence of successful publication on the rest of the author’s career.

Ewell condenses the life of Chopin into a brief first chapter, “St. Louis Woman, Louisianan Writer.” The selective biographical information, including several excerpts from Chopin’s journals, establishes Kate Chopin as an intelligent, reflective, and sensual
Deborah Pope

woman. Hers was a complex personality capable of independent daring and yet highly sensitive to public opinion and professional criticism. Ewell's critical discussions of Chopin's works are enriched by the biographical foundation which she lays in this first chapter.

In her analysis of *At Fault*, Chopin's "fictional debut," Ewell fulfills her objective of highlighting the achievements of each phase of Chopin's career. Ewell acknowledges the novel's flaws, labelling the chief weakness "its melodramatic resolution, which conveniently removes the principal obstacle" to a happy ending (32). Ewell goes on to insist, however, that the novel is not without merit: "Certainly," she claims, "the novel represents a major event in Chopin's career, articulating her serious concern for many pressing intellectual issues of her time [for example, significant social changes taking place in the post-Reconstruction South] even as it established the Louisiana settings that she soon learned to exploit more fully" (33).

Bridging the discussion of this earliest effort to an analysis of *Bayou Folk*, Chopin's first collection of stories, Ewell writes that in *At Fault*, Chopin had found her favorite themes and interests. "What remained," Ewell concludes, "was for [Chopin] to discover the element that would infuse life into her fiction. She found it in the bayou folk of Louisiana" (49). Ewell provides painstakingly researched and thorough studies of the stories of *Bayou Folk*, the collection which secured Chopin's reputation as a highly talented local colorist in an era when local color fiction was extremely popular. Ewell, however, for perhaps the first time in Chopin scholarship, delves into the complexity of the author's associations with the genre, what she calls Chopin's "second thoughts about her own exploitation of [it]" (62). Ewell points out how Chopin progressed beyond creating local color as an end in itself. The discussions of the stories which make up *Bayou Folk* detail Chopin's early treatment of social hypocrisies, double standards, and judgmentalism as well as her willingness to handle with startling frankness material dealing with sexuality.

Ewell devotes the longest chapter of her book to Chopin's second collection of stories, *A Night in Acadie*. Again, Ewell's discussions communicate her respect for the early evidence of Chopin's talent, abilities which anticipate her most mature work, *The Awakening*, but which have tended to go under-appreciated because of the long shadow of her famous last book. Ewell notes the experimentation and ambition of *A Night in Acadie* and sees the book as another important turn in Chopin's developing career. She praises this second collection, the final effect of which is one of "increasing subtlety and reach" (123). She, finally, observes that the book reflects a gathering of momentum.
DEVELOPMENTS IN CHOPIN STUDIES

on Chopin’s part as she moved toward a more probing examination of life, “more honest than she, or many others, had yet dared” (123).

One of the book’s most interesting discussions, the chapter entitled “Realizations: A Vocation and a Voice,” describes and analyzes Chopin’s third collection of stories, a book which was never accepted for publication, but is, according to Ewell, “the culminating of Chopin’s talents as a writer of the short story” (126). Ewell delineates several important movements occurring in Chopin’s fiction which are manifested in this book, the most noteworthy of which is a “focus...on human interiority” (126). Ewell wraps up this discussion of A Vocation and a Voice by looking closely at one of the selections chosen for the volume, “An Egyptian Cigarette,” a bizarre tale of a dream vision, a story of female frustration and despair. She claims that the significance of this odd story lies in its clear anticipation of “the emotional nucleus” of Chopin’s masterpiece (140). Ewell sees the writing of “An Egyptian Cigarette” (and, by implication, the compiling of the collection which contains it) as a sort of initiation ritual which Chopin had to perform before she could begin her great novel.

In keeping with her purpose of examining Chopin’s entire career and holding up The Awakening as the climax of that career, Ewell discusses the novel as the culminating of Chopinesque impulses, beliefs, and concerns manifested early in her writing. Ewell begins her relatively brief treatment of The Awakening with references to the most notable of the analyses which preceded her own, focusing on the wide range of opinion concerning the novel’s “apparent lack of authorial comment” and the consequent debate over the significance of Edna Pontellier’s suicide (142). Ewell forthrightly provides her own view of this provocative novel: “In fact, the central issue of Chopin’s last novel is one she had addressed in her first: how does one (especially one female) achieve personal integrity in a world of conventional restraints” (142-3). Ewell’s discussion of The Awakening, therefore, reasserts her book’s underlying idea that Chopin’s best known work is best understood and appreciated when seen as part, unquestionably the most distinguished part, of an entire body of writing. Although critics of Chopin’s day shunned the book for its author’s refusal to judge Edna Pontellier’s appalling conduct, and more recent critics have grappled with the interpretative dilemma that the same omission presents, Ewell offers a logical and convincing reading of the novel’s ambiguities. She sees the lack of commentary as Chopin’s rendering of her perceptions with as much fidelity to realism as she had ever achieved. In Ewell’s view, Chopin subtly forces readers to arrive at their own resolutions.
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Rounding out her critical-biographical study of Kate Chopin, Ewell discusses Chopin’s poetry and some late stories, again pointing out continuities in subject matter and theme and offering evidence of the detrimental effect on Chopin’s writing brought on by the rejection of *The Awakening*.

The final effect of Ewell’s book is a thorough account of Chopin’s literary life informed and enlivened by selective but sufficient details of her personal existence. Brisk and economical, it nevertheless offers a complete overview of a short-lived but superior career.

An excellent companion to Ewell’s study as well as to the whole of Chopin’s works is Thomas Bonner, Jr.’s *The Kate Chopin Companion*. Much more a reference tool than a readable prose account such as Ewell’s book, Bonner’s is a Chopin handbook, the parts of which can be consulted independently of one another. The volume is impressive for the extent and variety of its offerings. It includes a chronology (although Bonner defers to Ewell’s chart as the most thorough one available); a dictionary of characters, places, titles, terms, and people from Chopin’s life and works; eight of Chopin’s translations of tales by Guy de Maupassant and one of a story by Adrien Vely; period maps and photographs; and, extremely valuable to the student of Chopin, an exhaustive bibliographic essay.

In his introduction, Bonner establishes the rationale for his book. He claims that a “distinctly new phase of interpreting Chopin’s fiction has begun” (xii). The contents of Ewell’s and Bonner’s studies suggest that this new phase involves examining closely the entirety of Chopin’s works as well as relevant aspects of her life including her reading habits, her environment, and her social relationships. Beginning with “Aaron’s store,” one of the locations found in “The Woodcoppers” and ending with “Zoräide,” the young mulatto girl of “La Belle Zoräide,” Bonner’s remarkable dictionary should facilitate full readings of Chopin’s work because it provides relevant information about the extraordinary New Orleans and Cloutierville regions and about characters who appear in a number of Chopin’s works, sometimes in obscure pieces or in minor capacities. Because of this feature, Bonner’s book should go a long way toward resolving special problems and confusions which readers may encounter in Chopin’s highly allusive and interconnected fictions. Because this dictionary is available to clarify and expand readings of Chopin’s works, as Bonner asserts in his introduction, “readers from Bangor, Maine, or Tours, France, can concentrate on the forms, themes, and influences that dominate Chopin’s fiction” (xiv).
Bonner explains the inclusion of Chopin’s translations of Vely and Maupassant (the latter, a writer whom Chopin greatly admired for his faithful rendering of “life, not fiction”): “The translations of fiction, including Vely’s, all have strong psychological themes and distinct images that clearly relate to Chopin’s own fiction” (xii). He continues his explanation by pointing out that the titles of the translations provide “immediate clues” to Chopin’s own work, citing “Solitude,” an early title of The Awakening, as an example (xii). By themselves the translations are interesting pieces, but, finally, as Bonner states, “They are more important...for what they reveal about her own work than for what they reveal of Maupassant’s” (xii). The inclusion of these translations gives this reference book another highly distinguishing trait because five of them appear here in print for the first time.

Bonner’s book concludes with a twelve-page bibliographic essay conveniently divided into the following categories: editions of Chopin’s works; manuscripts and letters; biography; and criticism arranged according to scope and content with exclusive categories for At Fault, The Awakening, and the stories. Bonner’s authoritative annotations are direct and clear, making this bibliography the most useful feature of this companion.

Bonner’s book, which represents a long commitment to Chopin studies, offers much to the serious student of Chopin’s works. With its fascinating inclusions and up-to-date information, this reference volume teams up well with Ewell’s earlier interpretative and evaluative treatment to offer two significant contributions to the illumination of this very important writer.