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# EAPSU Online: A Journal of Critical and Creative Work

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## **Introduction**

*Kim Martin Long, Editor*

Welcome to our second annual issue of *EAPSU ONLINE: A Journal of Creative and Critical Work*, published by the English Association of Pennsylvania State Universities. EAPSU is a regional professional organization whose members come from the English Departments and students of the 14 state universities in Pennsylvania, otherwise known as the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education: Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Slippery Rock, Shippensburg, and West Chester.

This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of EAPSU, founded in 1980. Over the years it has evolved to better serve the faculty and students of Pennsylvania and (because of our journal) beyond. EAPSU sponsors an annual fall conference and co-sponsors a spring conference for undergraduate English majors. For more information about the organization's activities, see <http://www.eapsu.org>.

Two years ago the EAPSU Executive Committee voted to establish a peer-reviewed online journal, to supplement our conference and its Proceedings. We wanted to continue our practice of allowing just about anyone to present and participate in the conference; however, we also wanted a more competitive, higher-quality venue for scholarly and creative work. *EAPSU ONLINE* has helped us to accomplish this goal. We have received manuscripts from all over the world and believe that we are able to publish a variety of material that might not have an audience without us. Each submission goes through a blind review

process and is sent to two readers for input; marginal essays or works are asked to resubmit with revision. So far, in the two years of our publication, we have published approximately 1/3 of the articles, stories, and poems sent to us. As we grow, we will surely become even more competitive.

This issue is a good example of what makes EAPSU EAPSU. Each of the 14 universities in the State System retains its autonomy, despite our having a central governing board and common faculty union. We strive for high quality, but we are very different from each other. The works presented here, from some State System faculty as well as from scholars and writers from as far away as China and England, cover a range of interests. We have two essays on Victorian literature, a pair of works about dragons, poems on a variety of subjects, a creative nonfiction essay about place, a lengthy and thorough essay on Graham Greene and his early development, two composition pedagogy pieces, as well as essays on 1930s American writing and on Virginia Woolf and George Bowling, and a story translated from the Armenian.

We hope you'll see this issue as a tapas table; sample many of the offerings, and by the end, you should be satisfied from both the filling nature of the individual little plates and from the sheer variety of selection.

I wish to thank my editorial board for their help and the many, many readers (colleagues across the state and country) who gave their time to provide input on these works. Thanks to Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania for allowing me to use their server for this project.

Bon Appetit.

## Notes on the Contributors

**Alev Adil** is a Principal Lecturer and head of the Department of Creative, Critical and Communication Studies at the University of Greenwich, London. She was born in Cyprus and grew up in Turkey, Cyprus, and London, where she now lives. Her first collection of poems *Venus Infers* was published in 2004. Her poetry has appeared in magazines including *Agenda*, *Angel Exhaust*, *Mantis*, *Cascando*, *Issues in Contemporary Culture* and *Body Politic*; in Turkish and Greek media including *Hurriyet*, *Yeni Duzen*, *Toplum Postasi*, *Kibris*, *Afrika* and *Parikiaki* and in anthologies including *Hungry for You* ed. Joan Smith, 1996 and *Stepmother Tongue* ed. Mehmet Yashin, 2000. She has performed her poetry at a number of venues in London, Cyprus, and Ireland, including festivals and radio. She is part of *Poetz for Peace*, a bi-communal UN funded Cypriot writers' and musicians' collective, and is featured on their 2004 CD *Cyprus Thing*. Alev reviews for *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Independent*, and *The Financial Times*

**Timothy Dansdill** is an Assistant Professor of English at Quinnipiac University where he teaches Rhetoric, Composition, and most particularly, "The Art of the Personal Essay," and "The History and Practice of Lyric Life." Although he has been writing poetry all of his adolescent and adult life, and has given numerous readings, he has only just started to send out his work. EAPSU is proud that we are the first to publish his work.

**Anita Gorman** received degrees from Queens College, City University of New York; the University of Wisconsin, Madison; and her PhD from Kent State University. Her dissertation examined the work of Jane Austen, and her research

interests include 18<sup>th</sup>-century British literature, Scottish song lyricists, and detective fiction. She has been a member of the Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania faculty since 1990 and is currently on sabbatical leave, studying Latin at Kent State University

**Marcy A. Hess** is an assistant professor of English at Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia.

**John Hyland** completed a Masters in English at the University of Maine. He teaches at Assumption and Merrimack Colleges, and lives in Newburyport, MA, U.S.A. Recent work has appeared in *Rivendell* and *Issues*.

**Christopher Kelen** teaches cultural studies and creative writing in the English Department at the University of Macau. He holds degrees in literature and linguistics from the University of Sydney and a doctorate on the teaching of the writing process, from UWS Nepean. His fourth book of poems, *Republics*, was published by Five Islands Press in Australia in 2000. His first volume *The Naming of the Harbour and the Trees* won an Anne Elder Award in 1992. In 1988 Kelen won an ABA/ABC bicentennial award with his poem "Views from Pinchgut." In 1996 Kelen was Writer-in-Residence for the Australia Council at the B.R. Whiting Library in Rome. In 1999 he won the Blundstone National Essay Contest, conducted by *Island* journal. In 2000 Kelen's poetry/art collaboration (with Carol Archer) *Tai Mo Shan/Big Hat Mountain* was exhibited at the Montblanc Gallery in Hong Kong's Fringe Club. In 2001, another collaboration (essay and watercolour) titled *Shui Yi Meng/Sleep to Dream* was shown at the Montblanc Gallery. Apart from poetry he publishes in a range of theoretical areas including writing pedagogy, ethics, rhetoric, cultural studies and various intersections of these.

**Mark O'Connor** is an assistant professor of creative writing at Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania. His work has been published or is forthcoming in *Creative Nonfiction*, *Karamu*, *Gulf Coast*, *Peek Review*, and elsewhere. A chapbook from one of his nonfiction essays is available through Inleaf Press. O'Connor is a graduate of the University of Houston Writing Program.

**Jennifer M. Pugh** teaches at the University of Akron, Ohio, where she is a graduate student pursuing rhetoric and composition and a certificate in Linguistics. She resides in Canton, Ohio with her husband Caleb and her cat Pez.

**Lisa M. Schwerdt** is Professor of English at California University, specializing in modern British literature. She has published *Isherwood's Fiction: The Self and Technique* (Macmillan), and articles in *Critique*, *International Fiction Review*, and *Comparative Drama*, among others. Her interests include psychological approaches to literature and narrative form in the novel.

**Lori Smith Rios** completed a Ph.D. in English, emphasizing Rhetoric and Composition, at Texas A&M University-Commerce and is currently an Assistant Professor of English at Texas A&M University-Kingsville where she will also be Director of Freshmen/Sophomore Composition beginning the fall of 2006. A former reading and writing teacher in Texas public schools, she also conducts various professional development seminars for teachers. Her recent research involves case studies investigating the usefulness of teachers' comments on first-year composition students' essays. She is currently collaborating with professors and writing center directors at Regis University, Xavier University, and North

Harris College on a survey to further investigate the effectiveness of teachers' commentary practices.

Born in Yerevan, Armenia, **Margarit Tadevosyan-Ordukhanyan** moved to the USA at the age of 18 to pursue her education. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in English literature at Boston College, where she is working on a dissertation entitled "Strangers in Stranger Tongues: Vladimir Nabokov and the Writing of Exile." Her own trilingual experiences have cultivated her interest in the theoretical and practical issues of literary translation. In addition to scholarly essays, Tadevosyan-Ordukhanyan has published a number of translations from Russian and Armenian in various collections and anthologies in the USA.

**Jennifer Thompson** received her PhD in comparative literature from the University of California, Irvine, and is currently Assistant Professor of Humanities at Embry-Riddle University in Daytona Beach, where she teaches creative writing, western civilization, world literature, and Holocaust studies. She has published poems in several journals, including *The Absinthe Literary Review*, *Poetry Motel*, *Gin Bender*, and *Eclipse*.

**Matthew Ussia** is working on his Ph.D. in Literature in Criticism from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He currently teaches composition and speech at Point Park University and tutors for Point Park's Program for Academic Success and at the University of Maryland University Campus' online Effective Writing Center. In between work and tending to his ever-expanding collection of books, music, and films, he is working on a dissertation about the role of fantasy, consumerism, and ideology in the construction of identity during modernity.

This project will also deal with how the contemporary process of constructing identity creates challenges for the teaching of English in a fantasy and leisure addicted culture.

**Robert Ward** is a lecturer in American literature at St. Martin's University College, Lancaster, in the United Kingdom. His research concerns urban and penal narratives and the literature of the 1930s. His edited volume, *Nelson Algren: A Collection of Critical Essays*, is forthcoming from Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

## **“[A] Great Body Sleeping and Stirring”: Representations of the “Bread-Line” in American Left Writing of the 1930s**

*Robert Ward, St. Martin's University College, Lancaster (UK)*

I come home from the hill every night filled with gloom. I see on the streets filthy, ragged, desperate-looking men such as I have never seen before. (An anonymous journalist, quoted in Allsop 181-182).

The framing of impoverished figures, infertile and dilapidated landscapes, and derelict (post-industrial or post-familial) buildings was a key part of cultural representations of the Great Depression of the 1930s as it has been for numerous mass-human tragedies throughout the twentieth century. Such representation was established, or, better, supported by particular New Deal agencies as, for instance, the Federal Writer's Project (FWP), which helped piece together a narrative of, what Alan Trachtenberg calls, “the hardship, and also the hardiness and heroism, of the times” (49). As we know, and as the quotation at the top of this essay suggests, the documentary genre sought out familiar landscapes of the city, the factory, and the home, to “reflect” or “situate” the often unfamiliar images of the unemployed and the destitute.

In *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, published in 1940, James Agee calls such representation “honest journalism” because it captures and conveys an authentic picture of Depression experience (Agee & Evans 7). The label exposes the implication of a tension between “honest” as opposed to “dishonest” representation that bears relevance to left cultural debate during the 1930s. Certainly, the Communist Party in America and its regional John Reed Clubs

were a major influence in the formation of this definition, which unsettled many of its literary members and associates.

The following discussion is guided by my interest in this tension, which I argue is at the heart of many left-representations of one of the period's most iconographic images: the bread-line (and I use this phrase quite broadly to mean any type of queue or social margin). Although the presence of the line on the American landscape was clearly not a new phenomena, the particular complexities of the Depression—in terms of the political and aesthetic nature of documentary narrative—served to invest representations, not only with a didactic communist message, but also with a multiplicity of meanings and thinly masked critiques. This paper goes some way in drawing these meanings to the surface. In so doing, I show the extent to which left writers challenge and invert Communist Party agenda that, in some respects, was thought to limit and marginalize the vibrancy at the heart of left cultural discourse.

Caroline Bird offers a particular recollection of the period:

You could feel the Depression, but you could not look out of the window and see it. Men who lost their jobs dropped out of sight. They were quiet, and you had to know just when and where to find them: at night, for instance, on the edge of town huddling for warmth around a bonfire, or even the municipal incinerator; at dawn, picking over the garbage dump for scraps of food or salvageable clothing (Stott 68).

The sense that the Depression could be *felt* but not always *seen* is of course contingent upon the location and status of the viewer. But the fact that this *felt* experience could be harnessed if you knew “just when and where” to look, became the guiding aesthetic of many 1930's cultural texts. As one of the more seminal left writers of the period, Meridel Le Sueur (a name I want to come back

to a little later), put it: "The creative artist will create no new forms of art or literature for that new hour out of the darkness unless he is willing to go all the way, with full belief, into that darkness" (Shulman 52).

Many left writers became participant observers in that darkness of Depression life, their left agenda informed and shaped by the Communist Party in America. Robert Warshow's comment, that the Communist Party "ultimately determined what you were to think about and in what terms" (Shulman 10), is a little unfair (and perhaps says more about the Cold War atmosphere he was writing from than anything else). But it would be no exaggeration to claim that the Party had - and exerted - influence. Indeed, without the Party, and its editorial control of journals such as *New Masses* and *The Anvil*, many writers during this period may never have been published.

And this influence over the nature and content of the literary work established tensions between certain writers - such as Le Sueur, Nelson Algren, and Richard Wright - and the Party. If Party agenda were breached in any way by an article or story in *New Masses*, the piece was followed by an endnote that went some way in questioning its status as an authentic document of the American left. For example, this is the editorial comment at the end of Le Sueur's "Women on the Breadlines":

This presentation of the plight of the unemployed woman, able as it is, and informative, is defeatist in attitude, lacking in revolutionary spirit and direction which characterize the usual contribution to *New Masses*. We feel it our duty to add, that there is a place for the unemployed woman, as well as man, in the ranks of the unemployed councils, and in all branches of the organized revolutionary movement. Fight for your class, read *The Working Woman*, join the Communist Party (Swados 190).

Such postscripts both angered the particular writers in question, and made them feel (whether rightly or wrongly) that the Party had become too intrusive on literary and documentary work.

It is my argument, then, that this tension underpinned the search for, and the representation of, the social and human consequences associated with Depression experience. And one of the key features of this representation was the welfare, soup, or bread-line.

Many left writers read the line as a text, and used it to confront the reader (who perhaps may not have come across such a spectacle) with, what Philip Rahv was convinced by, “the Marxian prognosis of the disease and death of capitalism” (Conroy & Johnson xiii). In these terms, the line fractures America’s myth of opportunity (a myth propagated by cultural representations of the preceding decade), and replaces it with a sense of personal and economic stagnancy. Where the former myth spins on the idea of progress, the latter functions by reflecting the stasis and apathy of the line. An insightful example of this is given in Tom Kromer’s (now, almost forgotten) *Waiting for Nothing*, published in 1935:

I wait, and, Christ, but the hour goes slow. I stand in this soup-line. Back of me and before me stretch men. Hundreds of men. I huddle in the middle of the line. For two hours I have stood here. It is night, and ten minutes before they start to feed. Across the street people line the curb. They are watching us. (Kromer 87)

The same experience of waiting and boredom is also noted in “A School for Bums,” as Mary Heaton Vorse contemplates what she calls the “long shuffling” passage of the bread-line in New York’s East Side (Salzman 40). Aside from the wastage of human lives—which is also clearly at the core of such

representations—there is a real sense of bodies being fixed in a particular position, the orbit of movement regulated, restricted, and monitored.

Nelson Algren's first novel, *Somebody in Boots* (1935), gives another example of this type of representation. Here, the character Cass McKay has left his rural home and enters the city in search of a better life:

When he turned down Pedro Avenue in Navarro it was seven o'clock – and three blocks away, unevenly scissored there from a gray mist, a soup-line seemed a thousand-humped serpent winding. Regularly and minutely the dark line jerked, was still with waiting, then wormed six convulsive inches through one narrow door. Its humps were the heads of homeless men, centipede legs were arms in rags. Its hungering mouth was a thousand mouths; even from three blocks away Cass felt that dreadful humility with which homeless men wait for food. (Algren 118)

Such passages address left agenda by showing, what Le Sueur calls, “a great body sleeping and stirring” (Le Sueur 186). The representation imposes on the line an image of a single sleeping body, which, in terms of Party agenda, reiterates the Marxist connection between proletarian awakening and revolutionary action. However, Robert Shulman's point that left writing “*imaginatively* render[s] conflicts with or within Party positions” cannot be ignored here (4) (my emphasis); indeed, it is central to my argument.

At this point, I want to make not exactly a bridge, but more of a leap, between these proletarian texts and a particular “adventure” narrative of the period. Mervyn LeRoy's film *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* packed cinema houses on its release in 1932. It was based on Robert E. Burns' best selling book, *I Am a Fugitive from a Georgia Chain Gang*, which was published earlier that same

year. Both texts popularized the representation of a line of men, in this case convicted felons (a familiar sight in Georgia during the 1930s).

The dissimilarity between proletarian aesthetics and such “adventure” narratives is clear, and I do not want to labor the point more than is necessary. They compare only in the representation of the line, as a body of men whose movements are subject to restriction and regulation. The shackles wrapped around the ankles of the convict determined the so-called “lock-step” movement of the chain gang, which linked the entire body of prisoners to each other. The result was a long line of men forced to march to the same shuffling and painful step. There is a powerful moment in the film, when Burns escapes the shackles, but can only move in the same enforced pattern as before.

It is my argument, then, that such popularized images, were experimented with in left writing—in Vorse’s representation of the “long shuffling” bread-line, for instance, or Algren’s picture of the line’s “regular and minute jerks,” or of Kromer’s sense of enclosure and stagnancy- and so on.

Where Burns and LeRoy stimulated a critique that turned into a public outcry against penal conditions in Georgia, proletarian writers sought to instill a polemic in its readership concerning the human consequences of capitalism in America. But, at the same time, some of these writers allowed the polemic to be understood in terms of the hegemonic discourse of Party agenda. The Party was seen to have become a shackle on the creative imagination of the writer, and the covert critique contributed to the internal factionalism that would result in many writers (like the editors of *Partisan Review*, Rahv and William Phillips or the African American writer Richard Wright) resigning their membership, or, like Algren, never actually taking their membership up.

In his now seminal *The American Writer and the Great Depression*, Harvey Swados remembers this Party agenda and his personal involvement in it:

In addition to a passionate attachment to the mystique of the proletariat and a perfect Soviet state, there were also tremendous pressures – moral, psychological, even physical, to keep writers in line...All your friends and associates were committed to the common struggle...Where would you be, *who* would you be if you were to question them and thus isolate yourself? (Swados xx).

The fact that Algren's character sees the line heading towards "one narrow door" serves to establish this sense of a covert polemic still further. Once inside the mission he goes through a process of initiation, which begins with his signature or mark, allowing him to have food. After this, he is taken into another room.

What happens next is revealing in a number of ways:

There was one other in the tiny room – the louse-runner, a lank and pockmarked man of perhaps sixty years. Cass watched this delouser, and he began to feel ashamed that he would have to undress and be naked before such a man. The fellow had a *shameless eye*, and a *searching manner*. And Cass was ashamed to be naked before anyone, for he felt that others could read too much of his life in the scars of his body, in the rounded shoulders, his pigeon chest, in the thinness of his arms and legs. (Algren 51; my emphasis)

Again, this offers the reader an experience of the dark landscape of Depression America. But Algren has selected and arranged particular terms, like "a shameless eye, and a searching manner," which render the body naked and subject to regulation and surveillance. The same sense of surveillance ("They are watching us") is being conveyed in the Kromer passage that I mentioned earlier. Edmund Wilson's *The American Earthquake*, published in 1938, also speaks of the inhabitants of flophouses as suffering a "complete loss of independence which

can obliterate personality itself” (Wilson 315). As such, the terms become receptive to the growing unease these writers felt towards Party pressures and obligations.

There are few more committed social commentators of this period than Meridel Le Sueur. Her “Women on the Breadlines,” which I touched on earlier, exposes her search for the place of women on the margins of Depression landscapes. Her journey takes her to a free employment bureau, where she documents the personal narratives of women who wait there each day for the possibility of paid work. For Le Sueur, this internal and often even more “hidden” landscape is the bread-line for women. As she puts it:

It’s one of the great mysteries of the city where women go when they are out of work and hungry. There are not many women in the bread line. There are no flop houses for women as there are for men, where a bed can be had for a quarter or less. You don’t see women lying on the floor at the mission in the free flops. They obviously don’t sleep in the jungle or under newspapers in the park. There is no law I suppose against their being in these places but the fact is they rarely are. (Le Sueur 187)

The Party actively sought to affirm a stereotype of a working class individual being awakened by a revolutionary spirit (which, if you listen to critics looking at the political radicalism of the 1930s from the ultra-conservatism of the 1950s, simply did not exist amongst the American working classes). It attempted to achieve this by, on the one hand, publicly criticizing in *New Masses* such negative portrayals of working class women (or men—as in the case of Algren, Wright, Kromer, and others). On the other hand, they publicly applauded representations molded by Communist Party agenda (as happens quite explicitly in Jack Conroy’s 1933 work, *The Disinherited*). In these terms, as I mentioned

earlier, the Party defined or questioned particular representations as authentic left documents.

Le Sueur's questioning of the Party went deeper than surface agendas. She used the absence of women on the bread-line and their silence on the fringes of American Depression experience to draw attention to a similar absence within the hierarchy of the Communist Party: a hierarchy she would sometimes refer to as "the boys upstairs" (Le Sueur 182). The fact that the women she portrayed showed little possibility of ideological transformation is of secondary importance to Le Sueur. Instead, her constant reference to women on the bread-line as *us* and *we* belies her engagement to document (in comparison with other left writers) the underclass figure: the *loser* of modern American capitalism, not necessarily the *winner* of 1930's American communism.

This implicit challenge against what Robert Shulman calls "the male-dominated cultural politics of the party" (24), then, must be seen as contributing to a more general discontentment simmering within left discourse. As I have argued, one of the key sites on which this critique unfolded was the bread-line. The thinly masked signifiers embodied in the text of this representation questioned the Party's influence on writers' creative imaginations. This is not to suggest, though, that the writers contributing to this dialogue were losing their commitment to the core principles of the left. Nor is it to suggest that left writers saw the Party in the same way as the anonymous scribbler, whose slogan on the factory wall ends Edmund Wilson's essay on Hull-House in 1932 (Wilson 319): "VOTE RED: THE PEOPLE ARE GOOFY." Instead, the bread-line did serve to expose primarily what they saw as the human consequences of American capitalism, their representations mixed up, perhaps inevitably, with Conroy's Whitmanian "injunction to 'vivify the contemporary fact'" (Susman n.p.).

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## **The Future Behind Me, By Aghasi Aivazyan**

*Translated, from the Armenian, by Margarit Tadevosyan-Ordukhanyan*

I suddenly remembered about him. Or, rather, he made his presence felt again. I had forgotten everything: my beginnings, the short-lived but ambitious dreams, the meaning and consequences of every last action, my childhood train – the steam engine, ... and him. I look back at my life and see that even my future remains behind me. I passed by the future like it was some small local train-stop. And now I'm looking at the future behind me.

“You no longer speak to me,” he said.

He was some sort of an invisible Confessor to me, inside me. I was handing over my entire life to him – hour by hour, step by step, breath by breath, my innocence, my spurned kindness, misconstrued goodwill, idly wasted enthusiasm. I was handing over to him everything to the very last, shamelessly. I handed over everything knowing past any doubt. “You know that you are the important one. Nobody will ever know the selflessness of my innocence but you, nobody knows the true measure of my suffering but you, nobody will know the full measure of the value of my love, nobody will know the magnitude of my kindness towards everyone but you, nobody will know the true cost of my purity.” I handed over to him those imperceptible movements that laid bare the credibility of everything, the inner union of relationships, the supreme logic of their inner justice. I was handing everything over to his keeping, revealing to him every little detail; to me, he was the depository of my existence. I shouldn't have felt dumbstruck with fear, I was calm – at least he knew the truth; I had been lied to and called a liar, but I was calm – at least he knew the truth.

“You no longer speak to me...,” he said like nothing had happened.

“Really...?” I said, or rather just blurted out, leisurely considering his question.

“Yes,” he said.

“I hadn’t noticed... Actually, I haven’t thought about it. If you say so, it must be true. Yes, it’s really true. But it happened spontaneously. In spite of me. I can’t even say precisely when and how our intimacy, our oneness ended, or at what point our conversations ceased. Instead of memory, there’s an unending whiteness in my brain....”

“Do you no longer need me?” he asked softly, realizing his helplessness.

I thought a little.

“No. It seems – no.”

“It’s a shame,” he said, and it seemed to me that he also blurted this out aimlessly as well, as if to fill some void. “It’s a shame, we shared some good times.... Maybe there’s something else you’d like to add regarding you life?”

I smiled.

“You know it all... It’s all very close to you... It’s hard to imagine that anyone would have been able to reveal his life so sincerely, without embarrassment, in such detail to some Confessor.

“But I wasn’t just a regular flesh and blood confessor to you....”

“True, I wasn’t attending church. And I have been execrated twice by the clergy.... Even then I continued giving you explanations for my imagined sins. You knew more, and I was calm....”

He was quiet for a long time, and together we were looking at the dilapidated structure of the future that was left behind. Sometimes sadness produces a smile—a most meaningless bore.

My unseen Confessor didn't want to leave and was looking for a reason to keep me with him for just a little bit longer. With the helplessness of a cast off lover he asked – without any claims to getting an answer.

“Maybe you could remember...” and hastily added, “for my sake.... For instance, when did you first feel my presence?”

My life behind me seemed like a monotonous cloud of scattering dust. And, really, I didn't remember anything, and whatever I did remember was so insignificant, weightless, valueless now, an idle pursuit; I was only capable of seeing the superficial outlines of the plot, while the confessions were deep, subtle, murky, and had long become invisible even to me. But I didn't want to hurt his feelings, and so I said just for the sake of saying something,

“At the age of six, I think....”

“You think?”

“Yes, at the age of six...,” I said, again just for the sake of saying something, and looked toward the cloud of dust—in order to imagine which part of it contained that particular age. “Do you remember, we were at the summerhouse? We were going from the city to the country-side on a cheery little steam engine. Our neighbor, that little boy who was also on vacation there, wanted me to lie down under the train, and promised in exchange to give me his pen-knife. I lay down between the rails, and the train passed over me, pouring heat and soot over my face and my snow-white shirt, searing my body and my clothes.... But the boy never gave me his knife.... Do you remember that?”

The confessor gave me a smirk that meant, “What kind of a thing is that to tell?” Really, I have no idea what that had to do with him. The first thing that came to mind, I guess. Today everything is jumbled together, there's no telling between the important and unimportant....

“Remember more,” the confessor asked.

“Why do you need it?”

“.....”

“What should I remember?”

“Whatever you want... anything... from our conversations....”

Again I looked toward the cloud of dust:

“Do you remember our street? Old and familiar... Running between houses full of strange and wonderful people. Our street that was ageless for as long as it stood. Thousands of doors looked out onto the street, with the inhabitants’ professions and characters posted on the doors. In one house there lived Sasadidis, “Freelance art historian, cello lessons.” In another house there lived the street poet, Astanisa, “The revolution is a revolt against one’s own destiny.” In every yard, a musical instrument was playing.... And I went to the opera every day.

Do you remember, there came a time when people were migrating from one place to another? Our town also filled with refugees. But I kept going to the theater, where hungry artists kept singing operas in Italian.... That day I was going to hear Mozart’s ‘Orpheus.’ On the way from my house to the theater, I had to pass through the main street. It was taken over by streetwalkers. Back then, I couldn’t tell one person from another. I was on my way to hear Mozart, when a woman in the street caught me by my sleeve. Older than me, wrapped in a shawl, she started begging, saying:

“You are looking for a woman, I know.... Come with me, I am good... There’re many of them, shameless, brazen... They get everyone.... I am not like them, come with me, I have four children, I must buy bread for them, the bread is expensive.... I have to feed them.... What difference does it make to you? I am good....”

“You’re wrong, I’m going elsewhere, I’m going to hear Mozart,” astounded, I wanted to say, and some strange things were running through my mind. She grabbed my hand and forcefully pulled it toward her breasts, her thighs.

“Look at how good I am, how sturdy. I have to feed four children, and in this town I’m all alone.... Come with me...” she kept begging.

The woman had firm, pretty legs; this was the first time my hand touched a woman’s leg.... And instead of going to hear Mozart, I went with her. The foreign woman took me through unfamiliar streets of my town, through unfamiliar lanes of my streets, through unfamiliar yards of my houses....

I went after her, because she sparked in me lust and compassion for her. But later I was painstakingly dissecting myself: did I pity first and then desire, or the other way around, first desire and then pity, or maybe some amalgam of both. I, if I remember it right, kept asking you in those days, who was more to blame – she, her hungry children, or me? She, who seduced me, her hungry children, who had pushed their mother out into the streets, or I, who both pitied and desired her.... With self-loathing, I kept pondering over my sin and finally became convinced that I pitied her first and only then desired.... Or maybe only pitied her—of course, only pitied her, and I was content, because you knew this well....

Soon the woman disappeared, but I could no longer break away from the street. I would whistle Mozart and wander the streets at night, and every object I saw in the dark -a tree or a lamp-post, seemed a woman to me, and I would hasten to her side....

In those days, I tried to understand the reason behind my every impulse, in detail, piece by piece. No, I was not a sinner, and you knew that well... But I couldn’t explain this to others; to others, the inner details didn’t exist.

From the street to the prison the road is a very short one, you know.

I ended up first in my town's lovely prison, then in a few regional correctional facilities. I entrusted everything to you, and I was calm – you, of all people, knew the details. The prisons were a front, my fall was a front with no details. Everyone around me was pulling things together, building a front, one that was visible, while I kept busy working on forgiving myself. You alone knew this, and I was calm....

In prison – among criminals and liars, hypocrites and brutes, I was beaten and then punished for the beating; I was forced to work for others, who then cleverly made me look like the lazy one and I got punished for that as well; I was betrayed and punished for betraying; they smilingly hated and persecuted me while calling my gloomy love hatred; they ate my share and then beat me for eating the shares of others. And outwardly, this was how it was, because I didn't know my way around. Only you could see so deep inside me, my inviolable innocence, humiliated and maimed, born of the little pieces underneath the front caked with sin..."

The Confessor was looking at me with widened eyes and was shuffling his feet, and I asked, I don't know why, since nothing should matter to me:

"Now tell me, you knew everything, you understood everything, didn't you?"

The confessor looked at me with fear, then shifted his glance, looked at the tip of his shoes, made an attempt to smile, then looked at me again, without seeing me, and shaking his head no, waveringly left, walked slowly toward the dust....

"Then even you didn't know the truth?"

And before his image disappeared, dissolved into the dust, I saw from behind how he again shook his head no.

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“What the hell are you dreaming about now?” said the woman on call at the nursing home. “It’s lunchtime.... Are you daydreaming again? You belong in a mental hospital, not here.”

It was a sunny noon, the smell of borscht was drifting in from the cafeteria, and I could hear the old folks clicking their spoons.

I shook myself out of my thoughts, gave the woman a vague smile and started looking for my dentures, which I always keep under my pillow and then locate only with great difficulty.

1971

## Poems by Timothy T. Dansdill

*Quinnipac University*

### Manifest Destiny

I was violent and uninformed.  
Getting uniformed made me  
a god where village elders watched  
me, more patient in their range  
than the Sierra Madre surrounding my dawn  
patrol's shadow, its ripple on the chapel's  
whitewash, their brown faces ravined  
with wrinkles, black eyes insulting me  
like crows crying in translation: *See him?*

*He's a corpse under orders. His weapon's  
Large, gun small. My own M-16 in my mouth  
outside Madre de Dios. They must have cursed  
me into it. Madre de Dios!: a village so poor  
my image of poor buried itself, a bone  
Without a dog that comes on thin  
Pure animate gristle, suspicious  
At first, then onto me in joy  
less vicious somehow than the kids  
streaming rags and screaming *Yanqui!**

Fingers and toes are gone away.  
Ok. Now they kick my head loose.  
A helmeted skulls scares the dogs.  
Boys scream *Futbol! Futbol! Vamos!*  
Ancient mothers all in black keep  
Their calm distance, sheepish smiles  
Behind their shawls. A priest might break  
Into this game, sign the cross shouting  
*Merced! Merced!* and kneel down  
By my heart, pour some dust  
On my eyes, over the slug's rush  
Of my tongue, my scattered fragments  
Of freedom, oh my sweet tis of thee...

The village whore's made off with my  
man root, and the lust I studied in school.  
Into my void padre's heaping dust  
Until my blood's a darkened clay.  
*Madre de Dios! He whispers*  
As if he were praying for rain.

And so on me they gently fall  
All these ancient mothers singing  
Words they long ago let dry up  
When their last guerillas bit them  
Too hard, mixing blue milk with blood.  
They cry to let the harder world

Wean me and tear me down and now  
I'm cursing in Aztec all conquistadors.  
Gunbelt, canteen, dogtags—all gone

Mestizos, rescue me from my West.  
Remake my face from your first world:  
A serious, suffering face  
No good soldier would recognize  
In *Geographica de Nationale*.  
Make my face, still missing in action  
Illegal, alien, ready  
To work somewhere invisible  
In America, my birthplace  
Full of Grace, *Madre de Dios!*

### **Grim Reapers**

On Maple Crest Circle the old wives come  
Out of their suburban dreams of spring  
And stand amazed on their stoops, waiting

On lithe husbands, half inch cigarettes  
Stuck to lower lips, who pull on old mowers  
And walk, coughing man-machines,

Across a dandelion universe, some gone

To seed as gray as the exhaust, furious  
As the dull blades sending dizzy-steady

Spumes of memory of the final pass,  
The throttle pulled full of gas as the engines die  
And they hand their handsomes that sweating glass

Of lemonade or maybe a beer. How in love  
And how proud in love they were, watching  
Their men drink, wipe their mouths and wink

Wink: Oh no more that wordless code for  
Making love while babies slept; no, yes, the fresh  
Mown grass manliness of them, the shades

Down, the birds invisible in ivy delighted:  
For birds are souls who once knew such love  
And spring coming coming oh coming on.

## **Making Contact Zones Matter in the Composition Classroom: Grappling to Negotiate Understanding in Peer-Response Groups**

*Lori Smith Rios, Texas A&M University, Kingsville*

In “Arts of the Contact Zone” Mary Louise Pratt describes contact zones as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (444). Some theorists object to applying Pratt’s contact zone metaphor to the classroom. Many others, including Patricia Bizzell, Min Zhan Lu, and Phillis Van Slyck make convincing arguments for the usefulness of contact zone pedagogies. They suggest students analyze others’ texts for meaning through dialectical interaction and rhetorical interpretation. While their arguments are significant additions to English studies, the metaphor’s usefulness in the *composition* classroom stems mainly from students building meaning both dialectically and in *their own writing*. Therefore, I contend that in composition classes *combining* these previous contact zone pedagogies with *peer response writing groups* creates the site that both facilitates dialectic interaction and fosters writing. Using classrooms as dialectical contact zones is only the beginning of students’ cultural meaning making. In the composition classroom students continue grappling with conflicts in peer response groups as they create, revise, share, and understand the cultural, rhetorical, and linguistic knowledge that emerges in texts they produce. Therefore, peer response groups become the social site where “cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” as students extend their explorations of others’ texts to discussions of the meaning in their own writing. To illustrate how peer response groups help students build meaning in their writing, I will

first discuss Bizzell, Lu, and Van Slyck's approaches. Then I illustrate how I extend their approaches to the contact zone of peer response groups in my composition classes.

Patricia Bizzell began a flood of "pedagogical construction" that continues to pour from Pratt's work with her opinion piece entitled "'Contact Zones' and English Studies." Bizzell suggests using Pratt's concept to reorganize composition classes "in terms of historically defined contact zones" by selecting American cultural texts ("Contact Zones" 167). The texts all represent diverse American cultures – some "dominant" and some "minority" – that have at one point in American history... vied for power. Using Bizzell's approach, students discuss how rhetoricians build "rhetorical bridges" and begin the difficult task of examining their own culture in order to discover sites where their values overlap with others whose cultures they once perceived as so very different from their own ("4<sup>th</sup> of July" 56-57).

In "Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone," Min Zhan Lu explores "the question of how to conceive and practice teaching methods which invite a multicultural approach to style, particularly those styles of student writing which appear to be ridden with 'errors'" (442). She claims English courses are "informed by a view of language as a site of struggle among conflicting discourses with unequal socio-political power" (444). So, like Bizzell, Lu also aims "to apply a multicultural approach to student writing: an approach that views the classroom as a potential 'contact zone'" (447). However, Lu proposes students discuss various "idiosyncratic" features of "real" writers' style in order to examine the "politics of their stylistic decisions" (445). She claims that by exploring real writers' decisions, students will be able to work on their own styles, thus, making informed and effective choices about incorporating academic discourse and rhetorical strategies in their own writing.

Phillis Van Slyck offers applying what she calls an “interactive” contact zone approach to classroom discourse in “Repositioning Ourselves in the Contact Zone.” She proposes a practice “in which a variety of world literatures, and the cultures they reflect, are discussed, critiqued, and written about in a thematically coherent context” (155). She describes a contact zone where “students engage with specific texts...enabling an exploration of difference without assigning cultural ‘boundaries’ or ‘hierarchies’ and without demanding accommodation to any single or unified social vision” (155). This approach teaches what Van Slyck calls “decentering” where students not only learn to “express their views” but also to “construct questions, which enable them to negotiate issues and begin to define ethical positions for themselves” (155). The goal of decentering is for students to learn “the difference between an *informed* rejection and a naïve or unreflective one” (157) as they come to understand “how values are socially and culturally constructed” (152).

The diversity of American culture texts that Bizzell argues for in her approach provides ample opportunities for dialectical interaction during rhetorical interpretation. And even further - as Bizzell explains: one advantage to using this approach is that we “can no longer ask prejudicial questions” to evaluate authors, rather we analyze the “rhetorical effectiveness of each writer in dealing with the matter at hand” (“Contact Zones” 167). For example, we wouldn’t ask if Frederick Douglass is as “good” a writer as Henry Thoreau, but would instead question “the need to promote civil disobedience in the contact zone created by black and white efforts to define and motivate action in response to slavery” (167-68).

Understanding writers’ uses of these rhetorical strategies expands students’ own repertoires for using their cultural knowledge as a tool in building rhetorical bridges between them and the audience in their *own* writing. As Laura

Gray-Rosendale explains in *Rethinking Basic Writing*, “the peer group’s operation...inevitably gives rise to the construction of various identities that help them exercise agency and gain increased control and authority over their actions as writers” (17). As a result, Gray-Rosendale finds that in peer response groups, students continue dialoguing about rhetorical strategies, but take the analysis to their own writing “giving rise to the creation of new rhetorical positions within their texts” (17).

I have found this to be true with my own students. To help students think more deeply about topics and to narrow and clarify their theses, students write several informal position papers before each major writing assignment. In these papers they focus on making a claim and supporting it with evidence from the text and from their own experiences. They discuss their papers in peer response groups. Recently when I taught a sequence entitled “Negotiating Difference,” a student I’ll refer to as Derek brought a paper about conformity to his peer response group. His paper resulted from a lengthy and involved class discussion about the difference between bigotry and racism after reading bell hooks’ “Confronting Class in the Classroom” and Barbara Mellix’s “From Outside, In.”

Derek, a white student, claimed that being expected to “conform” to university writing standards was a form of institutionalized racism. He used his own background, language, and experience as evidence as well as examples from hooks and Mellix’s selections to support his claim. Several African American and white students in Derek’s group disagreed. They reminded Derek that *he* decided to attend the university; therefore, they claimed he accepted, even *asked*, to adapt to those academic norms. They cited Mellix’s experiences as support for their positions stating she willingly adapted her writing to conform to academic standards in order to succeed in her classes. Her academic success, they said, led to more gainful employment for Mellix.

One student in Derek's group, Holly, said the language they are acquiring in university classes benefits them in various ways as well – academically, socially, professionally, and monetarily. To illustrate her point, Holly explained her plans to attend law school after completing a bachelor's degree. She said getting accepted to law school depends heavily on her ability to "conform" to academic language. Holly then produced a letter she had written to her boyfriend and read it proudly. When she finished, Holly stated the letter is proof that her "real writing" contains non-standard usage and slang. She pointed out that, like hooks, she is not being asked to "give up" her language, just "add to it." She then added, "But the difference is that I know *when* to use my language and *how* to use school language." Holly and the rest of the peer response group identified with hooks and Mellix's struggles to adapt. More importantly, the students in the group found meaning in sites where their experiences overlapped with hooks and Mellix's cultural experiences, and they used those sites to build rhetorical bridges for expressing the new understanding they had about their own lives.

The group's initial "clash" of beliefs in the contact zone of their peer response group ultimately affected Derek's argument. He subsequently altered his position in his revised essay and argued that being expected to adapt to "university's language" was not a form of racism, but an "oppression" he willingly accepted to take advantage of the success his learning afforded him.

Derek's willingness to adjust his position and reshape his claim proves what the late Candice Spigelman claims in "Habits of Mind: Historical Configurations of Textual Ownership in Peer Writing Groups": writers make "fundamental changes" in [the] "central argument" of their essays "in response to the group's advice" (244-45). The discussion in Derek's peer response group enabled him to continue grappling with the cultural knowledge in hooks and

Mellix's texts and bridge the gap between what he perceived as others' knowledge and his own by helping him build meaning in his own writing. Derek's new perspective embraced his group's view that, like Mellix, changing his language provided him a way to succeed. However, he maintained he was *compelled* to change in order to "succeed" in the university system.

Peer response groups also engage students in furthering discussions of stylistic features as influences on their decisions about revision. As students move from analyzing and discussing stylistic features in professional texts to peer response group discussions about their own writing, their oral interaction shapes the way they produce text. As Lu states, "Having approached the writing of a 'real' writer from the perspective of the relationship between meaning, form, and social identifications, students are likely to be more motivated in applying this perspective to their own style and its revision" (456-57). During peer response group discussions, students may encounter idiosyncratic features of their own or another group member's writing that reflect either a writer's cultural position or rhetorical strategy. Examining cultural and rhetorical stylistic interpretations enable students to identify and understand the impact of such features on meaning.

As Gray-Rosendale contends, "Conversations make certain writing choices possible; more specifically, the oral exchange actually serves as a site of writing improvement" (150). She finds in her study that oral exchanges shape students' written documents in a wide variety of ways. She claims changes in structure and content evidence the effectiveness of peer response groups on student revision processes (150).

I found evidence of this behavior during the same "Negotiating Differences" sequence when another student in my composition class, Kim, gained understanding of idiosyncratic features in her own writing. Kim claimed

she grew up learning two languages – one standard and one not. She said she learned “standard English” in school and “black English” at home. Kim claimed she did not understand why “school language” was so difficult for her to master until she read about Mellix’s struggles with writing in high school and college. Kim also said reading and discussing idiosyncratic features of other students’ texts in peer response group discussions helped her understand that “school language” had been difficult because it is not what she speaks. Therefore, for Kim, like Mellix, it is the language of the “other.” Through this realization Kim was able to write about her language experiences with more authority than ever before. In peer response group discussions, she also conveyed a determination to “incorporate academic discourse in [her] own writing” by making those effective revision choices that Lu discusses.

Using peer response groups allows students to continue grappling with the cultural conflicts they encounter during previous and on-going discussions of their writing. As they interact with each other’s writing, the “identities [they] adopt are quite self-authorizing” according to Gray-Rosendale (151). She claims, “They seem to problematize our scholarly conceptions of how racial and ethnic identities shape writing, directly challenge sexual identity and how it operates within different cultural frameworks, and dispute conceptions of class relations and how they construct social identities” (151). In short, their writing implies they refuse to believe what we *tell* them about race, class, and gender. However, they learn from each other just as peer response group discussions allowed Kim to understand and overcome her difficulties with “school language.”

Phyllis Van Slyck argues for establishing a classroom environment in which questioning decenters students’ perspectives about difference. Moving discussion of students’ texts into peer response groups performs a further “decentering function” (165). According to Van Slyck, asking students to

examine their own texts about stereotypes in cultural identity may make them recognize in themselves what they have never recognized before. She says of one student: ““Texts like Karl’s...help [him] to recognize the layers of misrepresentation which stereotypes create.” Karl became aware of how he had been incorrectly defined by a cultural stereotype (165). And asking students to discuss possible solutions to cultural phenomena in *their* writing moves writers to take responsibility for themselves like another of Van Slyck’s students, AnaMaria, did in writing: “The way I get past stereotypes is by talking to people. I find out about their background. The more you talk to people, the more you see what you have in common” (165). For these reasons, peer response groups should dialogue constantly about the impact various cultural aspects have on the meaning of their texts just as Derek and Holly’s group discussed the impact of Derek’s position.

Understanding various perspectives includes close examination of values and concerted effort to understand social and cultural factors that construct those values. Only by examining their own cultural knowledge and then closely “reading” the differences that exist among various cultures, can students begin to negotiate understandings and gain meaning in a purposeful way. With cultural understanding, students also realize linguistic and rhetorical knowledge, as language cannot be separated from culture. Although dialectical interaction certainly lays the foundation for students’ meaning making, in the contact zone of the composition classroom, *peer response groups* foster students’ relationship building and thus knowledge making. Within the framework of peer response groups, students continue creating, revising, and sharing cultural, rhetorical, and linguistic knowledge. Dialectical interaction within peer response groups allows students to continue grappling with new understandings, but extends their exploration within the context of their own writing where negotiation brings as

Joseph Harris states, "difference into useful relation with each other," thus making that knowledge their own (164).

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## The Spaces Below

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"If I were asked to name the chief virtue of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace."

—Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*.

On the porch of my grandmother's house, my father is talking to my brothers and me. We are young. He points to a rundown Victorian home flanked with corner battlements. "Up there, on the third floor," he says, "in the study, is a secret room behind the bookcase. When you press a certain book, the entire thing swings open, revealing a hidden room."

"What's in there?"

"Nothing. An empty room."

This answer irritates us. We love such things, but only in potential, for the secrets these places might contain. An empty room is unsatisfying. "Can we see it?"

"That was a long time ago. We don't know the people who live there anymore," he says. "No."

That's it.

But the image has stayed with me, rooting as it were, for decades. Each time I visit my grandmother's house I glance across the street. Secret passages obsess some children, for these spaces are rife with possibility. My older brother tells me the story he heard. That a counterfeiter lived there in the 1920s and used the room only when he was in desperate want of money. That he wasn't greedy

or an anarchist out to undermine the government, but was a nice guy who had a talent for engraving and was down on his luck. For rent, or to pay the grocery bill—butter, eggs, bread, and milk.

I am suspicious of this version, for the secret room would have to have been well lit; old style counterfeiting was a precise, eye-straining art, the intense engraving, one mistake, and the effort of weeks, perhaps months, ruined. The printing press and racks for drying, everything would have been crammed in that space. The smell of the inks would have been overwhelming. I have worked with printing presses. They're heavy iron contraptions. He would have needed help to get it up to the third floor, not to mention secreting it inside the hidden room. Others would have known.

Why not simply use the study or a bedroom? Just pull down the shades.

The story does not follow, a nostalgic non sequitur. Yet, there is something compelling about the image of this man at his work behind the bookcase, a hermetic, rodent-like scratching on metal, just around the corner from the Catholic church, night after night, as the small New Jersey town went on about its business, unaware of the secret within spitting distance of the ubiquitous blue slate sidewalks for which it is known. It is a god-fearing town. On Sunday mornings, you can still hear the heels of women walking to mass.

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Secret passages and hidden rooms belong to older cities. They are architectural sleights of hand imported along with our dreams of castles. Louis the XIV, the Sun King, had a passage at Versailles from his suite to a guest bedroom; comely male and female guests, it was rumored, received nocturnal visits from the king. His consort, Marie Antoinette, used another passageway to escape with her children as revolutionaries overran the palace in 1789. Secret passages are egress and ingress into the body politic, a neutral zone between

here and there. The hiding places of children are the innocent precursor, but graduated architecturally in these cases.

Hiding places may have reached their apogee in the work of Nicholas Owen. A master carpenter, Owen worked in Elizabethan England, constructing scores of priest holes for the Jesuits—hiding places in the roofs of bread ovens, under cupboards, and beneath gatehouses. Jesuits missionaries would land on the coast and be spirited to Catholic-friendly, recusant households. Harboring a priest was punishable by death, so Owen worked at night, away from the notice of servants, whose faith under torture could not always be relied upon. A specific demonstration of his genius was that he often created two hiding spaces, one atop the other. The first was a succinct, easy-to-find version, providing false victory to the pursuivants, the Queen's priest hunters, who then missed the more dangerous spaces that lay below. Some were so well made they remained undiscovered until the 20th century.

It was a religious calling.

That he was apparently a dwarf is of no importance except for hagiographers who use his diminutive size to stress the depth of his conviction, all that solitary, secret work having been done by hand.

He was captured in 1606, and imprisoned in the Tower of London. Sir William Cecil, Elizabeth's domestic security chief, wrote, "It is incredible how great was the joy caused by his arrest . . . knowing the great skill of Owen in constructing hiding places, and the innumerable quantity of dark holes which he had schemed for hiding priests all through England" (Errand 58). That some of these gaps, these holes were lost doubles their evocative imagery.

According to a contemporary account, Owen was interrogated, racked for up to six hours at a time. It raises an interesting question—how often are carpenters tortured for their trade secrets? Owen soon died, either from a self-

inflicted knife wound, or from his body finally giving out. Four hundred years later, the story is still in dispute. Pope Paul VI canonized him in 1970.

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Only my uncle is left in my grandmother's house, which has been in our family since it was built over a century ago. In my childhood, the house held several generations of relatives crammed into its small rooms. My brothers and I ranged over all its parts, except the cellar. The cellar, writes Bachelard, "is first and foremost the dark entity of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces. When we dream, there we are in harmony with the irrationality of the depths" (18). My uncles had warned us about monsters down there. These stories were terrifying, but also thrilling, for we would pause at the cellar door, in the warm, well-lit safety of the kitchen and dare one another to descend. We rarely ever descended.

Secret passages, tunnels, cellars, all stoked our imaginations because we could see ourselves as both inhabitants and victims of these dark places. They are a centralized topography of mystery. What is the child's game Clue, but a parsing of secret spaces, the lives of adults? Nesting under bedcovers is not far from seeing ourselves as burrowing animals, inside walls, in the basement under the floor where the adults sat talking endlessly. We wanted to both seek and hide and some of my most pleasant memories are of playing that game, in what seems now impossible in that all-too-small house. We devoured images of sliding panels and secret tunnels in *Nancy Drew* and *The Hardy Boys*. We graduated to films, from *The Bowery Boys* to Harry, the famous tunnel from *The Great Escape*. This kind of hiding is intimate if you know you are being sought, a game of discovering and occupying such spaces.

Nevertheless, the sliding panel reveals as much as it conceals, for it is not simply the awareness of that which was formerly unknown (disturbing in itself),

but that such places are unassailable proof of premeditation. Someone made this. Surface planes of comfort, of surety, are fractured by such discoveries. Secret passages, priests holes, and hidden places collapse boundaries, let that which is beyond the pale, in.

In 15th century Dublin, the Pale was a series of pickets surrounding the city, protecting the locus of Imperial English power from the wild Irish. Those inside spoke the King's English and obeyed his laws. Those outside *Baile atha Cleath* (the Gaelic name for Dublin, still printed on street signs) were literally beyond the boundaries of language, of religion, of civilization—a space occupied by a heathen, untamed people.

Metaphorically, this is whom the pursuivants sought. The occupants of priest holes. Jung's not-I.

However, as my brothers and I got older, the ease with which we inhabited such spaces faded. In the broad daylight of adolescent, of adulthood, such things are sneered at, the games of children. These old fascinations become neutralized, memories.

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My family moved to Florida when I was eight. We were part of the 1970s migration away from old cities in the North to the promise of the New South. The secret places in Florida were different. Florida homes have no cellars, for the water table is too high. But we encountered something else that reminded us of home.

As Florida's population swelled, the state's aquifers, enormous underground lakes, began drying up, consumed faster than they could be replenished by rain. This created great voids, vast spaces just below the surface, waiting for the right circumstance to reveal themselves, a heavy truck passing over, a laconic summer afternoon. Sinkholes open and swallow everything—

swimming pools, trees, and houses. They take roads away, stealing the very lines on the asphalt.

But this is an old Florida story.

Paine's Prairie outside Gainesville was a thriving fishing community, its lake providing a livelihood for the families who lived along its edges during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are postcards of a steamship ferry line that ran the lake. Newspaper accounts report that one night in 1880, a sinkhole opened and the water disappeared. The residents awoke to find a prairie where yesterday there had been a lake. Their docks now overlooked land, bleachers in full view of something *new*. This revelation, of something that could vanish a lake, must have been terrifying. What was once unseen (and perhaps unnecessary then, a kind of *incognito ergo non sum*) is forced into one's consciousness. Surety is replaced by a gap, a denegation of space. Nowadays amateur astronomers walk their telescopes to the center of the depression to peer at the inky vastness of the universe, gauging the infinite.

Floridians desperately attempt to fill sinkholes, dumping construction debris, concrete, tree stumps, anything to replace what was lost, to fill in that which had not really existed. To bring the surface back to level. With each sip of water, each revelation, the spaces below grow larger.

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Since the end of the Korean War, multiple tunnels have been discovered under the demilitarized zone. The imagination quickly rushes in, filling these spaces with North Korean shock troops, tens of thousands of soldiers and tanks ready to burst forth at a signal from Kim Chong-Il, a member in good standing of the Axis of Evil. The South Koreans call these *tunnels of aggression and infiltrations*, as in "the third infiltration was discovered near Panmunjeon in 1978." For \$125 per person, tourists can explore one of the tunnels, but only

halfway. It is sealed from the South Korean side by a large steel door. The North Korean government denies having anything to do with its construction.

Quantification is the first impulse. How long is the tunnel? What was found inside? In an English mansion owned by a recusant family, pursuivants discover a priest's hole, accessed by moving a flagstone in the main hall fireplace, and running fifty yards to a small chamber ending near a beech tree. The chamber contained "a table, crucifix, a prayer book, and the remains of a cassock" (Errand 42). But no people. These questions lead to others, attempts to reinscribe what were once ours—this scar in the wall, the rupture in the ground of what was once safe. To inscribe is to attempt to reclaim. When we name the makers of secret places, we begin to contend with implications.

Outside Bogotá, high in Colombian Andes, a partly constructed submarine is discovered in a warehouse. It is in three sections; also discovered were blueprints in Russian for completing the work. American DEA agents surmise the submarine would have been trucked to the sea, with room for 200 tons of cocaine in its hull.

It is the cunning I hearken to, a submarine, mountains, drug smugglers. I imagine a fleet slipping into the warm waters off Colombia and gliding over the sandy bottom of the Gulf like manta rays, rising in the dark at some Florida beach, disgorging their wares, and then sinking once more, looping back in an endless run to satisfy American appetites. During the day entrepreneurs rent jet skis and Sunfish sailboats to tourists who skim over these same waters.

Why is the submarine so striking? It is the possibilities with which space can be refashioned, broken. The secret passage becomes an entire ocean, a watery sally port into America. Our AWACs useless; we are blind like cave fish, pursuivants walking beside the fireplace that conceals the Jesuit priest, the booze smuggler, the runaway slave. Were it not for its cargo, the idea would be deeply

seductive. Lance Morrow, in his 2005 book *Evil: an Investigation*, stresses evil's seemingly limitless capacity for adaptation, for surprise, that the forces of good are always playing "existential catch-up" (50).

The submarine punctures the illusory envelope of border.

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In May, a few years ago, an eighteen-wheeler truck hauling appliances was abandoned at a rest stop outside Victoria, Texas. The truck also held scores of undocumented workers, hidden behind the refrigerator boxes. The driver had fled, local police suspect, after realizing some of the immigrants had died, suffocated in the beginnings of the sweltering south Texas summer. When highway patrol officers opened the truck, those inside still able to run scattered like livestock suddenly loosed; perhaps they fled from the smell. There were sixteen dead people in the truck, including a five-year-old boy. Three others later died in a Victoria hospital. The truck may have held up to sixty people, but it's impossible to know. Fear is an amazing motivator. Who expected that eruption of bodies and stench roiling forth when the doors were opened, when light and air were let in?

These deaths are common in Texas, especially in the summer. In June the same year, three more dead people were found in a hopper car in a rail yard in Baytown (outside Houston). The bodies were discovered only because two other men also traveling escaped the hopper car by fashioning a rope out of their clothes. The three too weak to climb out baked in the smooth metal container. The escapees notified a Catholic priest in San Diego, but by the time the train was located, it was too late. The discoverers of such things are at the end of a long chain of inferences leading back to who knows where? Bachelard is suggestive, "Outside and inside are both intimate—they are always ready to be reversed, to exchange their hostility. If there exists a border-line surface between such an

inside and outside, this surface is painful on both sides" (217-218). But what is the point of the pickets if we are not willing to repulse anyone attempting to come over them?

All surfaces become suspect. Every truck, every train, every flight coming from beyond the Pale, are potential violations of our home, the body politic of the United States. Politicians call for more INS agents and a wall between them and us. Stronger enforcement merely drives illegals to remoter points of entry to the U.S., different passages.

At the beginning of the current war with Iraq, an embedded reporter noticed that some American troops attacking the Baghdad airport suddenly disappeared. An explanation was soon forthcoming. The soldiers had descended into one of Saddam Hussein's underground palaces. Traditional palaces usually contain secret passages, sally ports, but that the palace itself was hidden complicates notions of entrance and egress, with power and seclusion becoming muddied. Hussein's slippery presence (complete with body doubles, another kind of negative space) promised a pyrrhic ending. That he was pulled out of a spider hole, looking like late term Howard Hughes, seems a tepid conclusion to another fraternity member in the Axis of Evil.

A few weeks after September 11th the President vowed to drive terrorists from their hiding places and, "get them running . . . smoking [them] out of their caves." It is a hunter's metaphor, the difference between active pursuit and accidental discovery. On television, we were shown languid images, slow pans over wooden crates of ammunition and pamphlets in caves and blown out buildings, motes of our success. We have become pursuivants.

At home seeking becomes a permanent necessity. Detroit and Buffalo neighborhoods conceal terrorist cells, seemingly ordinary men hidden in plain

sight in American neighborhoods. One worked at a convenience store. Where you buy milk, for God's sake.

The language we use, the humming and buzzing of dark potential. Cells are an alveoli of evil, linked by their signification to other cells, a great hive spread across the world.

Whose home is truly safe when a sinkhole can swallow it at any moment?

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## **Necrophilia on Holiday: Constriction of Discourse and the Male Burden of non-“Z-men” in *To the Lighthouse’s* Mr. Ramsay and *Coming Up for Air’s* George Bowling**

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Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* and George Orwell’s *Coming Up for Air* are novels of despair caused by a common way of thinking. Both Woolf’s Mr. Ramsay and Orwell’s Mr. Bowling are willing subjects to a way of thinking that does not allow for their own piece of mind. These characters are trapped by an acute sense of their time and place. They are haunted by an idealized vision of what they could and should be doing with their lives. On top of all of this they possess a paralyzing sense of certainty which severely restricts their actions. As a result, Bowling and Ramsay willingly enter into a kind of living death. Unfortunately, both attempt to find a solution to their situation by embracing certainty over possibility through repeated actions and, in the case of Bowling, a disastrous attempt at bringing nostalgia to life. Through the teachings of Erich Fromm, the actions of Bowling and Ramsay can be defined as necrophilia. Fromm defined necrophilia as the love of death through an attraction to certainty and a rejection of possibility. This essay will further explore Fromm’s concept of necrophilia as it pertains to the actions of George Bowling and Mr. Ramsay.

While many critics have attempted to strike a balance between Woolf’s distrust of Freudian psychoanalysis and the deeply psychological nature of her novels, few have explored Orwell from the psychoanalytic approach. However, an understanding of the nature of the Between the Wars period in which *To the Lighthouse*, *Coming Up for Air*, and Fromm’s *Escape from Freedom* were written exposes some profound links between Woolf, Orwell, and Fromm. In particular,

the nature of Fromm's opinions about fascism as expressed in *Escape from Freedom* allow for a possible alliance between a psychoanalyst and an author that deeply distrusted psychoanalysis. Fromm firmly believed that a society built on unnatural, or unhealthy, institutions corrupted individuals (Schaar 15). In a similar notion, Woolf distrusted the patriarchal family structure because "the unequal distribution of power between genders is a key element of producing fascism" (Gätgens 21). The shared belief of the corrupting power of established order places Woolf and Fromm within similar ideological frameworks. However, Fromm and Woolf may have disagreed upon what main corrupting power within the established order was the primary source of human misery. Fromm's active resistance to fascism can also allow for an easy alliance between Fromm and Orwell, due to Orwell's vehement distrust of authority. For both Fromm and Orwell, authority represents a loss of freedom. While Fromm saw the submission to authority as willing surrender of freedom, Orwell saw authority as stealing freedom from its subjects. In spite of the fact that Orwell and Fromm disagreed on the process freedom is lost, it is doubtless that they agreed upon the result.

In the vast majority of psychoanalytic and/or biographical criticism has made much of the fact that Woolf was an incest survivor. The "sexual muggings" she endured at the hands of her half-brother undoubtedly had a significant impact upon her life (Gay 72). Couple this with the fact that Woolf admits in several letters that *To the Lighthouse* was an attempt at catharsis for an unhealthy obsession over issues that she had with her deceased parents, and one can see why and how most critics have decided to explore *To the Lighthouse* from a Freudian/Biographical approach (Hyman 103). However, this is troublesome for some Woolf scholars due to the fact that Woolf deeply distrusted psychoanalysis, even as her contemporaries in the Bloomsbury group embraced

Freudian psychoanalysis (Neverow 59). Woolf sincerely believed that if she were to be analyzed like her companions in the Bloomsbury group that her creativity were would be greatly diminished (Abel 14). The genesis of this idea is rooted in Woolf's belief that Freud's privileging of the phallus and the rise of fascism in Europe shared a common, male dominated, ideological root. By submitting her mind to a Freudian phallogocentric treatment, Woolf felt as though she would be surrendering both her sense of self and sense of creativity in a manner similar to the way in which individuals surrendered themselves to fascism (Pawlowski).

With this in mind, it would seem highly contradictory to initiate a psychoanalytic study of Woolf. Many critics have attempted to come to terms with Woolf's deep distrust of psychoanalysis in spite of the seemingly psychological nature of her writings. While Erich Fromm is generally not utilized in literary studies, his teachings may be of particular value in overcoming this contradiction. Woolf's distrust of Freud's teachings is similar to the revisions Fromm sought to bring to Freudian psychoanalysis. Like the critics of Woolf, who recognize the contradictory nature of using psychoanalysis in order to understand ideas that actively resist psychoanalysis, Erich Fromm was caught between depending upon Freud while attempting to revise Freud. While Fromm was attempting to expand upon Freud's narrow libido theories, thus overcoming Freud's limitations, Fromm was dependent upon Freud. Fromm once expressed this relationship to Freud as being similar to standing upon someone's shoulders. He was keenly aware that Freud was the foundation that elevated him to a position where he could look down on Freud (Burston 2). This relationship is similar to Woolf's relationship to the teachings of Freud. Virginia Woolf's deep understanding of human psychology, as expressed in her writings, compelled her to criticize Freud's ideas on psychology.

Compared to the volumes written on *To the Lighthouse*, not much has been written on *Coming Up For Air*. What little that has been written tends to address the novel as a pre-war companion piece for 1984. An article by Joseph Browne called "The Times of Their Lives: George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*" and the few mentions of the novel in Mark Connelly's *The Diminished Self: Orwell and the Loss of Freedom* are close to addressing the issues of this study. However, while *The Diminished Self* argues that George Bowling's problems are symptomatic of George's time, the text does not offer reasons for these symptoms. Browne's essay acknowledges that Bowling's nostalgia is a result of his being entrapped in the modern world, but this essay finds nostalgia to be a positive, creative solution.

This is similar to some of the reviews *Coming Up for Air* received at its time of publication. One reviewer compared Bowling's situation to that of being in a dust bin. Orwell's character and critic shared the belief that the past was better, the present ruined, and the future is sure to be worse. Concluding that on Bowling's excursion to Lower Binfield, "Needless to say he finds that his little paradise has just become part of the general dustbin" that is everything in the present time (Horrabin 155). Another reviewer stated, "This is a fine book, fair comment on one aspect of life today and a sincere picture of the younger ex-Service man dubiously looking into which seems even less promising than the past" (Allingham 154). Again George Bowling's sense of nostalgia is adopted by a reader. Other reviewers of the time shared Bowling's sense that the past will certainly always be better than the future, especially at the particular moment in history both George Bowling and the reviewers find themselves (Anonymous; Cogley; Howe). Isaac Rosenfeld, in his review of *Coming Up for Air*, took the level of agreement between character and reader to an extreme by making the

statement, “the onset of death is often the first taste a man gets of freedom” (172). Erich Fromm would classify such a statement as a symptom of necrophilia.

Erich Fromm sought to correct Freud’s sexualized definition of necrophilia. Freud defined necrophilia as a sexual impulse for the dead; Fromm defined a necrophiliac as any person who loved certainty. As death is the only certainty, certain things are dead. Death is the end of all other possibilities. The love of the repetitive processes of machines, nostalgia, and any limitation of possibility or sensation is an act of necrophilia (Fromm *Essential* 82; Forsyth 136). Edmond Fuller does seem to echo this idea in a 1950 essay on Orwell when he praises *Coming Up for Air* for “the scorn poured out upon our civilization of gadgets and synthetics, regimentation, standardization, and mechanization” (163). Fuller saw Bowling’s nostalgia as an act of resistance against the tools and products of necrophilia, though Fuller does not state this in Fromm-ian terms. Ultimately, Bowling’s attempt at resistance is a failed one. Bowling’s necrophilia is to blame for his inability to successfully resist.

Perhaps the best illustration of Fromm’s concept of necrophilia in both works is when, in *Coming Up for Air*, George Bowling reflects, “the churchyard was bang in the middle of the town, so that you never went a day without remembering how you’d got to end. And yet what was it that people had in those days? A feeling of security, even when they weren’t secure” (Orwell 125). Here, the churchyard symbolizes death and security in a literal realization of Fromm’s concept of necrophilia. George Bowling’s attempt to recapture moments of his youth by remembering and returning to his childhood hometown of Lower Binfield are acts embracing certainty and death. The past is dead because it is determined, beyond the infusion of further possibilities. His nostalgia is safe because he can revisit his major life decisions without having to

bear the burden of choosing again. His conclusions are already made; his security determined.

In order to fully understand the choice of necrophilia we must first examine the roots of the kind of despair Bowling and Ramsay experience. William James blames despair upon the unrealistic vision of a monistic universe. Both Bowling and Ramsay attempt to achieve goals within a monistic universe. They operate under a system with only one correct answer. This is a symptom of necrophilia because of the severe limitations placed on experience. In the system they choose to believe in there is only one right answer, one good, one positive outcome, etc. Both are then unable to create solutions because the lack of the discursive space in order to reach a satisfactory resolution. James is famous for reportedly once telling a student that if the rapture were to come and all of earth was shouting for joy in a monistic universe and one cockroach was suffering from unrequited love, then the suffering cockroach would be enough to destroy the joy of all creation (Forsyth 112).

Mr. Ramsay's concept of Z is an apt metaphor for a monistic universe, one which would forfeit the joy of all creation for the sake of one imperfection. Mr. Ramsay sees academic discourse as a noble, epic struggle to reach the highest, truest level of understanding. This ultimate level of understanding is signified by the letter Z. There is only one letter Z, and according to Mr. Ramsay, "How many men in a thousand million ...reach Z after all?" (Woolf 35). Earlier in this passage Mr. Ramsay laments and celebrates that he has reached "R" status. R places him towards the head of the intellectual pack, yet he is not in the lead. Z represents the goal, the singular "rightness" that Western reason tends to assign to rationalized Truth. R then represents what Mr. Ramsay describes as a "doomed expedition" and not an accomplishment (Woolf 36). It is as if there are

only two classifications in this system, Z and A, first place and last place. Under this system the world is reduced to rubble over minor imperfections.

One critic describes *To the Lighthouse* as, “a direct struggle against the still looming presence of the Victorian patriarch” (Levenson 167). In the original context of this quote, the critic is equating Mr. Ramsay with Woolf’s father, ultimately arguing that *To the Lighthouse* is first and foremost a resolution of Woolf’s relationship with her father. This is a limited interpretation. Even if Woolf was directly addressing her father in her portrayal of Mr. Ramsay, she is ultimately addressing the system of reason under which her established scholar father operated within. While it is generally agreed upon that Mr. Ramsay is a critique of Woolf’s own father, perhaps his own doomed expeditions towards Z is a critique of the doomed excursions of all Western intellectuals.

This revelation then makes Woolf’s possible critique of her father, a critique of all of Western reason, in particular the sense of perfection it achieved during the Victorian era. Another critic makes a similar assumption when critiquing Mr. Ramsay as Woolf’s father, claiming that the central conflict of *To the Lighthouse* is that of Mr. Ramsay’s linear thought versus the feminine creativity and intuitiveness of Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe (Hyman 30). Mr. Ramsay’s “desolate expedition” is through the polar regions of linear thought, an expedition which seeks to tame the unknown as much as it is a quest for knowledge; Mrs. Ramsay’s expedition is the search for something “beyond the outer factual world” (Woolf 34; Neill 332). Some have interpreted Woolf’s portrayal of Mr. Ramsay’s expedition as a satire of a common enterprise that is equally pathetic and destructive (Lee 12). Others see Mr. Ramsay’s pathetic/epic expedition as indicative of the way “patriarchal society imposes economic and social restrictions upon women on account of its own need for psychological support” (Burt 60). Mrs. Ramsay’s model of thinking allows her to reach a valid

conclusion about human experience; Mr. Ramsay admits that he is unable to get to "Z." In spite of this, Mr. Ramsay's failed expedition is seen by the society Woolf and Fromm are critiquing as the heroic expedition, worthy of both praise and support.

George Bowling is also caught up within this system. Though he is not quite as neurotic about rating his own intelligence versus the intelligence of his contemporaries, George Bowling does seem to possess a clear understanding of where he ranks. He qualifies his own ideas and fears about Post-Next-Great-War oppression by stating, "For that matter it frightens other chaps who are intellectually a good deal dumber than I am" (Orwell 195). George shares Mr. Ramsay's sense that his level of understanding is superior to that of some, yet like Mr. Ramsay, George does not in any way state that he is the smartest of all men. George and Mr. Ramsay are both not "Z-men." William James defines the status of despair as "the divided self." The divided self is described as "painful gap between the ideal self and the actual self—between what I ought to be and potentially am and what I actually am" (Forsyth 120). Bowling and Ramsay possess a sense of Z and they are aware that at best they are R's; the space between S and Y represents the painful gap of their real versus their ideal. By consciously acknowledging this gap, Bowling and Ramsay are submitting themselves to despair by embracing a divided self. The divided self is a tortured self.

Time seems to add onto the torture George and Mr. Ramsay. Both, in their own unique way, fear the future, and it is this fear of the future that is the root of both of their despair. While George Bowling dislikes his present, stating that, "I'd been a good husband and father for fifteen years and I was beginning to get fed up with it," yet he has a particular and profound fear of the future and the potential loss of his status that may come in the future (Orwell 6). Mr.

Ramsay strives for Z status, yet he also acknowledges that Z status is fleeting. During his epic struggle to breach R he laments, "The very stone one kicks with one's boot will outlast Shakespeare" (Woolf 35). Later in the novel, he mourns the passing of the relevancy of Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*; then comparing it to his own situation by responding to a statement that Scott is not read anymore by thinking, "That's what they'll say of me" (Woolf 118). This proves that Z status, or even R status, is ultimately a fleeting status. Even perfection will be buried by time, and ultimately forgotten. Progress means that something will always exist beyond Z.

This kind of thinking is indicative of the Monistic Western Liberal Progressive model of cognition, especially during modernity. If mankind is progressing towards something, then ultimately things will get left behind; likewise, not everyone is as progressive as everyone else. The trap of having but one goal within the system results in the failure of many, through time all will ultimately fail because mankind will progress beyond the progress of the past. Everything built and created will be torn down and surpassed or as Marx once said, "all that is solid melts into air" (Berman). George and Mr. Ramsey are then willing participants in a model that they cannot possibly be successful within. Furthering their anguish is the fact that both are conscious of their status as failures as they are striving towards the unattainable Z, resulting in constant rejection.

Fromm concludes that constant rejection leads mankind into necrophilia. As described in *Escape from Freedom*, the positive "freedom to" embrace life and the future becomes the negative "freedom from" certainty and safety (Fromm 30-8). Commodity capitalism insures that Western society will depend upon human beings, as well as everything else, being judged in these unrealistic terms. This system insures constant rejection, in fact constant rejection insures that not only

will individuals fight for Z status, but they will also fight to make the current Z obsolete. Progress is the byproduct of the process of attaining or replacing Z. Ultimately, through constant rejection of progress necrophilia gets reinforced. George Bowling's choice of nostalgia as escape illustrates the vicious cycle of necrophilia awaiting those who insist upon operating in the "Z system." Mr. Ramsay escapes through mechanized repetitive behavior. He rereads the same novels and takes solace in that "somebody would reach it [Z] – if not he then another" (Woolf 120). By taking solace in the fact that someone will acquire Z status, he takes comfort in the system that harms him. Mr. Ramsay is the realization of Fromm's idea that in the commodity system "for the progress of mankind... [mankind has become] a servant to the very machine he built, and thereby has given him a feeling of personal insignificance and powerlessness" (*Escape* 112).

Furthermore, as described in the novel's opening sequence Woolf describes how Mr. Ramsay finds reason to instruct his children on the harshness of life. By making them "aware from childhood that life is difficult; facts uncompromising; and [life is] the passage to that fabled land where our brightest hopes are extinguished, our frail barks founder in darkness" Mr. Ramsay's giving his children the fatherly gift of despair (Woolf 4). In his mind he is somehow also imparting upon them endurance, ensuring that his children are doomed to embark upon their own tragic expeditions towards the unattainable Z

George Bowling embodies another one of Fromm's principal causes of necrophilia. On the morning which George decides to "come up for air" he speculates on how neighborhoods like the one he lives in are "just one great big bull's-eye," ultimately concluding, "How can the bombers miss us when they come?" (Orwell 24). Here the coming war represents the loss of a way of life, of property, and perhaps life itself. George does not particularly embrace his own

life. Early in the novel he repeatedly expresses dislike for his profession, wife, children, and possessions, yet the potential loss of these things distresses Bowling. Fromm would explain this as a symptom of George Bowling's commodified world view. When George classifies himself as one of the "five-to-ten-pound-a-weekers," he sees himself as economically and socially the same as others who live on his street, and for him death is the same as the sack (Orwell 25). The loss of life and ten pounds a week are losses of possessions. Fear is the embodiment of "losing what I have...my body, my ego, my possessions, and my identity; the fear of facing the abyss of nonidentity, of 'being lost'" (Fromm *Have or Be* 126). Both Ultimately for Fromm, the question we face is the question of having versus being. Having means possessing dead objects that by their very nature resist change; being means to be alive and always subject to new possibilities.

This fear of loss is compounded by the gender role Bowling and Ramsay feel compelled to perform. As a patriarch, Ramsay and Bowling are both the namesakes and the financial support for their respective families. For both patriarchs their gender role compels them to battle both for their names and their bread. Ramsay's quest for Z is a quest to forever etch the name Ramsay in stone, amongst the pantheon of history's great thinkers. His attempt to do so is his profession, yet he acknowledges that his success is still ultimate failure. After all, "the very stone one kicks with one's boot will outlast Shakespeare" (Woolf 35). Every day Mr. Ramsay pushes his own stone up a hill, the only question left is whether he is a better stone pusher than Icarus. After all, it is inevitable that the world's most famous stone pusher will someday be surpassed in stone pushing abilities. For George Bowling, his position with an insurance company is a less heroic expedition, but it is nonetheless important. Without George to be their "five-to-ten-pound-a-weeker" it can be argued the Bowling would not be able to

survive, at least not in the relative degree of comfort they enjoy. Their gender role compels Ramsay and Bowling into having their position rather than being someone with a profession.

Under this same model of thinking time becomes a prison (Fromm *Have or Be* 129). The future war represents the potential loss of everything for George Bowling. Mr. Ramsay expresses the same fear when he reflects upon the future of his books. When he laments, "Will they be read, are they good, why aren't they better, what do people think of me?" he is ultimately contemplating how time will erase both his works as well as his identity (Woolf 118). Both Bowling and Ramsay have no way of preserving their devalued but cherished possessions. They choose to have, but have nothing. One solution is to stop time, and to attempt to make things certain; Fromm defines these choices as necrophilia.

Further, instilling necrophilia as a solution is the particular situation Western Reason puts its subjects in. The Surrealist and Dada movements came about in the Between the Wars period out of the same struggle which George Bowling and Mr. Ramsay are facing. In André Breton's "First Surrealist Manifesto," the "reign of logic" is profiled as that which assigns boundaries "even to experience" (365). The reign of logic is the Z system, the boundaries to experience are the result of there being only one valid conclusion or state of approval. For Breton, too much depends upon immediate utility and "common sense" both of which are limits imposed by the "Z system." Artaud blames "the asphyxiating atmosphere in which we live without possible escape or remedy" on the value of all knowledge and systems that came before (74). In "No More Masterpieces," Artaud suggests scrapping the whole system. Western Reason however, defends itself vigorously; Western Reason resists models for scrapping itself. For Bowling and Ramsey, the ideas of abandoning the reign of logic as

well as reverence for past texts would represent the loss of the commodities of history, reason, and ultimately Truth. These ideas constrict the discourse that constructs their lives, the Z system perpetuates itself. They are doomed to follow the one and only “right” answer, even if they are incapable of reaching past R.

Under the surrealist critique of established reason, as well as Fromm’s model, both George and Mr. Ramsay are forever unable to escape their despair. This is not to say that both *To the Lighthouse* and *Coming Up for Air* do not offer solutions, the tragedy of both texts is that the characters do not accept the solutions offered. Under Fromm’s model the key to conquering the fear of loss is to cease viewing life and everything in it as a commodity (*Have or Be* 126-7). One cannot lose being; experiences may end, but being cannot. Being simply is, even if individuals die and can no longer experience it. If one ceases to see a happy future as a commodity to be had the anxieties over the possible existence of a happy future evaporate. Death is not the loss of life, because life is no longer something that can be had. However, when persons insist on having they are doomed to loss of what you have and the constant fear of not having enough. By denial of the commodity system one becomes not a necrophiliac but a biophiliac, a lover of living things (Fromm *Essential* 82). The biophiliac is then a creative living individual. Fromm’s definition of creativity does not mean that all individuals must become artists, or that everyone must constantly be progressing towards new experiences that have not been done before (this would too closely mirror Mr. Ramsay’s Z system). For Fromm, “the condition of creativeness is the willingness to be born every day” (*Essential* 83). By being born everyday an individual is embracing the present while letting go of the dead commodity that is the past. Both Mr. Bowling and Mr. Ramsay seem to be unwilling to let go of dead commodities.

Mr. Ramsay is exposed to the creativity of Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe, and he chooses to dismiss them. By doing so Mr. Ramsay is embodying the “prick of steel” metaphor Woolf used to describe of the Victorian middle-class British male’s analytic intellect. This condition prevented such an individual from experiencing profound emotions as well as a love of nature, and most importantly, the recognition of the failures of the Z system (Scherr 258). Mr. Ramsay’s partial-self-awareness compounds his suffering. He understands his place within the system, yet he cannot comprehend the over-all failure of the system. He is still attempting to achieve success within the system. His failures are soothed by repetitive action, and seemingly though inflicting his despair upon those around him.

The tragedy of George Bowling is that he seems to possess a greater sense of his position as well as means of escape, yet he is unable to break from viewing himself as a commodity under the reign of reason. George differs from those around him because he is neurotic under Fromm’s definition. George lives in the commodity system but he refuses to surrender the battle for independence. Fromm explains that the conflict of the neurotic is the attempt to be independent. While the neurotic experiences conflict it is the “healthy” person who is more sick because they have given up on “the realization of their aims as human beings” (*Religion* 83). Bowling has not given up on his aim as a human being; in fact he describes “the peculiar flame inside you,” which is biophilia, as “the only thing worth having, and we don’t want it” (Orwell 194).

George finds “it” in chapter two of section three when he stops his car to admire a field of primroses. This chapter is the only point in the text in which George is truly alive, under Fromm’s definition of life and death. He admits that he is happy at that particular moment in time. However, his mind becomes his own worst enemy. First, he begins to reflect upon the dead and determined past

that is Lower Binfield. And it is there he begins to plan his tragic secret holiday to the sleepy village where he grew up. Rather than be born anew he attempts to hold onto a commodity, and in the process he allows something a much more precious, life, to slip away. Under George's model of thinking, he will later privilege reflecting upon the memory of stopping by the road to view the primroses rather than actually experiencing the sensation of the future memory in the making as it happened.

Bowling does attempt to commodify this experience, the act of picking a handful of primroses is a metaphor for capturing a memory. George can then leave the field while holding onto aspects of it. The peacefulness and life of this moment is interrupted by an approaching car. George reflects, "It struck me what I'd look like if those people in the car saw me. A fat man in a bowler hat holding a bunch of primroses! It wouldn't look right at all" (Orwell 196). George is faced with a decision of what he wants to hold onto. He can hold onto the life that is his moment in the primroses; he can hold onto the commodified memory that is the picked primroses; he can continue to reflect upon his dead past in Lower Binfield; and/or he can hold onto his self-commodified status as a fat, unhappy "five-to-ten-pound-a-weeker." His solution is to throw the primroses away and pretend that he stopped by the side of the road to urinate, preserving his self-commodified status as a fat unhappy "five-to-ten-pound-a-weeker." He takes solace by deciding to attempt to reclaim the commodity of his deceased life in Lower Binfield

Before the primrose passage, Bowling reflects, "a man really dies when his brain stops, when he loses the power to take in a new idea" under his own definition he is a dead man and so is Mr. Ramsey (Orwell 188). The anxieties of their age coupled with their despair at never achieving the status of Z dooms both to unhappiness. At the end of *To the Lighthouse* it is Lily Briscoe, and her

intuitive sense of creativity, that makes sense of Mr. Ramsay's linear journey. Her vision will be forever denied to Mr. Ramsay because of the functions of his own mind. George's experiment in nostalgia fails horribly when he finds the town forever changed for the worse and he is left to choose the option of least resistance when it comes to resolving the domestic conflict that results from his necrophiliac's journey into the past. As illustrated by the primrose experience, as well as some aspects of his childhood, George possesses an ability to experience life. His desire for certainty ushers in his metaphoric death. Unfortunately, like Mr. Ramsay, George is trapped within a mindset where happiness is unattainable and escape is unimaginable. Hopefully by recognizing the errors of their ideology we can come to believe in a system that allows for happiness.

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**Poems by Alev Adil**  
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**Beuys**

An arrangement of inert forms in stone  
still, waiting, in an abandoned room,  
objects leached of their former magic  
by some forgotten apocalypse.  
No rhyme brings reason, no prophylactic  
offers solace to now old lips.  
Mouths stuffed with felt and fat in the gallery tomb  
The unnamed tell us the dead are all together, the living alone.

**Oxford Green: the longings of lawns**  
(on the dreams of conspirators and the conspiracies of dreams)

Each night dreams slip  
from the open mouths of strangers sleeping  
to clip the lawns with nail scissors,  
and fill their strange heads with verdant velvet swords

velvet traps and gloves and swords.  
Hordes, (terrible but tidy) premonitions  
then creep back in  
through locked doors and leaking ears.

I have trailed them  
sneaking through creaking corridors and years.  
Then collected them :  
labelled and arranged typologically.

But I won't tell them your Names,  
(oh but tell them to me  
and I can keep them with my own)  
Betrayals and Disappointments.

I want to wake up now  
to go home where I'll dream of motorways  
rivers of destiny traffic flow  
roaring at me like a juggernaut.

Juggle naught - a currency  
that marks the promises  
and intimacies exhaled by the sleeping  
mouths of strangers.

## ***Oliver Twist*, Dickens's Nancy, and the "Truth" of Victorian Prostitution**

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Depictions of lower-class prostitutes were conspicuously absent from early Victorian publications, despite the proliferation of eighteenth-century literary works that had romanticized and glorified the life of the common harlot. Indeed, during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, the topic of prostitution was relegated to a scant number of philanthropic treatises and socio-medical journals of limited circulation. In 1837, Charles Dickens successfully introduced the figure of the lower-class prostitute back into popular print culture with *Oliver Twist*'s Nancy. Yet the text itself never directly discloses Nancy's profession. Dickens does not directly name Nancy's vocation until two years later when, certain of the novel's popularity and the public's approbation, he states in the Preface to the 1841 edition that "the girl is a prostitute" and his depiction of her "God's truth" (Preface 33, 37). A close examination of the novel and Preface reveals, however, that Dickens's "truth" of lower-class prostitution is a carefully-wrought fiction. In his depiction of Nancy, Dickens panders to contemporary moral sensibilities by combining stereotypical traits traditionally attributed to lower-class prostitutes with domestic and maternal qualities typically associated with virtuous middle-class womanhood, and thus renders false this supposedly truthful depiction of nineteenth-century lower-class prostitution.

### *Restoring the Prostitute to Print*

Although the presence of common prostitutes was an unavoidable social reality common to all of Britain's metropolitan areas, the topic of prostitution was virtually non-existent in the print discourses of the early Victorian period. Whether precipitated by distinguishable social phenomena such as the evangelical movement, or a more sweeping conservative backlash against the comparatively liberal and frank discussions of sexual matters in the "enlightened" eighteenth century, it was not considered appropriate subject matter for non-fictional debate or fictional diversion. "True" glimpses into the lives of prostitutes previously afforded by such works as Richard Steele's *Spectator* 266 (1712) or Dr. Johnson's *Rambler* (1749-52) were generally not to be found, nor were more obviously fictional treatments, like those in Cleland's *Memoirs of A Woman of Pleasure* (1748) or Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722). Read by a relatively small and specialized audience, the few non-fiction print materials that addressed the subject often offered apologies for the unseemliness of their subject matter, and typically warned that most individuals should avoid contact with common prostitutes at any cost. This policy of avoidance and a conception of the lower-class prostitute as both physical and moral contagion is evident in non-fiction works such as Thomas Smith's "An Address to the Guardian Society" (1817), in which prostitutes are described as "leprosy or scurvy all over . . . the body moral of this metropolis," the visible "consequences and symptoms of a moral distemper" (8, 9). Smith argues for "the necessity of separating them [prostitutes] entirely from the virtuous, in order to prevent contamination," and vehemently attacks the Guardian Society for its intention to utilize the volunteered services of "virtuous females" to assist in the reclamation of prostitutes: "Not content with endeavoring to bring back lost woman across this line themselves, they [the gentlemen of the Society] take virtuous woman to the

other side of it for this purpose:--dangerous experiment! A virtuous woman should be kept perfectly ignorant of those things" (10-11). Even reformers of the period who attempted to portray lower-class prostitutes as reclaimable social victims often appropriated the rhetoric of contagion and avoidance, as evidenced in the May 1838 Report of the London Society for the Protection of Young Females and Prevention of Juvenile Prostitution (1839). The report concludes with a final warning:

[I]f the general frame of society is tainted--if public exhibitions of profligacy are permitted--if the ear of age is to be shocked by licentiousness, and the eye of infancy to be familiarized to spectacles of obscenity, it will be in vain to expect that the contamination will not spread, and violate the seclusion of innocence and virtue. (Talbot, in Ryan 159)

A cursory reading of such non-fiction texts reveals the prevailing sentiment of the day: because of the potential for physical and moral taint, interaction with lower-class prostitutes should only be conducted by resilient male reformers who possess healthiness of body, strength of mind, and abundance of high moral purpose. A novelist writing for the conservatively circumscribed mind set of Victorian Britain's middle-class readership was therefore required to exercise great caution when discussing prostitution. Reading a realistic representation of such women could cause "the eye . . . to be familiarized to . . . obscenity" or the ear "to be shocked by licentiousness" (Ryan 159). This rendered the effective difference between trope and reality almost non-existent. In the 1841 Preface to *Oliver Twist*, Dickens discussion of his own authorial circumspection in presenting the subject echoes the language of the London Society's Report. In it, he argues that it is perfectly acceptable to portray "the very dregs of life, so long as their speech "[does] *not offend the ear*" (33, emphasis added). Indeed, a close

reading of *Oliver Twist* reveals the exquisite care Dickens employed in constructing Nancy, his own lower-class prostitute.

As noted, fiction and non-fiction works in preceding centuries had frequently presented prostitution as acceptable textual subject matter. From Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) and Hogarth's *The Harlot's Progress* (1732), to innumerable religious and social tracts, prostitution had not been shied away from topically. Yet, the turn of the century marks its virtual disappearance from print material available to the general public. From 1800 through the late 1830s, the problem of lower-class prostitution was broached almost solely in government reports, charity reports, and studies of England's Female Penitentiaries.<sup>1</sup> Past was the period of public interest in Dr. Samuel Johnson's theoretical musings on, and Boswell's physical gambolings with, common prostitutes.<sup>2</sup> Even the once widely-sought *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies, or Man of Pleasure's Kalendar* exits from production with the century's closing, and is replaced by works concerned primarily with reporting facts and statistics. One of the few emotional exchanges in printed literature of the time originated with William Hale, a London silk merchant, who incited a short-lived pamphlet war from 1808-1809 that criticized the London Female Penitentiary.<sup>3</sup> Flora Tristran's *London Journal* records her observations of prostitution in London, but her work was not published until 1840.<sup>4</sup> However, one cannot claim *ur-text* status for *Oliver Twist* in the genealogy of the Victorian print discourses of prostitution. In the wake of discursive studies and practices, it is impossible to conceive that Dickens solely initiated a renewed interest in textual discussions of Victorian prostitution. Rather, this study examines the methods that Dickens used to bring the subject of common prostitution back into the foreground of popular print culture.

### *Constructing the Truth: Oliver Twist*

To successfully enter the print marketplace of 1837, Dickens *could not* risk baldly stating that Nancy was a prostitute; thus he *did not* directly name her profession. To do so would have been to risk great public censure. The Preface to the 1841 edition of *Oliver Twist*, explains, in effect, why Dickens did not directly label Nancy a prostitute in previous editions of the text; by extension, it suggests why he could safely do so in 1841. By that time, the reading public had clearly shown its approval of and sympathy for Nancy's character, and so Dickens could risk openly declaring "the girl is a prostitute" (Preface 33). In doing so, he staked a claim for a discursive space and method through which to discuss prostitution in popular reading matter without having to fear public outcry.

Dickens had broached the topic of prostitution earlier in his career, but with no great consequence. As Fred Kaplan notes, Dickens's "fascination with prostitutes makes its first dramatic appearance" in "The Pawnbroker's Shop" (64).<sup>5</sup> Drawn from *Sketches by Boz* (1836-37), "The Pawnbroker's Shop" describes a young prostitute in what both Kaplan and Patricia Ingham interpret as stock, stereotypical terms. Dickens portrays "a young female whose attire, miserably poor but gaudy, plainly bespeaks her situation. The rich satin gown with its faded trimmings, the worn-out thin shoes, and pink silk stockings, the summer bonnet in winter, and the sunken face, cannot be mistaken" as belonging to anyone but a prostitute (*Sketches*, in Ingham 43). In *Dickens, Women, and Language*, Ingham interprets this passage as exemplary of how, in *Sketches by Boz*, Dickens "uses the traditional language [for describing prostitutes]" (43). Expanding upon this idea, Kaplan notes that this "prostitute, 'the lowest of the low; dirty, unbonneted, flaunting, and slovenly' . . . has 'but two more stages, the hospital and the grave'" (65). Dickens draws on stereotypical descriptions of the

common prostitute's dress, manners, and fate in "The Pawnbroker's Shop," generalizations that can be traced back to the earliest print discussions of prostitution in England. Dickens used this work as a test case for his subject matter, as well as "A Visit to Newgate," in which he briefly describes yet another prostitute. Philip Collins remarks of this sketch that it "clearly foreshadows such characters as Nancy in *Oliver Twist* and the other 'fallen women' in the novels" (38). There was no great public outcry against these two pieces, for they did not deviate from the stereotypical notions concerning prostitutes that had been established in previous centuries. In turn, Dickens's first foray into the print discourse on prostitution was successfully cleared the way for Nancy in *Oliver Twist*.

Dickens started publishing installments of *Oliver Twist* in *Bentley's Miscellany* in 1837. The text sparked what, by the mid-1840s, would become widespread public interest in and consumption of print materials related to social issues. The mid-Victorian reading public became obsessed with the literature of social reform, and thereby encouraged its proliferation. This change in taste had not yet become manifest, however, when Dickens began his work with Nancy in 1837. Fully aware of the criticisms pummeling Newgate Novels and other sensational literature, Dickens chose to mask his exploration of prostitution within a highly moral frame story, a tale that disclosed the effects of the New Poor Law on a "Parish Boy's Progress." Indeed, the novel is titled *Oliver Twist*, not *Nancy*. In many respects, however, Nancy is both the novel's central preoccupation and its most fully developed character. Dickens's rationale for broaching the topic of prostitution at this time is not specifically known, yet in a letter to John Forster from November 1837, he states, "I hope to do great things with Nancy. If I can only work out the idea I have formed of her" (Letters I: 328). Dickens was under contract from *Bentley's Miscellany* to edit its monthly

issues, which were to include roughly sixteen pages per issue of his own original work. Readers familiar with the tales in *Boz* anticipated that his material in *Bentley's Miscellany* would offer the similar social critiques. Yet, why prostitution? At no place in his letters or personal notes does Dickens clearly explain his choice in subject matter.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, just as he had popularized the critique of social institutions in *Sketches by Boz*, so he would reinstitute the topic of prostitution within popular print culture.

Though Dickens's motives for addressing the subject of lower-class prostitution in the late 1830s are unknown, that which remains is the historical document *Oliver Twist*, and the opportunity to explore the discursive forces that influenced nineteenth-century British print culture. Choosing the New Poor Law as his tale's vehicle provided Dickens with a three-fold advantage. First, by positioning *Oliver Twist* as a diatribe against England's poor laws, Dickens situates his story both in both the realms of fact and fiction; fact, because of its relation to historical and contemporary social institutions, such as the parish workhouse and pauper meals; and fiction, as the story is clearly an imaginary narrative. This dualism rendered the work both practical and pleasurable for the contemporary readership, both educational and escapist. Second, by choosing to begin with a critique of the poor law system, Dickens clearly expresses the sincerity of his moral purpose. Readers knew from the novel's first installment that it was not simply a sensationalist text or Newgate novel in the making. Dickens's work was clearly not gratuitous. And finally, by so soundly lambasting the poor law system and its destructive effects on individuals, Dickens invokes the contemporary debate on environmental determinism and its relationship to the poor, a frequently discussed and highly controversial topic in the 1830s. The frame story of the New Poor Law sets a serious tone, enabling him to discuss prostitution without fear of immediate censure.

Inextricably intertwined with the frame story of the New Poor Law is the narrative of young Oliver Twist. Scholars have argued that Oliver is both the main subject and the hero of Dickens's eponymous novel, and yet have complained that he is a flat, shallow character. However, as John Romano points out, "That Nancy is the hero proper--not with its other connotations, the heroine--of *Oliver Twist*, is not often observed. It is usual to say that Oliver is the hero, meaning that he is the central character" (Romano 135). Arguing that it is not Oliver, but Nancy, who is the text's focal character, and that it is prostitution, and not the poor laws, that is the novel's central topic, sheds new light on what have historically been considered Oliver's limitations as a character. Oliver and the New Poor Law are vehicles that serve to mask Nancy's profession and significance in the text. By placing Nancy within this socio-moral frame, Dickens affords himself the freedom to present her character in a public forum. According to Romano, "The power of the sentimental Nancy--to see, to feel, to act--figures so prominently in *Oliver Twist* largely because of the kind of novel that at least on one level it is intended to be: a novel of social evils" (136). This intentional blending of the factual and fictional, the social and literary, are evidenced in Dickens's vehicle of the frame.

Placing his discussion of prostitution within the context of the New Poor Laws provided Dickens with only a limited degree of security. At no point in the novel does he refer to Nancy as a whore or prostitute. This indirect method of foregrounding prostitution assumes the audience's general knowledge of the traditional stereotypical traits of such women, as presented by writers from previous centuries. Playing on his 1830s readership's superficial knowledge of prostitution, Dickens incorporates into Nancy's character not only the traditional, stereotypical qualities of such women, but also additional elements designed to gain readers' approbation. Dickens blends the stereotypical, attributes that his

readers would have considered the “true” qualities of common whores, with his own imaginative vision of Nancy’s progress. This is possible because Dickens’s medium was the popular novel, where the blending of fact and invention was typically condoned and anticipated, rather than discouraged. Thus, Nancy is a fully developed character, and not simply the textual rendition of a cultural stereotype.

Many traditional characteristics of prostitutes are manifest in Dickens’s appropriation of the stereotype, to the extent that, at times, his initial descriptions of Nancy resemble the renditions of prostitutes from *Sketches by Boz*. As Patricia Ingham notes:

Fallen girls in [Dickens’s] novels are not mere penitents, but are charged with other unexpected meanings. Nancy . . . seems at first close to her fallen sisters in *Sketches by Boz*, with her disordered appearance and “perfume of Geneva.” She is not obviously distinguished from a stereotypical group encountered by Fagin in a public house, who attract attention by their repulsiveness. (45)

Although Nancy is hardly “repulsive,” she bears many of the same stereotypical qualities of the prostitutes in *Oliver Twist* to whom Ingham refers:

Cunning, ferocity, and drunkenness in all its stages were there, in their strongest aspects; and women: some with the last lingering tinge of their early freshness almost fading as you looked: others with every mark and stamp of their sex utterly beaten out, and presenting but one loathsome blank of profligacy and crime; some mere girls, others but young women, and none past the prime of life; formed the darkest and saddest portion of this dreary picture. (*Oliver Twist* 237)

The preceding description suits Nancy. Readers learn of her drinking, poor

dress, loose manners, and suspicious behavior, all elements that serve to obliquely indicate her profession. As Ingham notes, Dickens also invokes the prostitute's stereotypical "fate" or "progress." Nancy is part of a fast, hard, immoral crowd. Such company marks the initial stage of the harlot's progress: "As there is a traditional significance attached to the prostitute, there is also a traditional story to reinforce it . . . the myth took the form of 'fall, decline, and death'" (Ingham 53). Ingham, drawing here on the work of Linda Nead, relays stereotypical views of a prostitute's existence. When Rose Maylie begs Nancy to leave her profession and reform herself, Nancy replies:

"You are the first that ever blessed me with such words as these, and if I had heard them years ago, they might have turned me from a life of sin and sorrow; but it is too late!" "It is never too late," said Rose, "for penitence and atonement." "It is," cried the girl, writhing in the agony of her mind. (*Oliver Twist* 364)

Nancy's membership among the ranks of London's prostitutes is indicated through how soundly she fits the well-known stereotypes. Two of the most obvious textual indicators of Nancy's profession are her dress and physical appearance. Dickens describes Oliver's first meeting with Nancy and Bet, her female companion:

They wore a good deal of hair, not very neatly turned up behind, and were rather untidy about the shoes and stockings. They were not exactly pretty, perhaps; but they had a great deal of colour in their faces, and looked quite stout and hearty. Being remarkably free and agreeable in their manners, Oliver thought them very nice girls indeed. (*Oliver Twist* 111)

According to the stereotype, prostitutes sported a great deal of false hair and facial make-up. As described, their disarrayed hair indicates not only

slovenliness and moral laxity, but also implies that they have recently spent time upon their backs. Their untidy shoes and stockings reveal that they do a great deal of walking (hence “streetwalkers”), a habit few women cultivated on London’s streets and sidewalks preceding the age of sanitary reform. Additionally, their free and easy manner betrays their moral degeneracy. Dickens’s audience, familiar with these tropes, realized from Nancy’s first appearance that she is a prostitute. When Nancy visits Rose Maylie’s town house to proffer information concerning Oliver’s safety, the female servant who responds to her knock automatically recognizes her, not for who she is, but for what she is, based upon her low speech and appearance: “The young woman, who had by this time noted her appearance, replied only with a look of virtuous disdain; and summoned a man to answer her” (359). A servant, herself a member of the lower-class, rejects Nancy out of hand as an embodiment of both moral and physical pollution that could prove dangerous to her virtue. In yet another instance, when Nancy feigns respectability so that she may inquire after Oliver at Newgate Prison, Fagin has her put on “a clean white apron,” tuck up her hair and curl-papers under a straw bonnet, and visibly carry a basket and door-key (139). Even the thieves are aware of the physical attributes that mark Nancy as a common whore.

Not only does Nancy’s attire mark her as a prostitute; her consumption of alcohol and drunkenness do so as well. Dickens relays that drunkenness “was very common among the Jew’s female pupils; and which, in their tender years, they were rather encouraged in than checked” (241). Nancy herself “was not exempt from [this] failing” (241), as is remarked upon several times throughout the work. Prostitutes were often associated with drunkenness, as the search for paying customers and shelter from the elements encouraged many of London’s whores to frequent public houses. Nancy is first seen drinking during her initial

meeting with Oliver, when “spirits were produced, in consequence of one of the young ladies complaining of a coldness in her inside” (111). Later, when Sikes inquires after Nancy’s success in tracking the escaped Oliver, he offers a glass of liquor, which she drinks down directly (155). As with her mode of attire, Nancy’s consumption of alcohol posits her unambiguously, though indirectly, as a prostitute.

Nancy’s whorish tendencies are not limited to finery and drink. She is also depicted as being duplicitous, sneaky, and an actress, additional traditional stereotypes of common prostitutes. Nancy puts on a show for the group of thieves, imitating how she will pose as Oliver’s worried and desolate sister:

‘My poor, dear, sweet, innocent little brother!’ exclaimed Miss Nancy, bursting into tears, and wringing the little basket and street door-key in an agony of distress . . . Having uttered these words in a most lamentable and heartbroken tone . . . [she] paused, winked to the company [of thieves], nodded smilingly around, and disappeared. (139-140)

When Nancy encounters the fugitive Oliver, her repeat performance of the aforementioned is so convincing that he is rebuked by strangers for having caused his “sister” so much worry and distress. Nancy feigns drunkenness when she is sober, spies on Fagin’s meetings with Monks, slips Bill laudanum, and arranges midnight assignments with her gang’s enemies. Nancy’s duplicitous performances clearly marked her as a prostitute for an 1830s audience.

Lest Dickens’s readers had any remaining doubts as to Nancy’s deviant profession, Nancy herself acknowledges her status, situation, and profession. When Sikes angrily exclaims, “Burn my body! Do you know who you are, and what you are?” Nancy replies, “Oh yes, I know all about it” (166). The

knowledge makes her “laugh hysterically” in an unsuccessful attempt to show her “indifference” to her situation (166). When arguing with Fagin, she describes her life in unglorified terms, “pouring out the words in one continuous scream. ‘It is my living; and the cold, wet, dirty streets are my home; and you’re the wretch that drove me to them long ago, and that’ll keep me there, day and night, day and night, till I die!’” (167). Dickens portrays Nancy’s painful self-recognition to further clarify her status for his audience. When speaking with Rose Maylie, Nancy describes herself as “that infamous creature you have heard of that lives among the thieves” (362), and suggests that Rose should “not mind shrinking openly from [her],” for even “the poorest women fall back as [she] make[s] [her] way along the crowded pavement” (362). In this passage, Dickens inspires images of pollution and avoidance, indicating that, like the servant girl in Rose Maylie’s town house, even other members of the lower class immediately recognize and shun Nancy as a prostitute. She further insinuates her profession during the midnight meeting on London Bridge with Rose Maylie and Mr. Brownlow. As Nancy refuses their aid, she turns to the river flowing beside them and says: “Look before you, lady. Look at that dark water. How many times do you read of such as I who spring into the tide, and leave no living thing to care for or bewail them. It may be years hence, or it may be only months, but I shall come to that at last” (415). Here, Nancy invokes what was considered to be the traditional end of the London prostitute, a watery suicide committed in the Thames. The contemporary press reported on how the corpses of drowned prostitutes, supposedly suicides, were found in the Thames and the nation’s other waterways. Many of Dickens’s readers in 1837, 1838, and 1839 would have made the connection, as the common prostitute’s watery suicide had become, in the public’s imagination, the whore’s inevitable end.

Nancy’s self-awareness, dress, drinking, and actions, are only

representative of the numerous stereotypical qualities of prostitutes that Dickens employs in shaping her character. He transcends a purely stereotypical depiction, however, through incorporating non-traditional traits into her depiction as well. In order to transport Nancy beyond stereotypical limitations, Dickens creates qualities for her that are uniquely her own, and that, in some instances, contradict traditional views of prostitutes. It is this aspect of Dickens's character construction that distinguishes him as an innovator within the Victorian print discourse of prostitution. The most remarkable element of Dickens's fictional embellishment of prostitution lies in his endowing Nancy with womanly and maternal attributes. Conventional wisdom in the early Victorian period disassociated prostitutes from the qualities of "true" or "womanly" women: maternity, loyalty, femininity, and the other qualities indicative of middle-class womanhood. But Dickens turns abruptly from this aspect of the stereotype: "The girl's life had been squandered in the streets, and among the most noisome of the stews and dens of London, but there was something of the woman's original nature left in her still" (*Oliver Twist* 360). John Romano terms this portrayal the "sentimental Nancy," whose womanly ability "to see, to feel, to act--figures so prominently in *Oliver Twist*" (136). This aspect of her character, which falls outside of the boundaries of the traditional prostitute type, renders her the most dynamic and realistic presence within the novel's otherwise flatly-rendered cast. Nancy is not initially good or wholesome; she "willingly undertakes the capture of Oliver . . . yet eventually she reveals characteristics proper to the womanly woman, from whom she is patently disassociated by dress, manners, speech" (Ingham 46). Her womanliness first becomes manifest after Oliver has been successfully abducted from Mr. Brownlow. When Sikes moves to set his dog on Oliver, Nancy reveals a "conversion to womanly compassion . . . an unexpected and long-sustained

womanly virtue" (46) by attempting to protect the boy. She displays a womanly, motherly attitude towards Oliver throughout the rest of the narrative. Just as she will not let Sikes or Fagin manhandle the boy, she likewise will not let harm befall him once she is aware of Fagin's plot with Monks. Indeed, it is Nancy's efforts on Oliver's behalf that precipitate her death. Nancy does not meet her end drowned in the Thames, as she once predicted. Instead, she is brutally murdered by her beloved Sikes as punishment for having provided Rose Maylie and Mr. Brownlow with information concerning Oliver. As Collins points out, "Nancy's premature and violent death at least saved Dickens from having to imagine a future life for her, in due consonance with his novel's happy ending and her state of repentance" (Collins 96). Through her atypical death, Nancy transcends the traditional representation of the prostitute's inevitable watery grave, while still upholding the moral framework which enables Dickens to depict her in *Oliver Twist*.

Nancy's motherly care and concern for Oliver parallel her womanly attitude and actions toward Sikes. Nancy does not accept Rose Maylie's offer of aid because her mind could not "wholly detach itself from old companions and associations" (*Oliver Twist* 397), particularly her love for and loyalty to Sikes. In this, Nancy is ruled by love rather than the self-centered impulse that was traditionally thought to be the prime motivation of any prostitute's actions. Her care for Sikes first becomes clear when she pauses at the sound of a bell tolling for the executed. The girl tells Sikes how, if he was to be hanged, she would pace around the place thinking of him until the last bell sounded. "And what good would that do?" replies the unsentimental Sikes, in disavowal of the type of impractical sentimentality Nancy here expresses (160). Sikes falls ill after the attempted break-in at Rose Maylie's, and Nancy keeps close vigil by his bedside, physically weakening her self in the process. When Sikes awakens and lashes

out at her for a trivial offense, Nancy gently chastises him: “‘Why, you don’t mean to say that you’d be hard on me tonight, Bill?’ . . . said the girl, with a touch of woman’s tenderness . . . even to her voice: . . . ‘I’ve been patient with you, nursing you and caring for you, as if you had been a child’” (345). Sikes is hardly a character to be reasoned with, much less coddled, yet Nancy’s womanly dedication to him is clear. Even when she realizes that Sikes is on the verge of murdering her, Nancy still makes an emotional, womanly plea to him:

Bill, dear Bill, you cannot have the heart to kill me. Oh! Think of all I have given up, only this one night, for you. You *shall have* time to think, and save yourself this crime; I will not loose my hold, you cannot throw me off. Bill, Bill, for dear God’s sake, for your own, for mine, stop before you spill my blood! I have been true to you, upon my guilty soul I have! (422)

Nancy’s cry is not so much for her own person as it is for Sikes not to ruin his life by committing murder. Yet asking Sikes to listen to his heart or his brain at this point is futile; Nancy dies at his hand, her skull crushed in by his wooden cudgel. Paroissien interprets her “inability to save her own life” as contrasting with Benthamite ideas of determinism and self-interest (260). If she were merely stereotypical, Nancy would pursue her own best interest. As Ingham notes, a certain “degree of autonomy” exists in Nancy’s character, an element absent from traditional depictions of prostitutes, who traditionally are completely subject to environmental determinism (54). Thus the prostitute, the “outcast who is normally inscribed in the underplots and margins of the text” receives a “degree of power” not granted to her in many print accounts from the early nineteenth century (54).

### *Defending the Truth: The 1841 Preface*

Dickens's Preface to the 1841 edition of *Oliver Twist* is frequently neglected by modern studies of Victorian prostitution. Scholars are often quick to dismiss the Preface as merely a rebuttal to William Makepeace Thackeray's harsh 1840 criticism of the novel and Nancy's character. As Kathleen Tillotson notes, "Dickens's 1841 Introduction to *Oliver Twist* shows that he knew he was breaking new ground . . . and that his realism may not be welcome[d]" by all audiences (75-76). Dickens addresses Thackeray's reproaches concerning the novel's unrealistic depictions of scenes and characters from low-life by responding specifically to his fellow author's complaints about Nancy. In an interesting turn of the critical wheel, Dickens uses Thackeray's criticism of Nancy to proclaim her directly what Thackeray says she is not, a successful and true depiction of a prostitute. In doing so, Dickens explains to both his readers and his critics why, by dint of moral necessity, prostitution was an appropriate subject for *Oliver Twist*. Additionally, he reveals to them the methods he used in creating this "truth" about Nancy and prostitution (Preface 37).

Dickens begins the Preface by defending his construction of Nancy on moral grounds. Without specifically naming Thackeray or any of the tale's other critics, Dickens states that the work ". . . was objected to on some high moral grounds in some high moral quarters" (33). The offense lay in the fact "that some of the characters in these pages [were] chosen from the most criminal and degraded in London's population; that Sikes is a thief and Fagin a receiver of stolen goods; that the boys are pickpockets and the girl is a prostitute" (33). This is Dickens's first public statement in which he boldly and directly proclaims Nancy's profession. He combats moral censure with moral justification: "I saw no reason, when I wrote this book, why the very dregs of life, so long as their speech did not offend the ear, should not serve the purpose of a moral" (33). By

claiming to promote the work of moral necessity, Dickens defends his conscious construction of Nancy's character, and thereby his depiction of prostitution. It was necessary for him to edit the vulgarities typically associated with prostitutes, so as to "not offend the ear" or reader's sensibilities (33). Dickens does not evade the question of Nancy's construction or authenticity; rather, he states that using such methods was vital, in order that "a lesson of the purest good may . . . be drawn from the vilest evil" (33). In such manner, Dickens begins Nancy's defense.

Having invoked moral authority as the initial motive for his discussion of prostitution, Dickens next cites literary precedence as further support for broaching the topic. "I have always believed this to be a recognized and established truth, laid down by the greatest men the world has ever seen, constantly acted upon by the best and wisest natures; and confirmed by the reason and experience of every thinking mind" (33). The "truth" here refers to the "lesson of good" that may be drawn from the "vilest evil," and Dickens claims, in turn, that he is not alone in undertaking the presentation of low and criminal subjects; on the contrary, he is in the company of the "greatest men the world has ever seen" (33). His enemies would group *Oliver Twist* among the Newgate novels. Yet Dickens asserts that, by addressing the subject of lower-class prostitution, his text is part of "the noblest range of English literature. Fielding, Defoe, Goldsmith, Smollett, Richardson . . . Hogarth . . . did the like without the compromise of a hair's breadth" (35-36). Dickens's critics would group his low characters with those, for example, from *The Beggar's Opera*, in which John Gay renders his characters' crime-filled existences so delightfully that many people worried over its potential for inducing impressionable readers to pursue a life of thievery and vice. Dickens refutes this by claiming that it is a weak audience, and not a weak author, that desires that criminals be represented

in an idealized form. He will not allow “allurements and fascinations . . . [to be] thrown around [his characters]” simply to facilitate weak readers, “people of so refined and delicate a nature, that they cannot bear the contemplation of such horrors” (34). Dickens states his refusal to concede to audience tastes in his depiction of characters. “Great writers”, Dickens states in the Preface, do not “descend to the taste of this fastidious class” of reader (35). By August 1837, *Oliver Twist* had clearly gained enough momentum and popularity that Dickens began to think of it as his “prose epic,” for the “[g]rowing public awareness of the ‘moral plague at [their] doors,’ as one observer called prostitution in London, encouraged Dickens to speak frankly about Nancy for the first time in the 1841 preface” (Paroissien 16). Prostitutes were nearly unavoidable in late-1830s London. For “even casual observers it was hard to ignore the extent of prostitution throughout the metropolis” (16). The “fastidious class” of readers could no longer ignore the social reality of prostitution, so Dickens convinces them to acknowledge prostitution’s presence in print as well as in its human representatives.

Because of his text’s success and the moral function he believed it served, Dickens unhesitatingly describes in the Preface how he made prostitution an acceptable topic for print. He calls direct attention to the carefully constructed presentation of such a volatile topic, so recently unmentionable in print material that aspired both to be popular and respectable:

No less consulting my own taste than the manners of the age, I endeavored, while I painted it in all its fallen and degraded aspect, to banish from the lips of the lowest character I introduced any expression that could possibly offend; and rather to lead to the unavoidable inference that its existence was of the most debased and vicious kind, than to prove it elaborately by words and deeds.

(Preface 36)

For Dickens, the challenge of “painting” or constructing Nancy’s character rested in not only cleansing her speech of offensive phrases, but also in presenting her profession indirectly, so that he would not offend his readers. As James Brown remarks of *Oliver Twist*, “Contemporary literary conventions dictated that certain social facts, taken raw or undiluted, were not acceptable literary food for the Victorian middle-class reading public. They had to be exalted, in some way ‘cleansed,’ and made respectable,” and so Dickens “avoids the full sexual implications of the prostitute’s role in his novels” (07). For Brown, Dickens “deferred to the conventions and taboos imposed on him by the tastes of a predominantly middle-class reading public” in not only the “censorship of language, but in selection and treatment of subject matter as well” (05). Dickens himself acknowledges this acquiescence to audience mores: “in the case of the girl, in particular, I kept this intention constantly in view” (Preface 36). While Nancy is a fictional character, processed through the artist’s creative, moral, and marketing filters, she is also a representative of the truth of prostitution--because of, not in spite of, her constructedness.

Nancy’s “truth” is found in Dickens’s original, consciously fictional construction of her character. Dickens’s Preface claims that *Oliver Twist* presents the truth about prostitution, but qualifies this claim by alerting readers and potential imitators to the literary elements that underwrite the depiction of this truth. As Dickens states in the closing paragraphs of the Preface, “It is useless to discuss whether the conduct and character of the girl seems natural or unnatural, probable or improbable, right or wrong. IT IS TRUE” (36). Indeed, it was the most accurate depiction of prostitution that contemporary mores would permit him to present. In discussing his own description of Nancy and its seeming contrariness, he writes, by way of disclaimer, that it is “God’s truth”, and

therefore “a contradiction, an anomaly, an apparent impossibility; but it is a truth” (37). What must also be kept in mind is that it is likewise an author’s truth, the work of a writer who, by invoking moral authority and literary precedent, claims the right to represent the formerly unspeakable truth about prostitution in the truest, though perhaps not the most realistic or accurate, way possible.

## Notes

1 See Nash, *Prostitution in Great Britain 1485-1901*; 101-102, 115, 116, 136.

2 For Samuel Johnson's views on prostitutes, see Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, Vol. 4. Boswell's own adventures with prostitutes are recounted in *Boswell's London Journal 1762-1763*. Included are his comments on the various venereal diseases that he contracted from his sexual exploits with prostitutes.

3 See Hale, *An Address to the Public Upon the Dangerous Tendency of the London Female Penitentiary (1809)*, *A Reply to the Pamphlets Lately Published in Defense of the London Female Penitentiary (1809)*, *Considerations on the Causes and Prevalence of Female Prostitution (1812)*; Hodson, G. *Strictures on Mr. Hale's Reply to the Pamphlets in Defense of the London Female Penitentiary (1809)*.

4 Tristran, *Flora Tristran's London Journal*. Tristran's observations on prostitution in London stem more from her own personal assessment of the circumstances as observed at a distance than from any actual personal interaction with prostitutes. Tristran was a Frenchwoman living and writing in England. Her journal is one of the few documents authored by a woman that offers an account of prostitution in early nineteenth-century Britain.

5 Dickens maintained this "fascination" with prostitutes and their plights throughout his career. Dickens and Angela Burdett-Coutts founded Urania Cottage in 1843. It was a "Home for Homeless Women" that dealt specifically with the care and reclamation of prostitutes. Dickens also features the prostitute Alice Marwood in *Dombey and Son (1848)*.

6 Because they were "public women," actresses were typically considered to be prostitutes as well as stage performers during the Victorian period.

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## **The Residue of Science and Pseudo-Science: Jane Austen and Hypochondria**

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From her first juvenile efforts to her last uncompleted novel, Jane Austen reflects the medical preoccupations of her culture. The late eighteenth century, into which Jane Austen was born, was a frightful time to be sick, a time of incurable pain “liable to be suffered at a moment's notice,” a time without the scientific knowledge to alleviate suffering (Williams 1), when medical men frequently continued to adhere to a body of knowledge essentially unchanged since the time of Hippocrates. There were doctors who still believed in the theory of humors, and that “those humours could best be treated by such traditional methods as blistering, cauterising, purging, the administration of powerful emetics, and the drawing off of blood” (Williams 1). *A Clinical Guide*, popular in Edinburgh in 1801, lists both useful remedies—castor oil, opium, digitalis—but also exotic ones, such as syrup of pale roses, crabs' eyes, pearls, and the unexplained “sacred elixir” (Cartwright 134).

While eighteenth-century citizens pondered the causes and cures of physical illness, they also were fascinated by the more complex interweaving of body and mind they called vapors, fits, hysteria, melancholy, and hypochondriasis. These related terms define illnesses quite different from physical diseases. Fascinated by the puzzling persistence in society of hysteria and what we now call hypochondria, eighteenth-century writers, like their predecessors, recorded the details of both physical and psychogenic ailments, questioned their origins, and suggested remedies. This focus on hysteria/hypochondria demonstrates the period's fascination with the mind/body

relationship, and its suspicion that illness often conveyed meaning beyond the literal and the apparent. Jane Austen shared that fascination.

Both hysteria and its related syndrome, hypochondria, were prominent features of eighteenth-century life and literature; indeed, hypochondria was often called the “English malady” (Kenyon 7). By the time Austen was born, centuries of discussion of hypochondria and hysteria had already taken place. For a very long time, medicine had been aware of the persistence of a constellation of symptoms that differ from ordinary illness. The symptoms are varied, changing, and, of course, physical; even if the disease is imagined and feared, as in what has lately come to be called hypochondria, the worries are manifested in physical terms such as headache, fatigue, upset stomach, fainting, screaming, or loss of appetite; how does a human being react, if not through the body? A centuries-old term, hysteria remains difficult to define; according to Ilza Veith, “except for the fact that it is a ‘functional’ disorder, without concomitant organic pathological change, it defies definition and any attempt to portray it concretely. Like a globule of mercury, it escapes the grasp” (1).

Like hysteria, hypochondria also lacks “organic pathological change.” The eighteenth century considered hysteria and hypochondria members of the same puzzling constellation. From a twentieth-century vantage point, the connections between the two, as well as their differences, have become apparent. Both find their origin in emotional causes, but one is more dynamic than the other. In Austen's writings, for example, hypochondria or valetudinarianism remains a static phenomenon, something that defines certain (mostly comic) characters, both male and female, a personality trait that finds expression in action every now and then, but more often in speech which records worries and advice. By comparison, hysteria in Austen (as well as in scientific and imaginative literature in general) contains dynamic properties; even though we

may speak of hysterical personalities (Mrs. Bennet, for example), most instances of hysteria in Austen occur in a pattern of increased emotion and debility and reach a climax in outward behavior (Marianne Dashwood's fever, Jane Fairfax's distracted wanderings) before subsiding into some sort of resolution connected with the working out of the plot.

The general view of "hysterical" outbursts changes according to the culture in which it appears. Over the centuries, medical writers have usually ascribed hysteria only to females, based partly on the etymology of the term from the Greek word for *uterus* (*hyster-*), coupled with conventional notions of "irrational" femininity. The standard explanation for hysteria in women, the theory of the wandering uterus, demanded revision when physicians were able to document similar symptoms in men. Thomas Sydenham named the male version of hysteria hypochondriasis (Veith 143), after the hypochondrium, the abdominal region said to be the locus of masculine hysteria; the spleen, the "seat" of melancholy, is located in the hypochondrium.

The word *hysteria* continues until the present day, carrying with it a lingering connection with the female, even though male hysterics were also studied by Freud. Eventually, the term for male hysteria, hypochondriasis, metamorphosed into hypochondria, replacing the now infrequently used valetudinarianism (a word popular in Austen's lifetime) to denote "imaginary" illness; hypochondria seems epidemic in the general population to this day. Probably not until the publication of William Cullen's *First Lines of the Practice of Physick* in 1777 do we find a description of hypochondria as we now know it: "As it is the nature of men to indulge every present emotion, so the hypochondriac cherishes his fears, and, attentive to every feeling, finds in trifles, light as air, a strong confirmation of his apprehensions" (Mullan 215-16). Cullen recommends that the physician try "diverting the attention of the person being

treated 'to other objects than his own feelings,'" using a placebo if necessary (Mullan 216), a prescription with which Austen would no doubt concur, and a prescription she turns inside out for her readers. Watching hypochondriacs (Mary Musgrove, Mr. Woodhouse, Mrs. Bennet, the Parkers) focus on themselves may function as the reader's own cure. Observing the silliness, the self-absorption, the ineptitude of fictional characters evokes the gentle shock of recognition, turning the reader away from this pathology in an attempt to "reform the self into another, more potent form of being" (Alcorn and Bracher 352).

Susan Baur in her recent study argues that hypochondria admits of at least three explanations: biochemical, sociological, and psychological. (5). Most fruitful as a way of analyzing the role of hypochondria in literature, the psychological explanation views hypochondria as a strategy for being helpless while still insuring that one will be taken care of. Fear of death lies in the shadow of hypochondria; worry over death may lead to worry over sicknesses before they are contracted and to amateur diagnosis of sundry aches and pains. When each twinge portends a heart attack, each pain a tumor, the hypochondriac employs metonyms for his/her own fear of extinction. Fears need an environment in which to grow. One of Austen's favorite writers, Samuel Johnson, shared with many eighteenth-century medical practitioners the belief that idleness constituted a potent breeding ground for hypochondria, thereby paralleling the linking of idleness and hysteria cited by Robert Burton and Celia Fiennes. In his *Idler* essays, Johnson often examines "the manifold miseries of total leisure" (Nardin 131), agreeing with the earlier tradition of Pope and Swift that a connection existed between leisure and "the whole range of psychosomatic ailments denominated spleen or the vapours" (Nardin 131). Leisure itself may prepare the groundwork for self-preoccupation. If that is so, then a society such as

Austen's, dominated by a leisure class, provides receptive ground for the growth of both hysteria and hypochondria.

Leisure also provided fertile soil for the writing and reading of novels of sensibility, where illness took on further meaning. Sensibility, that focus on one's feelings and emotional reactions, bears some relationship to hypochondria. Austen read those novels and satirizes them throughout her writing life.

Austen shows herself to be essentially unsympathetic toward adults who fantasize about their illnesses; in a letter to her sister Cassandra dated 9 February 1813, she writes that "Lady W. has taken to her old tricks of ill-health again, & is sent for a couple of months among her friends. Perhaps she may make *them* sick" (*Letters* 304). Critics have long debated the extent of Austen's mother's hypochondria, and to what degree it vexed her daughter. Park Honan in his recent biography of Austen (1988) calls Mrs. Austen a "gentle hypochondriac" who "chatted of bile, it seems, as others do of the weather" (387).

Jane Austen clearly had multiple reasons for viewing hypochondria, hysteria, and physical illness with a skeptical eye. The evidence of Austen's Juvenilia, her letters, and her mature works clearly shows a woman who knew that people indulged themselves, and convinced themselves and others that they were suffering from various ailments. Such people—Lady W. in life, Mr. Woodhouse and Mrs. Churchill in her fiction—used the benevolence of others in order to manipulate their own plots, privilege their status, and control those who cared about and for them. Held up to the light of reason and the laughter of comedy, such hypochondriacs and hysterics serve as models of undesirable behavior, and their lives as cautionary tales for the astute reader. Where physical illness was concerned, Austen recognized the frailty of human life, and fought against that frailty by creating characters who learned from illness as they recovered or who fended it off by confronting life.

What distinguishes the juvenile writings is the almost chaotic use of hysteria (but not of hypochondria) as plot details follow one another in (seeming) confusion. Austen satirizes hysteria and the novels of sensibility in *Northanger Abbey*, suggesting a path of moderation, "the common feelings of common life." *Sense and Sensibility*, as well, focuses more on hysteria than on hypochondria. In *Pride and Prejudice*, hypochondria, hysteria, and sensibility do not occupy the prominent place they do in the Juvenilia, in *Northanger Abbey*, and in *Sense and Sensibility*, even though Mrs. Bennet's "nerves" provide a counterpoint to the health of her daughter Elizabeth. Hypochondria functions as a more prominent target of Jane Austen's satire in her later work, an emblem of self-absorption's deleterious effects. Hysteria, however, becomes more diffuse and more complex in these mature novels. In Austen's later work, hysterical symptoms—those of Fanny Price and Jane Fairfax come to mind—stem less from self-imposed romantic delusions than from outside forces. Nevertheless, such conflicts must be faced squarely and withstood.

Catherine Morland's responses find their inspiration in the gothic variation of the novel of sensibility; her encounters with real people and events and especially with Henry Tilney counteract the effects of her reading. Marianne Dashwood's hysteria originates, as well, in sentimental fiction; her physical illness and the reactions of her sister and Colonel Brandon encourage the cure. Mrs. Bennet's nervousness arises from her lack of insight and from her desire to manipulate and control the lives of others. Although Mrs. Bennet does not change, the reader comprehends Mrs. Bennet's frivolity in part through the contrasting behavior of everyone else in the Bennet family. In each novel, then, hysterical reactions are shown to be unproductive in part through contrasting characters and actions and in part through the consequences of the hysterical behavior itself. In *Mansfield Park* Fanny Price's responses contrast with many

negative traits of other characters, including Mary's insensitivity, Maria's venality, Henry's predatory actions, and Edmund's obtuseness. Fanny's emotional, quasi-hysterical behavior is never shown to lead to destructive consequences; in fact she is awarded finally for not wavering from her principles and for maintaining her steadfast devotion to Edmund.

Austen's use of hysteria shifts as she moves from *Mansfield Park* to *Emma*, a novel more in keeping with the tone of *Pride and Prejudice*. In *Emma*, Austen delineates her first detailed treatment of that coping device and variant of hysteria known as hypochondria or valetudinarianism. Hypochondria emerges in *Emma* as a dominant theme of a novel where the physical and emotional are closely intertwined, where one is used to describe the other, where one defines the other. Hysteria complements the hypochondriac theme of the work, as emotional problems cause both real and imagined illness. The pattern of hypochondria is seen most graphically in Mr. Woodhouse, that of hysteria in the behavior of Jane Fairfax.

From the first pages of the book, Mr. Woodhouse attempts to control the lives of others (a parallel to his daughter's more sophisticated machinations). In a world where medicines were usually ineffective and causes of illness generally unknown, Mr. Woodhouse sees cause-and-effect relationships in the most unusual phenomena, issues proclamations about the value of one procedure or another, and recommends certain behaviors to all who will or will not listen. His daughter Isabella shares his preoccupation with apothecaries, weather, and food. Like Isabella's, so Mr. Woodhouse's hypochondria also functions as a pastime, as a way of fending off the dangers of the universe, and as a way of insuring that he is being taken care of.

Along with the novel's hypochondriacs walks one person who begins to suffer hysterical symptoms as the novel progresses: Jane Fairfax, with her

headaches, her "nervous fever," and poor appetite (E 389); her health is "deranged" according to Mr. Perry, the apothecary. Caused by her unstable social position, her uncertain future, and her secret engagement, her psychogenic ailments find their cure as soon as the consummate hypochondriac, Mrs. Churchill, dies, thereby eliminating any impediment to the marriage of Jane and Frank Churchill.

As did *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma* suggests that hysteria at times demands respect and concern, and that its victims really suffer. On the other hand, its relative, valetudinarianism, though outwardly comic, connotes duplicity, self-centeredness, and manipulation. Valetudinarianism, the fear of and preoccupation with illness, also emerges from inner stress and desire but is described in this novel as rather more egocentric, a coping device that often succeeds in the goal of manipulating and controlling others. Such generalizations fit Harriet Smith, Mr. Woodhouse, Mrs. Churchill, Frank Churchill, and Jane Fairfax, but not the novel's heroine, Emma Woodhouse. Though a controlling person, she does not use valetudinarianism to manipulate her world; if she did, she would be not a heroine but a comic figure. As an Austen heroine, she must learn to know herself and to find her place in the world; but she must not pretend to be ill or be made permanently ill by her own desires. The Austen heroine must have and show physical strength as well as strength of character. Even if she is frail, as is Fanny Price, she must be able to endure and to prevail.

*Persuasion*, like *Emma*, boasts a chronic valetudinarian, one who also manifests a tinge of hysteria. Mary Elliot, the wife of Charles Musgrove, is "often a little unwell, and always thinking a great deal of her own complaints" (P 33), as we are told by the reliable narrator. Anne Elliot, Mary's sister, has learned over the years to endure, to suffer, and yet to survive, though she has lost her "bloom." Mary, on the other hand, does not know how to endure quietly. She is

at the mercy of the winds of fortune, even if those winds have generally been warm breezes thus far in her young life. If all is well she is happy, but any small inconvenience is magnified by her sensibility. Unable to countenance solitude, maximizing her trivial difficulties, "and inheriting a considerable share of the Elliot self-importance," Mary "was very prone to add to every other distress that of fancying herself neglected and ill-used" (P 37). In contrast, we have the remarks of Mrs. Croft, which serve as a key to Austen's consistent approach to the welfare of the body. Her long-term marriage to Admiral Croft is of great importance to Mrs. Croft, and she relished being on board ship. Her place, she thinks, is with her husband, and her health never suffered from voyages after her initial slight illness on the first ship. Her only debility happened when she had to spend the winter at Deal while her husband remained on a ship in the North Sea. At this time Mrs. Croft experienced what we can only call hysterical/hypochondriacal symptoms, though Mrs. Croft's sense prevents her from being labeled a hysteric. She describes her ailments as imaginary, stemming from idleness, boredom, from, in her words, "'not knowing what to do with myself'" (P 71). Preoccupation with oneself may lead to physical symptoms, as we see in Mary Musgrove, in Isabella Knightley, and in Mr. Woodhouse. Concern for others cures the individual of anxiety and of imaginary symptoms. What it may not cure, as Mrs. Smith demonstrates, is real illness. Nor does it cure a broken heart, as we learn from the example of Anne Elliot, although altruism may enable the sufferer to endure.

Austen's last work, the fragmentary *Sanditon*, fits the pattern we have seen in Austen's work from the beginning: valetudinarianism exists to be satirized as an example of unproductive indulgence. Of all the Austen works (with the exception of some sections of the Juvenilia), *Sanditon* deals most explicitly with the human body in its various weaknesses, and attempts to confront that debility

with a comic look at seaside resorts and chic remedies. In *Sanditon*, illness is palpable, visible, and real in ways Austen has not employed before, and hypochondria forms part of an epidemic of neurosis.

The hypochondriac and commercial interests of the Parkers contrast with the healthy, open disposition of Charlotte Heywood, transplanted from the healthy, normal environment of Willingden to the village of unhealth, the health spa Sanditon, by Mr. Parker's invitation. Mr. and Mrs. Heywood grant permission for their daughter Charlotte to accompany the Palmers back to their home even though Charlotte suffers from no maladies; "Charlotte was to go,-- with excellent health, to bathe & be better if she could--" (MW 374), as if it were possible or even desirable to achieve a level of health better than excellent.

The serious hypochondriacs arrive, in the person of the Parker sisters and their brother. Miss Diana Parker remarks of her sister Susan that she experienced no hysterics until seeing Sanditon, a strange phenomenon, since their journey was now over. Arthur has lumbago. Miss Parker concludes that the world is divided between strong-minded and weak-minded people, between the active and those unable to act, and that those who are able must minister to the infirm: "'My Sister's Complaints & mine are happily not often of a Nature, to threaten Existence *immediately*--& as long as we *can* exert ourselves to be of use of others, I am convinced that the Body is the better, for the refreshment the Mind receives in doing its' [sic] Duty'" (MW 410).

Although couched in self-congratulatory terms, Miss Parker's statement resonates with truth. Concern for others, time and time again, brings one out of preoccupation with the self, tends to lessen hypochondriac complaints and restore health, and does some good for society. Just as *Persuasion's* Mrs. Croft discovered she felt better when on shipboard with her husband instead of being preoccupied with her own isolation on land, so does Miss Parker recognize the

value of benevolence. A rather sardonic view of the matter, however, is expressed by Lloyd Brown, who writes that Austen from time to time “exposes the sham” of the Parker sisters' hypochondria “by envisioning their zealous schemes as vigorous physical activity” (69). Miss Parker's claim of active benevolence may prove every bit as wearying as self-centered hypochondria.

Charlotte Heywood, Jane Austen's projected heroine for the novel, reflects the author/narrator's point of view when thinking about the “invalid” Parkers. Such unusual illnesses and remedies, she thinks, “seemed more like the amusement of eager Minds in want of employment than of actual afflictions & relief [sic]” (MW 412). The Parker family possesses great quantities of imagination, which find its outlet, in the oldest brother, in his various commercial schemes and in the rest, in hypochondria.

Whereas hysteria and hypochondria functioned as background motifs in Austen's earlier work, in *Sanditon* the professional patients are foregrounded, just as society in the nineteenth century (illustrated in Eliot's *Middlemarch*, for example) was moving towards the persistently therapeutic stage of contemporary society, where human beings often think of themselves as sick or neurotic and just as often seek the help of the physician, the counselor, or the faddist, and where institutions and armies of professionals stand waiting to treat the ill.

What Austen would have made of *Sanditon*, had she lived, remains unresolved. As with her earliest juvenile efforts, Austen here exaggerates illness and preoccupation with health, while avoiding the truly serious and tragic diseases which afflicted English citizens in her day. Similarities, in fact, exist between the *Juvenilia* and *Sanditon*, as if Austen were completing her professional life by restating the premises from which she started. In their eccentricity, the Parkers resemble some of the characters in the *Juvenilia*. *San-*

*diton*, however, foregrounds hypochondria in ways the earlier writings and the major novels never did. The Parkers are less realistic than the eccentrics of the mature novels (Mr. Woodhouse or Marianne Dashwood, for example), but the attitude towards hypochondria, illness, and debility which Austen demonstrates through their characterization remains consistent with her earlier works.

The cure for hypochondria eludes many of us, even today. Austen's prescriptions—moving out of the self toward altruism and benevolence, exertion, and activity—are worth a try. In any event, such cures will not be as unpleasant as electrical current, bloodletting, or the ingestion of the sacred elixir.

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## Poems by Jennifer Thompson

### A Sort of Song (After William Carlos Williams)

A poem darts from word to eye to stone  
to hover, split, and sip like  
a hummingbird hesitating  
between sky and blossom's sap.

Figure is both body and word-spire.  
Put pen to paper, then.  
Scan the invisible heart  
of things, my Corinthian,  
and muse.

### Not Actually a Villanelle

Like writing a poem, or, better, being written,  
I remember the smell  
of your hair, and its taste, so fitting,

silk in my mouth.  
I remember your face, dreaming,  
like writing a poem or – yes – being written.

Sweat limned our brows and shoulders,  
trickled down, a tropical rain.  
I remember its musk taste, so fitting.

I smelled my sex on your hands  
as your fingers traced my breasts,  
like writing a poem or, rather, being written.

Deep and labored breathing,  
soft exclamations and requests, incitements.  
In my mouth, your salt bitterness, so fitting.

I watched as you finished yourself,  
on your back, one knee crooked wide,

like writing a poem, or, better, being written.  
I still taste your rumpled hair, so fitting.

### **Act of Faith**

An egret fishes in the concrete bed  
of the San Diego Creek.  
With a gentle stirring gesture  
it agitates the reeds, weeds, strips of slime  
that cling to the sheer sides  
of the water's concourse.  
When a tiny fish-bit seeks to slip  
from its green refuge  
the egret's beak slices down so quickly and  
caution gives way to such decision!  
Its unity of purpose  
stops my breath.  
It flaps its white wings  
like a shaken sheet  
tucks an amazing arc of neck  
into a tight S  
gathers delicate yellow feet  
to its breast  
and glides overhead, tracing the curve  
of the freeway on-ramp  
where I idle my Firebird.  
I wonder what it means  
to have dominion over the animals.  
They festoon every power line  
graze on our garbage  
evidence of our abdication.  
The testimony of the egret's  
unthinking grace  
urges me to cast off free will  
and reason.  
It glides from sight.  
I turn back  
to the sloping stream  
of crimson brake lights.  
I resolve to think, to hope  
to pray.

## Calming the Drunken Monkeys: Using Felt Sense in the Composition Classroom

Jennifer M. Pugh, University of Akron

In her first chapter of *Bird by Bird*, Anne Lamott explains the tumultuous task of beginning the writing process. After sitting down and staring at a blank page or screen, Lamott writes, “You begin rocking, just a little at first, and then like a huge autistic child” (6). She goes on to mention the various “voices” of banshees and drunken monkeys who invade your thoughts while you try to compose. I doubt Lamott had Sondra Perl in mind, but she demonstrates the connection between the mind and the body—rocking back and forth because your mind is blank or reeling—a concept Perl calls “felt sense.”

In “A Writer’s Way of Knowing,” Perl explains, “When the writing is not going well, we know it. [...] We sometimes move around uncomfortably. Again, it is a bodily awareness” (81). Felt sense is directly connected to the body—the body’s way of knowing—as Perl writes, “When the emerging words do not feel right, we squirm. We feel uncomfortable. The alignment between our thoughts and our bodies hasn’t yet happened...” (*Felt Sense* 4). Perl’s notion of felt sense and the application of her Guidelines is structured to make a way for writers to calm their drunken monkeys, focus on the task at hand, and begin and continue writing. But the process proved to be more complicated than I had anticipated. I found that implementing an abstract concept into a freshman composition class seemed simple in theory but in practice, was much more difficult to explain and administer.

Originally used in psychotherapy, *felt sense* was coined by Eugene Gendlin, but has yet to be defined in simple terms. In his article “On Emotion in

Therapy,” Gendlin defines felt sense as “a vague, implicitly complex, physical feeling that can come in your body in regard to any situation or any aspect of life” (255). This abstract concept of “bodily knowing” and has been linked to Gendlin in therapy and Perl, who adapted Gendlin’s idea, in composition. Likewise, Leslie Greenberg, Laura Rice, and Robert Elliott, in *Facilitating Emotional Change: The Moment-by-Moment Process*, define felt sense as, “the sense of something that includes thoughts, feelings, perceptions, internal actions, and context” (165). Gendlin explains that you get the sense of “all” about something—including everything you have seen, felt, lived, and stored over the years about that one thing. This sensation comes to you all at once, as a single “aura” sensed in your body (*Focusing* 33). In other words, felt sense is an abstract feeling that can’t be explained until you’ve experienced it for yourself. And even then, you won’t be able to explain it, only nod your head knowingly.

Felt sense also includes what Gendlin describes as a “body shift” —one that doesn’t happen in the mind. According to Gendlin, “Not everybody feels the shift taking place specifically in the belly. It may seem to happen all over the body, or it might feel like a loosening in the chest, or it might be a relaxation of a tight throat” (*Focusing* 39). Thinking about the connection between the mind and the body in this manner allows us to realize that felt sense is something we *feel* and once we have the “right” word, we can feel something change or “shift” (*Felt Sense* v).

Pertaining to writing, Perl explains, “Only certain words will say what you sense; and these may only come by a careful process of slowing down and listening, of paying attention to those hunches, leanings, and subtle pulls” (“Knowing” 78). Perl writes, “When writers pause...they are looking to their felt experience, and waiting for an image, a word, or a phrase to emerge that captures the sense they embody” (*Understanding* 46). Similarly, in the forward to

*Felt Sense: Writing with the Body*, Peter Elbow explains felt sense in terms of “knowing” when a word is wrong. He writes, “Whether the word arrived easily or by dint of struggle—whether it’s still in mind or already written—we know it’s wrong” (v). Although the descriptive words are arbitrary, most writers understand this feeling. Perl writes, “Once you know how to notice it, you may conclude that the process is simple, that felt sense has always been there, available to you; you just never had a name for it” (*Felt Sense* 1).

In order to study felt sense, Perl has students and teachers, in “Understanding Composition,” use the “think aloud process.” Perl’s methodology is similar to that of Flower and Haas in their article “A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing.” Perl recorded her students as they thought out loud while they were writing. The recordings revealed that her students wrote only a few words before they began to edit, and they began to edit long before they actually had a sense of what they wanted to need to say (*Felt Sense* 6). By observing her students, Perl noticed a phenomenon in which they would pause for a minute or so sitting silently before having a “burst of composing energy” which she found often led to the creation of new ideas (*Felt Sense* 7).

In order to get to the place where we can experience a “burst of composing energy,” we need to relax in order to allow our felt sense to develop—what Gendlin called “focusing.” As Perl writes, “We know, for example, that we cannot force ourselves to go to sleep. But if we relax and allow sleep to come, it usually will” (*Felt Sense* 2). Focusing, as defined by Greenberg et al, is “a process similar in some ways to Eastern meditation practices but directed specifically toward felt sense” (166).

According to Gendlin, focusing is a process in which you make contact with your felt sense (*Focusing* 10). He goes on to explain that focusing is “attending to such a concrete sense of something without quite knowing what it

is.” He defines six “movements” or “shifts” in focusing: clearing a space, felt sense, handle, resonating, asking, and receiving (*Focusing* 45). These shifts also resonate with Perl’s Guidelines and what she tries to accomplish through them—a writer must sit and wait even after a felt sense has developed, completely silencing those monkeys, in order to develop it further and more clearly before the words will flow.

After reading about felt sense in “Understanding Composing,” I was most curious as to how it can be beneficial in the composition classroom, particularly in terms of Perl’s Guidelines. The Guidelines are a series of questions Perl asks to guide writers through the process of selecting a topic to waiting for their felt sense and learning how to listen to the felt sense for inspiration. Perl includes, “The Guidelines are not a set of rules to follow, but rather a set of questions that help writers cultivate a felt sense and then write with this felt sense as a guide” (*Felt Sense* 8). She writes, “...students often find the Guidelines questions to be both comforting and challenging, scary and revealing, fruitful and, at times, surprisingly profound” (*Felt Sense* xv). Including somewhat of a disclaimer, Perl writes, “I say a ‘try’ because I never know if implementing these Guidelines will work. It always feels a bit risky. I’m never sure how things will turn out, if everyone will find something valuable to write about...” (“Knowing” 80). Even though Perl includes the possibility of the Guidelines failing, there’s no evidence of this in her articles or books, which gave me confidence—perhaps too much—in the success of the activity.

Walking into my freshman composition classroom near the end of the semester with a CD player in hand, I felt self-assured and inspired having chosen to use the Guidelines. My students knew they were about to engage in an activity concerning “this felt sense thing” I’d been discussing, and, as I plugged in the CD player, they sat inquiring about what could be on the CD. Before beginning, I

reminded my students that felt sense is an abstract concept involving a connection between the body and the mind, I used Perl's example of forgetting your keys, I explained that they needed to pay attention to the CD and be ready to write, and I even believed that they understood all of this.

As soon as I pressed play, Sondra Perl's voice echoed through the classroom and a few students commented on its "soothing" sound—two students found it too soothing and opted to put their heads down for the remainder of the class. Following along with the book so that I could pause the CD and keep time, I glanced around the classroom to see students writing furiously, looking at the ceiling, staring blankly out the window, and glaring at me. Since our class was only fifty minutes long, I asked the students to bring a response with them to hand in the following day. Twenty-four hours later I stood in an empty classroom with many indifferent and angry responses in my hands.

Much of what I read about using felt sense in the classroom yielded positive results. Perl quotes one student as writing, "The Guidelines were helpful. They take you step by step through the entire process of private writing" (*Felt Sense* 11). Another student is quoted as writing, "At first it was hard to get the ball rolling but once I picked up a rhythm I was able to write continuously" (11). Although she also writes, "some writers occasionally report that the process did not work for them. [...] Some are not 'ready' to look deeply and write," she gives no examples of these instances ("Knowing" 86).

M. Elizabeth Sargent writes about her experience using Perl's Guidelines in "Felt Sense in the Composition Classroom: Getting the Butterflies to Fly in Formation." Many of the students whom Sargent quotes respond positively to the Guidelines. One exception, a student named Tara, was angry with her topic, but not the Guidelines necessarily. Sargent points out, "Tara was angry with her

topic, but it's important to acknowledge that some students will be angry at the process itself and won't write their way out of it during the class period" (61).

Before using the Guidelines, I was only aware of Perl's articles and book, and I assumed that the Guidelines would be easy enough to administer—give a brief description of felt sense, explain the activity, pop in the CD, and away we would go. Attempting to describe felt sense should've been my first warning sign that this activity wasn't going to be as easy as I had anticipated. Being new with the concept myself—as well as a second semester teaching assistant—this activity seemed to do little more than annoy most of my students. Comparable to what I found, Sargent writes: "The guidelines begin by asking students to relax, breathe deeply, shake out their hands, close their eyes. Some students get irritated right there—as in, 'I don't need writer's yoga, thank you'—and others (especially ones who love yoga) feel drawn in immediately"(59). Of the fourteen out of eighteen students who showed up for class on the day I administered the Guidelines, three initially said they enjoyed the activity (but later one admitted to saying only what he thought I wanted to hear). The majority of my students responded similarly to the following quotation taken from Josh, a male in his mid-twenties and one of my best writers:

Honestly I feel that this tape was put together to make money. The only reason it keeps getting good reviews is because students don't want to piss-off their teachers. No one, excuse me, most people would never do this. Not only because they may really not have the time, but also if they did have the time there are better things to do, like watching grass grow or paint dry.

Josh's response surprised me simply because he was one of my best students and, being a psychology major, I assumed he would be interested in the idea of

felt sense. His response, although more articulate, was similar to many of the responses I received. Many of my students, like Josh, seemed to dislike the silence and found the CD to be monotonous.

On the other hand, of my students who seemed to enjoy the process, one, Tammy, was a twenty-seven-year-old mother of three, the other, Cody, was a traditional male student familiar with meditation (similar to Greenberg et al.'s reference to meditation and Sargent's reference to yoga), and both are among my best writers. The following quotation was taken from Cody.

Felt sense is very much the same as my meditation I use with shooting and this exercise I feel can be more useful than anything in life if you learn how to use your mind in this manner and not only with the educational elements that everyone has been told is the only thing we need. [...] I believe that our brain is nothing more than a mushy supercomputer and that most of us haven't taken the time to read the user's manual. I believe that meditation before any exercise is extremely beneficial to anyone.

Initially I assumed Cody, who is younger than Josh, would have found the Guidelines less useful. But why is there such a difference between responses? I expected all of my "better writers" to understand felt sense and be able to use the Guidelines effectively, but that was hardly the case. Was it something I did incorrectly? Were my students simply not paying attention? Were they too new to the writing process to grasp the concept? Would it have helped if we tried using the Guidelines a second time or if I gave them a transcript of the CD? Maybe I should have waited a week, asked them to reread their responses, and respond to them after reading through a transcript of the Guidelines as Sargent

did. I'm not sure if any technique would have helped my students, but from what I can gather, silence seemed to be a key factor.

In doing this activity, I found few answers and many questions, so I did what any technologically-savvy-graduate-student would do: I emailed Sondra Perl. I explained my situation and asked what could've gone wrong. Perl responded with a few questions for clarity as well as writing,

I've never heard about so many students having negative experiences. It's common for one or two to feel disinterested but rare to hear about so many (unless, of course, most people don't have the courage to tell me). But on the whole, what I say in the book is accurate: the teachers I know who use the Guidelines normally are pleased by their students' responses. (email correspondence)

After answering her questions—Was I insecure? Did I try the CD out at home first? Did I reassure my students that there was nothing they could do wrong?—Perl responded a second time, writing, "...it sounds as if you were as careful and thorough as you could be," and directed me to Sargent's article.

Sargent gives her students a brief example of Gendlin's concept of felt sense, which I did, and then they move on to the Guidelines. She makes sure her students are aware that whatever they write in response to the Guidelines won't be read by anyone, which I did as well. According to Sargent, "After one week [my students] are to read [their responses] and write a fifteen-minute reflection—which I do collect and read—on what the writing process was like for them and what it was like to read through their writing one week later" (58). Maybe asking students to reflect after reading their responses a week later would've been beneficial.

Sargent suggests that allowing students to read through the Guidelines ahead of time may only increase worry and antagonism (62). Sargent also asks her students to read through the Guidelines before reading the writing they produced and writing a reflection on the process (63). I didn't use either technique, but I'm curious whether or not having a transcript of the Guidelines *during* the process would be helpful.

Gendlin explains, "The felt sense may seem to be only a slight wisp. Without a trained sensitivity for how the body feels from inside, one can miss it" ("Emotion" 269). Perhaps this is why many of my students felt bored or confused by the Guidelines. He goes on to write, "And, usually to let it come, one must be willing to attend quietly to inward physical sentience for a while, when as yet, nothing much is there" (269). This, I believe, was the main problem; many of my students seemed uncomfortable with the silence in the classroom, shifting in their seats and glancing around the room. Only the two students who enjoyed the process seemed to enjoy the silence.

Cody grew up on a farm and is accustomed to a quiet setting. He's also familiar with meditation techniques, which allowed him to relate the Guidelines to something he understands. Tammy wrote, "I think I liked [the Guidelines] the most because it gave me time to focus on my paper." She explained that finding a quiet place to write is a luxury in her house so she welcomed the silence in the classroom. The differences between the students who enjoyed the Guidelines and those who didn't doesn't seem to be culturally or academically based, rather it depends on their comfort with silence. Perhaps this problem is generational; I think it's difficult to find people in their early teens to mid-twenties who enjoy silence—even as I sit typing this paper, the television is on so I can hear the murmur of Jay Leno's voice in the background.

In "Getting Started," Lamott writes, "I wish I had a secret I could let you in on...some code word that has enabled me to sit at my desk and land flights of creative inspiration like an air-traffic controller. But I don't" (7). Maybe no one does. Even Sargant warns, "...[the process] never works for everyone on a particular day and never works for everyone every time" (61). Perl's Guidelines are a useful tool and do work for some, but there is no secret formula to writing—in this case, only questions are left. I'm sure there's a trick to teaching the Guidelines, and I'm confident that with more experience, I'll be able to help students understand felt sense. And if my future students can find their felt sense, they may not "land flights of creative inspiration," but they may be able to calm the drunken monkeys long enough to compose, providing that they can tolerate the silence.

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## **I saw Dragons**

*Kit Kelen, University of Macau*

...the sacred dragon stands on the little column at the end of our village and ever since the beginning of human memory it has breathed out its fiery breath in the direction of Peking – but Peking itself is far stranger to the people in our village than the next world.

– Franz Kafka, 'The Great Wall of China'

A referral for psychiatric care was clearly indicated. The statement as tendered to the doctor on duty and responsible for the committal of the patient is reproduced below. A note was appended at the time to indicate that the 'poetic' quality of the particular delusions described was not unusual for a patient of this kind. The question was, all things considered now, what kind of patient was this. His delusion having persisted over a long period of treatment, it is vexing to have this question go unanswered.

### **Case Notes: Presentation**

The patient was attired raggedly, as if for some kind of theatrical production, perhaps a Cantonese opera. That had been the first thought. He had rambled in his speech and been only marginally coherent. He might have been drunk when brought in but no tests were conducted. He had had an odd smell about him and seemed extraordinarily dirty.

When he'd first regained consciousness in the ward he had muttered very strangely to himself, but grown louder and louder. His words had been hard to

make out to begin with, but became clearer with repetition. He repeated the same formula many times and so it was recorded:

Guan Gong, La Za, Xun Ng Hon, Zu Ba Gai.

Lei yiu ng yiu Min Fen Gong Zai ar? Yiu Guan Gong ho ng ho? La Za le?<sup>1</sup>

Asked his occupation, the man had replied that he was a seller of *Min Fen Gong Zai* 'dough dolls', those dolls made of flour, stuck on sticks, that parents buy for their children, dolls depicting characters from famous stories. The only other factual detail so far obtained about the man is that his name is Ng, or at least he believes it is. The idea of the dough dolls was in keeping with the idea of the theatre, and led the hospital doctors to wonder if the man had been in a theatrical production of some kind at the time of the trauma which had led to his present derangement. However, no record could be found of any recent production in which such a vendor had been featured.

At first it had been thought that he might have been an actor in a Cantonese opera. Then the idea was entertained that he had been an actor in a production – opera or theatre – which for the sake of authenticity had deployed the traditional hawkers to move about the audience. If either of these suppositions had credence, one might have assumed that eventually the man would have come out of character and been himself or at least adopted another acting role. He has not so far done so. The conclusion reached is thus that the man has consistently believed himself to be a street hawker of *Min Fen Gong Zai*, one who did his best trade at the opera. There are no such hawkers in Macao today, nor is it credible that a man of his age could ever have had such an occupation.

The statement taken from the man corroborates all this, nor does it cast much more light on the circumstances in which he came to – or continues with –

us. He seems to all intents and purposes an orphan. Here is his statement as far as it was able to be understood. Please note that, no doubt from his extensive stage experience, and the nature of his delusion, his speech had an archaic quality that made it difficult to catch all that he said.

### **The statement**

It was the night of the gate's opening. There had been theatre to celebrate and I had done a good trade. My pocket was full of coins. It still is. (At this point the man was able to show a string of late Ch'ing cash, of the kind one might obtain at any coin shop in Macao or Hong Kong or across the border.)

All the ceremony was over. All the officials had gone. I went with my sorrows to the chase the dragon. The joy of the town was too much for me. It made me mindful of my own miserable condition. It was because of the loss of my worthless wife and my daughter I sorrowed. Still it was rare that I could afford this pleasure. When I came out of the makeshift shop, one that had been thrown together just for the occasion, I found myself close by the new gate, the gate to the city of white ghosts, Ao Men.

Yes, I was fascinated by the prospect of what lay through there. I was a little unsteady on my feet but I came up square before the gate. Looking through I imagined I could see another world – the world of the foreign devils, the modern world, the future. How often had I heard it from those who had travelled? In China everything is old and nothing changes, in the West just the opposite. In England, in America, everything is in changes and nothing has time to grow old. The gate itself seemed proof of this. What a grand and beautiful object it was. But how grand and beautiful the world of men and heaven over them!

To pass through there! What could it mean? What would I find on the other side? I should not have even dared to think such thoughts. What business had I, could I claim? Of course I had no papers. I have none now. I am no one.

When one lies down and smokes the white powder one feels powerful, yes, but more than that, one feels great benevolence. It is as if I were an emperor and all men my subjects, it is as if none can harm me then. I wish only to do good by all. And so it was on that night, I smiled at those fearsome guards who yawned so noisily now on either side of the gate. And they smiled back and put out their lamps and no doubt within minutes they were asleep.

Darkness now, either side of the border. The hour of the rat or so I guessed. No criers for the hours in so remote a place. Of course I should have turned away. I should have found some awning under which I might have dreamt it all off, woken next morning to my old shabby state, the safe world I knew. But instead like a fool I gazed into the darkness on the other side of the gate. I gazed until it came to light. And out of the light their faces indistinct came beckoning, the faces I mean of my wife and of my daughter.

I was bereft and now I was enraptured, what could I do but follow? The rest – but why should I not tell it, when I see from your face you already think me mad? I followed and they vanished, the two of them, into a crowd of faces less distinct. And still I followed into a blaze like daylight. I had heard of the framed pictures of Europe, I had seen such a frame once, and now I had walked into their picture. When I passed through that gate I was no longer in the Middle Kingdom.

An hour before, had I not lain on my back on a bench chasing dragons? Now I saw dragons, a street full of them, blazing their eyes were. Each sat on a cart, its scales shone as if they were one. Each vast beast growled, hurtled forward into the night. The night was full of dragons. I worried they would

chase me but they seemed not to know I was there. I followed them. It was what I had smoked gave me courage.

I followed them and then I realized they were everywhere. This was their town. People rode in them or on them. But whether the people were their prisoners or whether they had tamed them like horses I never learned. Whichever were true I was certain powerful magic was afoot.

Perhaps it was the poppy wearing off, but over time I became more fearful. I worried the dragons might turn to chase me yet. Surely they could see me, there was so much light. But then there were others on the street they did not molest. Then again those were dressed like the dragon tamers or prisoners, whichever they were. The only ones dressed as I was were beggars; they were the only people not in motion. The beggars were blind or crippled or both. When I gave one a coin hoping he would tell me what I needed to know, he laughed in my face. I went on. The night was full of more wonders than I could now account. At every corner I came to I saw the blinding glare of dragons' eyes. Sometimes they could not even move, so many of them were there. I had to get away, get out of this incessant light.

Through narrow by-ways and smoky lanes I came at last to a crowded square. It was roofed with tin. There was a stage... the opera had been here, had only just finished.

And now on the empty stage I saw my chance... there was a screen and on it I could see a street, a street like any I had known before I had become trapped in this crazy dream. Here was a picture of *my* world, I had only to walk through this gate as I had walked through the other. Then I would be safe out of the dream, home again. Or so I hoped. I walked across the empty stage. No one minded me. I presented myself before the picture frame. A dusty street of two-storeyed houses. I could smell the noodles brewing ahead of me. I drew a sharp

breath but when I attempted to pass through the 'gate' the screen on which it had been painted collapsed around me like a sheet. Indeed, that's what it was. This world was as real – more real to me now – than the one I had left. Now it wasn't dragons pursuing me, but men. I fled from under the sheet, down more alleys where I saw now the noodles I'd smelt.

Coming away from the theatre I again saw the dragons. I must find my way back, or if not, then onwards to my destiny. It was then I decided I must *follow* the dragons; I had to keep them ahead of me. I had to chase them, not have them chase me. When I came to the water I saw that the dragons were returning to heaven... I saw them carried away into a cloud, a great procession they were... simply vanishing from their road into the air. High above the sea this was. I dared not follow them...

By now, though, I had become almost convinced that the dragons could not see me. Perhaps I was invisible? Perhaps I was myself no longer real? Was I a bodiless spirit? Had I become a ghost on entering the white ghosts' town?

It was in this mind of frantic speculation, I saw the faces again, they were on the other side of the street now. The street was San Ma Lo. Their faces were receding from me, fading back into the crowd. The dragons were between me and them. It was true that my family *seemed* like spectral presences here, true that the dragons *seemed* real. But suddenly I knew things were other than they seemed. Now I saw that white lines appeared on the road before me, crossing the dragons' paths. I followed them, as if by rights.

It was only at this point I recognized that the dragons in this picture I was in were no more real than the dragons in any other picture. I knew I had to follow or lose them forever...

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That was the end of the man's account. The next thing he was aware of was being in the ward. He has complained constantly about the brightness of the light here. Several nurses have had to be taken off the ward because he had "recognized" them as either his wife or his daughter, or in one case, both.

As to the idea of 'dragons ascending to heaven', it seems plausible the patient had been watching the traffic on the old Macao Taipa Bridge. It had been a night of heavy mist when he was brought in. Perhaps it was the traffic 'disappearing' thus into the clouds which had suggested to him a kind of procession.

With regard to the opium references, it is entirely possible that the man might have been under some narcotic influence at the time of his being brought in. No tests having been conducted at the time however, this cannot be verified.

As a "reality check," given his persistent fantasies of the past, the patient was asked if he thought there was anything unusual in the hospital, in the immediate surroundings in which the interview took place. Again, he complained of the light, but claimed that, as he had never been inside a hospital before, he had no expectation of what one might be like.

Asked what the date was, the man told us that it was the eighth year of the reign of Qing Tongzhi Di. This date was found to correspond with 1870 in the modern calendar, which was indeed the year in which the border gate was opened. It is not unusual with such delusional cases, for the patient to have a penchant for accuracy.

Over time the patient has come to seem less disoriented, although his speech has retained its strange archaic diction. There has as yet been no success in our efforts to trace the man through missing persons' lists. There are many Ngs missing, but this one fits none of the descriptions for a man of his age.

## Note

<sup>1</sup>The names are the names of theatrical characters (the red-faced God of Courage, Guan Yin's helper, the Monkey King and Pigsy from *The Journey to the West*. The "Lei yiu..." is the call of the hawker who sells "dough dolls" to children, for instance to help parents keep them quiet at the Cantonese opera.

## Our Dragons and Theirs

*Christopher Kelen, University of Macau*

...the sacred dragon stands on the little column at the end of our village and ever since the beginning of human memory it has breathed out its fiery breath in the direction of Peking – but Peking itself is far stranger to the people in our village than the next world.

- Franz Kafka, 'The Great Wall of China' (246)

Anthems, toasts, oaths, flags. . . . These are among the many means which nations and their citizenry have of expressing the fact of nationality or membership of a polity, whether as subject or citizen. This kind of membership is conveyed and maintained by symbolic and abstract means. A tune is enough to stir the breast: the lyrics have become unnecessary. Toasting a sovereign is wishing yourselves luck.

The less contentious, the more effective the instruments of identification. You can't argue about the personality of someone about whom you have no personal details. (People have been known to try though.) You can't dispute the meaning behind lyrics not there. (Though some of us persist.) If there is detail it can be argued over. If you can symbolize your state with things far from anyone's experience then those things will have to be accepted, not at face value, but as representing a function. The head of the king on the coin represents the authority to give the coin an agreed common value. The fact that you have not met this king to discuss the economic situation is not merely *not* a problem. It is indispensable to this setup. A king

is remote from the experience of ordinary people. And yet things can be known about a king.

The PR machine for kings of old worked hard to sell the idea that the authority of kings was natural, that the downward flow of power was the way things were meant to be. God in heaven rules over earth. A king on earth rules over his subjects. The conception of authority may be different today, but authority still needs to be symbolized. And it's from the long ages of gods and kings and heroes and such that many such symbols still come.

Where it is necessary that populations behave, obey, coercion is part of the picture. Fear is a powerful means of coercion, a means often of maintaining peace. Fear is nothing without the imagination of terrors. Here's where the dragons come in.

If you can symbolize authority with things that don't exist, things about which no one can know anything, then who will be able to argue? Are people stupid (or smart) enough for this to work? As in all fiction credibility is an issue, notwithstanding a demand for the suspension of disbelief. The Easter bunny is no doubt easier to imagine than a dragon, but you would have a hard time making the Easter Bunny the symbol of your state. The lion and the unicorn on the British royal arms offer an interesting example: a concocted beast (one which never existed) coupled with a beast hunted out of existence (in Europe at least: remember Pyramus and Thisbe!). Has anyone ever really lived in a country run by a dragon? Plenty have lived where temporal power is signified by the image of a dragon.

It has been argued that in the case of China the necessity of an autocratic and central power came earlier and was more persuasive than

elsewhere because of the irrigation system needed to make the country function.<sup>1</sup> Order requires an outside for illustrative purposes. In China's case the imagination of particular fears (e.g. ghosts requiring their own annual festival) has a long tradition in the symbolic machinery. And in China a tradition of wall building has defined civilization in the effort to separate the fearful outside by means of a clear line. Franz Kafka brings the western imagination of these investments into complex play in his orientalist tale "The Great Wall of China."

Dragons have been a symbol of imperial authority in China since the Han dynasty. What the Chinese put on their square flag, when they had to have one<sup>2</sup> represent their crumbling empire in the late nineteenth century, was a dragon: not any dragon but the imperial five toed dragon known as the *shen-lung* (an insignia restricted, on pain of death, to the imperial family). Dragons are a symbol of imperial power because the emperor is a synecdoche for China. So dragons represent the authoritative identity of Chinese-ness; they represent the Chinese people (*Long De Chuan Ren*/Descendants of the Dragon). The appearance of dragons presages the birth of sages and emperors (de Visser, 1913). Dragons are a symbol of luck the Chinese carry around the world.

By the late nineteenth century, at the conclusion of the Opium Wars, the dragon had become an ironic symbol for China. This most powerful of preternatural alliances with humanity, the sign of heaven's mandate over the middle kingdom, was as much of an illusion as the authority of the empire itself: the picture of something which didn't really exist.

A persistent orientalism has gone on linking China with this imaginary investment: the sleeping dragon has become the waking dragon of China's *fin de siècle* economic miracle (the miracle which follows in the footsteps of the

'tiger' economies). The Great Wall itself appears dragon-like as a recumbent protector of the borders of Chineseness. And it symbolizes among other things, and as a dragon might, the failure of great cultural continuities. Here is something built, something crumbling, something failing to refer. The Great Wall is China's Ozymandias: the effort of humans at a dragon's behest.

Fears and terrors, as Freud has shown, come from somewhere; although one might get rather tangled in exploring their provenance. In Europe a terror of dragons has invested those who slew them with great authority. Dragons are as auspicious in the east as they are inauspicious in the west.

Consider the dragons in the Bible. They are warlike, they are exiles, they are associated with poison, with evil, with Satan himself: "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years" (Revelations 20:2). The serpent association is strong; it links the evil of dragons back to Eden and the Fall. Thus it places the dragon centre stage in the epic good and evil struggles that persist in the West's historic imagination. And of course all of the giant serpents of Greek and Roman mythology may be seen as players on the dragon team. Perseus, Cadmus, Hercules, and a host of other proto-types for St George, get the hero-credentials by despatching beasts fearful for their size and ferocity, credible for being snakes. The landscape which dragons inhabit is uninhabited, or better, dis-inhabited. In the Old Testament:

And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. (Malachi 1:3)

And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be an habitation of dragons, a court for owls. (Isaiah 34:13)

The moral of the story is that if you stumble upon a dragon you're definitely in the wrong place. Dragons—like Satan—have been cast out of civilization (Revelations 12:7). The casting out of humans from paradise is more or less on their account. Dragons may be associated with kings, but if so they're associated with other people's, generally with the persecuting, kind of king: "Nebuchudrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, / He hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled my belly with his delicates, he hath cast me out" (Jeremiah 51:34).

In what sense are the Chinese and western beasts related? Ezekiel identifies pharaoh with a dragon against whom God has set himself. And this dragon is just where one might expect to find a Chinese dragon: in the murky deeps: "the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, my river is my own and I have made it for myself" (Ezekiel 29:3). The Lord will lay Egypt to waste for this impertinence.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed a good deal of laying to waste in China. A certain amount of this can be slated to European interventions.

The West's arrival in the Middle Kingdom was more in the manner of a western than a Chinese dragon. This fearful alterity could not offer protection; it represented an evil and it had to be fought. Or that would have been the Tai Ping version of events. Note that the Ch'ing administration, in fighting the Tai Pings, were happy to regard the West as their friendly dragon. But from where we read now, the Ch'ing and Tai Ping administrations both appear to have been confused.

The most salient difference between the dragons of Christendom and Chinese dragons is that the latter can side with humans and/or gods; they are politically ambiguous. In the West the duty to subdue nature expressed in Genesis is naturally represented in a duty to subdue dragons. That's what dragon tales are all about in the West. Hero goes out to slay dragons = man subduing nature. The dragon hunter is thus proto-typical of the European explorer. In the Bible dragons get associated with the kinds of place which give rise to tales that turn out to be apocryphal. As time goes on and humans get into every secret little corner of Europe, they hunt up the dragons and give them a hard time. As time goes on it gets easier for anybody who thinks about such things to give the whole dragon idea a hard time. But maps of the world are decorated with apocryphal beasts, creatures of the deep infest uncharted coasts.

Eventually the European dragon hunters get to China... typical of the sort of place the Bible warned about. Lo and behold. Things are so upside down the dragons appear to be in charge of the place. At least they're on the emperor's side. But in the way a lion might show the strength of a king. Or eating a tiger's penis might make you more virile. These traditional metonymic investments bring us up to date.

By the grace of God, Pu Yi, the last emperor becomes a gardener in the Forbidden City: a young dragon transformed through a many staged lifecycle into something quite benign and socially useful. A communist success story.

How real are dragons in China today? Real enough for building conglomerates to follow the advice of fengshui experts and spend millions on building elaborate means for dragons to pass through buildings without getting stuck and causing problems.

The helpful<sup>3</sup>/hindering East/West dragon paradox is straightforward: dragons represent a power greater than that of humans. Humans can avail themselves of this power by having a dragon on side (in China) or by defeating one (in Europe). In either case association with a dragon symbolizes the power of nature harnessed for social purposes. Those purposes can be quite varied. For instance in Macao, where I live, the festival of the drunken dragon, is an annual event (in late April), requiring of fishermen the loud and public consumption of large amounts of alcohol. In this Bacchanalia it's the dragon demands the debauchery. What choice have the locals got? Remember Pentheus!

But unless you believe that dragons really exist in and of their own right then you have to acknowledge this superhuman power as of human origin. Break the spell and you see that there was only an arbitrary convention holding the picture together. This is just what the Daoists have argued since the *Tao Te Ching*. To think that their critique will be listened to now that China is part of the modern world is as naïve as thinking that there is better, foreign, theory available to cope with China's ongoing crises in identity and belief.

After the nationalist revolution in 1911 the problem presented of how to represent a new China, an other-than-imperial China, to the world. Obviously the dragon had to go. The Kuomintang flag was (and is) composed of lines of color representing the peoples of China. To join the modern world and be accepted into the family of nations China had obviously to abandon the 'Middle Kingdom' fantasy. China had to rehabilitate itself after the century of bad press the British, more than anyone, had given it. China had to reconstruct itself after a century of decay and western opportunism.

Dragons for China became a symbol of the imagination getting stuck, becoming disconnected from the real. Dragons came with China's nadir to symbolize arbitrary power and convention and the difficulty in thinking a way around these. Perhaps today in China's mythic reawakening dragons provide an imaginative dynamism that revives continuities for the purpose of making the future Chinese. Dragons represent for China the symbolic and abstract means by which an argument for identification may be forgotten. The dragons had to go; but today they're everywhere. Their survival for – and as representing – Chinese people today, is in the face of globalization, the survival of a kind of Chinese-ness.

Where do dragons come from? Tall tales? Dinosaur bones? The cautionary bedtime story? Dragons are perhaps as the Huns were in Medieval Europe: the one well-travelled memory of a rumor haunting both ends of Eurasia. The Huns (in Chinese, *Hsiung-nyu*) themselves, or their ancestors, could have carried the story. Universalizers love dragons because everyone has them. Dragons are evidence that all humans have the one imagination. Or, one might on the other hand say, dragons are so eclectic in their make up that it would be hard for a culture not to have one.

They're not the only mythic critter in the eclectic category. Mermaids are fish and girl, unicorns are horse and rhino. In the Maclay Museum at the University of Sydney you can see a bunyip skull and a preserved bunyip's head as well (shepherds' concoctions of the Australian mythic beast). But dragons are all about conjuring worst fears into one beast. How could you not end up with some snake in there? How could size not figure in the equation? Big sharp teeth? A bad temper? Shyness so they're seldom seen? When it comes to dragons the rational mind says... *there's got to be some komodo dragon (no coincidence in the names) and dinosaur's bones in there... something big and scary and man-eating, something old and scaly, some kind of throwback, something out of the past you'd be wise not to disturb. Something in the dark at the back of the cave. Guarding its treasure of course.*

The Chinese dragon—according to the tradition recorded by the Han Dynasty scholar Wang Fu—has a particular and evolving morphology, over its thousands of years of life. Everything is recycled. Cow's ears, stag's horns, snake's neck, clam's belly, soles of feet courtesy of tiger, carp's scales (numbered and mainly benevolent [yang], but some not so benevolent [yin]), head of a camel. The horns take thousands of years to develop and these are the means by which the dragon hears. Your average not-fully-developed *lung* is deaf. The *kioh-lung*, best known Chinese dragon, has these horns. The wings come last and are the property of the *yin-lung* (Shuker, 86-89).

The pearl under a fold of skin in the throat (Adam's apple?) is a symbol of power in the male dragon. And the Chinese dragon, according to Wang Fu, has the eyes of a demon (Shuker, 86). That's a different kind of recycling: from one mythical beast to another.

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Where do dragons come from? The other answer to that question is that the particular landscapes they inhabit are culturally invested. Imaginary creatures require imaginary landscapes. In the West the dragon's imaginary landscape is the desert place; in China – where clearly there is no less need to keep the habitations of dragons at a safe (so credible) distance – dragons may live in great style in palaces on the ocean floor. Or there's the two-bodied dragon T'ao T'ieh (the name indicating gluttony) banished to outer space by the emperor Shin in the second millennium B.C.

The fact that the Son of Heaven was able to banish a dragon indicates that emperors (in the backward and abyss of time at least) are availed of powers akin to, and potentially greater than, those of dragons. Temporal power of the universal kind is related to the power of dragons. Dragons, like emperors, are worshipped, loved and feared, and likewise enjoy a mandate of heaven. A dragon's den is awesome in the manner of a Forbidden City (*Gugong*).

In the West temporal power is expressed by means of a successful opposition to (i.e. combat with) dragons. Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky' tells the archetypal story: boy becomes man by bringing home dragon's head. And 'Jabberwocky' likewise, casting myth into the genre of nonsense, exercises a well developed cynicism. In this poem the story has to be pieced together from materials so suggestive as to not even be constituted by words from a dictionary. The words in 'Jabberwocky', like the habitations of dragons, are obscurer than that. But some of those words do make it into the dictionary (chortle, beamish). And some dragons get to be known by name.

It's difficult not to orientalize when accounting for Chinese dragons because, for instance, despite the fact that Chinese dragons are many and various, it's difficult not to account for them as, from the western viewpoint, forming a unified category: the Chinese dragon is a particular other. What's at stake here is the same reductionist move which converts the languages of China – at least nine distinct languages – into dialects on the traditional basis that they share a script (and today because it suits government policy for maintaining a particular style of national unity.)

Orientalism is about how you keep real others from seeping into your imagination of them. It's about how you keep othering them. Scope for this is becoming more limited as the world gets closer. The aliens write back and bite back. Keeping the othering up is getting harder and harder because we know too much about the others.

When dragons and unicorns were chosen as symbols for the magical and arbitrary power of kings or emperors, people were not absolutely sure that these creatures didn't exist. What they did know for a fact was that they themselves had never met one. This put speculation about the mythical beasts into a category of arcane knowledge for which a caste of academics or lying adventurers or the like was generally happy to go through the motions.

In this way authority was symbolized by something potentially as powerful as it was invisible, able to be magical because sufficiently remote, safe because unseen.

Our dragons and theirs have this much in common. Is it possible to imagine a conversation between them? One reason such a conversation is not so difficult to imagine is that dragons east and west have been such easy anthropomorphisms. They tend to be credited, at least when it suits, with

human or higher intelligence. Dragons know what's going on around them.  
Do we?

The "pure" imaginary of a culture (its imagination of things which do not exist) consists of objects purely invested *in* culture. Dragons are in that sense floating signifiers. This fact is of much more importance for China than for the West, because whether as self-addressed cliché, as orientalism, or as link with tradition, dragons still perform the labour of representing China to the world and to the Chinese.

The dragon story nicely illustrates what one might think of as the orientalist bind. One feels that a major difference between our dragons and theirs is that theirs are – not more credible but – more believed in. The difference in representation between dragons believed in and dragons not? But the mind asking that question is already made up. Modernity allows no agnosticism on this issue. One accounts for tradition and one dismisses superstition in the one gesture. Is it traditional to believe in dragons in China? Yes. Disbelief is both modern and western. One disinvests in one's culture by objectifying it. The alternative is a return to the dragon haunted mists of time, a return to that den at the back of the head where the horns might yet sprout.

It's not that dragons point us in the direction of imaginative purity. There's nothing pure about imagination. It's that these makings of the inward eye—jabberwocks and basilisks—are least constrained with a need to account for themselves by pointing to present and scrutable objects. Suspensions of disbelief are always tempered by the appeals of credibility. It's in that sense mythical beasts provide best manifestations of culture, unsullied by the actuality of objects present to it. In them we also see along with otherwise repressed fears, the

wishful or hateful or other feelings that a culture directs towards its environment.

In *The Philosophical Imaginary* Michele Le Doeuff draws attention to the landscape making on which philosophical discourses depend in order to establish and assert their territory. She cites a perhaps uncharacteristically metaphoric passage in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as a surprising example of this. Kant writes of:

the land of truth (an attractive word) surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the region of illusion, where many a fog-bank, many an iceberg, seems to the mariner on his voyage of discovery, a new country, and, while constantly deluding him with vain hopes, engages him in dangerous adventures, from which he can never desist. (93)

Such terms of imagery, landscape making, for Le Doeuff allow every philosophy the opportunity to 'engage in a straightforward dogmatization, and decree a "that's the way it is" without fear of counter-argument, since it is understood that the good reader will by-pass such "illustrations." If philosophy has been like this from the beginning then this is only because all thinking is like this. Concrete imagery has long been available as a means of naturalizing abstract arguments or better still, burying them as assumptions. Le Doeuff's dictum is "there is no thinking that does not wander."

From the point of view of cultural criticism or myth analysis, perhaps even better than an imagined landscape, are the imaginary beasts that might be loose in it.

Dragons tell us something about the West's ethical investments with regard to alterities and barbarisms. They demonstrate continuities in the

production of a rhetoric about good and evil; they also show us the *a priori* of the West's theorizing the line between culture and its outside. In China too all of this is indicated, but in China it's at stake in the definition of both Chinese-ness and the nature (perhaps the arbitrary nature) of power or authority. Just as China today represents itself with a border in the form of a Great Wall, so dragon backing establishes the boundary between social and natural worlds as in the service of the former. The boundary synecdoche establishes the logic of civilization over its others and its outside. Is there a difference along this line between Chinese and other styles of representation? Or is it rather the case a Chinese dragon teaches us what humans inevitably do in the process of representation? The difference then would merely be that a traditional credulity for dragons on China's part indicated a more candid (one might say pragmatic) attitude to the boundary between culture and nature.

A conversation between our dragons and theirs? I think that is happening, for instance in the eclecticism of popular culture today. Two children's film texts, *Neverending Story* (1984) and *Shrek* (2001), show contrasting efforts to combine the features of various traditional dragon types. In *Neverending Story* Falkor the Luck Dragon is friendly and rideable and furry as well. The scaly dragon in *Shrek* turns out—in line with the disturbances of expectation on which that text depends—to be tameable, as a love-struck girl. She puts on lipstick to signal her amorous intentions in the direction of a donkey, the story's motor mouth.

If it is true today that our dragons can be theirs and theirs ours, then it is worth investigating how that eclectic possibility came about, how it contrasts with and blurs the historical differences to which the students of dragons should

attend. To what extent does that historical difference between our dragons and theirs reveal a difference in attitude to the relationship between natural and social worlds and to the boundaries between these? How suggestive is it of a difference in attitude to the inside and out of a polity, or for instance of the style of an empire?

What the word *dragon* should alert us to is how translation can carry the danger of universalizing from one's own culture's experience. The fact that we can use the one word for some of the various beasts they conjure up does not make them the same beast any more than it makes them real. What it shows is merely that we do have a way of talking to each other; however, it doesn't necessarily mean that we understand.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cf Metchnikoff's account cited in Benjamin, *Illuminations* (119-120).

<sup>2</sup> It's not the case that the Middle Kingdom did not know about flags. On the contrary it's probable that they invented them. According to legend the founder of the Chou dynasty (c. 1122 BC) was preceded by a white flag. But until the twentieth century the Middle Kingdom never imagined itself as a polity on a notional equal footing with others, to be distinguished from among other 'nations' by means of Europe's (purportedly ancient and heraldic but in fact) modern symbolic machinery: flag, anthem, coat of arms.

<sup>3</sup> One notes the traditional association of Chinese and Japanese dragons with bad as well as good omens. De Visser accounts in this former category for the combat of dragons, the appearance of dead dragons and the appearances of dragons which are inauspicious because at the wrong time or the wrong place (45-56).

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## Graham Greene's Search for Faithfulness

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It is nothing new to say Graham Greene makes use of his own experiences in his writing and that those experiences more often than not have to do with childhood and adolescent issues of innocence, acceptance, loyalty, and betrayal. In his exhausting biography of Greene, Norman Sherry comments early how "several compulsive themes in his novels derive from his experiences at St. Johns" (65), and that Greene seeks "an answer to his personal problems in his earliest published pieces" (81). W.J. West focuses on showing how Greene's "Catholic background, as well as his political espionage and his literary activity, . . . stemmed directly from his life"(xiv), an approach also used by Robert Hoskins. More pointedly, Greene himself has said, "The first twenty-five years, or even sixteen [of my life], provide a rich enough quarry to exploit for the rest of life" (Allain 17-18). He has been straightforward about the therapeutic quality of composing for him: "I began to write, and the past lost some of its power—I wrote it out of me"; of how "writing is a form of therapy—the way one writes, but also the experience, the events in one's life which provide, however remotely, the basis for one's writing"(Allain 26). For Greene, writing allowed him "to escape the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in the human situation" (Greene, *Ways of Escape* vii).

What is new and important to recognize is how and when Greene elevates the use of his personal life in his writing from being mere therapy to becoming moving artistic achievement. He must come to realize and accomplish what he preaches in "The Young Dickens," that a creative writer's "whole career is an effort to illustrate his private world in terms of the great public world we all

share" (19). In order to do so, as Greene has remarked, "A writer has to conform to two conflicting requirements: he must be involved in his novel and detached from himself" (Allain 130). Just how to remain detached and yet express intimately felt experiences is the task Greene must solve before he can create integrated and moving art.

Greene's life is one of the most well-chronicled literary biographies that exists, and consists of autobiographies, biographies, essays, radio/television/print interviews, and reminiscences of friends—as well as Greene's interpolations into his writing of his travels, travails, and exploits. His earliest years were much like those of his upper-class contemporaries. Born in 1904, the fourth of six children, he spent most of his time in the nursery cared for by nursemaid and nanny, only interacting with his parents for an hour in the evenings. He was afraid of the dark, of drowning, of fire, of moths and birds, of being deserted by his parents, and he took stuffed animals to bed for comfort. He enjoyed playing with his siblings and cousins, and writes, "From memories of those first six years I have a general impression of tranquility and happiness" (*A Sort of Life* 31).

Interestingly, from this time of "tranquility and happiness," the major memories and events he reports, almost seven decades later, primarily center on death: "The first thing I remember is sitting in a pram at the top of a hill with a dead dog lying at my feet" (*A Sort of Life* 17). A memory he remarks on half a dozen times is of a man who cut his throat (18)(although whether Greene in fact saw the event is unclear), and he vividly recalls a container full of blood from having his tonsils removed, and subsequently being sickened for thirty years at the sight of blood (20). His memories as a somewhat older child are of collecting snails and killing them with salt, and of two pet mice who ate each other (Sherry 23).

Of course, given that Greene shares these memories publicly near the close of a long career, we might skeptically wonder if they weren't selected to preserve his image as the creator/chronicler of the darker aspects of life—and there may be some of that involved. However, they ARE events that would stand out in a life otherwise tranquil and happy, and Greene retained an interest in the importance of childhood all his life. He has spoken of how childhood reading has more influence on one's conduct than religious teaching (Sherry 18); commented on how some writers "never shake off the burden of their childhood" ("The Burden of Childhood" 74); reviewed productions of theatre for children; and authored four children's books—not to mention titling one collection of his essays, *The Lost Childhood* (1951).

Because of his intense interest in, and concern with, childhood, one might expect those years had a particular emotional impact upon his development. One way of apprehending the development of an individual is to make use of the psycho-social model of development posited by Erik H. Erikson who suggests we each go through eight phases of development in our lifetime. In each phase "there is a phase-specific developmental task which objectifies the resolution of certain conflicts. No [resolution] is absolutely demarcated, but is prepared for in previous phases and then carried to completion in subsequent phases" (Schwerdt 9). In each conflict, the first element is considered the healthiest criterion, and "that which ideally should become dominant in the individual. Realistically, each stage is completed by a greater or lesser achievement of the component's dominance, which varies with the individual. Although each component is systematically related to all others, each one has a period when it becomes the primary element in the individual's life" (9). In infancy one resolves tensions between trust and mistrust in others, and the mother is a prime influence; in early childhood one resolves tensions between autonomy and doubt/shame, and

parents are the prime influence; and in the play age initiative vs. guilt is paramount, and the family is important.

Greene's biography suggests he may have emerged from infancy with more distrust than trust, a situation that would impact his development of autonomy in the next stage. Tales of his interactions with his siblings and cousins suggest he developed autonomy, although his apparent preoccupation with death suggests a feeling of doubt as well. Passing through the play age of childhood seems to have left him with a sense of initiative and purpose as well as conscience—a prime necessity to grapple with issues of guilt. It appears, then, that Greene emerged from the first half of childhood relatively unscathed, but with some degree of less than optimal adjustment—not uncommon.

Those happy years began to acquire an overlay of discomfort as Greene moved from the world of the family to the world of Berkhamstead School's Preparatory Department, recently established by his father Charles. His most effusive comment on his new environment is to say he was "not unhappy at school" (Sherry 16). As he moved to the Junior School at age ten, Greene became aware of the negative side of childhood--the cowardice, shame, deception, and disappointment that developed in his interactions with his peers (19). Because his physical awkwardness in games elicited jeers from his peers, he feigned illness to escape class and stayed to himself more and more (*A Sort of Life* 68). At twelve he was at the bottom of his class for a term and lost confidence in his academic abilities (64). Life went precipitously downhill the next year when Greene became a boarder at St. Johns: "I had passed thirteen and things were worse even than I had foreseen" (73). He was offended by the coarseness of his peers, the lack of privacy in the dorms, but most significantly he was affected by the dual role he was forced into playing, the divided loyalties he was asked to uphold. His father, the Headmaster, expected him to spy on his classmates and

report any homosexual or other inappropriate activity he might notice; and as the headmaster's son his classmates didn't trust him to join their adolescent rebellion to authority and ostracized him: "I was not a member of the resistance—I was Quisling's son" (80). This confusion of loyalties, and the subsequent paradoxes it engendered, would become a major theme in Greene's career.

"I cannot remember what particular item in the routine of a boarding school roused this first act of rebellion [cutting his knee open with a penknife]—loneliness, the struggle of conflicting loyalties, the sense of continuous grime, of unlocked lavatory doors, the odor of farts . . . . Or was it just then that I had suffered from what seemed to me a great betrayal [one of his few friends deserted him to join with a boy who continually taunted Greene]?"  
(*A Sort of Life* 81).

It was during this miserable two-year period of his life that Greene was driven to desperate lengths in attempting to escape his unhappiness: he tried cutting his knee open with a penknife; drank hypo and, on another occasion, a bottle of hay-fever drops; ate a bunch of deadly nightshade; swallowed twenty aspirins; and finally left a note for his parents, saying he would not return to school and would hide on the Commons until they agreed he could live at home again (88-9).

It is clear Greene had many difficulties and much anguish resolving the tensions of later childhood, and that these were exacerbated in adolescence. Trying to negotiate the pull during the school age phase between industry and inferiority by demonstrating competence among his schoolmates, he wound up feeling inferior because he failed at both intellectual and physical pursuits. This inferiority became more marked in adolescence as he struggled between what Erikson calls identity vs. identity confusion as one develops fidelity and

establishes oneself among peer groups (Erikson, *Identity* 122-35). For Greene, there was no peer group at St. Johns, and there was no family. Looking for a place to be, Greene was torn between what role to play and to whom to be loyal. Indeed, he was so tortured by the conflict and the isolation, that he attempted suicide multiple times.

Fortunately for Greene, his parents finally realized his extreme distress and allowed him to return home. His elder brother, studying medicine, suggested that Greene might be helped by psychoanalysis, and he was soon sent to London to work with Kenneth Richmond who not only had a reputation for successfully treating troubled schoolboys, but an interest in literature which suggested he might make a good mentor for a budding writer. These were the early days of psychoanalysis in England and Richmond had no training or qualifications as a psychoanalyst; he was basically a self-taught Jungian and his "treatment" of Greene consisted of listening to a recitation of his dreams for an hour a day (Sherry 92-3). The rest of the time Greene was left to do what he wished; a period he has called "the happiest six months of my life" (*A Sort of Life* 98). Conditions at the Richmonds' were clean; life was cultured with various literary figures dropping in, and Greene was accepted as part of the circle. This acceptance apparently gave him the sense of belonging to a group that he needed. Upon his return to St. Johns he exuded more confidence, had more friends and, because he was excused from games, was no longer ridiculed for his awkwardness (Sherry 109-10).

Greene's blossoming continued when he went up to Oxford and began writing in *The Oxford Outlook*, and engaging in many of the adolescent behaviors he had missed at St. Johns. Sherry reports that Claud Cockburn told Greene he was "the greatest case of arrested development he had ever met" (Sherry 120), and David Lodge says, "There was an element of permanent adolescence in

Greene's make-up" (9). He experimented with various identities through acting at the university, and one time traveled in the nearby countryside, disguised, earning money with a barrel organ (124); he even considered becoming a secret agent (139). With his sister's governess, some ten years older than himself, he experienced his first passionate love. There has been speculation his experience with Russian roulette may have come about because of her rejection of him, although Greene has maintained he played the game out of boredom, searching for excitement. It also seemed to allow him to test his courage, so that "winning" at Russian roulette was "as if . . . I had passed the test of manhood" (*A Sort of Life* 130). Greene was fashioning an identity for himself as daring adventurer; the antithesis of the boy who felt so often a failure.

The impact of Greene's early experiences cannot be over-estimated. They left him with a feeling of sympathy for the underdog, an appreciation of the connection between the tortured and the torturer, a lifelong obsession with loyalty and betrayal, and a sense of duality. In 1981 he told Marie-Francoise Allain,

In all my books I return to the duality which has marked my life from the time that I was a pupil in the school at Berkhamstead whose head was my father. Hence my 'divided loyalties' . . . . I belonged to neither side. I couldn't side with the boys without betraying my father, and they regarded me like a collaborator in occupied territory. I made use of these divided loyalties in [*The Power and the Glory, The Heart of the Matter, The Third Man, and The End of the Affair*].

Thanks to these books I've recaptured my experience of childhood, or rather of that part of it when I was a boarder, at twelve or thirteen. I've had no wish to do away with this cleavage;

I've accepted it as one of the constants of my work and of my life. Perhaps it was the only way to exorcize the evil, for there's no doubt, it was a most unpleasant situation. (26-27)

Greene's first published novel, *The Man Within* (1929), tries to recapture some of that experience, but is marred by Greene's strong need to also work through his current emotional state. Not surprisingly, critics regard it unevenly, with A.A. Deities finding it "surprisingly excellent"(26), and Paul O'Prey pointing out its "unsuccessful pretensions to high moral seriousness"(16). Greene himself suggests its only quality is its youth (*The Man Within* v). Indeed, the novel is a young man's work and presents universal youthful problems. Greene was not quite twenty-two when he began it, in his parents' drawing room while recovering from surgery for appendicitis. It comes as no surprise the novel focuses on the influence of a father on his son given that the most formative experience Greene endured was life at St. Johns as an outsider because he was the son of the Headmaster. He never escaped from being haunted by those experiences, and by the tension between loyalty and betrayal—the fidelity one develops in adolescence.

Francis Andrews is a timid young man, well-educated by his smuggler-father, but then forced by him to join his band of smugglers. The sensitive Francis cannot hope to match the exploits of his larger-than-life, rough-and-tumble father, and is constantly teased and abused by the other smugglers for his refined and naïve ways. In trying to find his own place among the men after his father's death, Andrews yearns for guidance: "I could be made into a man if anyone chose to be interested—if someone believed in me" (16). He quickly develops a strong awareness of two sides to his nature: "The sentimental, bullying, desiring child and another more stern critic"(16) and wonders, "Why should any man be plagued as he had been plagued, with all the instincts—

desires, fears, comforts—of a child and yet possess the wisdom of the man? In these moments of crisis he felt physically drawn in two”(33). We see immediately “The Man Within” of the title, and how “there’s another man within me that’s angry with me” ---the quote from Sir Thomas Browne that Greene chose as the epigraph to the novel.

It does not require much excavation to find Greene in his first novel, and to see a trademark of his later works: his use of his past. In the future this will most easily be found in the incorporation of his various travels and exploits. At the sheltered age of twenty-two it emerges in his integration of his own emotional difficulty dealing with his father’s influence, how to fit into a peer group, and establishing his own identity—the tasks of adolescence.

Just as his father, Charles Greene, did not (or perhaps could not) assist Greene in interacting with his schoolfellows so, too, Andrews can obtain no help with his fellow-smugglers from his dead father, and he turns to Carlyon as a guide and substitute father. Betraying the smugglers, as Erdinast-Vulcan points out “is an act of revenge upon his dead father”(17) for forcing him into a life he is ill-suited for. This revenge, however, results in Carlyon, the substitute father, being punished. Such an Oedipal ritual “slaying” of the father frees Andrews to assume his own manhood, but his guilt at having betrayed the one man he shared so many interests with, who gave him guidance and love, is too great-- Andrews feels compelled to commit suicide to escape his guilt even while simultaneously believing he is claiming his courage: “His father’s had been a stubborn ghost, but it was laid at last, and he need no longer be torn in two between that spirit and the stern unresting critic which was wont to speak. I am that critic, he said with a sense of discovery and exhilaration” (230).

We can see the sureness in Greene about who he is in relation to his own father and almost hear his own voice in Andrews’ proclaiming his independence

as “the stern unresting critic.” The issue of the father-son relationship is skillfully woven into the novel because of Greene’s distance from the topic. He can use his own experience to flesh out Andrews to convey the duality within him because he has worked through his own feelings on the issue and has the necessary objectivity. Thus, he fulfills his own dictate that a writer must “illustrate his private world in terms of the great public world we all share” (“The Young Dickens” 19).

Such is not the case with the love interest in the novel. We know at the time of composing *The Man Within* Greene was in love with his future wife Vivien and gave up his first job after Oxford to stay in England and be near her. While still retaining some of his adolescent interest in poses and a juvenile lack of sympathy for others, at this time Greene exhibits all the signs of being in Erikson’s young adult stage, concentrating on falling in love and finding a partner while embarking on a career. But for all the romantic letters written to Vivien and his dogged pursuit of her, even converting to Catholicism to please her, as the wedding approached, so did Greene’s nightmares (Sherry 343-44). Andrews surely reflects some of that inner conflict, and Elizabeth’s strong and wise presence helps Andrews feel “the promise of his two selves at one” (73). With her encouragement, Andrews finds the courage to go to the Assizes and testify against the smugglers.

Elizabeth is certainly set up as Andrews’ savior, but she is too good—more the saint than a real woman. In trying to portray a woman, Greene must draw upon his own experience with women, which is slight at the time. We catch something of his feelings for Vivien in the exalted state Elizabeth occupies and in her ability to “save” Andrews. But she remains a cardboard figure. Greene cannot incorporate sexuality into her and must create Lucy as temptress, which also allows the issue of betrayal to come into play in the sub-plot. Allott and

Farris point out how the two women all too readily are set up as the “antithesis between sacred and profane love” (48), and they comment on the hectic attendance to sex in the novel, suggesting “an apparent lack of psychological distance and as a result we have the feeling that the author is too personally involved” (45). To what extent this antithesis may echo Greene’s agreement to an early suggestion by Vivien that they live together as brother and sister seems likely. Not having had a deep, meaningful male-female relationship, he is unable to convey one. While the subject is much on his mind and cannot be ignored, he is too close to it and prevented from obtaining enough objective distance from the concern to integrate it artistically into the work. His writing may be therapeutic for him, but it is not instructive for us.

The novel’s uneven quality and depth reflect Greene’s own emotional development. Now in the young adult stage, he feels his own independence from his father and can reflect that maturation in Andrews as the reader sees him develop and comes to a new understanding. The portrayal of the women, however, is one-dimensional and merely reports Greene’s confusion in his relationship with Vivien as they ardently come together in discussions about Catholicism, but she holds him at bay with her suggestion they live together as brother and sister. There is no development of a fully realized woman in the novel, and the reader comes to no new understanding either.

*The Man Within* is a young man’s attempt to fashion a creative artifact, informed by his psychological needs, but also hampered by them. Since the betrayals of adolescence left such an impression on him, it is no surprise that fidelity and betrayal are the major concern in the novel. Since Greene’s relationship with his father was the impetus for those betrayals, it is no surprise to find the novel focusing on a father-son relationship. Although psychologically in Erikson’s young adult stage, the fidelity issues of adolescence still hang

heavily upon Greene, creating the focus of the novel. His immaturity, however, forces him to include his current emotional conflict of what to think about Vivien, while his professional inexperience prevents him from seeing the difference between art and reporting. And they both keep him from judiciously cutting the less than successfully drawn Elizabeth and Lucy, who detract from the more successfully depicted interplay among Andrews, his father, and Carlyon. Thus, the novel is uneven in its presentation of felt life, and the lack of a unified whole weakens its place as a piece of lasting art.

Today *The Man Within* is scarcely read, although it did well when released in 1929. Expectations were high for Greene's future as a writer, and Heinemann gave him a three-year contract of 600 pounds a year in return for three novels. He had begun writing *The Name of Action* ten months earlier, and could now afford to quit the *Times* and devote all his energies to its completion. Greene seemed to be getting on better with his parents now that he was married (Sherry 380), and he and Vivien enjoyed life together among the myriad cultural activities in London.

Greene was now well into what Erikson calls the young adult stage. Only when the adolescent feels comfortable with himself can he willingly fuse his identity with that of another, thus reconciling the tension between intimacy and isolation. Intimacy, then, comprises not only a commitment to an affiliation, but the ethical strength to live by the commitment even when significant sacrifice is required (*Childhood and Society* 263-4; *Insight and Responsibility* 128); thus, it builds on the fidelity of adolescence. During this period one works at his profession, but the main psychological task to be accomplished is to resolve the tension between intimacy and isolation. Sex, love, intimacy, and forging an alliance with, and allegiance to, a partner are significant activities, and we see Greene's preoccupation with them in his next work.

For background and general atmosphere of *The Name of Action* (1931), Greene draws upon his 1924 trip to the Rhine as a secret German propagandist, and although the major action in the novel recreates the sense of impending lawlessness under French occupation, the novel's main focus is on the attraction between Anne-Marie Demassener and Oliver Chant, and the estrangement between Anne-Marie and her husband Paul Demassener, the Dictator. The subject of betrayal is uppermost, and at the close of the novel as Chant and the Dictator board the train, we see the coming together of betrayed and betrayer, as we will so often in Greene's work. With this novel Greene was set to prove himself as a professional writer, an original writer, and so he tried to write the antithesis of a conventional romantic novel of revolution. The conspirators are not heroic; the Dictator is neither strong nor cruel; and when the revolution succeeds it is not from a passion for freedom but rather from the cuckolding of the Dictator, which makes him an object of laughter (Allott and Farris 76-68). There is a good deal more action, more activity, than in *The Man Within*, but the plot relies heavily on a series of highly coincidental meetings, making much of that activity seem implausible and unmotivated.

Ostensibly, the novel concerns itself with action and espionage, but the emotional interests of the novel do not match the narrative. Greene has other matters on his mind than revolution; these come through, making the novel seem to be "a means of psychological catharsis for its author" (Watts 22). And just what Greene wants to grapple with appears at the outset when Chant is interested in going to Trier less for the revolution than because he is intrigued by/smitten with a photo of Anne-Marie. We see, as in *The Man Within*, an interest in the power of a woman, but rather than redemptive love, Anne-Marie's is destructive. Betrayal, not loyalty, is what defines these characters and is what Greene is compelled to explore.

Again we find Greene dealing with personal issues in his life. However, unlike *The Man Within* where the search for identification with the father was a task essentially resolved in Greene's past, here he focuses on an issue current in his life. Though Greene has said he was happy to be married and greatly in love with Vivien, Cedric Watts indicates Greene's diary reveals he repeatedly betrayed and deceived her in maintaining secret relationships with "A" and "O," two prostitutes he saw regularly in London (23). Trying for some objectivity and avoiding portraying himself in the novel, Greene shifts the role of betrayer to the woman. This provides him the opportunity to explore how Vivien might feel, or perhaps to expiate some of his guilt.

We see Greene make use of what will come to be a common technique for him: division and doubling. Chant is pulled between the visions of Kapper and Demassener and feels that he himself "stands for nothing at all, that he has no personality" (Allott and Farris 67). Similarly, we see Anne-Marie attracted to two men, as lover to both Demassener and Chant. These triangles allow Greene to test loyalties, provide difficult choices, and present opposing notions. Told through the point of view of Chant, the "divided mind" of Andrews in *The Man Within* is here externalized in Kapper and Demassener, and the virgin/whore presentation of Elizabeth and Lucy is merged into Anne-Marie.

Like many writers Greene must take his own feelings and understanding and transmute them into literary art--remain close to subjective feelings but distant enough to examine and present them objectively. *The Man Within* worked because Greene was largely dealing with feelings from his past. *The Name of Action* doesn't work because Greene deals with feelings he is currently coping with—a search for purpose, an interest in sex, guilt about betraying his wife—and cannot distance himself enough to artistically present those feelings.

Little record of Greene's activities exists for the next year or so. The lack of success of *The Name of Action*, the small retainer from Heinemann, and the high rent in London led the Greens to move to the countryside of Chipping Camden in early 1931 in order to stretch their income. While Greene enjoyed walking about the hills and Vivien seemed to take to the new life, their standard of living and quality of life were reduced. The isolation of the place seemed to weigh heavily on Greene—perhaps the reason he started work on a biography of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, even while writing the promised second novel for Heinemann. Sherry speculates the biography interested Greene because of Rochester's reputation as a pornographer and also served as an escape from the novel writing that so far was unsuccessful. Doing research for the biography at the British Museum allowed Greene to escape the isolation of Chipping Camden for life in London (393-95), as well as gave him opportunity to see "A" and "O." Heinemann, however, was uninterested in the biography, and Greene pushed on with his novel.

The extent to which sex is seen as emblematic of the honor and regard present in a male/female relationship is one issue explored in the novel—unsurprising since we know Greene's visits to London included visits to prostitutes. And Greene was still obsessed with loyalty and betrayal. The slings and arrows he suffered in adolescence at St. Johns were still with him, and he does not appear to have yet developed fidelity and the loyalty he would be expected to have toward Vivien; his adjustment in the young adult stage was impacted by his less than optimal adjustment in adolescence.

A short story he wrote in this period provides some insight into his emotional growth at the time. "I Spy" (1930), written while he was working on *The Name of Action* and *Rumour at Nightfall*, and a piece Greene calls of "modest truth" (Collected Stories viii), concerns a twelve-year-old boy who secretly sees

his father led away by strangers one night. Charlie's thoughts seem to reveal Greene: "his father was very like himself, doing things in the dark which frightened him. It would have pleased him to go down to his father and tell him that he loved him, but he could hear through the window the quick steps going away" (537). Charles Greene had retired in 1927, and Greene had given a farewell speech and also written an account of the fete for the *Times*. The conflicted loyalty he felt toward his father in adolescence was gone, and in the story Greene can step back and convey the poignant loss of a missed opportunity.

*Rumour at Nightfall* (1931) reveals none of the sureness evident in "I Spy." Love, trust, and betrayal are upper-most, and the technique of division is used again—this time via dual protagonists whom we are led, in alternation, to focus upon. Crane is cowardly, romantic, and spiritual—much like Francis Andrews in *The Man Within*; Chase is brave, rational, and secular (Hoskins 5). The characters, however, are too obviously drawn as opposing types to be life-like. Greene is too much at pains to present these "opposed sets of values" and the characters remain mouthpieces. Stepping back from the activity presented in *The Name of Action*, now "there is not a great deal of action and what there is gets smothered under interminable analyses of what people think and mean" (Allott and Farris 61).

Greene is still interested in sex and male/female relationships which he attempts to elevate to the level of the divine by giving Eulelia "the redemptive love of the St. Joan figure [which] makes religious faith possible" for Crane (Hoskins 16). But even Eulelia has a divided nature, feeling torn between "a good, spiritual, intellectual father [and] an evil, sensual, greedy mother" (5). She secretly marries Crane, providing him the only peace he has ever known. After he is killed on their wedding night, she marries Chase out of pity. Greene returns to the redemptive woman of *The Man Within*, however, when Eulelia sleeps with

Caveda in order to get back at her mother, we see some of the spite of Anne-Marie from *The Name of Action*. Still, Greene to want to put a woman on a pedestal. While Eulelia is seen, to some extent, to combine spirit and body she is still too good to be true—redeeming not just one man, as Elizabeth did in The Man Within, but two! Eulelia's ties to Catholicism surely echo Vivien's, and Greene seems to have drawn the character much as an homage to her. Or possibly out of guilt for his betrayal of her, for Eulelia is not necessary to either the plot or the emotional interest in the interactions between the two men.

Chase and Crane, the two halves of one, betray each other. Chase, who is chasing the guerilla leader Caveda in order to get a major scoop for his newspaper and enhance his own reputation, is motivated by money and success. Repelled by the "barbaric" Catholicism he sees in Spain, he increasingly identifies with Caveda. As Crane, who has come to Spain for the adventure and to escape his own restlessness, comes to feel pulled by the peace he experiences in the love and religious faith of Eulelia, Chase feels betrayed by his friend and, in turn, betrays Crane to save Caveda's life. As noted earlier, after secretly marrying Eulelia, Crane is killed on their wedding night. Chase experiences guilt and remorse over his betrayal, but with his suffering and in Eulelia's marrying him out of pity, we are left to think that Chase has found his spiritual and human side and will come to a fuller humanity.

It is all too pat, leading Frank Swinnerton to say, "Not one of these people can give a plain answer to a plain question. Their tongues jump heavily into irrelevance. They are not so much evasive as gravely incomprehensible, even to one another" (qtd. in Sherry 396). "Pat" and too talkily "incomprehensible" the novel may be, but it is a better book than its predecessor with fuller characters and more plausible action. Greene has gained a better grip on how to handle plot, but is still too concerned with talking through his own problems. The

betrayals would ring truer if the characters were not compelled to discuss them at length, and Eulelia's role is simply too contrived.

The fact that *Rumour at Nightfall* was an even greater failure than *The Name of Action*, selling only about a third of the number of copies, would seem to stem from its weighty discussions. If *The Name of Action* was all plot, *Rumour at Nightfall* was all talk. The financial failures and scathing reviews led to two important responses by Greene: he forbid both novels ever to be republished, to be excluded from the collected editions of his works and from any listings of his publications. And they convinced him he needed to make a drastic change in theme and style.

There is probably no one thing that led to the stylistic change evident in his next novel, but rather a confluence of events. Certainly the stinging review by Swinnerton affected Greene and "opened my eyes at last to the worthlessness of all the work I had done till then" (*A Sort of Life* 211). Sherry points out that Greene's reviews for the *Spectator* that year contain many comments on how introspective novels "are novels of escape: delicious daydreams in which the writer is enabled to utter all his complaints and bafflements aloud" and how good novels did not indulge in such personal escape (qtd. in Sherry 412). Having looked at his own three published novels, examined opinions about them, as well as his own comments about other writers' novels, it should come as no surprise Greene made significant changes in his approach to his next novel. And he knew he had to—not only was his advance from Heinemann nearly at an end, it was being cut from 650 pounds a year to 400 (Sherry 412). If what Greene then thought of as serious writing wasn't working, then a change was necessary: "That year, 1931, for the first and last time in my life I deliberately set out to write a book to please, one which with luck might be made into a film" (*Ways of Escape* 15).

What would please the public? Clearly it wasn't young men talking about their problems, feelings, and beliefs. There would have to be more characters—to appeal to a wider audience—more action, and any theme would have to emerge from the action rather than be pronounced by a character. In May 1931, feeling an urge to travel, he had thought about a trip on the Orient Express and that its collection of passengers on a journey to Constantinople could provide the basis for a story. The myriad different types helped him avoid creating mouthpieces, but he needed a way to move among all these people. This problem he solved brilliantly by using a highly visual style, a cinematic style, that allowed quick focus on different characters in the manner of cross-cutting in a film. Unity was achieved in having all the passengers on the train headed for their destination, and variety was felt in their different personalities and situations. Although conveying a theme would not be paramount, the novel had to say something. And Greene was able to capitalize on both his own feelings and those of the times.

The feeling of failure, of individual isolation, of the absence of love is palpable. Reflective of the gloomy post-depression years in England, the novel also conveys Greene's feelings at the time, and he has said it is impossible for him to re-read it: "The pages are too laden by the anxieties of the time and the sense of failure. . . . By the time I finished *Stamboul Train* the days of security had almost run out. Even my dreams were full of disquiet . . ." (*A Sort of Life* 212-13). Sherry speculates that Greene may have been experiencing some distancing in his relationship with Vivien at the time. He cites a discussion with Vivien, and a review of Greene's, each in which mention is made of an argument between Vivien and Greene at the time over how much of a writer's life he is free to use in his work, and his inevitable need to move "away from middle-class taboos for the sake of creation" (417-19). Greene's diary recounts his interest in following

the seedy, the sordid, the sexual, and the deviant—a journey Vivien’s conventional background would not allow her to take (419-200). While the novel is dedicated to Vivien (as were The Man Within and The Name of Action), there is no concrete information to suggest whether this is from gratitude for her sticking by him in hard times, or out of guilt for the distance he was putting between them—or a combination of both.

It is clear, however, that a major concern in the novel is the issue of fidelity, the pull between duty to others vs. duty to self. And that faithfulness to others doesn’t pay. Of all the passengers, our attention is most focused on Coral Musker, the chorus girl with heart of gold, and Dr. Paul Czinner, the exiled socialist attempting to return to Belgrade to join the revolution there—the two characters who put responsibility to others above responsibility to themselves, and who do not seem to profit by doing so.

Erdinast-Vulcan describes Czinner as an early “heroic loser” (15) who Greene will draw so often in later novels. Czinner is hounded by journalist Mabel Warren the entire train trip; finds the revolution has started without him; is arrested at Subotica, summarily tried and sentenced to death; and then shot as he attempts an escape. Far from seeming self-satisfied with his devotion to his patients or the revolution, Czinner merely seems weary and welcomes death not as a martyr but as a release from what he views as a betrayal of his parents, his people, and his profession: “He wanted to say to them that he had been damned by his faithfulness [to them], that one must lean this way and that, but he had to listen all the way to their false comfort, falling and falling in great pain” (*Stamboul Train* 223-24).

Greene makes the similarity between Czinner and Coral clear near the end of the novel as Coral, alone with the dying Czinner in the hut, thinks of Myatt and whether she should try to connect with him in the future:

Why shouldn't I put up a fight [for him]? I'm tired of being decent, of Czinner's when she exclaimed to herself that it didn't pay. . . . But she was aware all the time that there was no quality in Myatt to justify her fidelity; it was just that she was like that and he had been kind. She wondered for a moment wither Dr. Czinner's case was not the same; he had been too faithful to people who could have been better served by cunning. She heard his difficult breathing through the dark and thought again without bitterness or criticism, it just doesn't pay. (*Stamboul Train* 224-25)

Not even unselfishness is enough to create real connection, and Coral and Czinner remain as lost as the selfish characters in the novel: Mr. Peters, who cheats on his wife; Mr. Opie, the inadequate clergyman who turns a deaf ear to Czinner so he can talk about his own book; Mabel Warren, who boasts about having "bought" Janet Pardoe; Quin Savory, the hack writer only interested in how he can use people in his books; Josef Grunlich, who feigns interest in Anna just so he can burgle her employer's safe; and Myatt, who betrays Coral's love for the sake of a business opportunity. Taken together we see what will come to be known as "Greeneland" — that dismal, seedy, unhappy world Greene draws so well.

Creating this world so much more populated than any of his earlier novels presented Greene with a technical issue: how to write a cohesive novel with vivid individuals, and yet maintain a sense of their alienation from each other. The cinematic technique of cross-cutting worked excellently for these purposes. A character could be focused on briefly, then another, and another, and so on, before coming back to the first. The passage of time allowed the reader to fill in some of the narrative for each character's story, and the cutting between stories created a greater sense of action. The novelty of the technique

also worked to Greene's benefit giving the novel a freshness (although not entirely a new technique, having been anticipated by Joyce in *Ulysses*, and Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway*. However, those novels focused on one character, and two characters, respectively, rather than the broad spectrum Greene incorporates). In the dining car we hear:

"No, I won't have any more of this foreign beer. My stomach won't stand it. Ask them, haven't they got a Guinness. I'd just fancy a Guinness."

"Of course you are having a great sports revival in Germany," said Mr. Opie. "Splendid types of young men, one sees. But still it's not the same as cricket. Take Hobbs and Sutcliffe . . ."

"Kisses. Always kisses."

"But I don't speak the lingo, Amy." [ . . . ]

"No, not cricket. Not cricket," said Josef Grunlich, wiping his moustache. "In Germany we learn to run," and the quaintness of his phrase made Mr. Opie smile. "Have you been a runner yourself?"

"In my day," said Josef Grunlich, "I was a great runner. Nobody runned as well as I. Nobody could catch me."

"Heller."

"Don't swear, Jim."

"I wasn't swearing. It's the beer. Try some of this. It's not gassy. What you had before they call Dunkel." (115-117)

The comments are set off and separated so that we have a sense of the groups at table, and there is just enough identification provided so that we know which group is which, even if no names are provided. The quick pacing and multiple centers of action substitute for depth of characterization and psychological complexity (Hoskins 59).

This shift in technique allows Greene to avoid the heavy-handed interminable discussions of *Rumour at Nightfall*, yet still provides ample opportunity for theme to be developed. Indeed, in this case, style nearly becomes theme with the cuts between characters, the multiple points of view, reinforcing the superficiality of their ties, and the isolation of each. Unlike *The Name of Action*, where the emotional interests of the novel seemed at odds with the narrative, or *Rumour at Nightfall*, where the emotional interests nearly obscure the narrative, here they support and enhance each other.

For the first time Greene is able to step beyond himself and to connect with the world of his readers. While he is still using his own difficulties (the issue of fidelity to Vivien) as the major theme in his novel, his desire to “write a book to please” forces him to consider not only the technical issue of what readers might find appealing, but also how his own private drama might have resonance in their lives as well. The novel, then, not only is peopled by a variety of types, and has a suspenseful story, it also captures the contemporary ambience such that readers feel it is their world they have entered rather than Greene’s personal world that they are only asked to step back and observe.

Another subtle shift in the novel makes it more accessible to the reader, and raises its level of integrity. While Greene still writes of his own troubles with fidelity, now he examines them not so much as they affect the self, but as they affect others—there is a turning from inner to outer, and a fuller presentation of

all sides. The concern shifts ever so slightly to that of Erikson's adult: the issue of generativity vs. stagnation, that is, care about, and caring for, the next generation or those left behind. Greene has said, "The fact is, one is changed by one's own books" (Allain 134), and with *Stamboul Train* perhaps Greene began to mature and to see betrayal as more than simply an injury to himself.

The novel was a great success, selected by the Book Society as its Book of the Month (Sherry 431), although it also garnered some notoriety for its inclusion of lesbianism and for some sexual scenes, explicit by the standards of the times (Sherry 442). Greene fulfilled his hope of writing a book "which with luck might be made into a film" (*Stamboul Train* ix), securing him greater financial security when his agent in the United States was able to sell the film rights to Twentieth Century-Fox for \$7,500 (West 55).

Greene had now proven to himself and the world that he was a professional writer who could hone his craft appropriately. Instead of using his writing as personal therapy, here he used his writing in a therapeutic way. The stage was set for a new chapter in his life and career.

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## Poems by John Hyland

### Blue Away

*I caught this morning morning's minion –*

*"The Windhover"*

Gerard Manley Hopkins

1.

Early evening on my front porch,  
I sit still in stirring autumn air.  
The moon rises over the treetops  
red as drying fish blood.  
In the distance a cow's bell chimes  
incantations to lure magic out  
and I turn my eyes to the sky  
to give watch up to razor-streaking stars.

2.

Late spring in Carolina's mountains,  
I walk slowly along rain-thawed trails.  
Mud sticks quick to my boot soles  
and air plays in my nostrils as butterflies.  
Out above the closest ridgeline, a hawk  
circles methodically in his rapture –

I am captured and pulled out  
into wonder I cannot control.

3.

The dead of winter on Vermont's back roads,  
I drive gently on creaking fresh snow.

The sun burns bright, and  
tree tips coil in undulating winds.

Stopping at a street's end I spy  
a scurrying squirrel's grey tail, and following  
the tail to the coiled trees' tips,  
my seclusion is strangely released  
into blue-stained sweeping skies.

4.

Last night while I slept,  
I dreamed myself into night's sky.  
Flawlessly I flew over my sleeping self,  
like a hawk or star might to me.

I caught this morning a tuft  
of my feathered self in flight  
on the street corner as the wind  
blew back my brown hair.

## **In the Cemetery**

Nothing to amaze –  
regardless, I sought comfort

in grass grown  
by tears, by love.

How is it death throws light, not  
on life, say,  
but on a life  
singularly lived?

The grass was soft. Summer  
and a few birds – not crows,  
not crows anymore. Warblers,  
maybe sparrows.

As I walked, love,  
that light,  
seemed a sort of death.

I thought to find you there.

## The Reason Light Wanders

That is what is needed: open space, wild  
to stroll through – this I thought when tender and a child  
and yet broken by the fact  
this is not the situation. I recall clearly

the day – the light somber through the pines  
behind the house – my grandfather, his eyes  
blue-burning ( a torch ), took three coffees and two cigarettes  
to explain to me the body's house; the importance  
of recognizing one's shadow amongst others.

As if that were all I needed to know, I nodded the knob on the wisp  
of my neck, as he tilted back the mug, peered at me over its rim.

“And,” he said, smoke encircling his gaze, “this person looked into the sun.”  
“But, why,” I remember saying “why didn't he go blind?” “How do you know  
this was a ‘he’?” He answered quickly, slowly exhaling. “I don't know,  
but why?” I needed to know

these ways the sun holds its place. That fire  
is the problem – I see now, as I consider these things, look  
out the stern, with night  
again nearly dark silent  
and splintering the sun and sweeping along  
the water toward the horizon to touch it – of essence. Death –

that eternally difficult fact to grasp – visited him

a few summers back

I remember

the moment, though not there, I recall

the way the moon shone through the pines

of that island in Penobscot bay. While I walked the shores,

unable to sleep, because of the moon: I stood

summer-naked (my clothes a few yards back, dangling

in some branches) on top a boulder: seventeen and still uncertain

of the reason light wanders farther than the foot or eye.

These things beyond

our reach that move us

to ground ideas in sky, and speak

of eternity and the inadequacy

of words, are so brilliant and untouchable and useless.

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