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Poetry in Fiction (I)

Other ARTICLES and RESPONSES

Connotations
Vol. 23.2 (2013/2014)

"Poetry in Fiction": A Range of Options*

MATTHIAS BAUER

"Poetry in Fiction," the title of a special section in this and the following issues of *Connotations*, is deliberately ambiguous.[1] It may denote the fact that works of fiction occasionally include poems or that poems are referred to within the narrative, and it may mean that fiction can be or comprise poetry, that we may note and discover poetry in the fictional prose text. We may realize its "poeticity."[2] Our suggestion is that these meanings of "Poetry in Fiction" belong together, even though they may not all be present in the same work. What I hope to do in these introductory remarks is to suggest some of the dimensions or perspectives in which this link can be seen but also to draw attention to some of the conceptual and terminological problems involved. We all know, more or less, what fiction is and what poetry is. But joining the terms makes us realize that we are by no means always sure what we are talking about.

The difficulties begin when we consider the kind of terms we are combining. In one perspective, they refer to genres. Analogous titles would thus be: drama in fiction; or: sonnets in tragedy. But it is hard to delimit these combinations to genre. Only think of: comedy in fiction—this will not only, or it will even only rarely, refer to actual comedies within fiction. "Comedy" in this context rather refers to what Alastair Fowler has called a "mode" (i.e. comprising a more limited set of representative features, such as a specific kind of denouement and *anagnorisis*; he gives the example of *Emma* being a "comic novel" and says that "modal terms tend to adjectival"; 106).

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debbauer0232.htm>.

"Poetry" (or rather "poetic") can be such a mode, too, even though there has been an ongoing debate about its constitutive elements. New genres can develop by the mixing of modes. Plato in the *Politeia* anticipates this when he speaks of "epic poetry" in which the mixing of *mimesis* and *diegesis* contributes to the epic mode being present in poetry (392D-394D). One of the early definitions of the novel also refers to such a mixture: When Henry Fielding describes *Joseph Andrews* as a "kind of Writing," which he does "not remember to have been hitherto attempted in our Language," he famously calls this novel, this new kind of writing, a "comic Epic-Poem in Prose" (49). If fiction is epic poetry in prose, however, the very notion of "poetry in fiction" will draw our attention to the fact that we are not only considering genres and modes but also the way in which something is written. "Poetry in fiction" may also mean "verse in prose." For even though "poetry" in this more general sense of a mode may be written in prose, we tend to think of poetry as something being written in verse.

The terminological confusion that may arise is a familiar one. Several contemporary writers about prose, such as Simon Goodhill in *The Invention of Prose* (on ancient Greece), and Wlad Godzich and Jeffrey Kittay in *The Emergence of Prose* (on medieval French literature), begin by citing the *bourgeois* in Molière's comedy *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*. In this play, M. Jourdain hires a *maitre de philosophie* who is to instruct him in the art of writing a love letter to a lady of quality (2.4). The teacher asks him if he wants to write it in verse, which the bourgeois denies. But when he is asked if he wants it to be written in prose, he denies this too, which causes the teacher to explain to him that it must be either the one or the other: "Everything that is not prose is verse, and everything that is not verse is prose" (Godzich and Kittay ix). M. Jourdain is proud of having discovered the competence of speaking prose, an ability he never knew of, and goes on to impart his newly acquired knowledge to his wife. Unfortunately, however, in repeating his teacher's statement to her he somehow gets it wrong; what he says is: "Everything that is prose is not verse; and everything that is not

verse is not prose" (x). Godzich and Kittay suspect Molière's bourgeois, while he is the butt of his author's ridicule, to have stated a deeper truth (cf. x). They remain a bit vague about what that truth might exactly be but point out that M. Jourdain's statement could perhaps teach us that prose and verse are by no means as mutually exclusive as his teacher thinks. I agree with them, but I also believe that the deeper joke (or wisdom) derives from the fact that prose only comes into its own when it participates in certain qualities which are commonly attributed to verse. Prose and verse are contrastive categories but, at the same time, especially when it comes to qualities associated with them, the one (especially prose) cannot do without taking a share in the other.

Accordingly, when we think of the ways in which poetry may be related to prose narrative, it appears to me that we can distinguish three basic kinds of their relationship which are not schematic categories but are closely linked to each other and may overlap. In each case, we may consider poetry as a broad generic term, we may consider it as a mode (certain features belonging to poetry can be found in fiction and drama and elsewhere), and we may regard it as a form of speaking and writing, i.e. as verse. "Fiction," in this context, could be paraphrased as literary prose narrative.

In the first place, we can think of poetry in fiction as motivated by a principle of difference and even contrast. Even when difference is stressed, however, the two modes of expression etc. may nevertheless supplement each other and together form a whole. We may secondly see that, whenever certain qualities are assigned to either prose or poetry, the one may take precedence over the other. Poetry, for example, may be the genre, mode, or form which represents an intensification, enhancement, or concentration of the matter and style that has been presented in the prose narrative. The relation is thus a teleological or hierarchical one rather than being (merely) contrastive or complementary. In a third perspective, poetry and prose are not really different from each other, and the presence of both in one and the same text may serve to make us realize this very fact.

Difference and Contrast

Generic, modal, and/or formal distinctions can be used within the same text to stress difference. If we may switch over to drama for a moment, the analogous case of prose and verse in Shakespeare's plays will help us see this most clearly. When we think of the two couples in *Much Ado About Nothing*, for example, who are contrasted with each other, Benedick and Beatrice are always speaking prose, whereas Claudio, when it comes to his love and wooing of Hero, speaks verse. Only at the end, when Benedick and Beatrice recognize each other and their love (5.4.72-90), do they switch into poetry for a moment. This has been anticipated in 3.1 when Beatrice, in her rhymed soliloquy, has admitted her love for Benedick to herself. Prose is predominant in this play; thus we find poetry *in* prose. Certain expectations going together with verse (or "poetry") as the language of love are recognizable here, which Shakespeare uses for a sort of chiaroscuro effect; this is not invalidated by our realization that Claudio's love is not as constant as it at first appeared.

Likewise, the use of poetry in a nondramatic prose context may be based on a principle of difference and contrast. Michal Peled Ginsburg, for example, proposes such a contrast for Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* and Godwin's *Caleb Williams* in this issue of *Connotations*. Another case in point is Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, which is composed of "John Shades's" poem and "Charles Kinbote's" seemingly unrelated prose annotations. Even though we may then go on to discover a close relationship between the two, this is based on their apparent contrast. The principle is also borne out by the fact that Nabokov's work, strictly speaking, is not really an example of "Poetry in Fiction" but of a prose introduction and commentary added to poetry, which together establish a fictional text. It is fictional in the sense of being invented, but it is not fiction in the sense of prose narrative. The poem, which provides the title to the whole, is far too predominant in *Pale Fire* to be regarded merely as being "in" fiction.

This takes me to a genre-related observation. In order to think of poetry and narrative prose as contrasting elements of a literary work, each of them must have sufficient weight to influence our perception of the whole. From a historical perspective, this will bring up the genre of *prosimetrum* which, according to the *Princeton Encyclopedia*, is "a text composed in alternating segments of prose and verse" (Brogan 1115). We are reminded that *satura*, satire (the word meaning "medley"), is among the earliest examples of the *prosimetrum*; in particular, the works of Menippus (which are lost) consisted of such a mixture of prose and verse, and we may say that the principle of contrast which forms the basis of ridicule in satire (not just of the Menippean kind) fits in well with this generic mixture. Perhaps the most influential example of *prosimetrum* in Western literature, however, is of a quite different kind, namely Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (c. 524). The importance of the alternation between prose and poetry in the Latin original of this work may have escaped those who read Alfred's and Chaucer's English translations, which are entirely in prose, but it was frequently commented upon throughout the Middle Ages and has given rise to a number of poetological considerations (cf. Dronke 3, 38-52).

Medieval commentators on this and other cases of *prosimetrum* (e.g. Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis philologiae et mercurii* on the wedding of learning and eloquence) stress the function of the combination (see Pabst 1: 204-307). In the first place, it serves the rhetorical and aesthetic principle of *variatio*, which makes the work as a whole more attractive to readers: this is a psychological purpose and effect, in that the alternation helps to avoid fatigue. The brevity of verse[3] and its sound patterns enhances our ability to remember the text. Alongside with this goes the interpretation of the prose-poetry combination as a linking of rhetoric and music, which is seen by medieval commentators to be analogous to Horace's combination of *prodesse* and *delectare*, the usefulness being aligned with prose, and the delightful sweetness with poetry. At first, this appears to be divorced from content; utility and delight entirely depend on the mode or form of speech.[4] In par-

ticular, the soul of the reader is addressed in different ways: in Boethius's work, for example, the consolation is understood to be rational and argumentative in the prose parts and affective and even narcotic in and through the poetry.[5] Here we see, however, that prose and verse not only correspond to the different kinds of effect upon the reader but also to the matter presented. Thus Lady Philosophy, in Book 4 of the *Consolation*, tells the prisoner, i.e. the first-person narrator: "But now I see thè burdned with waight of question, & wearied w*i*t*h* length of reasoning, to expect the sweetness of som verse. Take th*e*rfore a draught wh*e*rby refreshed thou mayst trye strong further to go" (Boethius 96). The quotation is from Queen Elizabeth I's translation of Boethius's work, which not only maintains the alteration of prose and verse but also imitates the variety of metrical forms that can be found in the Latin original.

The passage just quoted is an example of immanent poetics, in so far as the nature and effect *of* the text is the subject of the communication *within* the text. Poetry and prose have their different effects, but they also correspond to different kinds of content. The latter aspect, however, is less frequently emphasized than the former, as shows the tradition of turning verse texts into prose and vice versa (the *dérimages* of late twelfth- and thirteenth-century France, for example; cf. Godzich and Kittay xv), which evinces a belief in the adaptability of the same subject matter. At the same time, the evaluation of prose and verse has always gone along with certain kinds of content and with the importance assigned to them. As we have seen, reasoning is considered by Boethius to be better suited to prose, probably because the metre restricts the rendering of complex subject matter (cf. Pabst 1: 303-04). As we read in Elizabeth's Boethius (in the 6th Prose of Bk. IV), "For if thou delyte in a musicall song, thou must differ [i.e. defer] a little thy delyte, while I doo tune in order the Reasons knyt togith*e*r" (91). Prose is seen as a tuning which is to lead up to a song, but it is also described as an ordering of reasons which cannot be replaced by the delight of the song.[6]

I would like to mention one further classic example of poetry with prose, in which poetry and prose are both contrasted and complementary. This is Dante's *Vita Nuova*, which is, among other things, a key text in the development of autobiography. Peter Dronke, who discusses it in the context of other medieval texts based on the mixed form for the account of a first-person protagonist, has suggested (using a distinction made by Leo Spitzer) that we can distinguish "between the *empirical* 'I' of a poet—that is, the specific personality revealed in the writing—and the *poetic* 'I,' which can stand for 'the human soul as such,' and which enables the author to speak representatively, on behalf of humanity" (83-84). Dronke stresses that, in Dante's work, "[t]he poems always remain very deliberately detached from the surrounding prose," with the prose primarily "supplying a background of purported inner autobiography," whereas the poetry establishes "a certain objectivity and exemplary force" (111-12), in this case the role of Beatrice as a heavenly being.

Transformation and Intensification

Historically speaking, the qualities assigned to verse and prose, and the kinds of subject matter, attitudes, emotions etc. best presented by them, are subject to change. So is their relationship. In fifth-century Greece, for example, "unmetered *logoi* challenged and over time largely supplanted traditional poetic forms as the privileged expression of the culture" (Graff 304). Accordingly, there was no word for prose, as it was defined in entirely negative terms as non-poetry. Thus, even though prose may have taken precedence over poetry, or, as Simon Godhill puts it, even though "prose becomes […] the expression of power" (5) in the classical period of Greek writing, it is still a relational term, and neither formally nor with regard to subject matter and function can the one really do without the other. That is to say, the one is more powerful in relation to the other, or the rational discourse associated with the one is more important than the emotional dis-

course associated with the other, etc. Godzich and Kittay describe the medieval French change of emphasis from verse to prose as the consequence of a shift in authority as regards the claim of truth. They cite Nicholas de Senlis's statement that "No rhymed tale is true" (xv); i.e. prose as the language of legal documents was (or became) a far more trustworthy guarantee of truth than poetry or verse with its formal restrictions.

But of course you also get the opposite view. In some ways, the more objective presentation of Beatrice in the poems of the *Vita Nuova* is an example of this. Referring to a completely different context, Emerson, in his essay on "Heroism," writes about "the heroic cast of character and dialogue" in Beaumont and Fletcher's tragicomedies, "wherein the speaker is so earnest and cordial, and on such deep grounds of character, that the dialogue, on the slightest additional incident in the plot, rises naturally into poetry" (245). This is reminiscent of the example from *Much Ado About Nothing*: especially when poetry occurs together with prose, the relational meaning of each mode or form of writing becomes obvious, but the relation can be seen dynamically as an enhancement. In Emerson's view, poetry is related to prose in terms of elevation, a rising which has to do with depth of character and sincerity of feeling ("earnest and cordial"). This notion of poetry as something special and intensified (compare the popular etymology of the German word *Dichtung* as *Verdichtung*)[7] is based on an implicit relation to prose and has made its way even into the *OED*, "poetry" *n*. 2.a.: "Composition in verse or some comparable patterned arrangement of language in which the expression of feelings and ideas is given intensity by the use of distinctive style and rhythm; the art of such a composition. Traditionally associated with explicit formal departure from the patterns of ordinary speech or prose, e.g. in the use of elevated diction, figurative language, and syntactical reordering." We notice the implied evaluation, and even though we have seen that the very opposite ranking may be true, too (you turn to prose for a more rational, truthful argument), I guess that in most of the texts which consist of poetry and prose (or poetry in fiction) po-

etry is used in order to bring about such an intensification. Poetry, though marked by formal restrictions, thus helps to overcome the limitations of prose.[8]

How ingrained this evaluation is with regard to poetry and prose can be seen by a conspicuous (not to say infamous) case of misapprehension, i.e. Henry James's review of Walt Whitman's *Drum-Taps* of 1865, which he regarded as an utter failure. This is relevant to us not so much for the appropriateness of James's criticism but for the criteria and standards he uses. Whitman's book of poetry, according to Henry James, "exhibits the effort of an essentially prosaic mind to lift itself, by a prolonged muscular strain, into poetry" (1). James's vituperation is an example of how the generally evaluative meaning of a word ("prosaic") goes together with the criticism of style. Prose and poetry become qualities of the mind, and it is of course the master of prose, Henry James, who is sceptical of a poetry that looks like prose. "He pursues these objects through a hundred pages of matter which remind us irresistibly of the story of the college professor who, on a venturesome youth's bringing him a theme done in blank verse, reminded him that it was not customary in writing prose to begin each line with a capital. The frequent capitals are the only marks of verse in Mr. Whitman's writing" (2). To Henry James, the imperfection of poetry as a form of writing is not remedied by poetry as a mode; to him this is neither poetry nor poetry in prose but prose dressed up as poetry: "As we have said, it begins for all the world like verse and turns out to be arrant prose. It is more like Mr. Tupper's proverbs than anything we have met. But what if, in form, it *is* prose? it may be asked. Very good poetry has come out of prose before this. To this we would reply that it must first have gone into it. Prose, in order to be good poetry, must first be good prose" (3). James regards Whitman's form of free-verse writing as pretentious rather than as the result of a painstaking process of poeticizing prose. What James addresses is the relationship of prose and verse as forms of writing and as qualities (modes; states of mind, even) that need not correspond to them. "Poetry in fiction" may thus mean that a mind elevated to

poetry finds expression in prose narrative. There is a hierarchy of modes but not of ways of writing. Still, in James's utterances there is the latent insistence that we should be able to see this in the form, the style.

Similarity and Identity

Henry James's statement about Whitman leads up to the third point, and will take us back once more to Molière. We have noted that M. Jourdain's garbled-up definition ("Everything that is prose is not verse; and everything that is not verse is not prose") implies that prose and verse are not necessarily strict alternatives, they are not mutually exclusive. If prose is to be to defined positively, i.e. not just negatively as "unmarked" speech or "as having no deliberate metrical structure" (*OED* "prose" *n.* 1.a.), it must have certain qualities that make us see the similarity to verse rather than merely the difference.

With respect to developments in ancient Greece, Graff has pointed out that "the basic distinction between poetic and appropriately prosaic language is extremely tenuous" (306). He shows this in particular with regard to tragedy, which is not only poetry but also "approximates the style of ordinary spoken language" (331). This concerns both rhythm and diction, the point of convergence being the fact that, in Aristotle's view, the iambic trimeter used in tragedy "has the rhythm of speech [and] an indication of this is that we speak many iambs in conversation with each other" (*Poetics* 4, 1449a23-26; quoted from Graff 330). If another historical leap may be permitted, we may notice an analogous prose-poetry continuum with the rise of the novel in the early eighteenth century; as Gabrielle Starr reminds us, "novelists consistently used patterns taken from the amatory lyric, lament, epithalamium, elegy, and Pindaric ode as primary models for constructing shared emotional experience between characters and from character to reader" (Starr 7-8). In this case, poetry in narrative prose does not (or not primarily) refer to form or to the poetic mode in

general but to specific features of poetic sub-genres. Still, neither the form of language (prose/verse) nor the genre (poetry/fiction) can be established on the basis of a strict difference or separation. We are reminded once more of Fielding's "comic epic poem *in* prose" with its ambiguous "in."

If we wish to describe this continuum systematically, we should first realize that poetry and prose may differ metrically, formally and stylistically, but may both be "poetical"—or, for that matter, "prosaic." The latter case is exemplified by Wordsworth, who, in his "Preface to Lyrical Ballads," not only defines the poet as "a man speaking to men" (71)[9] but also, as a concomitant of his emphasis on the ordinary human nature of the poet, maintains that "some of the most interesting parts of the best Poems will be found to be strictly the language of Prose, when Prose is well written" (67).[10] The former case, however, is the more frequent one. In this version, "poetry in fiction" could mean that a text is completely written in prose but nevertheless belongs to the mode of poetry or includes that mode. We can again distinguish different kinds in this first variant, namely the prose narrative comprising certain poetic modes (e.g. an elegiac mode), or the prose narrative being poetry in the sense of evincing a general quality; poetry could be seen as a general term (cf. German "Dichtung") which still designates certain common features.

Both kinds are covered by Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, in which we read that "the greatest part of poets have apparelled their poetical inventions in that numbrous kind of writing which is called verse—indeed but appareled, verse being but an ornament and no cause to Poetry, since there have been many most excellent poets that never versified, and now swarm many versifiers that need never answer to the name of poets" (87). An even more radical version of this view can be found in Joseph Wharton's *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* which goes back to a test devised in Horace's *Satires* I.iv: "Nothing can be more judicious than the method he prescribes, of trying whether any composition be essentially poetical or not; which is, to drop entirely the measures and numbers, and transpose and invert the order

of the words: and in this unadorned manner to peruse the passage. If there be really in it a true poetical spirit, all your inversion and transpositions will not disguise and extinguish it; but it will retain its lustre, like a diamond, unset […]" (vii-viii).[11] The "poetical spirit" here seems to be something not related to genre or mode but a quality located outside the text (probably the genius of the author). This kind of "poetry" is hard to grasp. Sidney is more specific when he says that "it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by" (87); it is fiction ("feigning"), the presentation of archetypal qualities and the fusion of teaching and delight that account for poetry. "Poetry in fiction" is thus almost tautological.

But Sidney, though an idealist, does not leave out form and style altogether. Poetry is not just "matter" but also "manner," namely: "not speaking […] words as they chanceably fall from the mouth, but peizing [weighing] each syllable of each word by just proportion according to the dignity of the subject" (87). The criteria of musicality ("just proportion") and appropriateness (the *aptum* or *decorum*) loom large. In this perspective, "poetry in fiction" will mean that the work is true because it is invented. Being independent of historical contingency, it will give evidence to its *ratio* (101) through its harmonious ordering of language. John Donne puts it similarly in a Sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn (1618) on Psalm 38:2: "God gives us […] our instruction in cheerfull forms, not in a sowre, and sullen, and angry, and unacceptable way, but cheerfully, in *Psalms* […]; Not in an *Oration*, not in *Prose,* but in *Psalms*; […]. Therefore is Gods will delivered to us in *Psalms*, that we might have it the more cheerfully, and that we might have it the more certainly, because where all the words are numbred, and measured, and weighed, the whole work is lesse subject to falsification, either by subtraction or addition" (2: 49-50).

Where does this leave us, finally, with our subject? Our starting point has been the ambiguity of our title, "Poetry in Fiction": there is something in prose, inserted poems or even just a reference to a poem, or a noticeable change of irregular language into a harmonic and

rhythmical form that will distinguish these texts from others which do not make us consider poetry at all. Whether we regard this presence of poetry as contrastive, dialogic and complementary, or whether we see a transformation and perhaps elevation into poetry, or whether this arrangement makes us realize that there is actually no prose without poetry (and vice versa)—in each case the coexistence of prose and verse, of poetry and narrative fiction will have a metapoetic dimension, showing us literature aware of all its options to extend its reach.

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NOTES

[1]The articles in this section are derived from papers presented at the 12th International *Connotations* Symposium, "Poetry in Fiction: Poetic Insertions, Allusions, and Rhythms in Narrative Texts," which took place from 28 July to 1 August 2013 at Mülheim an der Ruhr. The editors of *Connotations* are grateful to Sven Wagner for suggesting the topic and instigating our talks and discussion. I would like to thank both him and Burkhard Niederhoff for organizing an inspiring and productive conference. Furthermore, I am grateful to the participants of the symposium, and in particular my co-editors Burkhard Niederhoff and Angelika Zirker, for helpful feedback and suggestions.

[2]On this notion, see Fishelov in this issue of *Connotations*.

[3]In this respect, there is a link to the topic of the previous *Connotations* symposium, "Poetic Economy."
See <http://www.connotations.uni-tuebingen.de/topics.htm#poeticeconomy>.

[4]Their combination creates a kind of effect which is not unlike the "epigraph effect" described by Kronshage below (247, following Genette 160), which is independent of what is the actual content, and indicates (e.g.) highbrow cultural aspirations of the writer. Analogously, the mixture of poetry and prose may serve to indicate a comprehensive claim of the text, comprising both (e.g.) instruction and delight. Furthermore, the *prosimetrum* being a genre particularly popular throughout the Middle Ages, its imitation may be part of a strategy to evoke connotations of medievalism. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Ring* seems a likely candidate. On the poetic insertions in Tolkien, see Kullmann in this issue.

[5]See Dronke 41-45 for the function of poetry in the *Consolatio*. He cites (42) Thomas F. Curley III for the view that "Verse in the *Consolatio* functions as a 'pharmakon,' that is, as a potent substance of mysterious, almost magical, properties, which can either cure or kill" (Curley 245-46).

[6]An analogous example is Edgar Allan Poe's reserving the function of beauty to poetry and truth to prose. As Anastasaki shows, Poe, even though he does not condone the mixing of the two in his theoretical writings, actually does so in his own tales—as part of "a strategy in favour of poetry's supremacy" (209). The contrast thus serves the transformation of the one into the other (my second kind).

[7]See the beginning of ch. 4 of Ezra Pound's *ABC of Reading*: "'Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree.' Dichten = condensare" (36).

[8]See Ginsburg and Nandrea, who discuss Hegel's use of the expression "the prose of the world" in his *Aesthetics*: "for Hegel, this phrase indicts all the external factors that limit an individual's freedom and independence, hindering 'the higher aims of spirit'" (244, citing Hegel 149). Prose, as the "new" form, is thus also the mark of a loss. They point out that the positive (e.g. Bakhtinian) evaluation of prose as "'new' in the sense of unpredictable, free, and infinitely open […] has not become the dominant one" (247). Michel Foucault's discussion of the "Prose of the World," by contrast, is not premised on the distinction of prose and verse or poetry. Neither does he identify "poetry" with an older worldview or state of society which is replaced by a new social and ideological order that could be characterized by "prose." To him, the expression rather denotes a world that is characterized by similarity and analogy and in which things are signs. In his view, this world dissolves at the end of the sixteenth century, as can be seen in Cervantes's *Don Quixote*: "[…] writing has ceased to be the prose of the world; […] similitudes have become deceptive and verge upon the visionary or madness" (47). Ginsburg (below 202), aligns Foucault with a change of episteme that can be marked by a change from poetry to prose, even though, as Ginsburg and Nandrea (255) point out, "prose" marks the earlier stage in Foucault.

[9]The passages are quoted from the 1802 version but were already included in the 1800 preface.

[10]Marks is bewildered by this statement, especially in the light of Wordsworth's emphasis on metre: "When […] it is given the efficacy ascribed to it by Wordsworth, it is difficult to conceive how an otherwise stylistic conflation of prose and verse can be tenable, or even what it could mean" (119). It seems not unlikely that "language of prose," as a modal feature, is meant to denote that very humanity of discourse of which, according to Wordsworth, poetry must partake.

[11]The passage is partly cited by Starr (9), without reference to its origin in Horace.

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Turning: From Verse to Prose*

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In their study of the history of prose in France, Jeffrey Kittay and Wlad Godzich trace the manner in which prose and poetry get constructed as opposites of each other in the fourteenth century.[1] They argue that "the emergence of prose" was related to a change in the structures of authority: whereas the authority of verse was invested in the person of the performer, prose, in the Middle Ages, established its authority mainly by making a claim to referential truth (153). This is also the manner in which the novel, in England, established its authority during the eighteenth century (as Ian Watt has long ago argued in his analysis of the "rise of the novel"). In both cases, the emergence of a "new" form—prose, the novel—is related to class-based struggles for epistemological authority, social power, and political legitimacy.

In this essay I will discuss two literary texts dating from the second half of the eighteenth century, in which the contest between prose and verse is in some way dramatized or thematized, in order to examine more closely what was at stake in the opposition between these two terms at that point in literary history. My discussion of Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) will focus on the formal aspect of the opposition between prose and verse: prose, *prorsus* in Latin, means straightforward, straight, direct, as opposed to verse which "turns" (*versus*).[2] The straightforwardness of prose connotes an ongoing movement forward, an unlimited extendability.[3] In the English language, however, the straightforwardness of prose has connoted also honesty, candor, telling things as they are: "the frank prose of undis-

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debginsburg0232.htm>.

sembling noon" (J. R. Lowell, *OED*, "prose" *n.* and *adj.* A.1.b.). When opposed to verse, which is sometimes linked to deception ("fraud and imposition," *OED*), prose appears as the language of truth. My reading of William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), then, will center on this association of prose with truth as full disclosure. Though both texts valorize prose, they also allow us to see why at a certain point prose had to be altered—why its ongoing forward movement as well as its commitment to truth as full disclosure needed to be limited. In my conclusion I will suggest that this limitation is one of the ways in which, to use Virginia Woolf's words in her essay on *Robinson Crusoe*, prose "accommodated itself to the demand" of a rising middle class and "had fitted itself" (*The Second Common Reader* 50) to express its values and ideology.

The Vicar of Wakefield

The Vicar of Wakefield provides us with a unique window onto the wide field of possibilities for narrative available to authors before the novel has become a distinct (and later on, hegemonic) genre with a more or less normative plot structure. The "tale," as Goldsmith called his text, exemplifies the peaceful coexistence in one cultural space of a large number of literary forms and genres—ballad, (mock) elegy, song, romance, sermon, political discourse and a fable being some of them. That Goldsmith's tale is hospitable to many forms of discourse and different types of narrative does not in the least imply that the differences among these forms or types are erased or should be considered negligible. Rather, the tale can be seen as an example of a "dialogic" text where different modes of discourse co-exist without being hierarchized so that with all their differences they are treated as equally valid options.

The first genre we encounter is the ballad. Burchell introduces the ballad as a counter-example to contemporary English poetry (Sophia's praise of Mr. Gay) as well as classical poetry (Moses's praise of Ovid), both of which he criticizes. The ballad's language, he says, is simple

rather than "luxuriant," emphasizes "plot or connexion" over description (or images), and in it sound is less important than "carrying on the sense" (331).[4] Since simplicity, lack of images, and emphasis on sense rather than sound are features commonly associated with *prose* (whether prose is considered "plain," or "ordinary" or "direct"), Burchell's comments raise the question of where the specificity of the ballad as *verse* might reside. I will argue that it resides in the dependence of the ballad's narrative on verse/versus as "turn."

The ballad tells the story of two lovers: Angelina—rich, proud, and coquettish—and Edwin, poor and virtuous. Dejected by her pretended scorn, Edwin disappears. Full of regrets and sure he is dead, Angelina, disguised as a man, wanders in search of the dead and of death. She happens upon the dwelling of a hermit who is none other than Edwin, alive and in love.

The importance of "turns" for the ballad (the word is repeated six times) is signaled from the very first line: "Turn, gentle hermit of the dale, / And guide my lonely way" (331). Since the poem starts abruptly, it is not clear from what the hermit needs to "turn," and thus the request to turn appears as an absolute: the poem cannot start, the encounter between the hermit and the wanderer cannot take place, without an act of "turning." Since the ballad starts at a point near the plot's climax and dénouement—the meeting between the wanderer/Angelina and the hermit/Edwin—much of its story is told through the wanderer's retrospective narrative. This turn back to the past as the cause of the present is also what brings about recognition, reversal, and closure. The ending, like the beginning, depends on a turn.

Further turns are predicated on symmetrical oppositions and reversals. The wanderer asks the hermit to "turn" and guide him "To where yon taper cheers the vale/ With hospitable ray" (stanza 1), opposing this hospitable "yon" to a "here" which is threatening since it seems to actively prevent the wanderer from reaching his goal: "For here forlorn and lost I tread, / With fainting steps and slow; / Where wilds immeasurably spread, / Seem lengthening as I go" (stanza 2).

But the hermit recasts this "there" as a false goal, since it leads to death: "yonder […] phantom flies / To lure thee to thy doom" (stanza 3). He opposes to it a "here," the site of true hospitality ("Here to the houseless child of want, / My door is open still," stanza 4), inviting the wanderer to "turn" away from the false goal and find safety in his cell: "Then turn to-night, and freely share / Whate'er my cell bestows" (stanza 5). Thus turn and counter-turn create an opposition between "here" and "there" which is also an opposition between true and false goal, true and false hospitality.

But the false goal from which the hermit asks the wanderer to turn away is not entirely false: as we find out, the wanderer was seeking both death and a lover presumed to be dead (and which the hermit's "yonder phantom" uncannily designates). In turning away from this original goal the wanderer finds something she thought was irrevocably lost: her lover alive and loving. In the following stanzas the hermit exhorts the wanderer to "turn, thy cares forego" (stanza 8) thus inviting the wanderer to renounce all earthly attachments, to die to the world, as he presumably has done (since he asserts "All earth born cares are wrong [...] / And what is friendship but a name [...] / And love is still an emptier sound [...]"; stanzas 8, 19, 20). But as in the case of the wanderer, the hermit's renunciation of life is the result of a false assumption, here that his beloved was indifferent to his love. In turning away from their original (and symmetrical) goals of seeking death and renouncing life, the wanderer and the hermit find what they truly desired.

The hermit's exhortation and his discourse against love and earthly attachments bring about the first "turn" in the plot of the ballad, when the wanderer "stands confest /A maid in all her charms" (stanza 23). As she "turn'd to chide" the hermit for clasping her in his arms (stanza 36), the second "turn" in the plot occurs and the hermit reveals himself to be Edwin. Edwin then invites Angelina once more to turn: "Turn Angelina […] / […] turn to see/Thy own, thy long-lost Edwin here, / Restor'd to love and thee" (stanza 37). Now Angelina can again be asked to "every care resign" (stanza 38) but not, as before,

because earthly cares are "wrong" but rather because "'Never from this hour to part/ We'll live and love so true'" (stanza 39). The opposition between his constancy and her "fickle art" is proved to be false: Angelina's "wandering" and "straying" (both physical and moral) have led to a "true end" which is at the same time a restoration (the lovers are "restor'd to love," life, and to each other).

The symmetrical reversal of oppositions, the mirroring of true and false goals, the repeated irony that shows us the two lovers moving towards their true goal without fully recognizing it,[5] all suggest the presence of some hidden force (fate, providence) that leads the plot inexorably towards a goal already present from the beginning. It is this "turn"—the recursive form of plot—that differentiates the ballad from a prose tale whose "straightforwardness" should therefore be understood as forward oriented extension not circumscribed by a final cause. Such straightforwardness, I will argue, characterizes the Vicar's own tale, as well as some of the tales told by other characters, such as the story of the reunion of the Vicar's son, George, with his lost love, Arabella, which the ballad is sometimes said—wrongly in my opinion—to resemble and foreshadow.[6]

After the Vicar has lost his fortune, the engagement between his oldest son, George, and Arabella Wilmot is broken, and George leaves home. Though he initially sets himself a goal—seeking his fortune in London—once he fails to make it in the market of talent, his movements and actions are determined by chance encounters: a man he meets as he "was meditating one day in a coffee-house" (388); a young gentleman of distinction he encounters "on a bench in St. James's Park" (390); a captain of a ship he meets just after having decided to sell himself for a slave (393); an Irish student into whose company he falls (394); an old acquaintance who belongs to a company of comedians (397). Each new acquaintance steers him in a new direction, and so he keeps going. Soon, rather than seeking to make his fortune, he is trying simply to survive. The lack of a specific goal makes his travels open-ended, and this is what defines his movement—wherever it leads him—as a movement forward: "In this manner I proceeded to

Paris, with no design but just to look about me, and then to go forward" (395). He works his way back to England and intends to return to his father's house, but does not: another chance encounter changes his course. A few more chances down the road he runs into his father and Arabella.

This double encounter is not the result of the kind of "turns" we have seen in the ballad. Rather, it is the result of the intersection of different straight lines, chains of events that are independent of each other (George's peregrinations; the Vicar's travel back home from his futile search for his daughter, Olivia; Arabella's visit to her aunt and uncle). Though the two lovers meet again after a long separation, this meeting does not, in itself, lead to their happy reunion; before that can happen, a whole series of further chance events (detailed in eleven chapters) has to take place. The union of George and Arabella therefore does not have either the necessity or the finality of the reunion, caused by turns, of the lovers in the ballad, and George's story, dependent on chance, remains in principle open-ended, always going forward.

The story of George's adventures is not the only example of the "straightforwardness" of prose narrative. Critics have noted the uncompromisingly linear nature of the Vicar's own tale of woes, proceeding as it does with no digressions, flashbacks, or foreshadowing.[7] The absence of strong causal relations (there is not one single overriding cause, fate or a flaw that can account for all the disasters which befall the Vicar and his family nor are the various events linked to each other in a chain of cause and effect) means that the movement of the plot is chronological rather than logical. This further highlights the tale's structure as a forward-oriented extension not circumscribed by a final cause. But whereas the emphasis on chance in George's story means that there is no compelling reason why its episodes (including, of course, that of his reunion with Arabella) should be in the order they are told (we can change much in the order of the episodes without loss of meaning), this is not the case in the tale of the Vicar where

the main events create an ordered series. This can be seen most clearly by looking at the changes to the home.[8]

At the beginning of the story the Vicar and his family live in "an elegant house, situated in a fine country, and a good neighborhood" (306). When the Vicar is forced to leave Wakefield after losing his fortune he moves to "a little neighborhood" among farmers to whom he feels socially and intellectually superior, in a house which "consisted of but one story and was covered with thatch" (318). When this "snug abode" is destroyed by fire, the family is reduced to live in one of the outhouses, made "as convenient as possible" by the contributions of his farmer neighbors (408). From there the Vicar, through the machinations of the Squire Thornhill, goes to prison where all he has in his cell is a bed made of a bundle of straw and some clothes he receives from a fellow prisoner. At this point, with the structure of downward progression firmly established and the Vicar and his family reduced to a bare minimum, the series of disasters can only either continue to the point of complete annihilation or be reversed.

And yet there is also a sense in which the reversal of the Vicar's plot does not contradict or compromise its straightforwardness. As we have seen, the ordering of the events that constitute the Vicar's plot is not only chronological but also one of intensification: losses (of home and family), and the affective reaction to them, become more and more intense. Though the Vicar's forbearance of his losses is firmly grounded in his Christian faith, his salient character trait is not ascetic resignation but an unlimited capacity for affective experience. Indeed, the Vicar shows an exultation in his suffering that foregrounds affect in and of itself (rather than a particular manifestation of it—pain or joy).[9] Suffering and enjoyment are here not the negation of each other but are both experiences of powerful affect; passing from one to the other carries an increase in intensity by virtue of "contrast," that is, difference.

This point is made in the sermon the Vicar preaches when he reaches the nadir of his misfortune. The focus of the sermon is the

difference between the rich and the poor, and this difference is one of intensity: in heaven the poor and the wretched have "all that superiority of pleasure which arises from contrasted enjoyment" (438).[10] In this sense, the Vicar's joy at the reversal of his fortune at the end of the tale does not contradict the thesis of the sermon, as some critics claim.[11] Enjoyment is possible even after many losses and when everything is lost, then the loss itself guarantees a greater enjoyment when reversed. The reversal is subsumed in the movement forward since it increases the intensity of affect and it is this increase in intensity that gives the plot of the Vicar's misfortunes its uncompromisingly linear character.

In *The Vicar of Wakefield*, then, prose narrative is "straightforward" in the sense of going on, without a predetermined goal and the closure produced by a "turn."[12] This "on-goingness" is related to the story being that of survival as well as of affect, that is, describing a process in time that is not a progress: it is neither governed by a goal nor serves as the means to an end that exceeds and negates it.

Caleb Williams

Godwin's *Caleb Williams* is different in tone, style, and plot from Goldsmith's tale but its main thematic concern—the relation between tyranny and freedom, between power and justice—is pertinent to Goldsmith's tale too. Both texts show power as primarily that of a privileged class that has the ability to bend the law and its institutions in its own favor. In the first part of *Caleb Williams*, tyrannical power is primarily expressed as physical force, and it is embodied in the squire, Tyrell; when it comes to a contest of words, however, Tyrell, who can barely read or write, is no match for his antagonists. But in the rest of the novel, where the conflict is between Caleb and Falkland, the focus shifts from physical to discursive power. In this part, the novel articulates a struggle between two discursive practices—prose and verse—and the competing, indeed conflicting values and ideals they represent. The world of prose is the democratic world, the world of

social mobility due to merit; it is opposed to the old "poetic" world of privilege and social hierarchy. The novel can thus be read as an allegory dramatizing the change in authority that enabled prose to gain ground over poetry as a means of expression.[13]

The aristocratic Falkland, who has "imbibed the love of chivalry and romance" from "the heroic poets of Italy" (10) and is the author of "an Ode to the Genius of Chivalry" (25) is consistently associated with verse, which he reads, writes, analyzes and imitates. Caleb is not Falkland's equal since his parents were peasants but he has a keen intelligence and is well-educated. His fundamentally democratic values (equal rights, justice, freedom) contradict Falkland's aristocratic code of honor and investment in appearances (reputation rather than truth or justice). Caleb is consistently associated with prose, specifically prose of the "plain style" (characterized by the avoidance of figuration). In contrast to Falkland's elaborate figures, Caleb's speech is "artless and untaught […] having an air of innocence, frankness and courage" (108); he gives "honest explanations" that are "clear, collected, and simple" (297).

Caleb's conflict with Falkland was caused initially by the former's curiosity, his desire to uncover the mystery in Falkland's past (the murder of Tyrell of which he rightly thinks Falkland is guilty). But the discovery of the secret turns out to be not the end of his story but rather its beginning. From a mystery plot that culminates with the revelation of a past, hidden truth (a recursive plot), his tale becomes a narrative of persecution and pursuit, a tale of the continuously renewed task of eluding the pursuer. The endlessness of this tale is especially pronounced because Falkland decides not to kill Caleb but simply to continue the chase, rousting him from every roost. Thus, even the physical action of the novel participates in the opposition between prose and verse (Falkland, for example, repeatedly forces Caleb to turn back where he would go forward). But this action is punctuated by a series of overtly rhetorical contests, in which Caleb's story is pitted against Falkland's word.

Falkland's word, of course, is guaranteed by the enormous social and political power of its author. Caleb has to make his story hold in the absence of such a guarantee, independently of the social position or reputation of the teller; it has to convince readers or listeners through its own internal qualities. "Virtue rising superior to every calumny, defeating by a plain, unvarnished tale all the stratagems of vice, and throwing back upon her adversary the confusion with which he had hope to overwhelm her, was one of the favorite subjects of my youthful reveries" (160), Caleb writes.

What is on trial in the court scene that brings the novel to its end is, first, whether the "truth" of prose can compete with the "word" of verse (and the sheer social power to which it is attached); second, whether prose can succeed in establishing its own authority. In Godwin's original manuscript ending, prose loses both contests.[14] In the published ending, prose achieves an ambivalent victory: Caleb defeats the "godlike" Falkland, but the victory takes place only because verse gives its word to prose: "I stand now completely detected. My name will be consecrated to infamy, while your heroism, your patience and your virtues will be for ever admired" (324), Falkland declares. Moreover, Falkland's concession is brought about by Caleb's adoption of Falkland's view of reputation as the highest good: Caleb's feeling of guilt for bringing Falkland to trial derives from his sense that he himself is a murderer since he is destroying Falkland's reputation. The result of the contest is, therefore, highly ambiguous: prose has overcome verse, declaring victory over the other principle, but its victory is overshadowed by guilt; what it has overcome is preserved as a lost, sacrificed, mourned ideal.

Towards the ending of the novel, however, Godwin provides a glimpse of another kind of conflict, between the values of prose and those espoused by the domestic realm. For the most part, Caleb's story is that of persecution and survival, taking place on the road and in spaces typical of the Gothic (prisons, ruined castles). Each episode seems to bring the story to a climax of horror, and hence to its end, but the next episode presents Caleb and the reader with yet a more crush-

ing defeat, thus suggesting that the tale of persecution can go on forever. But at a certain point Caleb believes that he has found a resting place in "an obscure market-town in Wales [...] clean, cheerful and of great simplicity of appearance" (289-92). While living in the village, Caleb for the first time generates an income that brings him above the level of mere subsistence; he has leisure to spend in intellectual, non-remunerative pursuits (he begins an "etymological analysis of the English language"; 295); he forms well-mannered friendships with the local gentry and contemplates the possibility of marriage. This brief village interlude has all the marks of a scene of closure in a novel by, for example, Dickens. But if this had been the closing scene, we would not have the novel, since at this point Caleb feels no inclination to write it. Lasting domestic happiness would not be the ending of the novel; it would altogether prevent the novel's creation.

In a scenario which might have been the beginning of story for a writer like Jane Austen, Caleb's stay in the village is disrupted when the false, fictional tale of his life, a pamphlet called "The Wonderful and Surprising History of Caleb Williams," is smuggled into the village by his tracker. Whether or not the story is true—indeed, especially because the truth of the story is open to question—this public representation of Caleb's life, and his new ability to incite inquiry, make him a threat to the stasis of the village world.[15] He is immediately avoided as a contaminant: "It seemed as if I had some contagious disease, from which every man shrunk with alarm, and left me to perish unassisted and alone" (295).

At this moment of crisis, Caleb appeals to Laura, a friend and benefactress whom he has come to regard as a mother, confident that she "will not cast [him] off unheard, nor without strictly examining a question on all sides" (298). Yet to his surprise, Laura stops him from telling his story, because it threatens to put her absolute values in flux and to introduce shades of difference into clear oppositions. "'Good God!'" he exclaims, "'Can you think of condemning a man, when you have heard only one side of his story?' 'Indeed I can,' replied she, with dignity: 'True virtue refuses the drudgery of explanation and apology.

True virtue shines by its own light, and needs no art to set it off. You have the first principles of morality yet to learn'" (299).

Laura, who is the novel's chief personification and proponent of domestic values, defines "true virtue" as something that is immediate and self-evident ("shines by its own light"), that consists of actions rather than words; words become then equated with eloquence, understood as sophistry.[16] Indeed, for Laura, Caleb's virtue, or lack thereof, does not depend on the truth or falsity of the tale. According to her, what is legitimate or truly virtuous will never give rise to ambiguity, never need to defend itself—it will never produce a tale. Preserving one's virtue entails remaining outside the province not only of "art" and "eloquence" but of "plain and unadorned" tales as well as of "explanation and apology": keeping the domestic realm as the site of virtue and morality means keeping it outside the whole realm of narrative and discourse.

Though Caleb is inclined to dismiss Laura's attitude as unreasonable, perhaps it is only from her conservative point of view that the radically destabilizing potential of prose can be glimpsed. Caleb's notion is that, as a tool of democratic equality, prose would be free of power differentials; bringing all to light will result in clarity, improved understanding, and accurate interpretation. When the whole story is told the truth will emerge, which will result in just and fair treatment of all parties by right-minded persons. But Laura's attitude is that "examining a question on all sides" will, on the contrary, create ambiguity; fuller knowledge will destroy moral certainty. Her determination to stop listening suggests that bringing all to light would result not in an ultimate transparency or total legibility, but rather in an overabundance of illumination that renders distinction impossible and thus abolishes clarity. For her, the threat resides in the endlessness or inconclusiveness implied by "telling all." The episode ends with Caleb's being denied a hearing and forced to leave the village; Godwin thus leaves intact an implication that prose as full disclosure would undermine a domestic realm defined as the site of stable moral values.

Expelled from the village Caleb resumes his flight and begins writing his story in the belief that "my story faithfully digested would carry in it an impression of truth […] posterity might be induced to do me justice" (303-04). But because his story of persecution is not over yet when he begins writing, the story does not end when it catches up with Caleb's present. Instead of casting the moment of writing as the stable point towards which the story recursively leads, the end Caleb arrives at is so unexpected that it moots his original motives for writing: "I began these memoirs with the idea of vindicating my character. I have now no character that I wish to vindicate" (326). Including the temporality of writing within the narrative thus highlights its inconclusiveness. Though Caleb steadfastly persists in his attempt to tell the whole story, so that "the world may at least not hear and repeat a half-told and mangled tale" (326), he is forced to relinquish his notion that telling all will yield anything like simplicity, stability, justice, or moral clarity. Implying that things would have been better if Falkland's story had never been told, Caleb ends up giving support to Laura's belief that moral certainty is best preserved by excluding the kind of honesty and full disclosure, associated with prose.

In this light, *Caleb Williams* can be said to bring out one of the problems involved in prose's attempt to legitimize itself as the discourse of truth. Being completely truthful, withholding nothing, actually implies going on, continuing forward indefinitely (as prose does). But such a continuing forward entails a risky epistemological instability, since everything must always be re-interpreted in the light of what *comes next* (rather than of what came before and to which one can "turn" for closure). As long as it adheres to the principle of full and faithful telling of the truth about the world, prose cannot achieve full legitimacy since it undermines its own foundation. And while its cumulative structure may be suited to the road and for tales of survival it is not "fitted to express" the domestic ideals towards which the novel was leaning.

* * *

In spite of their many differences, *Caleb Williams* and *The Vicar of Wakefield* have one feature in common: the association of prose with ongoing movement, continuing forward indefinitely. Both suggest also the affinity of prose thus understood with narratives of survival, that is narratives that foreground the continuous, in principle endless, creation anew (production and reproduction) of life, self, affect, sociality. Such narratives are characterized by a forward movement that is not a progress, an expenditure that does not result in gain; rather than sustaining suspense they "climax" repeatedly; limited only by the energy or lifespan of the characters or the writer, their endings often appear arbitrary.[17]

One can speculate (and this if of course only a speculation) that around the turn of the eighteenth century—Austen would be the important transitional figure here—the middle class has achieved enough economic, political, and cultural power so that the question of survival—which the straightforward, additive, repetitive, and endless narratives one finds in novels of sensibility as well as in picaresque and gothic tales not only represented but embodied—was no longer the issue. Survival then becomes merely the pre-condition for "higher" pursuits—a transparent means to other ends—the acquisition of knowledge as well as identity, spouses, fortunes, and homes. To be fit to represent this new outlook, prose itself needed to change: it needed to limit itself and did it by subordinating forward movement to a final cause.

Does this mean that we are back in the world of verse? Not quite. Following Michel Foucault's argument in *The Order of Things*, one can say that poetry and prose depend on two conflicting epistemologies or competing interpretive principles.[18] The old, "poetic" world of privilege and social hierarchy was sustained and made to appear natural by a belief in a universal order of correspondences where events find their meaning as elements in a larger design or as a manifestation of an overarching idea. By contrast, the new world of social mobility and rights of individuals is subtended by the modern view of a universe governed by cause and effect where events find their meaning as links

in a causal chain, whose effects are unpredictable. Within this new epistemology the "turn"—the recursive plot that imposes closure—appears as undermining the principle on which the narrative is predicated rather than supporting it. It represents a "discontent" within narrative, "a discomfort with the processes and implications of narrative itself" (Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents* x).

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NOTES

[1]Part of the argument I will be making in this essay derives from an earlier essay, co-authored with Lorri Nandrea, entitled "The Prose of the World."

[2]I do not intend to imply that prose and verse can be opposed to each other in an absolute way: just as prose contains pauses and breaks in which the reader rests and reflects back so verse has various forms of "linking forward" (e.g. enjambement). Nor, of course, can one argue that prose lacks turns in the sense of tropes or figures of speech; since no language can dispense with figuration the impression of "plainness" is merely the effect of a particular use of figuration. The difference between them is a matter of degree and especially of value judgment. For further discussion of this question see Ginsburg and Nandrea.

[3]The "unlimited" nature of prose has been part of its definition since Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (3.8) where it is associated with the lack of meter. In *Rhetoric* 3.9 Aristotle condemns an "ancient" prose style he calls "strung-on" (or "free-running") which he characterizes as having no end in itself. He argues that this style is unsatisfying because it goes on indefinitely (is "unlimited") and contrasts it with the "turned-down" (or "compact") style, which is in periods. He argues that the latter is satisfying because it is the reverse of the unlimited, indefinite style. This opposition underlies eighteenth-century debates among grammarians about the difference between the cumulative and periodic sentence structure. For a discussion of this debate and its relation to the novel see Nandrea, *Misfit Forms*.

[4]The simplicity of the ballad, as opposed to the luxuriance of the poetry Burchell rejects, echoes Goldsmith's own characterization of his tale in the "Advertisement," where he doubts whether the "simplicity of [the Vicar's] country fire-side" will please "in this age of opulence and refinement" (305).

[5]Thus the wanderer's lines in stanza 2, "For here forlorn and lost I tread / with fainting steps and slow," anticipate already the union of the two lovers by echoing the penultimate line of *Paradise Lost* where Adam and Eve walk hand and in hand out of Eden "with wandering steps and slow" (Milton 678, Book XII, line

643). Whether or not this echo opens up another layer of irony, as Robert Hunting suggested (it would have been better for them had they not found each other) depends on how we evaluate human love outside the paradise of ignorance.

[6]See, for example, Brown 169. It would be similarly misleading to read the ballad as foreshadowing the happy coming together of Burchell and Sophia. Though Burchell, like Edwin, is disguised, when he reveals himself it is not a long-lost lover who reappears but a new and quite formidable person: the rich Sir William Thornhill. Sophia, for her part, was never fickle or scornful (as Angelina was) but has shown herself to be exactly what Sir William was looking for: a woman who can love him for himself rather than for his riches. But instead of reclaiming her as his own (and alleviating the worry his metamorphoses has caused her) Sir William indulges in a gratuitous act of cruelty by offering her to Jenkinson, an act that could have resulted in his losing her. The very gratuity of this gesture shows us how far this story is from the one told in the ballad, where closure, brought about by symmetrical oppositions and reversals, allows no residue, no excess or lack.

[7]The narrator deviates from the straight line of the story only when members of the family who were away from home tell the Vicar what happened to them while away, or when strangers tell him their life story. None of these stories reveal important new facts or shift the course of the plot. The tale contains no flashbacks, and the narrator does not provide foreshadowing of future events or of the ending. Brown has characterized the *Vicar* as a "consecutive narration without retrospect" (167). But Brown argues that "in the second half of the novel we are no longer dealing with a linear array of plot elements" (148)—a claim with which I disagree.

[8]From this perspective the opposite of chance is not the illusory desire to impose order, to plan according to one's wishes, as Preston, for example, argues. The ordered series here is not the product of a plan and its result is not control (or its failure) but intensity of affect.

[9]This exultation in suffering is reinforced by its dramatic, indeed, theatrical quality. As Brown has pointed out, the Vicar is "essentially never alone" (155), and his most private feelings are always displayed in public.

[10]Most critics argue that the focus of the sermon is on providence as a mysterious but ultimately just design. See, for example, Rogers 8.

[11]See, for example, Hopkins 217.

[12]Discussions of closure often associated the open text with both a subversive resistance to containment and the failure or inability to fix meaning. They just as often produced counter-arguments showing how closure fails to occur in "closed" texts. These discussions fail to account for narratives in which process or movement in time is not goal oriented (where "reading for the plot" cannot be equated with "reading for the ending"), where the goal is immanent to the process (so that the notion of "deferral" or even of a "middle" ceases to be meaningful), and where the notion of closure is irrelevant rather than subverted or unattainable. It is to such narratives that I give the name of "narratives of survival."

[13]For a fuller discussion of this issue see Ginsburg and Nandrea. Scheiber interprets the power struggle in the novel in terms of the challenge posed by enlightenment values of reason and empiricism to old "laws of decorum" (261). Without making distinctions between verse and prose, Jacqueline Miller uses Godwin's own writings on language to analyze the competition for authorship in the novel.

[14]For a discussion of the original manuscript ending see Ginsburg and Nandrea.

[15]Sullivan reads this pamphlet scene in the context of "post-revolutionary print culture," arguing that Godwin ultimately presents this culture "not as an expanding set of practices to which writers of all classes have equal or near-equal access, but as another vehicle for upper-class power" (336).

[16]One can read Laura as a representation of the romance idealism of unmixed character. But since she is the sole representative of the domestic realm in the text it seems more pertinent to link her to the idealization of the domestic sphere, as it will be articulated later on by Ruskin ("Of Queen's Gardens") and others. These two interpretations are not mutually exclusive.

[17]On narratives of survival see Ginsburg, "Narratives of Survival" and "Sentimentality and Survival."

[18]See primarily his discussion of the "Prose of the World," a propos of *Don Quixote* (46-50).

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Embedded and Embodied Poetry in Edgar Allan Poe's "Ligeia" and "The Fall of the House of Usher"*

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Edgar Allan Poe constantly revised everything he wrote from publication to publication. His revisions consisted mainly of deletions or alterations of phrases, but they also sometimes included more extended insertions of text, such as epigraphs and even poems. Although there are other instances of inserted poetical elements in Poe's tales (e.g. *The Assignation* 1850), this paper will focus on two examples in which Poe incorporated a poem of his own in one of his short stories. The first is "The Haunted Palace," published in April 1839 and inserted a few months later in his famous short story "The Fall of the House of Usher," and the other "The Conqueror Worm," first published in 1843 and incorporated a few years later, in 1845, in a second revised reprint of his short story "Ligeia" (first published in 1838).

What I propose to show is that, despite their seeming obscurity, the poems are invested with a crucial double function within the narrative. In terms of content, they offer the reader a key for interpreting the mysterious *poetic* characters who utter them. As narrative devices, by their placement in the middle of the stories in which they are embedded, they are figuring as an omen of the bad fortune ahead, foreshadowing the sinister ending of the tales. I will attempt to show that poetic speech in this context is given as a source of solemnity and authority so as to enhance the effect of inevitability in the outcome of the narrated tales. This addition of a disruptive element in the narrative level, aiming to draw the reader's attention on the semantic level, takes a major significance in the tales and contrasts with Poe's strict

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debanastasaki0232.htm>.

technique of composition, as he himself described it in his "Philosophy of Composition" (1846). According to Poe, the achievement of a specific desired effect calls for a tight, strictly focused structure, with no deviation from the *dénouement*.[1] The insertion of an autonomous piece of literature originally disconnected from the story seems to disregard this fundamental rule. Furthermore, the mixture of genres seems equally at odds with his philosophy.

Poe's Poetic Deviations: Theory and Practice

Poe reserves different functions to the modes of literary writing, with poetry being particularly attuned to the expression of "Beauty," and prose being the right mode to convey "Truth":

> Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes—that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to is *most readily* attained in the poem. Now the object, Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable, to a certain extent, in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion a *homeliness* (the truly passionate will comprehend me) which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul. (Poe, "Philosophy of Composition" 456)

If, as Poe claims, Beauty is the province of the poem and appeals to the soul, while Truth and Passion, appealing to the intellect and the heart respectively, are far better rendered in prose and are viewed as "antagonistic" to Beauty, then the insertion of the poems into the prose narrative could be viewed as a possible threat to the coherence of the structural edifice of the story; unless we were to see it as an attempt to achieve, through this intrusion, a synergy of the two genres for the production of a more complete work. This is however not discussed or even hinted at in Poe's "Philosophy of Composition."

Before rushing to declare that Poe disregards the rules he has laid himself in his theoretical writings, it would be of interest to further investigate this discrepancy between Poe's theory and practice. In his "Poetic Principle" (published posthumously in 1850) Poe grounds one of his central ideas, namely the positioning of the poem as the supreme artistic form, in the intuition of the human soul:

> […] but the simple fact is, that, would we but permit ourselves to look into our own souls, we should immediately there discover that under the sun there neither exists nor *can* exist any work more thoroughly dignified—more supremely noble than this very poem—this poem *per se*—this poem which is a poem and nothing more—this poem written solely for the poem's sake. (131)

Although the essay is presented as a scientific treatise on the subject, Poe is choosing to appeal to the emotion in a similar way as he claims poetry does. He is investing "pure" poetry with an aura of mystic truth, while emphasizing its ability to bypass the intellect and have a direct effect on the soul. One would then expect him to very consciously safeguard this autonomy of the poem. And yet, Poe delights in being subversive even regarding his own ideas, and seeming inconsistencies appear often in his writings.[2] As it has been invariably repeated by writers and scholars alike,[3] given Poe's penchant for satire and his predilection for hoaxes, one most often not only can but also *should* question Poe's earnestness in his writings. However, I would like to put forth the idea that Poe actually needs his tenets to be taken seriously so as to build upon a well-secured set of ideas concerning the nature of poetry in order to create the right reception for his literary work, which is then based on a circular argument[4] pertaining to the function of poetry. In other words, while Poe seems to contradict his theory in his own tales, this is in fact a strategy in favour of poetry's supremacy, a means to an end. And to this end, the emphasis on the separate "provinces" of poetry and prose—namely Beauty and Truth—is of central importance.[5]

Despite Poe's quite "purist" ideas as they are exposed in his theoretical writings concerning the autonomy of the poem and its suprem-

acy as an artistic form, it is no surprise that scholars have often pointed out the peculiar poetical nature in Poe's tales as a general characteristic permeating his works. This characteristic can be viewed as blurring, to some extent, the clear divide between the two forms which Poe argues for, at least in terms of what those modes of expression can reveal (namely Beauty for the poem and Truth for prose).[6]

Inserted Poems and Their Multiple Functions

Poe's predilection for the form of the tale and his insistence on its tight structure which best serves its strong point, the "unity of effect," is well known.[7] Viewed in the light of this unity of effect, the insertion at a later date of poems which were originally standing on their own, into tales that were also already completed, raises a series of questions regarding their function. If we look at those two instances of insertions in connection with this compositional rule, then his insistence on a tight structure and on a strategy of no deviation for a perfect result leads us to interpret these insertions either as a deviation from the rule (which is further emphasized by the fact that they were later additions to the text), or to assume that the poems are a necessary structural element to the creation of the "unity of effect." The first issue to take into account is that the insertion of the poems necessarily "reorganizes" the narrative structure of the tales. Both poems are placed in the middle of the story and, although related by the narrator, they clearly break his narration and momentarily eclipse the narrative "I." This breaking of the narrative serves multiple functions, including tempering with the unity of effect.

On the narrative level, the temporary shift away from the narrator's point of view makes possible the subversion of the well-known issue of the often hinted "madness" of the narrator. In "Ligeia" the narrator repeatedly questions his ability to see clearly; for instance, he talks of his "incipient madness" (83); admits that "There was a mad disorder in [his] thoughts" (88); wonders "What inexpressible madness seized me with that thought?" (88). The only secure objective view of Ligeia

as a character, in terms of her being seen from another perspective than the eyes of the narrator, is the quotation of her own words which constitute the poem. In "Usher" both the narrator, who avows: "I was obliged to resolve all into the mere inexplicable vagaries of madness" (95); and Roderick Usher, who exclaims "MADMAN! I TELL YOU THAT SHE NOW STANDS WITHOUT THE DOOR!" (98), bring to our attention the narrator's possibly clouded mental faculty. The quoted poem offers the reader the chance to have, at least seemingly, an unmediated glimpse of Roderick. For, although it is the narrator who is repeating Roderick's poem, we still get to bypass his possibly distorted and certainly objective view. The interpretation given is still the narrator's, but we as readers also have Roderick's verses in hand and can proceed to interpret them according to our own judgment. As James W. Gargano has pointed out,

> the structure of many of Poe's stories clearly reveals an ironical and comprehensive intelligence critically and artistically ordering events so as to establish a vision of life and character which the narrator's very inadequacies help to "prove." […] Poe suggests to his readers ideas never entertained by the narrators. Poe intends his readers to keep their powers of analysis and judgment ever alert; he does not require or desire complete surrender to the experience of the sensations being felt by his characters. (178)

This communication on an external level that the implied author conveys "over the shoulder" of the narrator, so to speak, gives the reader important information while offering a broader scope than the narrator's focalization. In the case of the two poems, this allows for the feeling that, regardless of the narrators' reliability in giving an accurate portrait of the respective characters of Ligeia and Roderick, we get to evaluate on our own their most important concerns which are the subject matter of their artistic expression (the will to live for Ligeia and the fear of madness for Roderick).

I would further like to suggest that the inserted poems are one of the narrative devices[8] Poe uses not only to "reveal" to the reader more than the narrator can convey in terms of plot, but also to communicate more than prose, as a literary form, can convey regarding existential

higher truths. Although Truth is the province of prose, the unreliability of Poe's narrators due to their unstable mental state undermines, at least to a certain extent, the veracity of their tale. In these cases then, paradoxically, it is poetry which conveys the "truth" rather than prose, but it does so in a special way. Poetry in those tales is presented as conveying a higher form of Truth, one that bypasses both the unreliability of the narrator and the limitations of the rationality of prose. It is a truth attained through beauty and intuition, rather than rational thought. On the plot level this translates into the artistic inspiration that is able to access hidden recesses of the artist's soul; on the theoretical level, for poetry to convey Truth through Beauty, it needs to be incorporated into prose in order to gain a firm grip on the reality the prose narrative has constructed.

In the tales, the poems are given as the artistic work of the mysterious characters on which the narration focuses and are therefore a means of self-expression of those characters. Poetry possesses the peculiarity of being a self-expression even without the use of "I," and this gives an extra dimension to the access of "truth" that cannot be attained through the characters' regular speech within the narrative. In terms of how the reader is to receive and interpret them as a form of expression, the implication is that those poems are revealing the innermost part of the character who composed them, which cannot be conveyed by the narrator's description nor by their own self-perception. They are then an added means of characterization which "escapes" not only the narrative frame, but also the consciousness of both the narrator and the character, thus being the repository of some element pertaining to their soul, the part through which, according to Poe, poetry is conceived and perceived.

In both stories the narrators know the characters well, but somehow their essence remains out of their grasp. Both narrators give a meticulous physical description before expressing their inability to portray them, their admittance that the most important element eludes them, or at least that it cannot be conveyed through words. The poems come to supplement this lack. The narrator in "Ligeia" opens his story with

putting emphasis on the limitations of his memory concerning his departed wife who haunts his mind: "I cannot, for my soul, remember how, when, or even precisely where, I first became acquainted with the lady Ligeia" (79).[9] At the same time, he is also aware that her essence[10] is something he has often sensed, but which has always escaped him at every attempt to grasp it intellectually.[11] In "Usher," too, the narrator has known Usher since childhood but finds him "terribly altered" (90); and after describing the physical ravages of his illness he is at a loss what to make of the profound mental changes it has produced in Usher's being. A series of undecided nouns and adjectives—"incoherence," "inconsistency," "tremulous indecision," "unnatural sensations," "anomalous species of terror" (91)—express his inability to convey who Usher has become.

Where the narrators stop and avow their limitations, the poems express what the narrators are unable to do with their narrative, functioning as condensed, albeit abstract portraits of the characters. The limitations of prose narration are thus extended through the poetical expression. Poetry is circumventing logical conscious thinking and allows access to a deeper and less conscious part of the characters. Vagueness, which is a disadvantage in prose, is the means of poetry to convey meaning. Poe asserts that "Words cannot hem it [poetry] in. Its intangible and purely spiritual nature refuses to be bound down within the widest horizon of mere sounds" ("Drake-Halleck" 419). The core element of Ligeia's personality, the trait that cannot be expressed in prose narrative, is presented to be the extraordinary power of her will in her uneven fight with death. "It is this wild longing—it is this eager vehemence of desire for life—*but* for life—that I have no power to portray—no utterance capable of expressing" (82-83), confesses the narrator. He is describing as best he can a feeling that can only be displayed through the poem. Ligeia's own regular speech would not be enough to express what her artistic expression is conveying. Through her ultimate poetical work are revealed all the acuteness of the tragic fight of her will against the inevitability of death and her deep knowledge of the mysteries of life that will allow

her to come back once more from the realm of the dead. For a more comprehensive understanding of the person of Ligeia, the poem should also be viewed in connection to the tale's epigraph which is repeated by the narrator and by Ligeia herself just after the declamation of the poem. The words are attributed to Joseph Glanvill but are of Poe's own invention[12]:

> *And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.* (79)

The narrator sees a "remote connection between this passage in the English moralist and a portion of the character of Ligeia" (81); these words are also Ligeia's only direct verbal expression in the narrative. The emphasis that is put on them by means of a four-time repetition in the tale (including the epigraph) leaves no room to question their significance to the understanding of the work. If there is a central effect for the tale, then it must be the conveyance of this extraordinary desire and power of the will to conquer death. To this effect the poem gives an added dimension through its capability to encapsulate the main element in the story and present it in a concentrated abstract form.

Usher's "indescribable" attribute, that is his connection with the house of Usher and his ability to see interconnections everywhere, to feel them with his over-excited and acute senses, is the counterpart to Ligeia's extraordinary will to live; it is the elusive part the narrator cannot relate and that the poem will reveal. Again it is the core element of the tale, and this is also alluded to by the epigraph which describes the strange ability of the character to resonate what is around him. Usher's descent into insanity due to his overly excited mind is given a powerful expression in "The Haunted Palace," where the edifice and the mind of its master and inhabitant are superimposed[13] and shown to be inextricably linked by one of the most elementary characteristics of poetry: metaphor. The interconnections Usher experiences are projected in his artistic work, and the bond

between Roderick Usher, his sister and the house is manifested not through rational explanation (which makes Usher sound mad) but through artistic sublimation, which elevates it into the sphere of intuitive attestation. Qualified that way, his ability needs no rational explanation (since there is none), but what a poem asserts requires no "proof" as such, it only requires to work in aesthetic terms; if those are met, then it has sufficiently verified what the narrator cannot express without sounding mad.

Another function those poems have within the narrative is connected with the stories' *dénouement*. In his theoretical writings, Poe repeatedly stressed the importance of all elements of the story working towards one ultimate goal.[14] Both poems foreshadow the tragic ending, sealing its inevitability like a sinister omen of fate. In the "Conqueror Worm" the inevitable death and the futility of fighting against it is indicated first by the "angel throng" (83.3) who, "drowned in tears" (83.4), is silently watching "a play of hopes and fears" (83.6) that they have seen over and over again. The "circle that ever returneth in / To the self-same spot" (83.21-22) alludes to the circularity of death and life and its inevitability. The final lines reveal that "the play is the tragedy, 'Man,' / And its hero the Conqueror Worm" (83.39-40) and are announcing that, no matter the extraordinary nature of Ligeia's will, the end is predetermined. In "The Haunted Palace" the final collapse of the Usher siblings, Roderick's mind, and the house, which is the physical manifestation of the mental collapse, is also foreseen. Once the description of the house is connected to the person of Roderick, the serenity and prosperity of the palace presented in the first four stanzas is seen to falter: "evil things, in robes of sorrow, / Assailed the monarch's high estate" (93.33-34), the windows turn crimson, and the "well-tunéd" (93.20) music of the first part becomes "a discordant melody" (93.44). "A hideous throng" (93.47) rushes out, and haunting laughter is heard.

This function of the poems to contain the ending of the story they are part of is reinforced by the sense of a-temporality, a sort of suspension of the narrative time that the poems bring within the tale.

Both stories are narrated retrospectively, giving a linear account of events, but the poems, as we have seen, come to interrupt the narrative voice; they also have the same effect on narrative time. They act like little pockets of a-temporality, giving an overall view of past and future that encompasses, but also supersedes, the characters of the tales. It is significant that they are both impersonal[15] and adopt an almost metaphysical point of view using a vintage point outside earthly affairs, which reinforces the effect of the omniscient authoritative poetical voice. Both poems begin with reference to the realm of angels. In "The Conqueror Worm," the angels are the saddened but passive spectators of the tragedy of man, a play they have witnessed many times before, rendering time unessential. Human time, and the human struggle within it, are reduced to a mere part of the play that the timeless angels are witnessing again and again in their eternity. In "The Haunted Palace" the scene is set in some indeterminate place and time: "In the greenest of our valleys, / By good angels tenanted, / Once a fair and stately palace" (93.1-3).

This remoteness from earthly and narrative time allows for the feeling of the poems encompassing the tales, even though they are embedded in them. While their form is condensed, their time-span is enclosing the time covered within the narrative. They include a remote and indeterminate past as well as the inevitable future fall of both characters, who have created them in a moment of artistic insight brought by the overexcitement of their souls, thus surpassing their creator's intellectual faculties and revealing their own future.[16] This effect of the poems encompassing the tales is further reinforced by their connection to the epigraphs: in "Ligeia," the strong sense of helplessness[17] and the lack of free will,[18] as well as the anonymity the tragedy of "Man" suggests, contrast sharply with the emphasis on the boundless power of the individual will expressed in the epigraph. They also contrast with Ligeia's own extraordinary will that permits her to conquer death and momentarily come back to life through the narrator's second bride's body in the horrifying scene which concludes the tale.

The poems have yet another function, as they are the structural elements of the tale which convey both the extra "complexity" and the "undercurrent" meaning which gives the tale its depth. According to Poe's theoretical exposition of the genre, these are indispensable elements for the composition of a good tale:

> Two things are invariably required—first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, secondly, some amount of suggestiveness—some under-current, however indefinite, of meaning. It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that *richness* (to borrow from colloquy a forcible term) which we are too fond of confounding with *the ideal*. ("The Philosophy of Composition" 463)[19]

This function of the poems is reinforced by Ligeia herself and by both the narrator and Usher. Ligeia only speaks once throughout the narrative, and her words, coming directly after the declamation of the poem, stress its connection to the epigraph, thus hinting at the poem's function as the key to the understanding of the tale:

> "O God!" half shrieked Ligeia, leaping to her feet and extending her arms aloft with a spasmodic movement, as I made an end of these lines—"O God! O Divine Father!—shall these things be undeviatingly so?—shall this Conqueror be not once conquered? Are we not part and parcel in Thee? Who—who knoweth the mysteries of the will with its vigor? Man doth not yield him to the angels, *nor unto death utterly*, save only through the weakness of his feeble will." (83)

By linking the epigraph on the power of the will as a general human tragic trait with her own personal struggle against death, and by giving it a religious tone through her address to the "Divine Father," Ligeia is bringing together in her character the different elements of the story (epigraph, narrative, inserted poem), thus making visible the necessary interconnections that form the "undercurrent of meaning" that lends its unity of effect to the tale. The narrator in "Usher" also draws the reader's attention quite overtly (we could even say bluntly) to this function of the poem: "I was, perhaps, the more forcibly impressed with it, as he gave it, because, in the *under or mystic current of*

its meaning, I fancied that I perceived, and for the first time, a full consciousness on the part of Usher, of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne" (93; italics mine).

The "Haunted Palace" is in a way the manifestation of Roderick Usher's mysterious "illness" (for lack of a better word from the narrator) which makes him able to sense all the intricate and mystical connections that are not visible to the "sane" mind. In the poem, the palace takes the shape of its sovereign: the blending of the person and the edifice is suggested from the very beginning ("Radiant palace—reared its head," 93.4) and is sustained all through the poem with the "two luminous windows" turning into "red-litten" windows (93.18, 93.42) marking, with this colour denoting turmoil, the point when madness takes over. The character of Usher is in fact the connecting agent both between poem and narrative on the structural narrative level, and between literal and metaphorical (i.e. poetic) meaning on the semantic level.

A fusion can be seen to take place if we interpret Roderick Usher as being madness or poeticity[20] personified. Already in the epigraph Usher is likened to art: *"Son cœur est un luth suspendu; / Sitôt qu'on le touche il résonne.*—De Béranger" (88), and the poem, which represents Usher himself,[21] is also stressing its link to the epigraph. Usher's thoughts are first portrayed in the poem as being organized "To a lute's well-tunéd law" (93.20), only to develop into "a discordant melody" (93.44) when he sinks into madness.

Roderick Usher interprets ("reads") the house through the interconnections of its structure,[22] inviting us to do the same with the poem and the tale: when the narrator reads to him a passage from "The Mad Trist," he interprets it through its analogy with his reality: "And now—to-night—Ethelred—ha! ha!—the breaking of the hermit's door, and the death-cry of the dragon, and the clangour of the shield!—*say, rather*, the rending of her coffin, and the grating of the iron hinges of her prison, and her struggles within the coppered archway of the vault! Oh whither shall I fly?" (98; italics mine). The events in the text correspond indeed to the narrative reality. Madeline stands in front of

her brother demanding revenge and blurring the limits between the literary text which is read out loud and reality, leaving the question of the "order" of events unanswered. Is it that Usher "reads" his inescapable fate in the texts, or is it the texts that "evoke" the events? In either case, the texts (both the poem and "The Mad Trist") double the events, investing them with solemnity, and creating an atmosphere of inevitability; the fall is "written" and therefore inescapable. This feeling of being caught in a vicious circle with no way out is also intensified by the fully circular motion on the structural level, with both tales closing with the repetition of their title. "The Fall of the House of Usher" starts with the narrator's description of the decaying house itself surrounded by the tarn, and ends with the phrase "and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the 'HOUSE OF USHER'" (98). "Ligeia" as well begins with the narrator expressing his inability to remember when he "first became acquainted with the lady Ligeia" (79) and ends with the words "LADY LIGEIA!" (88).

How Poetry Conveys Truth

Within this circular, enclosed and confined space of the tales, the poems are no longer self-sufficient textual entities; they are part of the tale, but also "part" of the fictional characters. The uttering of the poems, which not only exist as written text but are also words spoken out loud, provides a two-way communication between prose narrative and poetic form. It gives the poems more than just a voice; it gives them a body through which they intrude into the narrative, while at the same time they become an intrinsic part of the characterization concerning the utterer, uncovering his supernatural abilities to access something more beautiful, more powerful, and elusive than what earthly existence can offer. Ligeia has the name of a Siren,[23] which hints at her song being as fatal as it is unearthly beautiful. The "thrilling and enthralling eloquence of her low musical language" (79), "the

almost magical melody, modulation, distinctness, and placidity of her very low voice" (81) imply that the ascendance she has over the narrator is not only due to the content of her teachings but also to the poetic form through which they are expressed. She does not only produce poems, she is poetic in her nature by virtue of her siren qualities which are manifested through her entire being. She is presented, even in her physical attributes, as a work of art: her skin "set[s] forth the full force of the Homeric epithet, 'hyacinthine!'" (80), and in her chin the narrator finds "the gentleness of breadth, the softness and the majesty, the fullness and the spirituality, of the Greek—the contour which the god Apollo revealed but in a dream, to Cleomenes, the son of the Athenian" (80). But it is the eyes, in which the narrator senses there is to be found "something more profound than the well of Democritus" (81), that hold all the mystic secrets.[24]

Usher functions as an incarnation of the poetic principle in a similar way. His quasi-assimilation into the lyrical instrument of the lute and his quality to vibrate in unison with the cosmic interconnections through his unnaturally heightened physical and spiritual senses present him as a sort of "medium" through which higher truths and hidden meanings can be reached. The narrator here again stresses the idea that mystical truths which cannot be conveyed through words are expressed in Usher's entire being: "Yet I should fail in any attempt to convey an idea of the exact character of the studies, or of the occupations, in which he involved me, or led me the way. An excited and highly distempered ideality threw a sulphureous lustre over all. His long improvised dirges will ring forever in my ears" (92).

This function of poetry as a medium for the conveyance of some higher truth in general is one of Poe's main theoretical tenets. In "The Poetic Principle" he identifies the source of the power poetry has to move us as "a certain, petulant, impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp *now*, wholly, here on earth, at once and for ever, those divine and rapturous joys, of which *through* the poem, or *through* the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses" ("The Poetic Principle" 470).[25] It is this exact same feeling that the narrator of "Ligeia"

describes as his response to her entire person, which functions as the trigger for the reminiscence of what the soul knows as truth:

> There is no point, among the many incomprehensible anomalies of the science of mind, more thrillingly exciting than the fact—never, I believe, noticed in the schools—that in our endeavours to recall to memory something long forgotten, we often find ourselves *upon the very verge* of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember. And thus how frequently, in my intense scrutiny of Ligeia's eyes, have I felt approaching the full knowledge of their expression—felt it approaching—yet not quite be mine—and so at length entirely depart! (81)

Ligeia's poetic quality thus allows the narrator to access a truth that is beyond the mortal scope of man: "My brain reeled as I hearkened entranced, to a melody more than mortal—to assumptions and aspirations which mortality had never before known" (82). This transcendent quality of poetry is a constant in Poe's artistic expression. As Edward Davidson has demonstrated, poetry was for Poe "an act of discovery and penetration; from Coleridge he had obtained the view that man's perceptive powers can transcend this world of space and time and give him insights as profound and earth-disturbing as the great discoveries in the physical sciences" (40).

This brings us back to Poe's clearly distinguished realms of poetry and prose which he emphasized in his theoretical writings. By assigning the realm of Truth to prose and reserving the realm of Beauty to poetry, Poe indirectly puts them in opposition with one another, while prompting the reader to give primacy in his reading to either the one or the other, depending on the form of expression chosen by the author. A mixture of the two seems somehow contradictory in a genre like the tale, in which, Poe insisted, everything should converge to one single aim. What I would like to suggest is that the insertions of the poems in the tales do not constitute, however, a contradiction in Poe's thought, but are rather part of a strategy which has the ultimate goal of merging the two in a deliberately circular argument. That argument, if successful, brings out poetry as a self-evident truth because it appeals to intuition and not to the intellect. The turning point of this

strategy, the final step, is to be found in the preface of what Poe considered his masterpiece, *Eureka: A Prose Poem*. This work, which contains Poe's intuitional view of the universe, is dedicated:

> To the few who love me and whom I love—to those who feel rather than to those who think—to the dreamers and those who put faith in dreams as in the only realities—I offer this Book of Truths, not in its character of Truth-Teller, but for the Beauty that abounds in its Truth; constituting it true. To these I present the composition as an Art-product alone,—let us say as a Romance; or, if I be not urging too lofty a claim, as a Poem.
>
> *What I here propound is true:*—therefore it cannot die:—or if by any means it be now trodden down so that it die, it will "rise again to the Life Everlasting."
>
> Nevertheless, it is as a Poem only that I wish this work to be judged after I am dead. (*Eureka* 132)

By addressing *Eureka* to "those who feel rather than to those who think," it is "as a Poem only" that Poe wishes us to judge it; and yet he boldly declares that it is a "Book of Truths," and, what is more, a book of scientific truths that need, however, no scientific proof other than their beauty. Although *Eureka* is written in prose, Poe asks us to judge his work as a poem, that is on such aesthetic terms which need no empirical proof other than the soul's elevation due to the Beauty expressed, only to then turn his argument on its head and say that it is, however, this Beauty which is "constituting it true," thus providing the "proof of Truth" through the non-demonstrable quality of Beauty.

Poe's demand for the judgment of his work "as a Poem" is to be viewed in connection with what he considers as poetry and its function. It is clear that the plea for poetry is a plea not to look for the "proof" in the conventional sense, but to take the text's truth at face value. Poe further explains this process in *Eureka* insisting on the sense of symmetry:

> The sense of the symmetrical is an instinct which may be depended upon with an almost blindfold reliance. It is the poetical essence of the Universe—*of the Universe* which, in the supremeness of its symmetry, is but the most sublime of poems. Now symmetry and consistency are convertible terms:—thus Poetry and Truth are one. A thing is consistent in the ratio of its truth—

> true in the ratio of its consistency. *A perfect consistency, I repeat, can be nothing but an absolute truth*. We may take it for granted, then, that man cannot long or widely err if he suffer himself to be guided by his poetical, which I have maintained to be his truthful, in being his symmetrical, instinct. (*Eureka* 134)

This symmetry, which is traditionally a characteristic of poetry as a form,[26] is also carefully provided in the two tales discussed here through the introduction of the poems which reflect into the world of Beauty the Truth that is the ultimate goal of the tales, thus providing the guarantee for their success as credible narratives. Read in this light, the poems in "Ligeia" and in "The Fall of the House of Usher" add more than just a different point of view. By virtue of their poetic nature, they introduce into the tales, at the point where the narrator's reliability is questioned, the guarantee of the Truth which pertains to poetry, a truth directly aiming at the soul's intuition which, through a circular argument pointing to the notion of symmetry, encloses its proof within itself.

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NOTES

[1]For a detailed analysis of Poe's conception of the tale as a genre see Thompson.

[2]For instance, in his "Philosophy of Composition," Poe emphasizes the importance of a well-organized plot and presents it as the prerequisite to any literary attempt: "Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its *dénouement* before anything be attempted with the pen" (453). But in a review on Edward Lytton Bulwer, we find him claiming plot is not important: "A good tale may be written without it. Some of the finest fictions in the world have neglected it altogether. We see nothing of it in Gil Blas, in the Pilgrim's Progress, or in Robinson Crusoe. Thus it is not an essential in story-telling at all" (*Graham's Magazine*, November 1841; *Essays and Reviews* 151). Another instance of his inconsistency is that he often goes against his own rules. While Poe stresses that a work, especially a poem, should be short enough to be read in one sitting, and while he also gives a precise account of what constitutes a poem and how it operates differently than prose, he nevertheless considered as his best work his lengthy *Eureka*, which deviated from these rules. He also characterized this hybrid

text as a "prose poem." Stuart Levine and Susan F. Levine, the editors of Poe's *Critical Theory: The Major Documents*, are right in giving the author's inconsistency the prominent place it deserves in his work: "That Poe's ideas sometimes contradict one another should not upset readers overmuch; indeed, acquiring a feel for his inconsistency is a good first step toward getting to know Poe's mind" (4).

[3]Henry James and T. S. Eliot considered Poe's work mainly to appeal to the adolescent mind. According to Henry James, to take Poe "with more than a certain degree of seriousness is to lack seriousness one's self" (*French Poets and Novelists* 76); Eliot attributes to Poe "the intellect of a highly gifted young person before puberty" ("From Poe to Valéry" 35). Stuart Levine and Susan F. Levine describe Poe's theoretical text "The Rationale of Verse" as "bluffing and shoddy scholarship" (78). More recently, Stott argued that *Eureka* should be interpreted as a hoax attempting to reveal the gullibility of its readers, thus refuelling an old scholarly debate on that matter. It is interesting and quite telling for the case of Poe's reception by critics that, although Stott points out that we could "talk of irony rather than deception" and quotes critics who stress this aspect of his work, he however insists that: "Yet Poe was a *hoaxer*: one who took pleasure in mocking the public" (58). The reception of Poe's theoretical essays has also suffered due to this "hoaxer" image of the author. Even at the time of its publication, "The Philosophy of Composition," where Poe illustrates his theoretical ideas through his step by step description of how he composed "The Raven," was suspected to be a hoax; "Mallarmé called it an intellectual game" (see Voloshin 292n5).

[4]Poe is providing a prescriptive theory which comes from his own way of writing, thus making his work the perfect embodiment of artistic production. He even goes further than that in order to secure its reception; in 1845 he anonymously publishes a review of his own *Tales* where he asserts the originality and novelty of his work and establishes himself as a "genius": "A writer must have the fullest belief in his statements, or must simulate that belief perfectly, to produce an absorbing interest in the mind of his reader. That power of simulation can only be possessed by a man of high genius. It is the result of a peculiar combination of mental faculties […] It is possessed by Mr. POE, in its perfection" (Poe qtd. in Voloshin 285-86).

[5]In his famous review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales* Poe seizes the opportunity to stress this point once more: "We have said that the tale has a point of superiority even over the poem. In fact, while the *rhythm* of this latter is an essential aid in the development of the poem's highest idea—the idea of the Beautiful—the artificialities of this rhythm are an inseparable bar to the development of all points of thought or expression which have their basis in *Truth.* But Truth is often, and in very great degree, the aim of the tale. [...] The writer of the prose tale, in short, may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought and expression—(The ratiocinative, for example, the sarcastic or the humorous) which are not only antagonistical to the nature of the poem, but absolutely forbidden by one of its most peculiar and indispensable adjuncts; we allude of course, to rhythm" (*Essays and Reviews* 573).

[6]As Walter Evans points out in his overview of the scholarship on that matter, Edward Davidson has stipulated that "[t]hese tales are indeed 'Poems'" (154); Thomas Woodson sees Poe's fiction as tending "toward the conditions of lyric poetry" (Evans 141); Caroline Gordon and Allen Tate point to a "poetical" unity in "Usher" (Evans 141). Evans himself puts forth the view that "Poe demonstrably composed the body of the story of elements central to the lyric method but largely irrelevant to plotted narrative progression; he clearly subordinates combined incidents to patterned images" (140). The poems themselves have not so much been regarded as intrinsic elements of the narrative but rather as pointers to the poetic nature of the text. Tallack has seen "The Haunted Palace" as "imag[ing] the story's poetic status" (51); and Kennedy has proposed that "Ligeia represents the presence of poetry within the sphere of the fictional text" (120). Bruce Olson has tackled the issue of the presence of the poem within the narrative but only as "proof" of the narrative itself: "Paradoxically, the poem really exists, embedded within the 'fiction' which accounts for its possibility; and the very existence of the poem itself helps to establish the 'truth' of the 'fiction'" (558).

[7]In his review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales* Poe repeats this undeviating rule for the success of a tale: "If his [the author's] very initial sentence tend [sic] not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and this is an end unattainable by the novel" (*A Study of the Short Fiction* 125).

[8]The most common device Poe uses is the narrator's own inconsistencies or obsessions. As the following example shows, the narrator is presented as being aware of his obsessions, often even questioning the reality of his own experiences due to their unnatural nature (in this instance, Ligeia trying to come back to life through Rowena's body): "And again I sunk into visions of Ligeia—and again, (what marvel that I shudder while I write?) *again* there reached my ears a low sob from the region of the ebony bed" ("Ligeia" 87).

[9]On the function of memory in Poe's poetic economy as well as for an analysis of how the two poems work within the tales as a device for an economy "that always is doubled" (28) see William E. Engel.

[10]This sensation that Ligeia is more than he knows is expressed a few times in the tale; see, e.g.: "how frequently, in my intense scrutiny of Ligeia's eyes, have I felt approaching the full knowledge of their expression—felt it approaching—yet not quite be mine—and so at length entirely depart!" (81).

[11]Right in the opening paragraph the narrator is struggling with his knowledge of Ligeia that seems to be intuitive and emotional but for that very reason also quite elusive: "Or, perhaps, I cannot *now* bring these points to mind, because, in truth, the character of my beloved, her rare learning, her singular yet placid cast of beauty, and the thrilling and enthralling eloquence of her low musical lan-

guage, made their way into my heart by paces so steadily and stealthily progressive that they have been unnoticed and unknown" (79).

[12]On possible functions of epigraphs in literary texts see Kronshage in this issue of *Connotations* <http://www.connotations.de/debkronshage0232.htm>.

[13]The palace takes the shape of a face, it "rear[s] its head" (93.4), has "two luminous windows" (93.18) for eyes, and "pearl and ruby" (93.25) for teeth and lips. The two images of the palace and the face are blended in the poem.

[14]"It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention" ("The Philosophy of Composition" 453). See also the quote in n7 from Poe's review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales.*

[15]Both poems are narrative and not lyrical poems, which might have been expected because they are given as expressing the character's inmost being. However, this impersonal poetic voice allows for the poems to function as a *mise en abyme*, containing the expression of the core element of the entire tale.

[16]This form of trance is characteristic of all of Roderick's artistic creations: "the fervid *facility* of his *impromptus* could not be so accounted for. They must have been, and were, in the notes, as well as in the words of his wild fantasias (for he not unfrequently accompanied himself with rhymed verbal improvisations), the result of that intense mental collectedness and concentration to which I have previously alluded as observable only in particular moments of the highest artificial excitement" ("Usher" 93). Concerning Ligeia's poem we only learn that it was "composed by herself not many days before," but her strong emotional reaction to hearing the narrator read it at her own request shows that her composition was conceived in internal turmoil. Her own words pronounced by the narrator excite her emotions anew: "'O God!' half shrieked Ligeia, leaping to her feet and extending her arms aloft with a spasmodic movement, as I made an end of these lines—'O God! O Divine Father!—shall these things be undeviatingly so?'" ("Ligeia" 83).

[17]Even the angels are merely spectators of "A play of hopes and fears" (93.6).

[18]Men are described as "Mimes," "Mere puppets" (83.9, 83.12).

[19]Poe goes on in this passage to show the wrong usage of this literary device and its detrimental effects in the poetry of the transcendentalists: "It is the *excess* of the suggested meaning—it is the rendering this the upper instead of the under current of the theme—which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind) the socalled poetry of the socalled transcendentalists" ("The Philosophy of Composition" 463).

[20]In his article on "Poeticity," András Sándor defines the term as follows: "poeticity is an experiential phenomenon that emerges when verbal processes, activations of the linguistic system in discourse, trigger and interact with nonverbal mental processes, activations of nonlinguistic systems, that prove strong or predominant" (299). He stresses that "[p]oetic texts differ from non-poetic texts by

having a specific kind of openness or indeterminacy, and a specific kind of strategy for dealing with it" (300n1) that is textually based and can be analyzed linguistically. This is the way both poems function within their narrative prose frameworks.

[21]The spontaneous and peculiar artistic expression is said to be "the result of that intense mental collectedness and concentration" Usher exhibits (93), and the narrator fancies he perceives in the specific poem "a full consciousness on the part of Usher, of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne" (93).

[22]"The conditions of the sentience had been here, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones—in the order of their arrangement, as well as in that of the many *fungi* which overspread them, and of the decayed trees which stood around—above all, in the long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement, and in its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn […]. The result was discoverable, he added, in that silent yet importunate and terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family, and which made *him* what I now saw him—what he was" ("Usher" 94).

[23]For a discussion of this aspect of the tale see Jones.

[24]"The 'strangeness,' however, which I found in the eyes, was of a nature distinct from the formation, or the colour, or the brilliancy of the features, and must, after all, be referred to the *expression*. Ah, word of no meaning! behind whose vast latitude of mere sound we intrench our ignorance of so much of the spiritual. The expression of the eyes of Ligeia! How for long hours have I pondered upon it! How have I, through the whole of a midsummer night, struggled to fathom it! What *was* it—that something more profound than the well of Democritus—which lay far within the pupils of my beloved? What *was* it? I was possessed with a passion to discover. Those eyes! those large, those shining, those divine orbs! they became to me twin stars of Leda, and I to them devoutest of astrologers" ("Ligeia" 80-81).

[25]We can see here a strong Platonic influence. Poe, however, seems to suggest that poetry can convey, albeit briefly, a clearer picture of the imperfect images of the true Forms or Ideas of which, according to Plato's myth of the cave (*The Republic*, Book 7, 514a-517e), man can only see the reflection. Poetry is then presented as a means to transcend momentarily man's limitations and gain access to a higher form of knowledge.

[26]In "The Haunted Palace" the poem is divided into two uneven sections with the first four stanzas describing the prosperity of the kingdom in the past which corresponds to the time when Roderick Usher still had a clear mind, and the last two describing the descent into madness. We notice the same slight imbalance in Ligeia's poem, with the entering in the scene of the "conqueror worm" occurring in the fourth of the five stanzas. Both poems have the rhyme scheme ABABCDCD. This slight deviation of poetical symmetry is the indication that something is wrong; in the case of Usher it mirrors the imbalance of his mental faculties and in Ligeia's case it reflects her excessive fear of death that causes her

to lose her mental serenity. For an analysis of the theme of symmetry in "Usher" see Herrmann and Kostis.

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The Function of Poetic Epigraphs in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*[*]

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Daniel Deronda was never what one might call a "popular" novel. When F. R. Leavis, in 1946-47, notoriously described it as consisting of two separate halves, he was merely summarizing the critical reception of the book since its publication. By comparing the "magnificent […] achievement [of] the good half" to the "astonishing badness of the bad half" (94), Leavis voiced the common discontent with the book's lack of unity. He therefore suggested a new title for "the good part of *Daniel Deronda*," which he then kept using throughout his essay: "*Gwendolen Harleth*" (100). The considerable impact of Leavis's *Great Tradition* on the further reception of *Daniel Deronda* can be seen by the humble scholarly interest the novel attracted in the period immediately after the publication of Leavis's book.[1]

Leavis's criticism is at odds with Eliot's expressed belief in the novel's unity. In 1876 she complained to Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon about readers who "cut the books to scraps and talk of nothing but Gwendolen," and added: "I meant everything in the book to be related to everything else there" (*The George Eliot Letters* 6: 290). The sharp contrast between the notion of unity on the one hand (Eliot), and the feeling of a split between plot lines on the other (Leavis) has been an issue of critical debate ever since, and an unresolved one, mostly due to the fact that literary critics never agreed on what "unity" in a fictional text is supposed to denote. Apologists of the novel's unity have argued for such diverse forms of "unity" as self-sufficiency (Leavis 138), "thematic unity" (Beaty 18), "structural unity" (Carroll 369),

[*]For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debkronshage0232.htm>.

"unity of imaginative conception" (Daleski 28), and a unity of imagery (Hardy 14). In addition, the general dissatisfaction that readers have felt about *Daniel Deronda*'s bipartite structure ever since its publication seems to be based on the Aristotelian notion of the unity of plot, in which the "various incidents must be so arranged that if any one of them is differently placed or taken away the effect of wholeness will be seriously disrupted" (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451a). That concept reverberates in one of Eliot's later poetic essays, "Notes on Form in Art" (1868), in which she defines unity as that in which "no part can suffer increase or diminution without a participation of all other parts in the effect produced and a consequent modification of the organism as a whole" (*Selected Critical Writing* 358). The resemblance between Eliot's definition of formal unity and Aristotle's definition of plot unity points at her notion of the novel as a "wholeness […] which may be broken up into other wholes" (*Selected Critical Writing* 358), i.e. formal unity *and* plot unity.

I argue that Eliot attempted to achieve an overall unity by, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, including quotations from other texts than her own in the form of epigraphs. These paratextual elements link the main text of the novel to numerous other texts outside it, thereby potentially threatening the sense of closure that a novel often is supposed to have. Eliot's specific use of epigraphs does, however, achieve a unifying effect by linking several aspects of the novel (different topics, characters, plot lines, images and so forth) together. To highlight this idea of internal unity achieved through the inclusion of external texts, I will confine the following analysis to the *poetic* epigraphs in the novel. Thereby I intend to demonstrate how Eliot uses texts from another genre (poetry) to unite different characters and topics of her prose work, the novel *Daniel Deronda*. I further argue that Eliot employs a dialectic method to create a sense of unity, by sublating the epigraph's internal/external, textual/paratextual, and poetic/prose dichotomies. A detailed survey of the epigraph's literary functions, its formal classification, and its quality to indicate literary

history is added to the analysis of the organic function in *Daniel Deronda* in form of a comprehensive supplement.

Poetic Epigraphs and Organic Unity in *Daniel Deronda*

Daniel Deronda contains a total of 74 epigraphs, one book epigraph, and one epigraph for each of the 70 chapters, of which three contain an additional second epigraph. Of these 74 epigraphs almost two thirds, 44, are poetic epigraphs (i.e. heterogeneric, see supplement 1.a),[2] while only one third is written in prose (homogeneric). It is conspicuous that the poetic epigraphs in *Daniel Deronda* constantly resurface in the main body of the text. The epigraph to chapter 17—the crucial chapter in which Deronda meets his future wife, Mirah Lapidoth, for the first time and saves her from drowning herself in the Thames—is taken from Alfred Lord Tennyson's dramatic monologue "Locksley Hall" (written in 1835; published 1842):

> This is truth the poet sings
> That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.
> —TENNYSON: Locksley Hall

By quoting the Poet Laureate of her day (1850-92), Eliot includes the authoritative voice of a prominent poet in her own text. The final word of the first line, "sings," adumbrates some of the events in the chapter itself (proleptic function; supplement 2.e), as it is through singing that Deronda and Mirah meet in this chapter. In addition, the twice repeated word "sorrow" foreshadows the desperate situation of Mirah, which gives her the idea of committing suicide, thus providing emotional foreshadowing (supplement 2.f). Furthermore, these two lines have a clear affective function: the "crown of sorrow" is meant to set readers in the appropriate mood for the encounter with Mirah Lapidoth, and to rouse their compassion.

The two lines from Tennyson's poem reappear in the chapter itself. Deronda is rowing in his boat on the Thames one fine summer eve-

ning. While he follows the current he thinks about the course of his own life, feeling deeply insecure about which road to choose. A barge approaches him, and he is forced to navigate closer to the shore. Unconsciously, he sings a song, a

> low-toned chant which had haunted his throat all the way up the river—the gondolier's song in the "Otello," where Rossini has worthily set to music the immortal words of Dante—
>
> "Nessun maggior dolore
> Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
> Nella miseria:"—
>
> and, as he rested on his oar, the pianissimo fall of the melodic wail "nella miseria" was distinctly audible on the brink of the water. […] Deronda, awaiting the barge, now turned his head to the river-side, and saw at a few yard's distance from him a figure which might have been an impersonation of the misery he was unconsciously giving voice to: a girl […] (187).

This passage corresponds both directly and indirectly to the poetic epigraph to this chapter, the two lines from Tennyson. Firstly, it contains singing: Deronda is singing a song from an Italian opera (Rossini) based on an English play (Shakespeare's *Othello*), which also contains the words of yet another poet, Dante, in the form of a quotation from the *Inferno* (5.121-23). Then, it also describes, just as Tennyson's poem does, the "sorrow's crown of sorrow," the "maggior dolore," which is (Tennyson again) "remembering happier things," "ricordarsi del tempo felice." In order to further highlight this connection, Eliot even inserts a footnote (i.e. another paratextual device) after the Dante quotation, in which she explains: "Dante's words are best rendered by our own poet in the lines at the head of the chapter" (187).

This is not an isolated case. Chapter 39 of *Daniel Deronda* displays a similar structure of quotation and repetition. After having rescued Mirah from committing suicide, Deronda intends to establish her as a singing teacher in London's high society and arranges an audition with the famous German musician, Herr Klesmer. The chapter opens with a poetic epigraph taken from Goethe's *West-Östlicher Divan*, quoted in German:

> Vor den Wissenden sich stellen
> Sicher ist's in allen Fällen!
> Wenn du lange dich gequälet
> Weiß er gleich wo dir es fehlet;
> Auch auf Beifall darfst du hoffen,
> Denn er weiß wo du's getroffen. (*Daniel Deronda* 481)[3]

At this point of the novel the reader knows that the expert in question ("der Wissende") is Herr Klesmer (and his wife, the pianist Catherine Arrowpoint, now Mrs. Klesmer), and that it is Mirah who wants to step before that "Wissender" to sing—which she does (affording an opportunity to quote numerous songs and poems put to music in the course of the chapter). Finally, Herr Klesmer passes his judgment, saying to Mirah: "Let us shake hands: you are a musician" (484). He recommends her an appropriate teacher to further her musical education and explains:

> "She [the teacher] is a thorough musician, and has a soul with more ears to it than you will often get in a musician. Your singing will satisfy her:—
> 'Vor den Wissenden sich stellen;'
> you know the rest?"
> "'Sicher ist's in allen Fällen,'"
> said Mirah, promptly. And Klesmer saying "Schön!" put out his hand again as a good-bye. (485)

Here the epigraph recurs, quoted by one of the characters. It thus becomes directly incorporated in the main text itself, making explicit what the reader already knew, namely the quite straightforward relation between epigraph and plot of this particular chapter. The epigraph, generally separated from the rest of the text (written, as Genette says, *en exergue*, literally meaning "*off* the work"; Genette 144), is thus made an organic part of the chapter itself. The poem by Goethe reappears a second time in the chapter when Mrs. Meyrick, the woman who has taken care of Mirah in London, approaches and asks her about the meaning of Klesmer's final words. Mirah translates—both for Mrs. Meyrick's convenience and for the convenience of those readers of the novel who do not understand German: "It means

that it is safer to do anything—singing or anything else—before those who know and understand all about it" (487).

Both examples (from chapters 17 and 39) demonstrate the recurrence of words and phrases from the poetic epigraphs either in the discourse of the narrator or the direct speech of characters: sometimes *verbatim*, sometimes slightly modified, sometimes translated. Moreover, both poetic epigraphs occur in chapters that are deeply concerned with singing. Following this hint of a nexus between music and poetry, I would like to bring into consideration a contrasting example.

Unlike the chapters that deal with Mirah's success as a singer, those telling of Gwendolen's complete failure to ascend to the high ranks of musical genius are preceded not by poetic epigraphs, but by epigraphs written in an extremely vitriolic prose, like the following, which precedes chapter 23:

> The most obstinate beliefs that mortals entertain about themselves are such as they have no evidence for beyond a constant, spontaneous pulsing of their self-satisfaction—as it were a hidden seed of madness, a confidence that they can move the world without precise notion of standing-place or lever. (250)

As if the smashing of Gwendolen's hopes by Herr Klesmer had at this point in the novel not yet been made obvious enough, the narrator evokes, just before the arrival of the sincere musician, the two roles in which Gwendolen had formerly imagined herself: that of Saint Cecilia (chapter 3) and Hermione in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (chapter 6). Gwendolen is waiting for Klesmer, while

> the melancholy waning sunshine of autumn rested on the leaf-strown grass and came mildly through the windows in slanting bands of brightness over the old furniture […] over […] the superannuated organ at which Gwendolen had pleased herself with acting Saint Cecilia on her first joyous arrival, the crowd of pallid, dusty knick-knacks seen through the open doors of the ante-chamber where she had achieved the wearing of her Greek dress as Hermione. (251)

Not only does the "superannuated organ" in this scene foreshadow the failure of her musical career, it also signals the role evoked by Hermione, which had peculiarly mortified her. When Herr Klesmer, accompanying the play, had struck a chord, a hidden panel in the wall had sprung open, revealing the portrait of an upturned dead face. On this occasion, Gwendolen "looked like a statue into which a soul of Fear had entered: her pallid lips were parted […] she fell on her knees and put her hands before her face" (61). The reader is alerted that the upcoming meeting with Klesmer will have disastrous consequences for her future life: a warning conducted by both the extensive allusions to two of Gwendolen's greatest artistic failures and the epigraph itself. The epigraph, against all expectations, is not a *poetic* epigraph, but a sardonic and biting criticism in a matter-of-fact *prose*, finding fault with "obstinate beliefs," "madness," and "self-satisfaction"—in reference to Gwendolen, as the reader may understand. It is not difficult to see the difference between this prose and the earlier quoted poetry, "Auch auf Beifall darfst du hoffen, / Denn er weiß wo du's getroffen." Again there are words and phrases from the epigraph which resurface in the chapter itself, as for instance the quoted "self-satisfaction," which variedly recurs as Gwendolen's "self-estimate," "her self-confidence," her "self-opinion," her "self-contentment," and her "self-confident visions," all against which Klesmer in his speech sets the need for her "self-denial" (251, 256-57, 262-63).

The novel's preoccupation with music and musicians brings me to the musical aspects of the epigraph. The recurrence of words and phrases from the poetic epigraphs within the chapters proper can be compared to the musical motif, especially since this interpretation is in line with the musical content of the respective chapters that deal with Gwendolen's failed opera career, Mirah's beginning musical career, and Leonora's former musical career. The epigraphs establish a nexus between poetry (in the form of poetic epigraphs) and music, which remains mostly constant throughout the novel.

A further illustration of this connection between music and poetry in the novel occurs in chapter 51, when Deronda travels to Italy in

order to meet, for the first time in his life, his mother, the princess Leonora von Halm-Eberstein, the former Primadonna Alcharisi. Prefixed to this chapter is another poetic epigraph which deals with musical art:

> She held the spindle as she sat,
> Erinna with the thick-coiled mat
> Of raven hair and deepest agate eyes,
> Gazing with a sad surprise
> At surging visions of her destiny—
> To spin the byssus drearily
> In insect-labour, while the throng
> Of gods and men wrought deeds that poets wrought in song. (624)

This poem is Eliot's own, "Erinna," and deals with the eponymous young Greek poet who was chained to the spinning wheel by her mother, which precluded the development of her artistic talent. The final word of the poetic epigraph ("song") opens up a door to the story of Leonora's life, just as Deronda is opening the door to her hotel rooms in the very first sentence of the chapter directly following the epigraph. The reader is thus invited to compare Erinna, the poet who was forced into a social code of conduct by her parents and who died in consequence, to Leonora, the artist who disobeyed the law of the father and lived. The relationship is thrown into further relief by the resurfacing of certain motifs from the poetic epigraph, when Leonora tells her son:

> "[…] you can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl. […] My father […] hated that Jewish women should be thought of by the Christian world as a sort of ware to make public singers and actresses of. As if we were not the more enviable for that! That is a chance of escaping from bondage." (631)

The difficulties depicted in the poetic epigraph, Erinna's inability to free herself from the fetters of social constraint in order to write poetry, recur in Leonora's narration, yet with a decisive turn. Unlike

Erinna, she managed to use her talent as a singer to surmount her father's will, even though this decision forced her to give her two-year old son Daniel Deronda into the care of Sir Hugo, where he grew up in ignorance of his mother's identity.

Thus Eliot's epigraphs form throughout her novel an almost Wagnerian *leitmotif*, a musical phrase, as, for instance, a particular melody or chord, which announces the occurrence or approach of some character or some action, or which even—and this was certainly the real innovation of Wagner's technique—evokes some thought process, a psychological dimension otherwise inexpressible. Yet Wagner's music is, as Carl Dahlhaus has pointed out, more than just a *leitmotif* collection ("Ansammlung von Leitmotiven"; Dahlhaus 230) of simply illustrating character. What is more important about Wagner's technique is the combination of the motifs into a symphonic fabric ("Verknüpfung der Motive zu einem 'symphonischen Gewebe'"; Dahlhaus 231), or, in other words, into an "organic whole," a phrase that Eliot uses in her essay "Liszt, Wagner, and Weimar" when she describes Wagner's theory of the music drama:

> An opera must be no mosaic of melodies stuck together with no other method than is supplied by accidental contrast, no mere succession of ill-prepared crises, but an organic whole, which grows up like a palm, its earliest portion containing the germ and prevision of all the rest. (*Selected Critical Writing* 86)

Just like the Wagnerian *leitmotif*, Eliot's use of epigraphs accomplishes two effects. It both creates foreshadowing (largely preempting the feeling of a "mere succession of ill-prepared crises") and enhances the sense of an organic whole. The recurring word "sorrow" from the Tennyson epigraph in chapter 17, for instance, not only evokes the sadness of Mirah but also the idea expressed in the poetic epigraph, that this sadness derives from "remembering happier things." When Deronda in the same chapter describes Mirah as a "sorrowful image of womanhood," an "image of helpless sorrow," and thinks that "sorrowful isolation had benumbed her sense of reality," this sorrow

is explained in this chapter exclusively through the epigraph—for Mirah tells her own life story only three chapters later. Here, the poetic epigraph in its function as *leitmotif* helps the reader to understand Mirah's psychology—despite the fact that the scene is internally focalized through Deronda and contains no free indirect speech for Mirah, which elsewhere is Eliot's preferred literary device for the presentation of thought processes. Through the emphasis of the connection of song and sorrow, the epigraph links Mirah's fate to that of Gwendolen (who fails at banishing her sorrowful thoughts through music) and Leonora (whose sorrows are the result of her music, i.e. her decision to value her professional career higher than her personal feelings toward her son).

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, Eliot famously said about *Daniel Deronda* that she meant "everything in the book to be related to everything else there." The poetic epigraphs are an important technique by which she achieves this high level of unity in the novel,[4] a unity which holds together the two different plot lines that F. R. Leavis wanted to separate: the (in his view) inferior Deronda and the superior Gwendolen parts. In addition to the numerous general epigraphic functions (see supplement), the organic function of the poetic epigraphs in *Daniel Deronda* stands out as most important for Eliot's conception of the novel's unity.

* * *

Supplement: The Epigraph: Formal Classification, Literary Function and Historical Symptoms

The following supplement focuses on the form of the epigraph,[5] its functions within the literary text, and its quality to indicate literary history. Where possible, I try to adhere to the established terminology and to build upon existing research.

1. Formal Classification

a. Generic Qualification

It may well be the case that the generic distinction is so obvious that no one has yet cared to point it out. I believe, however, that it is important to differentiate between prose and poetic epigraphs. When a poetic epigraph is included in a prose text (and vice versa), the epigraph is heterogeneric. Poetic epigraphs in poetic texts and prose epigraphs in prose texts, on the other hand, are homogeneric.

Heterogeneric epigraphs may introduce aspects traditionally associated with a different genre. A case in point is the topos of poetry as vocation, which can be found in the epigraph to Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.[6] Here we find a biography of a novelist, written by another novelist, using a poetic epigraph by a prominent Victorian poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, taken from *Aurora Leigh*, her "novel-poem," as she herself called it in many of her letters (Barrett Browning 330 *et passim*), which describes the life of yet another poet. The apostrophe to God in the quoted passage seems to echo the extensive prayer in the Book of Esther and serves to link the social role of Victorian women with the topos of divine vocation.[7] The poetic epigraph skillfully anticipates the combination of two central aspects of Brontë's life (as presented in Gaskell's biography). First, the fact that the rural Yorkshire environment clearly restricted the free development of a female writer's skills; and, second, the fact that any woman in such circumstances must have felt a truly strong vocation to overcome those limitations, perhaps even a divine vocation. Gaskell's choice may therefore be understood as the transfer of a well-established poetic topos to the domain of the novel; it is doubtful whether Gaskell would have found an equally suggestive prose epigraph. The intended connotation could be given complete expression only in the poetic form of the epigraph, i.e. in a heterogeneric quotation.

b. Allographic vs. Autographic

The general need for distinguishing between autographic and allographic epigraphs seems to date back to the large-scale "invention" of epigraphs by Sir Walter Scott. Scott had confessed in *Chronicles of the Canongate* that many of his mottoes were invented rather than taken from actual literary texts.[8] His epigraphs have attracted relatively large scholarly attention, and several attempts have been made to label the invented mottoes, for instance as "feigned mottoes," "fabricated epigraphs," and "faked mottoes" (Berger 378-79). Genette suggests more neutral terms: "autographic" epigraphs (written by the author of the text to which they are prefixed) and "allographic" epigraphs (taken from the work of another writer) (Genette 151-52).

The allographic motto seems to be the norm, both in nineteenth-century and contemporary literature,[9] and yet its autographic counterpart never went out of fashion since Scott.[10] Writers "invented" epigraphs either out of necessity or as a conscious game between author and reader (see Grutman 293; Higdon 129). *Daniel Deronda* itself is prefixed by an autographic motto,[11] although, as Leah Price has shown, Eliot's authorship of the poem was revealed shortly after the novel's publication by Alexander Main's anthology *Wise, Witty, and Tender Sayings in Prose and Verse Selected from the Works of George Eliot* (Price 145-47), thus putting an end to any conscious game Eliot might have intended.

c. Identified vs. Unidentified (or Ascribed vs. Unascribed)

At first sight, this category seems closely related to the previous one. Yet even autographic epigraphs are sometimes (falsely or misleadingly) ascribed. Scott, for instance, often referenced ominous sources like an "Old Play," an "Old Ballad," or an "Old Poem" for his epigraphs, when they were in fact written by himself without any preexisting literary text.[12]

Sometimes the epigraph is ascribed to a fictional character, as for instance in Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*, where the book's epigraph features an aphoristic remark ostensibly by Miss Haldin, who is a character in the novel itself. Similarly, in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, the poetic epigraph is ascribed to Thomas Parke D'Invilliers, who is a character in Fitzgerald's debut novel, *This Side of Paradise*. There does not yet exist any statistical survey of the distribution of identified and unidentified epigraphs. It seems, however, that in nineteenth-century fiction unascribed mottoes gradually made way for ascribed ones, so that the lack of (unambiguous) ascription could commonly be considered an indicator of autographic mottoes.

Often, as Genette remarks, the purpose of the ascription is merely to include the authority of a prominent name, and the content becomes subordinate to the epigraph's author (see Genette 159). Charlotte Smith's choice of epigraph in *The Old Manor House*, taken from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, is obviously such an inclusion of external authority, as the epigraph is not related to the novel's content. It is not unlikely that Jane Austen had this function of authoritative quotations in mind when she opened the first chapter of *Northanger Abbey* by ironically stating that Catherine Morland received the better part of her education from Pope, Gray, Thompson, and Shakespeare, for the quotations the narrator lists are themselves rather arbitrary, and receive their value largely from their ascription.

d. Complete vs. Incomplete

The epigraph is by definition a short text. As an inscription, it needs to fit the limited space of a plate. Consequently, most epigraphs are incomplete, i.e. brief quotations extracted from longer texts. Not surprisingly, therefore, the only examples of complete epigraphs that I was able to detect were poetic mottoes, as for instance the short poem "Das Glück ist eine leichte Dirne" by Heinrich Heine, prefixed to chapter 62 of Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*.

Incompleteness of the epigraph may generate various effects, for instance through the omission of important information (*ellipsis*[13]) or the deliberate breaking off of a sentence (*aposiopesis*[14]). Completeness, however, is a difficult category regarding autographic epigraphs, as these mottoes are potentially interminable. Yet the autographic sonnet that precedes chapter 57 of *Middlemarch* demonstrates that autographic epigraphs might sometimes be considered as at least formally complete or as conveying a clear sense of completeness (e.g. the short poem in chapter 8 of *Daniel Deronda*, "What name doth Joy most borrow," see below).

e. Language

The example of Heine's poem further demonstrates that epigraphs are written either in the same language as the text in which they are included (homolinguistic) or in a different language (heterolinguistic). In the early stages of the literary epigraph, the foreign-language epigraph was clearly the standard form, as books in modern languages commonly included mottoes in classical Greek or Latin. Only in late eighteenth-century literature, epigraphs of the same language gradually replaced the classical quotations. In Eliot's novels both kinds can be found: epigraphs in the same language (i.e. English) and in different languages, for polyglot Eliot commonly quotes Dante, Molière, Goethe and others in their original languages. In *Daniel Deronda*, for instance, eleven of the 74 total epigraphs are written in a language other than English, including the two that are given in English translation (the quotation of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* in chapter 57, presumably translated by Eliot herself, and the one by Guido Guinicelli in chapter 61, translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti). The inclusion of a great number of foreign-language quotations poses a considerable challenge to any reader, and increases the risk that he or she might eventually decide to skip the epigraphs. Tye believes that Eliot removed the chapter epigraphs from *Romola* before the novel's

publication because she might "have felt it prudent to lighten the burden of erudition," which resulted especially from epigraphs in foreign and classical languages (Tye 237).[15] Single book epigraphs in foreign languages, however, seem to have prevailed (again) since early modernism.[16]

The increase of epigraphs in foreign languages from the late-nineteenth century onwards may be understood as an increase in international literary exchange. The demise of circulating libraries in England, which notoriously refused the inclusion of foreign novels in their programme (Mudie's Select Library is only the most prominent case in point), marks the international expansion of the British narrative market.[17] Since epigraphs remind us that all writers are always also readers, the usage of quotations in foreign languages may signal changing reading habits around the turn of the century, probably as a direct influence of the changing European book markets.[18] Nevertheless, the fact remains uncontested that quotation in languages other than English had its heyday in the romantic and the modernist period, and almost completely disappeared from realist fiction—with the one canonic exception of George Eliot's novels.

2. Literary Functions

Although no empirical study of general reading behavior regarding epigraphs has yet been carried out, there is reason to believe that mottoes are often read with diminished attention, or even skipped over entirely (see Berger 396; Simon-Baumann 156). Whenever epigraphs serve a particular function within the literary text, the reader skipping them runs the risk of missing input vital for a full understanding.[19] As an intertextual device, the epigraph commonly exceeds the merely ornamental; it rather opens up the semantic horizon of another literary work of art, which may invite comparison, affirm or contradict the general meaning of the main text, elucidate otherwise unintelligible passages, or foreshadow plot events. The epigraph is

not limited to a single function but can perform several functions at the same time. The following list outlines six frequent epigraphic functions (or rather functional groups).

a. Contrastive vs. Affirmative Function

Among the most obvious epigraphic functions are affirmation and contrast. Both have been analyzed repeatedly, although under different names. Tye calls affirmative epigraphs "illuminating adjuncts" (249), Ginsburg understands the relationship as "one of illustration" (547), Higdon describes the relationship, in his analysis of epigraphs' "organic function," as one of "structural allusion" (134-35), and Simon-Baumann points out the general affinity in terms of subject matter ("äußere Stoffähnlichkeit"; 163). Such epigraphs affirm by repeating the general idea of the following text, although it would be more correct to say that the text repeats the idea of the epigraph, because the epigraph *precedes* the text and not the other way round. Since the reader cannot possibly know that a given epigraph is affirmative, its function is realized only in hindsight, after the text itself has been read.

The same holds true for contrastive epigraphs, whose function is also realized retrospectively. They, too, repeat the general idea of a given text, yet in inversion. Such epigraphs oppose the main text by inviting possible alternative readings that are not otherwise inherent to the text. This is illustrated by an example given by Ginsburg: the short quotation from Dante's *Purgatorio* that is prefixed to chapter 19 of *Middlemarch* is slightly changed by Eliot, reading "altra" instead of the correct "altro" (Ginsburg 547). The change of grammatical gender invites a direct comparison between Dorothea Brooke and Henry I of Navarre (c. 1244-1274), who is described by Dante as the one "ch'ha fatto alla guancia della sua palma, sospirando, letto" (*Purgatorio* 7.107-08[20]; quoted in *Middlemarch* 176), a phrase that resurfaces in the chapter proper: "one beautiful ungloved hand pillowed her [Dorothea's]

cheek" (177). The complex allusion to the French king in the *Antipurgatorio*—"who neglected what he should have done" (*Purgatorio* 7.92)—indicates Dorothea's current awareness of her own failure to live up to "the lofty conception of the world" that her mind has formed, as the very first chapter of the novel tells the reader (8). In chapter 19, when Dorothea is secretly observed by the German painter Naumann, he seems to see only her "antique beauty" (177) and is consequently reprimanded by Will Ladislaw, who reminds him that "the true seeing is within" (179). This "within" is expressed by the contrastive epigraph at the beginning of the chapter, especially by the word "sospirando" ("sighing"), which does not appear in the otherwise quite literal translation of Dante's lines in the chapter proper. The epigraph adds a layer of meaning to the text, which the text itself cannot (or cannot easily) express. That additional meaning must not necessarily *contradict* the meaning of the primary text; it rather *complements* it by saying something that the text itself does not say, i.e. it serves as a *contrastive* foil.

b. Ironic Function

The ironic epigraph, however, is more than just a complementary contrastive foil; it expresses the exact opposite of the main text. Often analyzed by scholars, the ironic function is, along with the affirmative function, the most prominent topic of research. Higdon discusses at great length epigraphs containing "ironic comments on the material within the following chapter" (142) and lists irony as one of the "organic functions" of the epigraph. Böhm subsumes the ironic function under the contrastive function (164), thereby limiting the contrastive to a binary opposition, rather than embracing its potential as juxtaposition.[21] Wayne C. Booth discusses the epigraph in *A Rhetoric of Irony* as "a kind of nudge" and a "straightforward warning in the author's own voice" (53, 55) that the following text should be taken with a pinch of salt. This may well generate dramatic irony; the reader,

alerted by the epigraph, presumes that the ensuing text means the exact opposite of what it says (see Higdon 144-45).

As such, the ironic epigraph has a certain signal effect, for instance, when it is taken from the works of a well-known ironist (see Booth 54). However, the signal effect of the epigraph usually only *marks* the irony that the text already possesses; it does not *establish* the irony for an otherwise irony-free text or textual part. An exception is chapter five of *Daniel Deronda*, which is free from all irony in its description of Gwendolen's failure to excel in her musical talents at a dinner-party at the Arrowpoints' Quetcham Hall (43-51). It is through the epigraph from Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (3.1.55-57) that her failure receives the decisive ironic twist:

> Her wit
> Values itself so highly, that to her
> All matter else seems weak
> —*Much Ado about Nothing* (*Daniel Deronda* 43).

With hindsight the reader understands at the end of this chapter that Gwendolen's failure is tragic because she believes herself to be superior to everyone else—Catherine Arrowpoint included. The point about that excessive self-confidence is conveyed only by the epigraph, which in this case therefore *establishes* the irony, rather than simply *marking* it.[22]

c. The "Epigraph-Effect"

According to Genette, the most complicated function of the epigraph is the effect of its mere presence: the "epigraph-effect" (160). In a literary work, epigraphs are part of a cultural currency, or, as Rainier Grutman writes, "much like smoke indicates fire (i.e. is an *index* of fire), an epigraph signals culture" (284). To be more precise, an epigraph signals a particular culture in which it was considered a valu-

able currency. That was especially the case in (late) eighteenth and (early) nineteenth-century literature, in Radcliffe, Scott and Stendhal. Yet in every economic system excess inevitably leads to inflation, and the "mottomania" of the early nineteenth century soon became an "eccentric mannerism, an annoying tic" (Grutman 284), serving to inflate the value of that literary currency, thus leading to its abandonment by the subsequent generation of writers.

The epigraph-effect can be intensified when the motto is identified/ascribed (see above). In this case the epigraph exceeds its own status as a mere sign of culture and becomes the sign of a very particular culture, often of high culture, by referencing certain "highbrow" writers. The opposite, i.e. references to popular culture, certainly became more common by the late twentieth century (although such references are not automatically to be classified as the opposite of "highbrow" culture). Interestingly, such epigraphs seem to derive quite often from (pop) songs, and are therefore heterogeneric: e.g. in Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland* (epigraph by US-American blues singer Johnny Copeland's "Every Dog's Got His Day"); John Irving's *Last Night in Twisted River* (Bob Dylan, "Tangled Up in Blue"); and Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Marriage Plot* (Talking Heads, "Once In A Lifetime").

d. Explanatory/Commenting Function

While affirmative epigraphs (see above) function as *amplifiers* of a given text, explanatory epigraphs serve to *elucidate* that text. Without them, understanding the text might appear difficult, in some extreme cases even impossible (although that is rather a theoretical case). According to Genette, the epigraph explains either title or text (156); he adds that the explanation must not necessarily be unambiguously clear, but can also be rather enigmatic. Berger's more nuanced account distinguishes between six different explanatory relationships: that of epigraph and the following text; the plot; the general theme; charac-

ters; setting; and "other constituent parts" (388). Tye adds another form of relationship, that of the text toward itself. In such cases the author uses the epigraph to "address the reader on the technical problems of writing" (244). The explanatory function of such metatextual epigraphs is therefore self-reflexive.

Whenever the epigraph suggests a certain interpretation of the following text, its function is not so much explanatory, but rather that of making a commentary. Such epigraphs are indeed often used to convey moral lessons. Tye identifies direct moral comments in many of Eliot's epigraphs, such as the prose motto prefixed to chapter 39 of *Felix Holt*,[23] which "undoubtedly provided her [Eliot] with an additional opportunity to exert the moral force of her medium without intrusion *in propria persona* where she might have felt such intrusion inappropriate" (239). Grutman agrees with Tye's interpretation when he describes epigraphs as "ideal vehicles for ideological messages" (293). At any rate, such explanatory, commenting epigraphs demonstrate the independence of the motto from the main text, even showing that sometimes the main text seems to depend on the epigraph. Such cases provide the most obvious evidence of the epigraph's surpassing the status of the merely ornamental, but these clear cases are rare indeed.

e. Proleptic vs. Analeptic Function

In his brief analysis of the epigraphs in H. C. Andersen's novels, Søren Kierkegaard expresses his reservations about mottoes that only summarize the content of the following chapter.[24] One must not necessarily share Kierkegaard's critique, for even when the epigraph really does summarize, it usually relates to the following chapter, i.e. it foreshadows its content. These epigraphs therefore have a proleptic function, anticipating either certain elements of the following plot, aspects of particular characters, thematic strata, or even textual strategies. My research has not yielded a single example of an epigraph that

could be considered a "dull general statement" of a precursory plot summary, as Kierkegaard obviously regarded the epigraphs in Andersen's novels, when he dismissed them, polemically, as "Selbstzweck" (50; German in the original). What Kierkegaard really seems to condemn is the epigraph-effect (see above), and not the fact that epigraphs sometimes do relate to and foreshadow something of the following chapter (which, as Kierkegaard acknowledges, may well be a meaningful literary device, if properly done; see 49).

Since the reader does not know whether a given epigraph is in fact proleptic, he or she may be induced to make suppositions concerning the subsequent text; and yet such suppositions are, as already stated, rarely unambiguous. The autographic epigraph to chapter 8 of *Daniel Deronda*, for instance, speaks both of young people's joys and sorrows, without making explicit which of these two aspects will turn out to be dominant in the chapter proper (it is in fact sorrow or, more precisely, Rex's first experience of lovesickness):

> What name doth Joy most borrow
> When life is fair?
> To-morrow.
> What name doth best fit Sorrow
> In young despair?
> To-morrow. (83)

The joy of a "fair" life that projects all its hopes to an indistinct "To-morrow" is not, as the reader will soon find out, a prolepsis, an anticipation of Rex's bliss of love. Rather, the first part of the epigraph is an analepsis, referring back to the previous chapter, which presents Rex as "a youthful lover" who, in his "spring of joy," regards Gwendolen as the "object of his love" (68). The epigraph therefore works in two different directions, backwards in time (toward chapter 7), and forwards in time (toward chapter 8), while it simultaneously highlights the structural similarity of both chapters, as well as of hopes *and* sorrows of youthful love. Epigraphs that unite both the proleptic and analeptic function occur conspicuously often in the novels of George

Eliot, though more usually one of the two functions seems to be dominant in literary epigraphs. However, the epigraph in question is not made redundant by simply being a distillate of the longer narrative that is about to follow in the ensuing text; rather, it has a certain "guiding function" (see Berger 384),[25] structuring the material. This also implies the possibility of a conscious confusion of the reader; the guiding function then becomes a "misguiding function," for instance, when a seemingly proleptic epigraph in fact serves an ironic purpose—which may be interpreted as another form of the conscious game between author and reader that I mentioned above (see also Grutman 293).

f. Emotional vs. Intellectual Function

The distinction between the emotional and the intellectual function is less clear-cut than the others. Both functions may even overlap with the other functions of the epigraph at certain points. It may therefore also be regarded as complementary to the former distinctions. Genette treats it as such when he distinguishes between the emotional and intellectual effects of the explanatory epigraph (158), whereas Böhm interprets them as distinct, autonomous categories: emotional attunement ("emotionale Einstimmung"; 115) and rational preparation ("rationale Vorbereitung"; 122). Böhm's former category is consistent with Kierkegaard's more positive account of the ideal epigraph's power as a "prelude which may get the reader into a certain mood."[26] The latter features only *en passant* in Kierkegaard's theory of the epigraph as a "relationship [*forhold*] to the entire passage" (49; my translation). Kierkegaard's dialectical use of the Danish word *forhold* (relationship[27]) proves that he also understands the (intellectual) relationship between epigraph and text as dialectical. Higdon expresses a similar thought in his reference to a letter from George Eliot to Frederic Harrison (*The George Eliot Letters* 4: 300-01), when he writes:

"The epigraphs often cite the 'spirit' which the chapter develops as 'flesh'" (Higdon 140).[28] Without the epigraph, Higdon seems to imply, the chapter sometimes would be nothing but "flesh" (or "spiritless" flesh), while, without the flesh of the actual chapter, the epigraph would lose its sensual certainty ("sinnliche Gewissheit" in Hegel's terminology; see *Phänomenologie des Geistes* 82 *et passim*). In this context, Böhm's idea of the intellectual dimension of the epigraph as rational preparation must be extended; the epigraph not only prepares the reader for the (complex and intricate) argument that is about to follow, but is already part of the very argument itself (in the dialectical process described by Kierkegaard and Higdon). A case in point is Eliot's autographic motto to chapter 16 of *Daniel Deronda*, which begins with the words, "Men, like planets, have both a visible and an invisible history" (164). The chapter itself, however, tells us about Deronda's visible history, his "education [as] an English gentleman" (172), while only slightly hinting at the existence of the invisible part of his biography (his Jewish ancestry). The chapter therefore seems to contradict the theory formulated in the epigraph, establishing a dialectical relation (Kierkegaard's *forhold*) between the two, leaving its final import in suspense for another 35 chapters.

The emotional aspect pertains either to the reader or to certain strata of the text itself, although it is often difficult to keep these two levels separate. The above-mentioned example of how the "crown of sorrow" in chapter 17 of *Daniel Deronda* is meant to set the reader in the right mood for the ensuing description of Mirah Lapidoth's attempted suicide, illustrates Böhm's concept of "emotionale Einstimmung" (115). At the same time, as Tye remarks, epigraphs also "reflect the mood and temperament of the principal character of the chapter, in the form of introspection" (239). Tye gives examples from Eliot's *Felix Holt*, where the epigraphs describe the feeling of a character in the chapter: Ch. 1, Mrs. Transome; Ch. 14, Mr. Lyon; Ch. 41, Esther (see Tye 240). These examples clearly demonstrate that the idea of the reader's emotional attunement by and of the reflection of a character's emotions through the epigraph often go hand in hand.

3. Epigraphs as Indicators of Literary History

The literary epigraph may be considered a symptom of a particular historical constellation, development or occurrence, especially since its history is a relatively short one. Genette provides a substantial historical survey (144-49), demonstrating that the earliest canonic examples only date back to the late seventeenth century. Long into the eighteenth century, classical Latin epigraphs prevailed, although they were, as Genette points out, mostly prefixed to philosophical, (auto)biographical or scientific texts, and not to fictional ones. During the period of the "rise of the novel," as Ian Watt has termed it, only a handful of novels were preceded by epigraphs, for instance, Rousseau's epistolary novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67). Epigraphs achieved the status of a common literary device only in the days of the English Gothic novel. Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), for instance, contains not only a book epigraph, but also continuous chapter epigraphs. Moreover, Radcliffe exclusively chooses quotes from British poets (i.e. heterogeneric and homolinguistic quotes): Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Collins, Thomson, and others. This also partly explains the additional title to Radcliffe's novel: *The Mysteries of Udolpho*: *A Romance. Interspersed With Some Pieces of Poetry*.

As mentioned above, the literary epigraph clearly reached its preliminary climax with the novels of Sir Walter Scott, who used them in all of his novels except *Waverley*. With the broad success of Scott, other European writers soon began to employ the chapter epigraph as literary device. The later generation of realist writers, however, dropped the epigraph almost completely. There are no chapter epigraphs in Austen, Balzac, Dickens, the Brontë sisters, Thackeray, Trollope, Flaubert, and Zola. This may be seen as marking the difference between romantic fiction and these novelists' realist writing, as well as their awareness of the radical departure from the (still basically Aristotelian) poetic rules of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature. Instead of chapter epigraphs, realist writers pre-

ferred the use of brief and descriptive (and largely proleptic) chapter titles; this is the practice in Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*; in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*; in Trollope's Barchester novels; and in Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*. There are also chapter titles in the early novels of George Eliot, in *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), and *Romola* (1862-63), although Eliot had originally intended to use chapter epigraphs in *Romola*.

Considering the predominance of chapter titles in the time between 1832 (Scott's death) and 1866 (the publication of *Felix Holt*, Eliot's fifth novel and the first of novels to contain chapter epigraphs), it can justly be said that Eliot revived and promoted a literary device that had been out of fashion for almost thirty-five years. The epigraph to her Gothic novella *The Lifted Veil* (1859), for instance, connects the short novella with the epigraphic tradition of Gothic novels by Ann Radcliffe and C. R. Maturin, simply through its presence. By the mid-1860s, Eliot was experimenting with new subject matter in her novels, and with new forms, especially poetry.[29] These two distinct reorientations demonstrate Eliot's search for new ways of aesthetic expression. Indeed, her two approaches overlap, at least in one direction, as her last three novels contain chapter epigraphs (as a new form in a new genre), and, what is more, an abundance of *poetic* chapter epigraphs.[30] In doing so, Eliot attempted to transcend not only literary genres but also the historical gap that separated her realist novels from the romantic, Gothic and proto-realist novels by Radcliffe, Scott, Yonge, and Bulwer-Lytton.

Literary epigraphs can be seen as symptoms of both an increased cultural exchange and an increased literary historical consciousness, and, in Eliot's case, as her desire to extend cultural horizons. Her inclusion of epigraphs from non-English poets and writers furthers the concept of *Weltliteratur*, a comparative (not competitive) approach to literature, and an interest in exchange (not exclusion). Eliot's intertextual strategies are as extraordinary as her revival of the literary epigraph, and, I believe, both have substantially contributed to the reception of her fiction as a prime example of cosmopolitan open-

mindedness (see Appiah xv-xvi).[31] The combination of both is indeed unprecedented, providing further evidence for her epigraphs to be indicators of an increased cultural exchange and of an increased literary historical consciousness,[32] which interprets *Weltliteratur* as an organic whole.

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NOTES

[1]For the 1950s, the MLA database lists only nine articles on the novel, three of which address, in direct response to Leavis, the aspect of the novel's unity: Maurice Beebe's article "'Visions are Creators': The Unity of *Daniel Deronda*" (1955); Jerome Beaty's article on "*Daniel Deronda* and the Question of Unity in Fiction" (1959); and David R. Carroll's excellent article "The Unity of *Daniel Deronda*" (1959).

[2]Counting quotes in verse from plays by Shakespeare and others as "poetic epigraphs," the exact percentage is 59.5 percent.

[3]This is the twentieth poem of the fourth book of Goethe's *West-Östlicher Divan*, "Tefkir Nameh, Buch der Betrachtungen." The poem was added to the *Divan* in 1827, eight years after the first publication of the text.

[4]In his appropriately titled book *Unities*, H. M. Daleski identifies another unifying technique in *Daniel Deronda*. He writes "that one sure indication of a unity of imaginative conception in a given work is the proliferation of analogous situations in it" (28), interpreting the owning and disowning of the forsaken child as "the core situation that, repeated again and again, functions to relate everything in the book to everything else" (32).

[5]The content of epigraphs varies so widely that it is not expedient to bring about a list of its dominant content-related characteristics. In a given novel, however, it sometimes seems that certain topics dominate the numerous epigraphs. J. R. Tye, for instance, has made a strong argument for the metadiscursive function of literary epigraphs in *Daniel Deronda*, by showing that their content is often poetry itself, or rather "the technical problems of writing" (244).

[6]O my God,
—Thou hast knowledge, only Thou,
How dreary 'tis for women to sit still
On winter nights by solitary fires
And hear the nations praising them far off
(*Aurora Leigh*, 5.434-41; qtd. in Gaskell 1).

[7]Barrett Browning's phrasing is very close to the additions to the Book of Esther, i.e. Esther's prayer (Esther 4:38-39 and 4:43): "open the mouths of the nations for the praise […] O Lord!" and "You have knowledge of all things" (*The New Revised Standard Version*). Seen in this light, Gaskell's choice seems hardly accidental, given the importance of Esther's predecessor, Queen Vasthi, for Charlotte Brontë (see *Villette*, ch. 23: "Vashti"). For further discussion of Brontë's Vashti, see Johnson.

[8]"I found it too troublesome to turn to the collection of the British Poets to discover apposite mottos, and [instead] I drew on my memory as long as I could, and, when that failed, eked it out with invention" (Scott 144).

[9]David Leon Higdon's affiliation of Eliot's allographic epigraphs with certain formal characteristics of the main text seems unconvincing. He writes that "chapters entailing recognitions, confrontations, and reversals almost without exception bear epigraphs from authors other than George Eliot" (Higdon 128). His theory is vulnerable to counterexamples: the central (first) confrontation of Deronda with his mother in chapter 51, for instance, which also includes the central revelation that Deronda in fact *is* Jewish, is preceded by an autographic motto.

[10]As Elena Anastasaki demonstrates in her article on E. A. Poe in this issue of *Connotations*, the epigraph to Poe's short story "Ligeia" is ascribed to Joseph Glanvill, while it is in fact by Poe himself.
<http://www.connotations.de/debanastasaki0232.htm>.

[11]58 percent of all epigraphs in *Daniel Deronda* are allographic, with the remaining 42 percent being autographic. The distribution of ascribed/unascribed epigraphs (see below) largely follows the number of allographic/autographic ones. Eliot's letters and notebooks shed no light on the question of whether she was forced (like Scott) to invent epigraphs because of her being pressed for time. That is, however, not unlikely, as her novels were published in separate installments, and she was still working on the last installments when the first ones were out already and readers and critics alike discussed the possible outcome of the plot. *Daniel Deronda*, for instance, was published in eight monthly installments between February and September 1876, yet Eliot only finished the entire book on 8 June 1876, i.e. after the publication of the fifth installment (see Haight 482-85).

[12]Walter Graham identifies an impressively large number of such epigraphs: "[i]n novels following the *Antiquary*, Scott quoted from 'Old Play' ninety-one times, 'Old Ballad' twenty times, 'Old Song' seven times, 'Anonymous' (which was probably employed in the same way) twenty-five times, 'Old Poem' once, and 'Ancient Drama' once; and in nearly every case the motto is believed by [John] Dennis and other editors to be the novelist's own work" (16).

[13] See, for instance, the omission of the second stanza of a poem by William Blake, which Eliot used as an epigraph to chapter 25 of *Middlemarch*.

[14]See, for instance, the unfinished sentence in chapter 3 of Middlemarch, a quotation from Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

Say, goddess, what ensued, when Raphaël,

> The affable archangel, *had forewarned*
> *Adam, by dire example, to beware*
> *Apostasy* […] (*Paradise Lost* vii.40-43; my italics)

Eliot breaks off the quotation after "archangel," leaving out the rest of the sentence (here in italics).

[15]The manuscript contains chapter epigraphs for the first nine chapters of *Romola*, or at least leaves a blank space at the top of the first page of each chapter for later insertion of an epigraph. Before publication, however, she abandoned the idea and replaced the already existing epigraphs with descriptive chapter titles.

[16]Joseph Conrad's novels contain many book epigraphs in foreign languages, for instance *An Outcast of the Islands* (Calderón de la Barca quoted in Spanish) and *Almayer's Folly* (Henri-Frédéric Amiel quoted in French), which contribute to the international settings in the Malay Archipelago. Other modernist writers also preferred epigraphs in foreign languages, as can be seen in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (Dante, Italian), Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* (Psalms, Latin), and Ezra Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (Nemesianus, Latin).

[17]For an extensive analysis of the number of "foreign novels in British circulating libraries (1766-1861)," see Moretti 148-58, esp. fig. 70.

[18]Some scholars have expressed their reservations about an overly assertive interpretation of cultural exchange in the nineteenth century. Rainier Grutman, for instance, recently called into question the idea of a growing literary network. He writes: "We should therefore […] question the idea that the mere fact of quoting foreign writers guarantees knowledge of or even familiarity with foreign literatures. It might well be a self-serving gesture, used to delineate national spaces and thereby reaffirm borders rather than abolish them" (292).

[19]Another imminent danger is that epigraphs may well encompass a broader semantic horizon than intended and thus take on a life of their own, even to the extent that such epigraphs develop "unforeseen and undesired effects" (Berger 396).

[20]"[…] who has sighing made of his palm a bed for his cheek" (*Purgatorio* 7.107-08).

[21]One definition in the *OED* understands "contrast" in aesthetic contexts as the "juxtaposition of varied forms, colours, etc., so as to heighten by comparison the effect of corresponding parts and of the whole composition" (II.2.a).

[22]It also invites the reader to compare Gwendolen's character to that of Beatrice, who is the person spoken of in the epigraph—and also indirectly spoken *to*, since Hero knows that the hidden Beatrice is listening to her conversation with Ursula.

[23]"No man believes that many-textured knowledge and skill—as a just idea of the solar system, or the power of painting flesh, or of reading written harmonies—can come late and of a sudden; yet many will not stick at believing that happiness can come at any day and hour solely by a new disposition of events; though there is naught less capable of a magical production than a mortal's happiness, which is mainly a complex of habitual relations and dispositions not to

be wrought by news from foreign parts, or any whirling of fortune's wheel for one on whose brow Time has written legibly" (371).

[24]"[…] et fadt almindeligt Udsagn om det, som Capitlet indeholder" (48) [a dull general statement about that which the chapter contains; my translation].

[25]Berger seems to think of the reader-response criticism of the Constance School when he describes the "guiding function" of the epigraph as one that "has to rouse the reader's expectation and to draw his attention to a particular issue" (384). Shortly before, he briefly discusses Rainer Warning's "aesthetics of the reader," although he does not make explicit this reference in his discussion of the epigraphs' guiding function.

[26]My English translation of: "[…] et Motto […] bør ligesom præludere og derved sætte Læserne i en bestemt Stemning" (48). Kierkegaard's description of the epigraph's effect is saturated with musical metaphors: "musicalske Magt," "præludere," "Stemning," "Stemningens Temperatur," and "den Rhythmus, hvori Afsnittet er skrevet" ["musical power … to prelude … mood/tuning … temperament … the rhythm in which the passage is written"]. This circumstance links his analysis particularly well to my discussion of the organic function of poetic epigraphs in Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (see above).

[27]See the famous opening paragraph of *The Sickness Unto Death* (*Sygdommen til Døden*, 1849).

[28]The dialectical opposition refers to scripture: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (*King James Bible*, Galatians 5:17).

[29]Right after the publication of *Romola* in 1863, she began writing the verse play *The Spanish Gypsy* (published in 1868). In 1869, she simultaneously wrote her "Brother and Sister" sonnets, the quite well-known poem "Armgart," and *Middlemarch*, while in the years after that she sat down to write "The Legend of Jubal and Other Poems" (published 1874) and her final novel *Daniel Deronda* (published 1876). In the light of the particular function that the poetic epigraph fulfills in her last novel, the simultaneity of poetry writing and the inclusion of epigraphs in Eliot's late work hardly seem coincidental.

[30]As Leah Price has shown in her excellent analysis of the many editions of Alexander Main's *Wise, Witty, and Tender Sayings in Prose and Verse Selected from the Works of George Eliot* (first published in 1870/71), Eliot was quite aware of the anthologization of her own poetry and poetic epigraphs (Price 145-47). In a letter, she once wrote, "there should be a good sprinkling of the best quotations from my Poems and poetical mottoes" (*The George Eliot Letters* 6: 431).

[31]As Kwame Anthony Appiah has correctly observed, Eliot calls any form of naïve impartial ethics into question by presenting the moral shortcomings of a main character to whom "tolerance was the easiest attitude" (*Daniel Deronda* 545). Only at the end of the novel is Deronda able to leave the "mazes of impartial sympathy" and to choose "with that noble partiality which is man's best strength, the close fellowship that makes sympathy practical" (*Daniel Deronda* 745).

[32]While Grutman's general skepticism does not necessarily apply to Eliot's use of epigraphs, Ginsburg in this context strikes another note against any overly affirmative interpretation of the relation Eliot establishes to a past tradition through her epigraphs. Ginsburg concedes that "[t]he use of epigraphs establishes a relation between the text and a past tradition." She adds the cautionary remark that "the relation to the past in George Eliot is never unambiguous," and that in her novels every "acceptance of the past is also a rejection. On the thematic, as on the formal level (in the epigraphs), there is not, in the novels of George Eliot, a simple rejection, or a simple acceptance of past and tradition" (547-49). I agree with Ginsburg's interpretation and add that she points out the dialectics of Eliot's method. It is dialectic insofar that it sublates the past tradition in the double sense of the Hegelian word *Aufhebung*: as preservation and annihilation.

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Poetry and Poeticity in Joyce's "The Dead," Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris*, and Yehuda Amichai[1*]

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In this article I analyze various aspects of poeticity in James Joyce's "The Dead," especially in its concluding paragraph. To illustrate my general argument about the multi-faceted relationships between poetry and prose, I also examine three paragraphs from Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris* and two poems by Amichai, which deliberately problematize the conventional distinction between poetry and prose. Whereas the notion of poeticity is difficult to define, it is still a useful term for analyzing a variety of poetic texts, and it is especially pertinent to different kinds of "amalgamation" of poetry and prose. The term poeticity refers to the place in which certain linguistic patterns of parallelism and/or tense semantic relations of incongruity and paradoxes meet an attentive reader tuned to these textual characteristics. Thus, it is a complex notion that involves formal, semantic, and pragmatic aspects. If certain textual qualities are lacking, it will be difficult for a reader to experience the text's poeticity; without an attentive reader, the text's poeticity could be lost despite the fact that the text contains certain formal and semantic features. The term refers to the complex process by which a string of words is endowed with a poetic "aura," and can thus help us understand how prose is "transformed" into poetry.

When Roman Jakobson describes poeticity, he leaves, at one point, straightforward language and turns to an analogy that I find quite suggestive:

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*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debfishelov0232.htm>.

> For the most part poeticity is only a part of a complex structure, but it is a part that necessarily transforms the other elements and determines with them the nature of the whole. In the same way, oil is neither a complete dish in and of itself nor a chance addition to the meal, a mechanical component; it changes the taste of food and can sometimes be so penetrating that a fish packed in oil has begun to lose, as in Czech, its original genetic name, *sardinka* (sardine), and is being baptized anew as *olejovka* (*olej-*, oil- + *ovka*, a derivational suffix). Only when a verbal work acquires poeticity, a poetic function of a determinative significance, can we speak of poetry. (Jakobson, "What Is Poetry" 378)

The heterogeneity of the examples chosen in the following discussion illustrates how poeticity "emerges" from texts differing in language and specific literary traditions as well as in their formal framing: a long short-story (Joyce), a self-declared hybrid of poetry-in-prose (Baudelaire), and texts printed as half poems and half prose paragraphs (Amichai). Still, all these modern texts evoke (or, at the very least, attempt to evoke) a poetic effect that challenges traditional distinctions of poetry and prose. To paraphrase Jakobson's analogy: all these texts turn prosaic *sardinka* into poetic *olejovka*. Furthermore, as I will show, they all use two kinds of "oil" to produce poeticity: linguistic patterns of parallelism and deep semantic contrasts, notably paradox. In many cases, we encounter both of these two textual elements, but sometimes one of them is dominant. When deep semantic contrasts are developed in a text, the role of an attentive reader becomes more important for detecting the poetic effect, i.e. poeticity. In other words, these two kinds of "oil," especially the one that involves deep semantic relations, need an attentive reader to activate them.[2] Thus, in the following discussion about the meeting ground of poetry and prose, I attempt to integrate the work of Jakobson (1960) about the important role of linguistic patterns of parallelism for creating poeticity with Brooks's emphasis on the place of deep semantic contrasts, notably paradox, in the language of poetry, and, finally, with an awareness of the active role played by readers (Culler) in producing the mysterious, yet quite familiar effect of poeticity.

Poeticity in the Conclusion of Joyce's "The Dead"

Anyone who has read Joyce's "The Dead" will have noticed that it is full of music and poetry: characters play the piano, listen to music, sing popular songs, talk about the opera, prepare to recite lines from a poem, and reminisce about a song associated with a young, dead lover. The text itself is also rich in alliteration, repetition, figurative language, recurring motifs, and parallelism, at least some of which are considered poetic devices and associated with the poetic function because they call attention to the text qua text rather than to the fictional world created in the text (cf. Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics").[3] Furthermore, despite the fact that "The Dead" is a relatively long short-story, not much happens in the present time of the story, and the action that does happen is quite disconnected and episodic : there is a Christmas party in the house of two elderly sisters, Kate and Julia Morkan; their nephew Gabriel Conroy and Gretta, his wife, attend the party and meet several old acquaintances; there are exchanges of words between different characters; music is played; participants dance; sit down to eat; Gabriel delivers his welcome speech to the gathering; he and Gretta return to the hotel in which they are staying; they have a short conversation about an episode from Gretta's youth: she was in love with a young man (Michael Furey), and, despite the fact that Furey was very sick at the time, he came to part from her before she went into a convent in Dublin, and he died soon afterwards.

The fact that no dramatic event takes place during the present story time, and the fact that the story focuses on Gabriel's inner world, together with the poetic qualities of the text mentioned above—all encourage the reader to further concentrate on minute textual details and on small emotional and semantic nuances, characteristics that are traditionally associated with lyric poetry (see Freedman; Todorov, "A Poetic Novel"). This specific combination of a minimally developed plot and poetic qualities has made the story not only a masterpiece of

modernism but can also teach us something about the meeting ground of poetry and fiction.

I would like to argue that, in addition to several formal and structural qualities that are usually associated with poetry, there is another element that contributes to the story's overall poetic effect. This element lies in the unexpected semantic relationships suggested between two contrasting poles, inviting the reader to see one pole through the lenses of its opposite, and ultimately merging the two into a unifying, paradoxical whole. When we discuss the poeticity of fictional texts we need to distinguish between these two elements: formal and structural devices, on the one hand, and deep semantic relationships, on the other. These two elements are frequently connected and reinforce one another, as in Joyce's "The Dead." Nevertheless, an overall poetic effect, in verse or in prose fiction, can sometimes emerge without a conspicuous use of formal devices or a noticeable poetic structure.[4] In a complementary manner, the use of certain poetic forms (e.g. meter, rhyme) does not guarantee, in and of itself, attaining an overall poetic effect.[5]

These two related but autonomous dimensions can be found in the concluding paragraph of Joyce's "The Dead." Let us first read it carefully, preferably even read it out loud:

> A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead. (Joyce, *Dubliners* 223-24)

Many critics have discussed the "epiphany" and the symbolism of the conclusion of "The Dead."[6] The fact that the narrator does not offer a comment or clue leaves room for different ways to interpret the concluding scene: we could interpret the conclusion as Gabriel's moment of redemption, a moment in which he transcends his personal feelings, frustrations, and limitations and connects to the universe. However, we could also suggest a more skeptical or cynical reading: instead of facing his true, hurt feelings after discovering Gretta's love for Michael Furey, Gabriel escapes to the vague, metaphysical generalizations presented in the concluding paragraph. Regardless of our specific interpretation of Gabriel's psyche, I would like to argue that the story's conclusion evokes a distinct sense of poeticity, a feeling that transcends a regular, "prosaic" mode of narration.[7]

What is the source of the poetic effect of this passage? First, we can detect in these lines several patterns that are many times associated with poetry, first and foremost intensive patterns of repetition and parallelism: repetition of sounds or alliteration (e.g. the sound /s/ is repeated thirty times, the sound /f/ twenty-two times); repetition of words (e.g. "falling"—seven times; "snow"—three times; "dark"—three times); repetition of phrases in chiastic form: "falling softly/softly falling," "falling faintly/faintly falling." Verbal repetitions, especially those of complete words and strings of words, help establish the *rhythm* of the text. The *cumulative* effect created by repetition of sounds, words, and phrases is usually observed in poetry and poetic texts.

The "Yes" in the concluding paragraph of "The Dead" ("Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland") indicates Joyce's use of free indirect style, i.e. the narrator integrates into his narration elements that are part of Gabriel's thoughts and words. This "Yes" may remind us of another place in which the word was used by Joyce: the conclusion of *Ulysses*. In the culmination of Molly Bloom's interior monologue, the "yes" plays a major part in creating the text's rhythm. As we approach the very last sentences of the novel, the

repetition of "yes" creates a rapid, intense, almost ecstatic rhythm of incantation:

> and the glorious sunsets and the figtrees in the Alameda gardens **yes** and all the queer little streets and the pink and blue and yellow houses and the rosegardens and the jessamine and geraniums and cactuses and Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain **yes** when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red **yes** and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again **yes** and then he asked me would I **yes** to say **yes** my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him **yes** and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume **yes** and his heart was going like mad and **yes** I said **yes** I will **Yes**. (Joyce, *Ulysses* 704; my added emphases)

The units (or "building blocks") used to create rhythm in poetry, notably in structured patterns of meter, are syllables. In prose, on the other hand, the linguistic units used more often to create rhythm are larger: words and sentences. Needless to say, these two options for creating rhythm are not mutually exclusive: a poem that uses a regulated metric pattern (e.g. iambic pentameter) can also employ the repetition of larger units (e.g. words and sentences) to achieve different rhythmic and semantic effects (e.g. to emphasize certain themes, etc.). In a complementary manner, we can sometimes detect in prose fiction a pattern formed by syllables (e.g. a paragraph written in iambic pentameter), but such cases are relatively rare, and when they occur they will probably be perceived as "poetic."

As we have seen, the concluding paragraph of "The Dead" is rich with linguistic patterns of repetition that create its rhythm. These linguistic repetitions, however, are not necessarily structured sound patterns associated with poetry (i.e. meter and rhyme). In addition to the repetition of sounds, of words, and of strings of words, there are also interesting repetitions on the semantic level. These can be described as building up the motif of death or, in linguistic terms, of the occurrence of words that are associated with the semantic field of death. Before the actual word "dead" appears as the story's final word ("upon the living and the dead"), there are several words in the para-

graph that are linked metaphorically or metonymically to death, either directly (e.g. "dark," "buried," "barren") or indirectly (e.g. "falling"—seven times, "treeless").

Thus far, we have established that the passage is replete with repetitions (of sounds and words), and with words associated with the semantic field of death, and we can describe these formal and semantic forms of parallelism as one source of our sense of the text's poeticity. There is yet another, more elusive source of the text's poeticity which lies at a deeper semantic level and requires a more active reading. The fact that this layer is below the text's surface does not, however, make it less effective: it stems from a latent invitation to readers to consider how death might be related to its antonym, life; in other words, the passage juxtaposes life and death in ways that unsettle this well-entrenched opposition.[8]

The story's concluding phrase—"upon all the living and the dead"—explicitly states two poles of a binary opposition. Words associated with the semantic field of death not only pervade the passage before the word is stated but also "color" neutral words that are associated to them in the continuum of the text. Thus, for example, the image of "spears of the little gate" acquires deadly overtones because it is interpolated between a graveyard's "headstones" and "barren thorns." Furthermore, since snow is portrayed in the paragraph as "the great equalizer" (i.e. death), since snow can freeze life, and since its color, white, may also symbolize death—the sense of death seems to engulf the entire passage and the whole universe.

This intense sense of death, however, is not the whole story. An attentive reading may also detect several elements in the paragraph that are associated—directly or indirectly, literally or metaphorically—with life. It is true that these elements are scarce, but nevertheless they are there. The "*mutinous* Shannon *waves*" (my added emphases), for example, connote something rebellious, and vital, which is definitely the opposite of deadly stagnation. Note also that, while snow is freezing (hence death), because water and snow are the same natural element, differing only in (physical) state, we can realize that the over-

whelming blanket of white snow that falls upon Ireland will eventually turn into fresh water, i.e., a source of life and growth (perhaps even adding strength to the "mutinous Shannon waves"). Thus, the deadening snow can also be perceived as one stage in the overall *cycle of life*.

The most intriguing element in creating unpredictable, paradoxical relationships between life and death can be found in the mentioning of Michael Furey. Needless to say, as far as Michael's body is concerned, he is definitely dead. But is he indeed dead? The startling discovery that Gabriel makes during the evening about the place that Michael still has in Gretta's heart suggests that physical death is not necessarily the end. A dead person (perhaps especially a dead person?) can be very much alive in the minds and hearts of the living. Thus, the binary opposition of life and death is questioned and reshuffled. The text suggests that we see the two terms of the opposition (life and death) as part of something larger than both, wherein life is followed by death, which is then followed by life. Furthermore, we are invited to see the two opposing terms as co-existence: every moment of life is also a moment of death, and every moment of death is also a moment of life, with no "pure life" followed by "pure death."

A recurrent theme in "The Dead" and in *Dubliners* in general is that of the different forms of death-in-life: the unauthentic, frightened, paralyzed, stagnated mode of life is associated with many characters in *Dubliners*, Gabriel included. In a complementary manner, perhaps in a minor key, there are also moments when we are invited to consider the possibility of its opposite, namely life-in-death, and the conclusion of "The Dead" is one such moment, especially if we read the story's ending as a turning point in Gabriel's consciousness and existence. Joyce invites us to entertain the paradox of death-in-life and, at certain rare moments, also to ponder on life-in-death; and this fresh perspective on the deeply entrenched binary opposition of life and death is, I believe, another source of the text's poeticity. It was Cleanth Brooks (1947) who suggested that the language of poetry is the language of paradox, and the concluding paragraph of "The

Dead" illustrates this kind of paradoxical language. Note, however, that the term "language" in Brooks's discussion does not refer necessarily to explicit paradoxical formulations (e.g. "the last shall be the first, and the first last") but, rather, to a deep semantic layer that underlies, and generates, the text (when a poem "is based on a paradoxical situation," Brooks 4). Thus, even when no explicit paradoxical statements are present, the best way to construct the meaning of the text is by seeing it as emerging from a deep, underlying paradox—like in Brooks's analysis of Wordsworth's "It is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free" or, as I suggest, in the conclusion of Joyce's "The Dead."

One may argue that paradox is but one semantic instance of the general principle of parallelism in which a term is followed by its opposite, hence the text continuum is built on the principle of similarity and contrasts (i.e. parallelism), just like any other phenomenon discussed by Jakobson. Consequently, thus goes the argument, we do not need two relatively independent principles (parallelism and paradox) responsible for producing poeticity, only one (parallelism). This argument is probably valid when explicit, direct oppositions are introduced one just after the other (e.g. "The last shall be the first"), but it will hardly apply to more complex, subtle and indirect paradoxes discussed here. These paradoxes (a) do not necessarily consist of direct oppositions, and (b) they require an active act of interpretation that integrates a variety of semantic elements, some of which are scattered in different places of the text. Thus, there is a good reason to maintain the distinction between the two principles, especially because the one associated with paradox is sometimes responsible for creating poeticity in cases that lack conspicuous patterns of parallelism.

Poeticity in Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris*

To illustrate how poeticity can emerge from conspicuous parallel structures but also from paradoxical relations on the deep semantic

level, I present three short passages from the modern *locus classicus* of the juxtaposition of poetry and prose: Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris* or *Petits Poèmes en prose*. Thanks to the prominent position of its author in modern literature, this collection has probably become the prototypical attempt to combine poetry and prose fiction. The first passage is the opening to the first text of the collection, entitled "L'Etranger" [The Stranger]:

> Qui aimes-tu le mieux, homme énigmatique, dis? ton père, ta mère, ta sœur ou ton frère?
>
> —Je n'ai ni père, ni mère, ni sœur, ni frère. (Baudelaire, *Œuvres Complètes* 162)

> [Tell me, enigmatic man, whom do you love best? Your father, your mother, your sister, or your brother?
>
> —I have neither father, nor mother, nor sister, nor brother.] (Baudelaire, *The Poems and Prose Poems*)

In these opening lines we immediately notice a very distinct structure: the list of four family members is doubly organized in pairs: in terms of generations, we have two pairs organized in an AABB pattern: two parents (father, mother) and two siblings (sister, brother); when we consider the list from the point of view of gender, another, a competing pair emerges, this time organized in a chiastic pattern of ABBA: masculine (father), feminine (mother), feminine (sister), masculine (brother). The rich parallelism does not stop there: the question presented to the stranger is responded to with an exact repetition of the four terms, with one negating word ("ni") prefixed to each of these terms. Thus, we have condensed patterns of parallelism on both the formal and the (surface) semantic levels, patterns which Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss liked so much to analyze in Baudelaire's poetry (Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss, "Baudelaire's Les Chats"). Such patterns are undoubtedly responsible for creating the poetic effect or poeticity in Baudelaire's collection of poetry in prose.

Not all the texts of *Le Spleen de Paris* contain explicit patterns of parallelism (cf. Todorov, "Poetry without Verse"). Let us, for example,

take a look at a short paragraph from the text entitled "Les Foules" (Crowds):

> Multitude, solitude: termes égaux et convertibles pour le poète actif et fécond. Qui ne sait pas peupler sa solitude, ne sait pas non plus être seul dans une foule affairée. (Baudelaire, *Œuvres Complètes* 170)

> [Multitude, solitude: identical terms and interchangeable by the active and fertile poet. The man who is unable to people his solitude is equally unable to be alone in a bustling crowd.] (Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen* 20)

Here, too, can we detect different forms of parallelism: the paragraph opens with an indirect opposition that also rhymes ("Multitude, solitude"), it has two words closely related in meaning ("égaux […] convertibles"),[9] the second sentence is structured as two parallel halves ("ne sait […] ne sait"), and there is a network of partial synonyms and antonyms: "multitude," "peupler," and "foule" form a group which is contrasted to "solitude," "solitude," and "être seul." I would like to argue, however, that grammatical or linguistic parallelism plays only a secondary role in creating a poetic effect in this paragraph. What Baudelaire tells us is that, from a certain point of view, that of the poet (!), to be alone and to be in a crowd should not be considered any longer as opposition; rather, they should be treated as interchangeable (or synonymous) in the "language" of the poem. Someone who is alone (physically) can still have company (mentally); and someone who is (physically) part of a crowd can still be very lonely (mentally). In other words, Baudelaire invites us to reshuffle an ordinary opposition and to see loneliness-in-company and company-in-loneliness; and he explicitly links this invitation to the mind of "the active and fertile poet," i.e., to a "poetical" perspective that the reader is invited to share.

Finally, let us take a look at another famous passage from Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris*: the opening lines of "Enivrez-vous" ("Intoxication" in the 1919 translation):

> Il faut être toujours ivre. Tout est là: c'est l'unique question. Pour ne pas sentir l'horrible fardeau du Temps qui brise vos épaules et vous penche vers la terre, il faut vous enivrer sans trêve.
>
> Mais de quoi? De vin, de poésie ou de vertu, à votre guise. Mais enivrez-vous. (Baudelaire, *Œuvres Complètes* 197)

> [One must be for ever drunken: that is the sole question of importance. If you would not feel the horrible burden of Time that bruises your shoulders and bends you to the earth, you must be drunken without cease.
>
> But how? With wine, with poetry, with virtue, with what you please. But be drunken.] (Baudelaire, *The Poems and Prose Poems*)

These emphatic sentences strike the reader twice. First, the opening categorical declaration that one must be forever drunken ("Il faut être toujours ivre") might raise objections, guided by common wisdom and moral principles: to be drunken occasionally is acceptable, even forgivable, but to recommend a permanent mode of being (i.e. drunkenness) that is inappropriate, degrading, and possibly dangerous is outrageous. To lessen the shock of the opening declaration, Baudelaire introduces the existential motivation behind his recommendation: one should get drunk to soften the acute distress that stems from the "horrible burden of Time" that "bends you to the earth," i.e. to death. In light of this "background information," the readers' initial shock is reduced: what was first perceived as outrageous now appears more understandable.

The specific list of ways to get drunk offered by Baudelaire creates yet another surprise: whereas the first element in the list (with wine) is quite predictable, the second (with poetry) is a bit puzzling. How does one get drunk on poetry? To make sense of this phrase we may call to mind images and ideas that associate poetry with high emotional intensity and the transcendence of oneself. These ideas, which can be traced back to Plato's portrayal of poets as possessed by divine madness in *Phaedrus*, suggest a semantic bridge between getting drunk and being "intoxicated" with poetry.[10] The third element presented as a means for getting drunk (with virtue) is quite perplexing. At face value, the two juxtaposed notions—to get drunk with wine and to be absorbed in virtuous activity or to promote virtue—seem

opposites, at least from a social, normative point of view: the former is a debased form of behavior wherein one indulges; while the latter is a commendable form of behavior wherein one devotes oneself to high moral principles existing beyond oneself. By creating this surprising sequence, a zeugma with a tense, conceit-like quality (i.e. the yoking together of different ideas under the same grammatical construction), Baudelaire compels us to view virtuous activity (or the advocacy of virtue) as a form of intoxication. We are invited to perceive a person deeply absorbed in virtuous activity as a drunk: both of them go beyond themselves, they both forget themselves, and they are both engrossed in an intense, out-of-the-ordinary emotional state. Furthermore, according to Baudelaire, these two seemingly opposite modes of behavior are basically the same: they are both *forms of escape* from the frightening awareness of death.[11]

True, in addition to the invitation to reshuffle our cognitive and moral categories and to see one notion through the lenses of a totally different one (i.e. poetry and virtue as modes of intoxication), one can also find in Baudelaire's "Enivrez-vous" several forms of linguistic parallelism.[12] I would like to argue, though, that the passage's most powerful effect stems precisely from this innovative, even provocative invitation. This invitation makes Baudelaire's text so memorable: we note the text's highly suggestive phrasing which compels us to go back and forth from its chosen words to the provocative ideas they convey. This unorthodox invitation, produced by the mind of "the active and fertile poet," is the special "ingredient" from which poeticity emerges.

Amichai's Complication of the Poetry-Prose Distinction

During the 1980s the highly regarded (and widely translated) Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai published several texts that challenge the distinction between poetry and prose. Although these texts appeared in volumes of poetry, framed by "regular" poems, they did not use the

conventional, truncated layout of verse but rather were printed as paragraphs of prose. Amichai did not, however, abandon in these texts all markers of poetry: modern Hebrew poems are usually printed with vowel marks (*niqqud*), and Amichai retained these also in the justified-margins, prose-like, paragraphs, thus sending mixed signals as to the text's "true" nature: published in a collection of poetry and using vowel marks, but printed in a typical prose layout. Moreover, in several texts Amichai deliberately calls attention to the distinction between poetry and prose by printing one part of the text in verse form (truncated lines with *niqqud*) and another part in prose layout.

Amichai's "Tourists," for example, effectively illustrates this mixture. In this text Amichai addresses experiences and phenomena familiar to anyone who has either lived in Jerusalem or has visited the city as a tourist:

> 1
> So condolence visits is what they're here for,
> sitting around at the Holocaust Memorial, putting on a serious face
> at the Wailing Wall,
> laughing behind heavy curtains in hotel rooms.
> They get themselves photographed with the important dead
> at Rachel's Tomb and Herzl's Tomb, and up on Ammunition Hill.
> They weep at the beautiful prowess of our boys,
> lust after our tough girls
> and hang up their underwear
> to dry quickly
> in cool blue bathrooms.
>
> 2
> Once I was sitting on the steps near the gate at David's Citadel and I put down my two heavy baskets beside me. A group of tourists stood there around their guide, and I became their point of reference. "You see that man over there with the baskets? A little to the right of his head there's an arch from the Roman period. A little to the right of his head." "But he's moving, he's moving!" I said to myself: Redemption will come only when they are told, "Do you see that arch over there from the Roman period? It doesn't matter, but near it, a little to the left and then down a bit, there's a man who has just bought fruit and vegetables for his family." (Amichai, *Selected Poems* 137-38)

The first section (stanzas? paragraphs?) depicts a series of "mandatory" tourist photo ops in Jerusalem. The common denominator of all these tourist stops is death, i.e. places associated with ancient and modern wars, destruction and bereavement: be it the Holocaust Memorial (*Yad Vashem*), the remnants of the ancient Temple (Wailing Wall), a fierce battlefield of the Six-Day War of 1967 (Ammunition Hill), a tomb from biblical times (Rachel's tomb), or of modern times (Herzl's tomb). The tourists are satirically exposed here, firstly, as moving through a series of sites in which they display a "standard" serious appearance, as opposed to showing genuine interest and authentic, individual reactions. Secondly, and more importantly, Amichai exposes the contrast between the tourists' façade and their true, hidden feelings and likings: between the way in which they "put on a serious face" at the Wailing Wall and their "laughing behind heavy curtains in hotel rooms," between weeping "at the beautiful prowess of our boys" and lusting "for our tough girls." Amichai does not necessarily satirize the tourists' hidden behavior as such (which reveals, after all, authentic feelings) but rather their hypocritical behavior, the gap between their displayed demeanor and their hidden genuine feelings.

The second section (paragraph?) develops another contrast. This time Amichai does not refer to tourists in general ("they") but, rather, focuses on a specific situation with a specific group of tourists, their guide, and the speaker himself (probably representing Amichai). If the first section creates the impression that Amichai is critical only of the tourists, the second broadens the scope of the poem's satire and now includes tourist guides. Tourists and tourist guides alike seem to participate in and perpetuate the official and artificial approach towards Jerusalem. This approach puts at its center "solemn" monuments, sacrifice, death, and stones, as opposed to the quotidian lives of real people in ordinary Jerusalem. The speaker in the poem openly calls for a total reversal of values: the trivial, day-to-day actions of a man who takes care of his family, who brings home fruit and vegetables (i.e. providing for life's basic needs), should be "put on a pedes-

tal," rather than the official monuments. Simple life should be cherished and consecrated rather than the glorified sites of death and destruction.

According to Amichai, redemption is not an extraordinary, miraculous event that transcends worldly affairs; it is embedded in ordinary, mundane actions—but only when the latter are recognized to be the most significant because "a man who has just bought fruit and vegetables for his family" represents caring for his family and providing it with basic needs of life. Note that Amichai chose to express this surprising, paradoxical idea about redemption not in "solemn" poetic form, but rather in the section that resembles plain prose.[13] Thus, in addition to openly challenging our notions about what constitutes important places and about what redemption will or at least should look like, Amichai also challenges the regular hierarchy between poetry and prose. In our regular expectations poetry is associated with the elevated, the spiritual, and the profound; and prose with the low, the material, and the mundane. While the text's first section with its truncated lines, conventionally associated with poetry, focuses on places and practices that are usually perceived as important or profound, this section in fact exposes these places and the social practices associated with them as shallow, superficial, and stained with hypocrisy. It is the second, prose-like section that unexpectedly addresses profound metaphysical and existential questions. Thus, Amichai simultaneously challenges our set of social values and the conventional hierarchy between poetry and prose.

I would like to conclude with another text by Amichai that also deliberately plays with different aspects of poetry, prose, and poeticity, "On the Day My Daughter Was Born No One Died":

> On the day my daughter was born not a single person
> died in the hospital, and at the entrance gate
> the sign said: "Today *kohanim*[14] are permitted to enter."
> And it was the longest day of the year.
> In my great joy
> I drove with my friend to the hills of Sha'ar Ha-Gai.

> We saw a bare, sick pine tree, nothing on it but a lot of pine cones. Zvi said trees that are about to die produce more pine cones than healthy trees. And I said to him: That was a poem and you didn't realize it. Even though you're a man of the exact sciences, you've made a poem. And he answered: And you, though you're a man of dreams, have made an exact little girl with all the exact instruments for her life. (Amichai, *Selected Poems* 131-32)[15]

I will not go into a detailed analysis of Amichai's text. But I would like to call attention to the way he challenges or problematizes the conventional typography of poetry and prose in this text: the first section, which is printed in the form of a poem, tells in a prosaic manner a sequence of events; while the second section, which is printed in the form of a prose paragraph, contains poetical and meta-poetical statements. Amichai further complicates the opposition between poetry and prose, because in the seemingly prosaic first section (which uses a poetic layout), he touches upon personal, emotional moments—notably giving birth—which are frequently associated with poetry or at least with lyrical poetry. The first section indirectly but persistently evokes the charged opposition of life and death: while referring to his daughter's birth (hence life) it also evokes death when he mentions that "not a single person *died* in the hospital"(my emphasis). Furthermore, the seemingly neutral mention of Sha'ar Ha-Gai, a place on the way from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, reminds readers (at least Israeli readers) of scenes of war and death: a memorial composed of burnt-out armed vehicles is deployed along Sha'ar Ha-Gai to commemorate the people who were killed in an attempt to reach the blockaded Jerusalem during Israel's War of Independence in 1948.

Thus, through its very unorthodox mix of "poetic" and "prosaic" typography, and through the introduction of "poetic" and "prosaic" elements into both sections, Amichai invites us to reconsider the fixed boundaries between poetry and prose and the conventional expectations associated with these two forms or modes of expression. Furthermore, when Amichai labels his friend's botanical observation ("trees that are about to die produce more pine cones than healthy trees")—a "poem," we may wonder what triggered him to say this. I suggest that Amichai detected in his friend's words *a poetic quality*

because they offer an unexpected, paradoxical relationship between life and death: "trees that are about to die" can nevertheless exhibit a final burst of fertility, which is associated with life. The connection between an invitation to reshuffle fixed oppositions and a sense of poetic quality or poeticity can be found, yet again, also in Amichai's text.

Parallelism, Paradoxes and Poeticity—Conclusion

I began my article with Joyce's concluding paragraph of "The Dead," in which one can detect several linguistic patterns of repetition and in which the reader is invited to see death-in-life and life-in-death. I then moved to examine selected passages from Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris*, in which the author uses conspicuous patterns of parallelism, and the reader is also invited to reshuffle accepted semantic and cognitive oppositions. I concluded with Amichai's texts which openly challenge the conventional layouts of poetry and prose and invite us to reconsider several fixed oppositions: important places and actions against mundane ones, life and death, a newborn child and old age, scientists and poets. In some of the discussed texts, linguistic patterns of parallelism accompany an overt or a covert invitation to reshuffle deep semantic oppositions and both seem to join forces in creating the text's poeticity (e.g. the conclusion of Joyce's "The Dead"; Baudelaire's "Les Foules"). In some cases, however, the role of linguistic parallelism seems minor—relative to the role played by an unorthodox invitation to reconsider and reshuffle accepted semantic oppositions (e.g. Baudelaire's "Enivrez-vous"). In other cases yet, the poetic effect emerges almost entirely from an explicit invitation to consider the poeticity embedded in a seemingly prosaic, botanical statement, in which a paradox is embedded (e.g. Amichai's "On the Day My Daughter Was Born No One Died"). Thus, when the two elements—linguistic parallelism and an invitation to see anew deep semantic oppositions—are detected, they seem to reinforce each other in creat-

ing a poetic effect. An author can, however, create a poetic effect even without using conspicuous linguistic patterns of parallelism—by directing the reader's attention to interesting, unexpected, paradoxical relations between the two poles of a familiar semantic opposition, as Amichai does in his texts.

By using poetic and prosaic layouts in the same text, Amichai forcefully reminds us that the conventional opposition of poetry and prose is by no means fixed or static.[16] There may be prosaic elements in poetry, and there may be a poetical quality in fiction, or in prose, or in everyday speech, or even in certain scientific observations; a poetic quality created by unexpected, paradoxical relationships between ordinary oppositions. All it takes to detect that poetic quality in such texts is the attentive mind of a poet or a critic.

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NOTES

[1]I would like to thank the participants in the discussion following my paper at the 12th International *Connotations* Symposium in 2013 for offering useful and enlightening comments, the two anonymous readers of the article whose critical comments spurred me to clarify my argument and, last but not least, Matthias Bauer and Angelika Zirker for their eagle-eyed reading of the manuscript.

[2]For the active role played by the reader in detecting and sometimes even construing such poetic qualities, see Culler, especially 188-209.

[3]Jakobson's formulation in his "Linguistics and Poetics" about the linguistic principle ("the projection of the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection to the axis of combination" 358) for attaining the poetic function has raised several objections (e.g. Riffaterre, Ruwett). Critics point out that not every linguistic parallel participates in creating the poetic function (i.e. focusing readers' attention on the text qua text). Furthermore, according to the critics, the poetic function can be achieved in ways other than the one pointed out by Jakobson (hence, it is not a necessary condition), and that not every occurrence of the principle of equivalence achieves the poetic function (hence, it is also not a sufficient condition). Despite such valid objections, Jakobson's formulation captures a very important principle underlying a wide variety of poetic devices that create the poetic function (but not necessarily its dominance).

[4]In an empirical test conducted with a group of students (Fishelov "The Institutional Approach"), I showed that readers recognize a text's poeticity (or its "poetic qualities") even when the text is presented as a paragraph of prose fiction.

[5]Aristotle already pointed out that a treatise on medicine or natural science can be written in verse but this does not make it a poem, i.e. an artistic text (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1447b). The notion of poeticity developed in this essay differs from Aristotle's concept of a poem: the former is associated with the dominance of the poetic function and/or the offering of "poetical," paradoxical insight, whereas the latter is grounded in the notion of mimesis. In both cases verse alone is not sufficient for constituting a poem or for attaining poeticity.

[6]See, for example, the essays by Allen Tate, Kenneth Burke, C. C. Loomis, and Florence L. Walzl in Joyce, *Dubliners*.

[7]There is interesting indirect evidence for the existence of such a poetic effect in a YouTube video of the conclusion of John Huston's adaptation of "The Dead," which is closely based on Joyce's text, with only a few small alterations (e.g. introducing phrases from previous paragraphs into the concluding paragraph; see Hollymarg). The person who put this video on YouTube added subtitles that do not use their conventional format; instead, he or she animated the subtitles in verse-form, i.e. the lines are truncated with changing length, position, and size (even color), so that we watch a text that looks much like a poem. Whereas I came across this YouTube video by sheer accident, the animator's decision to present Joyce's text as a poem is probably no accident: unless we assume that he or she acted on a whim, it seems likely that it is an attempt to express typographically the text's poetic qualities, i.e. that the text has a strong poetic quality, and hence "deserves" poetic typography.

[8]From a broader perspective, this invitation to reconsider and reshuffle established semantic categories can be described as another illustration of art's function to "make strange" common concepts, phenomena and modes of presentation (Shklovsky).

[9]These words are not synonyms in the strict sense of the word, but they still can be treated as partial synonyms (cf. Lyons 60-64).

[10]"And a third kind of possession and madness comes from the Muses. This takes hold upon a gentle and pure soul, arouses it and inspires it to songs and other poetry, and thus by adoring countless deeds of the ancients educates later generations" (*Phaedrus* 245a).

[11]Baudelaire's zeugma in "Enivrez-vous" can be described (see Glucksberg and Keysar) as creating an ad hoc category (i.e. metaphor, according to their theory) of "intoxication" that consists of three members: drinking wine, and being immersed in poetry, or in virtue.

[12]Todorov expands on the thematic contrasts in Baudelaire in *Le Spleen de Paris* and points out that they can be grouped under three headings: implausibility, ambivalence, and antithesis (Todorov, "Poetry without Verse" 63-64). I believe

that the term paradox should also be introduced in discussing the poetic effect in Baudelaire's work, perhaps as a variation of antithesis.

[13]For Amichai's use of conceit and paradox in his poetry, see Fishelov, "Yehuda Amichai: A Modernist Metaphysical Poet," and Fishelov, "Poetic and Non-Poetic Simile"; for a detailed analysis of his poetry-in-prose texts, see Fishelov *Like a Rainfall*, especially 164-71.

[14]Jews whose family name is Cohen, considered to be descendents of priests in the Temple, were forbidden to be in proximity to the dead.

[15]For the original Hebrew, see Amichai, *Selected Poems* 44.

[16]For a dynamic perspective on other literary forms and genres, see Fishelov, *Metaphors of Genre*.

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Poetic Insertions in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*[*]

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1. Poems and Songs in *The Lord of the Rings*: A Survey

Throughout *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55), narrative prose is supplemented by poems and songs.[1] As this practice does not correspond to the established conventions of twentieth-century novel writing, I propose to investigate the nature and functions of these insertions in Tolkien's work of fiction, with a view to providing some indications as to the poetics of this mixture of genres.

Concerning the poetic insertions in *The Lord of the Rings* (more than 60) I should like to proceed from two observations: firstly, all of them appear to fulfil a function within the narrative; they are all part of the plot and motivated by narrative developments.[2] Most of the poems and songs are sung by a group of characters or recited by one character for the benefit of a group of listeners; they constitute or record communal experiences; and they serve to convey important information.

Secondly, the poems and songs inserted belong to different, and often very specific, genres and traditions: they include songs which accompany wandering, marching to war, drinking, and even bathing; songs which, like ballads, tell a tale from ancient mythology or recent events; riddles, prophecies and incantations; hymns and songs of praise and complaint. They are of varying length and make use of a large variety of metres and rhyme schemes (a list of the poems and songs is given in the Appendix to this article).

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[*]For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debkullmann0232.htm>.

The origins of some of these genres go back to Anglo-Saxon poetry, which includes riddles, charms, complaints (or "elegies"), poems of memorizing as well as tales of heroic deeds (corresponding to nos. 2, 7, 10, 11 and 12 on the list printed in the Appendix).[3] The nature poems (no. 6) may remind us of songs in Middle English, like the Harley Lyrics, and their French and Provençal antecedents. Others of the poems and songs in *The Lord of the Rings* belong to genres or traditions which are part of English "folklore"; they are reminiscent of songs sung at festivals, in taverns, in the nursery, in barracks, at school or in church, serving communal functions specific to the environments mentioned. This particularly applies to the poems and songs listed under nos. 1, 4, 5 and 13, which accompany habitual social activities. Drinking songs (no. 4) have been recorded since antiquity, and some are also found in modern anthologies of English folk-song[4]; similarly, military officers have always made use of the stimulating effects of music and song (no. 13). Wandering songs (no. 1) are rather well-known in Germany, while they may have been less prevalent in England. The hymns listed under no. 3 can also be considered as "functional poetry" as they obviously accompany some kind of religious observance.[5]

The communal functions of the poems and songs listed under the headings of nos. 8 and 10 are not as obvious, as their main purpose is a narrative one. They belong to poetic traditions, however, which certainly flourished (and flourish?) at festivals and in taverns. Narrative verse, in the form of "ballads," constitutes the bulk of the texts found in anthologies from Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) to *The New Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* (2012). Many of the traditional ballads deal with England's or Britain's historical and mythological past (like "The Ancient Ballad of Chevy Chace," "The Ancient Ballad of the Battle of Otterbourne," "Sir Lancelot du Lake," etc.)[6] and can thus be compared to the tales told in verse about Gil-galad, Tinúviel and Eärendil (Appendix 8.1, 8.2, 8.4).[7]

The poems and songs found in *The Lord of the Rings* are thus reminiscent of a wide range of English poetic traditions and practices[8];

they do not, however, belong to the category of poetry which is considered to constitute the literary canon. Common definitions of poetry or "the lyric" emphasize the subjectivity of poetry and its function of expressing the poet's personal feelings, as well as "the immediacy of felt experience" (Lindley 3),[9] qualities which are certainly found in the work of "canonized" poets like Petrarca, Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Keats. In *The Lord of the Rings*, it is only in some few poems (listed under the heading of "meditation," no. 9) that the speaker or singer gives words to his or her personal outlook and plans, using the first person singular pronoun; but even here, as in the songs composed and sung by Bilbo, the hobbit, and by Galadriel, the elf queen, the outlook voiced is a typical rather than an individual or subjective one.

An analysis of the metrical forms used corroborates these observations: the poems and songs of *The Lord of the Rings* make use of a wide variety of metres, the most original of which is certainly the alliterative verse used by the "Ents" and the "Riders of Rohan," which obviously follows the rules of Old English alliterative poetry (as e.g. in the *Beowulf* epic).[10] It is mainly used for heroic praise (no. 10) and memorizing (no. 12), two "genres" which are also found in Old English poetry.

Most (if not all) of the other metres used are part of the repertoire of English folksong. The most prominent metre found in the novel is iambic tetrameter, with rhyming couplets. This metre is mainly used for the walking songs (no. 1), for some of the hymns (no. 3) and some of the mythological tales (no. 8). Tolkien here resorts to a metre sometimes found in narrative folk poetry—there are several examples in Percy's *Reliques*[11]—, but which was also used by Geoffrey Chaucer (*The Book of the Duchess, The House of Fame, The Romaunt of the Rose*) and occurs in Renaissance pastoral poetry (e.g. Marlowe, "Come live with me and be my love," *The Penguin Book of English Verse* 31-32), in some metaphysical poems (e.g. Marvell, "Had We but World Enough and Time," *The Penguin Book of English Verse* 135-36) and in nineteenth-century children's poems (e.g. Stevenson, "In winter I get up at night," *A Child's Garden of Verses* 1). While it is a very simple metre, it

is also a metrical form which links Tolkien to canonized, highbrow poetry. Sometimes iambic tetrameter poems take a more sophisticated form by using alternate rhymes (10.1) or a complex strophic structure (8.2).

The poems listed under the heading of "riddling information/prophesy" (no. 2) are mostly composed in a dactylic mode, with lines in which a stressed syllable is followed by two unstressed ones.[12] This metre certainly allows for verse which is closer to the rhythms of English prose; many narrative folksongs make use of this metre.[13]

Another of the metres used, however, has often been considered to be characteristic of folklore: the ballad metre which can be analysed as iambic heptameter, with a caesura (or even a pause) after the fourth stress, used for poem 6.3 ("When spring unfolds the beechen leaf") and 9.2 ("I sang of leaves").[14] According to Geoffrey Russom, this metre is sometimes called "common metre" (57). There may also be a rhyme at the end of the first part of the heptametric line, so that we could speak of a ballad stanza (with four stresses in lines 1 and 3, and three in lines 2 and 4) rhyming alternately; this is the metre used in a song sung by Legolas, telling a mythological tale (8.6), and in the meditative verses by Bilbo (9.1) and Sam (9.4). In Percy's *Reliques* the ballad metre is the most prominent form of narrative verse (e.g. "King Estmere," "Sir Patrick Spence," "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne," "The Children in the Wood").[15] The iambic octometer used in the long tale of Eärendil the mariner (8.4; 227-30), which on the page is rendered as four-line stanzas with four metrical feet each, the second and fourth line rhyming, also constituted a metrical form much used in popular narrative verse.[16]

Some of the poems and songs found in *The Lord of the Rings* resist metrical categorization: while they are rhymed in couplets and contain a fixed number of stresses, the number of unstressed syllables between the stresses is not determined. When using traditional terms of prosody, we can only classify these metres as "irregular"; this term, however, might be considered a misnomer, as, in the poetry in Old and (in part) Middle English, as well as in the early stages of the

ballad and folksong traditions, it is "regular" that stresses rather than syllables are counted.[17] As an Anglo-Saxon scholar, Tolkien may have considered syllabic metres as an import from French and other Romance languages, and set store by the "accentual metre" (Leech 118) characteristic of native (Germanic) poetic traditions. Characteristically, accentual metres most often occur in songs and poems which belong to Old English genres: incantations (no. 7, but also cf. 2.1), praise (10),[18] complaint (11); they are also used for "familiar" poetry: drinking and bathing songs (4, 5), and "natural magic" (6).[19]

We see that Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings* makes use of a wide variety of traditional and popular metrical forms, choosing metres with respect to situation and genre. Sometimes a variation goes along with a shift in the addresser or addressee: in Frodo's elegy on Gandalf, supposed dead, his lines rhyme alternately; when Sam adds a stanza, he switches to couplets (10.1; 350-51). The message in verse by Queen Galadriel addressed to Aragorn is much less regular than that given to Legolas (491-92). With all these variations Tolkien consistently avoids the metres prominent in canonized and anthologized poetry from Sidney, Spenser and Shakespeare to Wordsworth, Keats and Tennyson, most notably iambic pentameter, rhymed or unrhymed.[20] As with the poetic genres, Tolkien seems to draw attention to the wealth of a literary and cultural undercurrent which (while it has been the object of study of antiquarian and folklore societies and individual researchers since the sixteenth century)[21] has not usually been recognized by representatives of the literary establishment. His pre-texts from popular and folk culture can be located in forms known from the periods of Old and Middle English, as well as folkloristic traditions from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century.[22]

However, two aspects the poems do have in common with a lot of canonical poetry, and Romantic poetry in particular: they are sometimes difficult to understand; and that they often give voice to some transcendental experience, open up vistas into a "world beyond."[23] In *The Lord of the Rings* it is the listeners and sometimes even the singers themselves who are baffled by the poems' words, and this uncertainty

sometimes provides suspense and furthers the plot.[24] It should also be noted that, while the poems are part and parcel of the plot, they are clearly marked as a distinct type of utterance; they are sung or recited; and the beginning and end of song or recitation are clearly marked. On the printed page this distinction between poetry and prose is emphasized by the italics invariably used to reproduce poetry.[25]

2. Poetry and the World Beyond

As an example of the transcendental quality of poetry I should like to refer to the poem recited by Gandalf the wizard (2.1):

> *Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky,*
> *Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,*
> *Nine for Mortal men doomed to die,*
> *One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne*
> *In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.*
> *One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,*
> *One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them*
> *In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie*. (*The Lord of the Rings* 49)

Alliterations ("Mortal men") and repetitions ("Dark Lord on his dark throne") serve to set off the poetic text from ordinary narrative prose and evoke the sentiment of a world beyond the ordinary world, full of mystery and danger. The poem climaxes in a kind of incantation, describing the superior powers of the One Ring, with its triadic phrasing and the repetition of the place-name of Mordor. With the discovery of this very ring, the supernatural world, or rather the world beyond, has entered the cosy environment of Frodo the hobbit at Hobbiton in the Shire. To the reader, Frodo's experience of the supernatural is conveyed as an experience of poetic language. The shift from prose to poetry serves to direct the focus of the reader's attention away from the meaning to sound and form, from the *signifié* to the *signifiant*. It is the beauty of the language—of repetition, metre, and rhyme—which suggests a notion of a world beyond the extent of

which cannot be comprehended in ordinary words, i.e. words which only convey a meaning rather than an experience of sound.

When Frodo sets off on his quest, this to him constitutes a setting-off to the unknown, and again this experience of reaching out into an unknown world is expressed through a poem (1.1):

The Road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,
Pursuing it with weary feet,
Until it joins some larger way,
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say. (72)

To Frodo, this poem conveys the notion of the world beyond the confines of the known world, the Shire. To the reader, it is again through the poetic devices of repetition, metre, and rhyme that this experience of crossing boundaries is represented.

It comes as no surprise that the Elves are also introduced through a poetic insertion. At the hobbits' first meeting with the Fair Folk, they hear a song (no. 3.1):

Snow-white! Snow-white! O Lady clear!
O Queen beyond the Western Seas!
O Light to us that wander here
Amid the world of woven trees! (78)

If the hobbits only partly understand the song, so will the readers: the elves sing of a world "beyond the Western Seas" which we have not heard about yet. This world is apparently characterized by beauty, by extreme whiteness, light, shining, and silver. The hobbits' excitement at meeting the elves, this supernatural people, is conveyed to the reader as an experience of language, with repetition, metre, and rhyme elevating the words from common speech. The language does not just denote beauty, it becomes beauty. This is not least because of the beautiful names mentioned in stanzas 2 and 4, of Elbereth and Gilthoniel, names that emphasize the letter *l*, which obviously charac-

terizes this people of Elves. Their association with the letter and sound of *l* seems to convey the notion of the elves being -*l*-ight, -*l*-iquid, e-*l*-usive, possessing a set of characteristics conveyed by the sound itself, which is clearly iconic in that it appears to resemble the meanings attached to it.[26] The elvish song, of course, becomes pure sound, pure *signifiant*, when we hear or read it in the original Elvish tongue (poem no. 3.2).[27]

It is in the form of poems, as well, that mythological tales from the world of the elves are made known to the characters and the reader, as in the verses on Gil-galad the Elven-king (no. 8.1) and the tale of Tinúviel and Beren (no. 8.2). The "enchantment" mentioned in the latter text (beginning of third stanza, 187), is transmitted to the reader by the poetic form. Again, an experience out of the ordinary (the passion of love) is experienced as language out of the ordinary.

3. Hobbits (and Readers) as Philologists

The main phenomenon which characterizes the poetry found in *The Lord of the Rings* is the embedding of these poems in the narrative: the characters do not just recite or listen to poetry, they usually set about commenting on it or interpreting it.[28] Their interpretations do not primarily consist in elucidating the meaning; indeed, sometimes uncertainties are left as they are. What interests the characters more is the provenance of these poetic texts. The poems and songs of *The Lord of the Rings* have a history which is often discussed by the listeners and sometimes proves to be relevant to the plot; like the ballads mentioned above, they also appear to be part of a living tradition, as some of the characters are shown as being engaged in translating and communicating ancient as well as more recent poetry.

Let us look at the first quotation again containing the poem about the Rings: Frodo finds engraved on the mysterious and indestructible ring an unreadable script which is represented on the printed page. The mystery of the ring's magic is conveyed to the reader as a mystery about a piece of ancient writing. Gandalf can identify the characters

and the language as "Elvish, of an ancient mode" (49). It was not just written by elves, but by elves of some former period of time. Gandalf also knows the meaning, which he renders in poetic language, using the Common Tongue spoken by the hobbits, rendered as English on the printed page. It is the complexity of the provenance of the poetic text which greatly enhances its significance and conveys a notion of the ring's importance to the reader. At the same time, Gandalf's competence as a wizard manifests itself as a philological competence which the reader can witness on the printed page.

The hobbits themselves also engage in a philological exercise when Frodo, on setting out, speaks the poem beginning "The Road goes ever on and on." Pippin remarks "that [it] sounds like a bit of old Bilbo's rhyming" (72), reminding him of the style of Bilbo as a poet. He wonders if Frodo imitated Bilbo's verses; Frodo himself cannot say if he made up the poem on the spot or heard it long ago. Actually, the words are almost identical to those sung by Bilbo seventeen years and thirty-seven pages before (35) when saying farewell to Gandalf. While Bilbo sung the lines, Frodo is speaking them. The reader is invited to become a philologist, to make an attempt at supplying those pieces of interpretation which the characters are trying to grasp.[29]

The hobbits also discuss the tone and meaning of these lines. On Pippin's remarking that the poem "does not sound altogether encouraging," Frodo replies by giving an outline of Bilbo's philosophy of life:

> He used often to say there was only one Road; that it was like a great river: its springs were at every doorstep, and every path was its tributary: "It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door," he used to say. "You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to [...]" (72)

Bilbo is certainly unique among the hobbits in imagining life as a journey toward the unknown, to a world beyond, a journey beset by dangers and uncertainties. Frodo, and the reader, enter into this image, and premonition, when Frodo sets out on his quest, the poem emphasizing the importance of this step. We should also note that, as

with the poem on the ring, the significance of the poem is enhanced by its being old. If Frodo had made it up on the spot it would not carry the connotations of ancient wisdom and general truth.

If the poem, as recited by Frodo, does not sound altogether encouraging, this is certainly due to a slight but significant change in the wording: while the fifth line in Frodo's version reads "Pursuing it with weary feet," Bilbo sung "Pursuing it with eager feet." This change of adjectives obviously characterizes the greater psychological depth of Frodo's quest which, more than Bilbo's journeys, can perhaps be understood as emblematic of the storms and stresses of human life.[30]

This poem can well be compared to another one, which two other hobbits, Pippin and Merry, make up, albeit using phrases from previous texts (1.3):

> *Farewell we call to hearth and hall!*
> *Though wind may blow and rain may fall,*
> *We must away ere break of day*
> *Far over wood and mountain tall*. (104)

The narrator informs us that this song "was made on the model of the dwarf-song that started Bilbo on his adventure long ago, and went to the same tune" (104). The reference is to the story of Bilbo and the dwarves setting out to regain the treasure stolen by Smaug the dragon, as told in Tolkien's previous work of fiction, *The Hobbit* (1937). Readers of *The Lord of the Rings* are invited to look up the reference themselves, in case they have a copy of *The Hobbit* ready. The main similarity consists in the exclamation: "We must away! We must away! / We ride before the break of day!" (104). In *The Hobbit*, the song contains several stanzas with a very similar wording; this is what Bilbo hears when going to sleep:

> *Far over the misty mountain cold*
> *To dungeons deep and caverns old*
> *We must away ere break of day,*
> *To find our long-forgotten gold*. (36, cf. 24-25)

Actually, the messages or tendencies of the two songs are rather different. While the song in *The Hobbit* conveys the dwarves' greed and stubbornness, Pippin and Merry give voice to a spirit of adventure, looking forward to seeing the elves, among other things.[31]

The borrowing from the dwarf-song, however, is not the only one: Readers of *The Lord of the Rings* will easily recognize the line "and whither then we cannot tell," from Bilbo's and Frodo's song. The poem turns out to be a composite of previous texts. This, of course, as Julia Kristeva has taught us (see 66), applies to all texts, but in *The Lord of the Rings* this intertextual mechanism is "metatextually" rendered explicit (cf. Kullmann 37-38).

A different sort of metapoetical reflection is provoked when Frodo answers the poem as if it were an ordinary communicative utterance:

> "Very good!" said Frodo. "But in that case there are a lot of things to do before we go to bed—under a roof, for tonight at any rate."
>
> "Oh! That was poetry!" said Pippin. "Do you really mean to start before the break of day?" (*The Lord of the Rings* 104)

Pippin seems to share the assumption of many amateur poets that poetry is not to be taken seriously, that it is an exercise in wit rather than in conveying some truth. Frodo will soon remind his friends of the real dangers awaiting them on their journey which do indeed necessitate an early start.

Poems, and indeed texts in general, are shown to be dependent on one another, and thus to tell a story, additional to the information conveyed by the words. The poetic sensibility of the characters of *The Lord of the Rings*, and, by implication, the reader, is based on an aesthetics of imitation rather than originality. The value of a poetical text is enhanced by its age and history. In order to read and appreciate the story told by a poem's history, readers become philologists.

Another example of philology entering the plot of *The Lord of the Rings* occurs when Sam Gamgee recites a poem, provoked by Strider's remark on the history of the ground they are crossing:

> "[...] It is told that Elendil stood there watching for the coming of Gil-galad out of the West, in the days of the Last Alliance."
>
> The hobbits gazed at Strider. It seemed that he was learned in old lore, as well as in the ways of the wild. "Who was Gil-galad?" asked Merry; but Strider did not answer, and seemed to be lost in thought. (185)

Strider, whom the hobbits only knew as a wanderer, unexpectedly turns out to be learned in "old lore." But more surprises are coming when Sam Gamgee begins "murmuring" the poem (no. 8.1):

> *Gil-galad was an Elven-king.*
> *Of him the harpers sadly sing:*
> *the last whose realm was fair and free*
> *between the Mountains and the Sea*. (181)

If the company was surprised by Strider, they are even more so when learning that Sam, the ordinary hobbit, has also been infiltrated by elf-lore.

Sam Gamgee rather inadvertently provides a poetic answer to the question "Who was Gil-galad?" by repeating a song he had heard from Bilbo, but never understood. Now it is Strider's turn to be surprised, as he never knew that Bilbo had been aware of elfen-lore to that extent. Sam's lines appear as "part of the lay that is called *The Fall of Gil-galad,* which is in an ancient tongue" (181-82). Readers of *The Lord of the Rings* will of course be able to notice the similarity of the line on Mordor: "in Mordor where the shadows are" (181) to that of the ring poem, "in the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie" (49) and begin to be aware of the hidden connectedness of the ancient history of Middle-earth (cf. Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* 85). They are also put in a position to reflect on the process of oral traditions: Just as with some nonsensical nursery rhymes, words and sounds may have been preserved while the meaning has not.

Poetry emerges as the main medium in the process of handing down ancient history or myth. This also applies to the tale of Tinúviel which is told, or rather "chanted," by Strider (no. 8.2):

The leaves were long, the grass was green,
The hemlock-umbels tall and fair,
And in the glade a light was seen
Of stars in shadow shimmering.
Tinúviel was dancing there
To music of a pipe unseen,
And light of stars was in her hair,
And in her raiment glittering. (*The Lord of the Rings* 187)

Strider then proceeds to give the footnotes: the song is a translation of an elf poem composed in a special genre which is given an elfish name, "*ann-thennath*" (189). As the present version only provides a "rough echo" (189) of it, curiosity is raised to know the original. The hobbits' desire to see the elves is conveyed to the reader as a philological desire of discovering a hidden source and understanding an ancient language.

Strider's introduction to his chanting contains a discussion of the effects of this poem: it is fair, it is sad, and it lifts up our hearts (187). The poem tells an archetypal love-story; it is fair because the beauty of the lady is conveyed through the beauty of the song's form, tune, and language; it is sad because we are induced to imagine the difficulties experienced by the lovers; and it is uplifting because it allows us to experience the grand feeling of love and brings us closer to the ultimate potential of humanity.[32]

On the plot level, the poem takes the hobbits deeper into the world of the elves and the history of Middle-earth in which they are going to take a part; they can certainly do with an uplifting of hearts, given the heroism which will be expected of them. Strider's interpretive remarks allow the reader to see the potential of the interpretation of old texts with regard to a widening of his or her outlook on the world.[33]

In another instance it is the readers themselves who are called upon to become philologists: like many other songs in *The Lord of the Rings*, the song sung by Frodo at the Prancing Pony inn (no. 4.2) is reputed to have been written by Bilbo; its genre is given as "ridiculous song" (154). It is composed using a five-line stanza, which may remind us of nineteenth-century comic verse.[34] Before the poem is quoted, the narrator gives the reader a subtle hint as to the poem's intertextual

connections, saying: "Only a few words of it are now, as a rule, remembered" (154). It is only in the course of reading the poem that we become aware of the words we remember.[35]

At the beginning, the poem records a rather idyllic scene at a country inn, so that it could serve as a song which accompanies drinking. The only nonsensical elements are the Man in the Moon who patronizes that inn, a tipsy cat who provides entertainment as a fiddler, and a dog who can understand jokes.

There is an inn, a merry old inn
beneath an old grey hill,
And there they brew a beer so brown
That the Man in the Moon himself came down
one night to drink his fill.

The ostler has a tipsy cat
that plays a five-stringed fiddle;
And up and down he runs his bow,
Now squeaking high, now purring low,
now sawing in the middle. (155)

The cow who begins to dance when listening to music could even be considered to come from real life (stanza 4):

They also keep a hornéd cow
as proud as any queen;
But music turns her head like ale,
And makes her wave her tufted tail
and dance upon the green. (155)

It is when the Man in the Moon has drunk a lot that the dish and the spoon begin to dance, too, which is possibly a quirk of the man's drunken imagination (6th stanza):

The Man in the Moon was drinking deep,
and the cat began to wail;
A dish and a spoon on the table danced,
The cow in the garden madly pranced,
and the little dog chased his tail. (155)

The mad prancing of the cow in the garden and the little dog chasing his tail, however, appear to belong to real life. So do the man rolling beneath his chair, the innkeeper's appeal to his assistant (the cat) to look after the Man in the Moon's horses, the fiddler's attempts to wake the man by fiddling hard, and the transferral of the man outside. At this point, things get out of hand. The man is bundled back into the moon, the dish runs up with the spoon, the cow and horses stand on their head, and finally (penultimate stanza):

> *With a ping and a pong the fiddle-strings broke!*
> *the cow jumped over the Moon,*
> *And the little dog laughed to see such fun,*
> *And the Saturday dish went off at a run*
> *with the silver Sunday spoon*. (186)

It is then, at the latest, that we recognize the few words of this song which are still remembered. They consist of the famous nursery rhyme:

> Hey diddle diddle,
> The cat and the fiddle,
> The cow jumped over the moon;
> The little dog laughed
> To see such sport,
> And the dish ran away with the spoon.
> (*The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes,* no. 213 [240])

Like many nonsensical nursery rhymes, this one might originally have carried some meaning which, however, has not been found.[36]

As Thomas Honegger notes, Frodo's song had originally been published by Tolkien in 1923, entitled "The Cat and the Fiddle: A Nursery Rhyme Undone and its Scandalous Secret Unlocked" (see 43). Through Frodo's song, Tolkien obviously offers a playful theory on how to account for this nursery rhyme. While Honegger in his article concentrates on the literary antecedents of the Man in the Moon motif, I should like to make some remarks on the impact of Frodo's song on the reader: he or she is playfully given a source text and invited to deal with it philologically, i.e. to engage in tracing the further devel-

opments of this text until it reaches its present mutilated form. We are also invited to speculate on the plausibility of this comic drinking-song being the origin of the rhyme (cf. Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* 28-30). To add to this philological game, Tolkien appends two footnotes to the text of this poem. One of them refers the reader to another footnote in one of the appendices, where Tolkien, as author, explains that the hobbits observe Fridays as holidays rather than Sundays, and that he substituted the original references to Thursday and Friday in the poem by Saturday and Sunday (1084). The other footnote provides an explanation of the personal pronoun given to the sun: "Elves (and Hobbits) always refer to the Sun as She" (156). Readers with some philological training will realize that this gendering follows Germanic conventions, as in the German language, rather than the English poetic convention of referring to the sun as "he," as in Latin.

4. Conclusion

Poetic insertions in *The Lord of the Rings* invariably serve to introduce the notion of a world beyond that of ordinary experience. They do so by turning the readers' attention to the element of language—of language change and language history—and they induce the readers to become philologists in order to enter the intricacies of the plot. These metalinguistic elements thus create an awareness of the historical dimension of human experience and invite comparison with the scholarly endeavour of historical philologists like Tolkien himself. *The Lord of the Rings* is to a considerable extent a comment not just on language and literature, but on philological scholarship, with a glance not just at the academic study of Old and Middle English, but also at the research of folklorists not infrequently undertaken by amateur scholars.

The position of Tolkien in literary scholarship is a precarious one. His reputation as an author has been damaged on the one hand by the

excessive sales of his books (nothing but trash could possibly be so popular), and on the other hand by well-meant but rather incompetent attempts at criticism by members of the community of Tolkien fans.[37] These fans (who usually appear to know Tolkien by heart, but have read little else) tend to lose themselves in the intricacies of the genealogy of Tolkien's elves and wizards but fail to take account of the central tangible property of his writing: language.[38] While some Tolkien aficionados have devoted a lot of time and energy to deciphering the Elvish languages invented by Tolkien, his interest in the poetic, rhythmic, and musical qualities of English has largely gone unnoticed.[39] Tolkien, as far as I am aware, is not mentioned in any general account of twentieth-century English poetry. I hope that this contribution may help establish Tolkien's language as an object of scholarship and provide some answers to the question asked by American critic Edmund Wilson:

> Why was this "balderdash" so popular, Edmund Wilson asked himself, in *The Nation* (14 April 1956). Well, he concluded, it was because "certain people—especially, perhaps, in Britain—have a lifelong appetite for juvenile trash." (Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* 1)

The Lord of the Rings, I should like to contend, does indeed appeal to a childlike or juvenile interest in sounds, in mechanisms and functions of language, in the creation of meaning, in the potential of stories to structure experience. As a philologist, Tolkien retained this juvenile interest and curiosity in adult life; and in his novel, he appeals to the hidden philologist in his young and adult readers, to those who have retained their childish or childlike curiosity about the potential of sounds and language.

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NOTES

[1]"[...] the verse embedded throughout *The Lord of the Rings* [...] must count as the most widely read poetry of the century" (Jones 13); according to Vit Wagner, 150 million copies of *The Lord of the Rings* were sold (by 2007). Perhaps, though, Tolkien's verse has by now been surpassed by the verse embedded in J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997).

[2]"The outstanding feature of the verse in *The Lord of the Rings* is the individuation of poetic styles to suit the expressive needs of a given character or narrative moment" (Rosebury 106-07).

[3]On the genres of Old English poetry see, e.g., Pilch and Tristram 21-81.

[4]For example, "Ye Mar'ners all," *English Folk Songs* 101.

[5]Cf. A. L. Lloyd's thesis: "In primitive Europe nearly every song was performed for a particular occasion or purpose, notably for seasonal magic-making, for social ceremonial, and for work" (53).

[6]These are nos. 1.1.1 and 2, and 1.2.9 in Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1-10, 53-55).

[7]Many other traditional English ballads, of course, tell stories of various forms of sexual misconduct and their tragic or comic consequences. This topic, it is true, is not represented (and appears to be strenuously avoided) in *The Lord of the Rings*. A. L. Lloyd contends that "the road of the ballad runs from the magical to the heroic to the domestic. What was once a kind of narrative incantation becomes a complex tale in recitative form whose aim is to encourage and inspire, and finally the sung narrative becomes a romance with little more purpose than to divert and entertain" (131). If Lloyd is right, examples of all three stages of ballad are found in *The Lord of the Rings*; the second, "heroic," type, however, seems to be prominent.

[8]On the Englishness of the hobbits and their environment, see Harvey: "Hobbits represent the archetypal pre-Industrial Revolution English yeomen with simple needs, simple goals, and a common-sense approach to life" (114). See also Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* 76-79.

[9]For a discussion of the generic qualities of lyric poetry see Lindley 1-24; and Shurbanov 16-55. From a structuralist point of view, Todorov (130-31) distinguishes between literature engaged in "présentation"—poetry in verse or prose, and "représentation"—epic narration and prose fiction. If we follow this dichotomy, most of the poems in *The Lord of the Rings*, being representations of past or imagined events, could not be considered poetry at all. Nor could the bulk of medieval poetry or English folklore be considered "poetic."

[10]Concerning Tolkien's use of the Old English metrical rules see Shippey, "Tolkien's Development"; and Phelpstead 440-47. Phelpstead (445) also comments on the "cultural kinship" of "the Riders of Rohan" to Anglo-Saxons.

[11]For example, "Lady Anne Bothwell's Lament" 2.2.13 (138), "Jane Shore" 2.2.26 (154), "The Lady Turned Serving-Man" 3.1.17 (217). The last text mentioned "is

given from a written copy, containing some improvements (perhaps modern ones), upon the popular ballad, intitled, 'The famous flower of Serving-men; or the Lady turned Serving-man'" (Percy 217). As Roy Palmer points out, the ballad was written and published in 1656 (*Everyman's Book of British Ballads* 187). Palmer himself prints a gorier version, recorded in 1908, the metre of which had undergone a change to a dactylic rhythm ("The Flower of Serving Men," no. 91, 187-88).

[12]In spite of the fact that the first stress is often preceded by an unstressed syllable, this metre should not be called "a special form of iambic trimeter" as Russom suggests (60), as the pattern of two unstressed syllables following a stressed one is fairly regular.

[13]For example, "Golden Glove," *The New Penguin Book of English Folk Songs*, no. 26 (64-65); "The Bonny Blue Handkerchief," no. 61 (149-50); "The Wild Rover," no. 88 (213-14), etc. The metre is also found in recent children's books (e.g. Donaldson, *The Gruffalo* [1999]: "A mouse took a stroll through the deep, dark wood [...]").

[14]On the ballad metre and its musical setting, see Julia Bishop, "Introduction to the Music," *The New Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* xlvi.

[15]Percy, *Reliques* 1.1.6-8 (16-24) and 3.2.18 (238-39). Alternate rhyming occurs, for example, in "The More Modern Ballad of Chevy Chace" and "Gilderoy," *Reliques* 1.3.1 and 12 (66-70, 83-84). According to Percy, the "modern" version of "Chevy Chace" "cannot be older than the time of Elizabeth" (1).

[16]For example, "The Heir of Linne," *Reliques* 2.2.5 (Percy 121-23); "Lord Bateman," *New Penguin Book of English Folk Song* no. 33 (78-80). On this poem's metre cf. Russom 59-60. As Russom remarks: "By undoing the usual relations between rhyme and meter, Tolkien encourages us to look more deeply into both" (60).

[17]As Saintsbury remarks, "a strictly syllabic system of prosody has hardly at any time been a sufficient key, even in appearance, to English verse [...]. It is, of course, French in origin" (14). Saintsbury proceeds to describe English prosody as a system of "feet" (19-36) which allows for a certain variation in the number of unstressed syllables. His examples are usually taken from the literary canon (which he himself helped to establish). This system, however, is based on the quantitative prosody of ancient Latin and Greek and would not be sufficient to account for the "irregular" metres found in some early English ballads as well as some Tolkien poems; on the inadequacy of "traditional prosody" based on the notion of "feet" see Leech 112-14, esp. 113: "When we turn away from the learned tradition, towards the 'folk prosody' of nursery rhymes and popular songs, the metrical foot becomes a patently unsuitable tool of analysis." Leech himself describes the metre "which has dominated English prosody for the past six centuries" as "'accentual syllabic'; that is, it is a pattern of regularity both in the number of syllables and in the number of stresses" (111). Concerning "accentual metre" as "the type of metre based on an equal number of stresses per line, without respect to the exact number of syllables per stress," Leech states that, "although in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it was replaced by the conti-

nental accentual-syllabic metric as the main syllabic foundation of English poetry, it has survived in popular verse (ballads, nursery rhymes, etc.), and has enjoyed a revival at the hands of twentieth-century poets like Eliot and Auden. Hopkins's 'sprung rhythm' is also a variant of accentual metre" (118).

[18]As Lynn Forest-Hill points out, the great Eagle's song "Sing now, ye people of the Tower of Anor" (10.9) is "composed in the style of psalms in the Authorized Version of the Bible" (93) and may be considered to be part of the story's "spiritual dimension" (92).

[19]Concerning the metre of Tom Bombadil's poetry (6.1) and its resemblance to that of "Good King Wenceslas," see Russom 63-64.

[20]Cf. Russom 53. If the metre of the song sung by Galadriel "in the ancient tongue of the Elves beyond the Sea" (368, no. 3.3) is iambic pentameter, it might be considered the exception which proves the rule.

[21]See, e.g., Roy Palmer, "Introduction," *Everyman's Book of British Ballads* 9.

[22]On the history and dating of folk song and ballad composition in England, see Lloyd 149 and 161. Shippey's contention that, "when it comes to modern writers, Tolkien was notoriously beyond influence" (*The Road to Middle-earth* 225) should evidently be reexamined. Concerning modern influences on Tolkien's prose, see, e.g., Kullmann, esp. 43-47.

[23]On connections between Tolkien and Romanticism, see *Hither Shore: Interdisciplinary Journal on Modern Fantasy Literature* 7 (2010). While the articles collected in this issue discuss Romantic ideas and attitudes at some length, little attention is paid to formal aspects of poetry or prose, or to specific literary motifs.

[24]Cf. Shippey's assessment of the poetic technique of "Eärendil was a mariner" (8.4): "Describing the technique is difficult, but its result is obvious: rich and continuous uncertainty, a pattern forever being glimpsed but never quite grasped. In this way sound very clearly echoes or perhaps rather gives the lead to sense. Just as the rhymes, assonances and phrasal structures hover at the edge of identification, so the poem as a whole offers romantic glimpses of 'old unhappy far-off things' (to cite Wordsworth), or 'magic casements opening on the foam / Of perilous seas, in faery lands, forlorn' (to remember Keats)" (*The Road to Middle-earth* 146).

[25]Tolkien's prose might certainly also be called "poetic," but the "poetry" of the prose narrative follows other rules than that of the poems; for a possible exception (Tom Bombadil's speeches) see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* 81.

[26]"Tolkien's idea of poetry mirrored his ideas on language; in neither did he think sound should be divorced from sense. In reality this 'elvish tradition' was an English tradition too" (Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* 148).

[27]Shippey's suggestion that readers can to some extent "feel" what the Elvish poem means (*The Road to Middle-earth* 88), appears to me to be a romantic misconception. The narrative point is that the hobbits cannot understand the song, but that this failure of comprehension only enhances their fascination by the exoticism and beauty of the sounds. The import of the song in its situational frame is pro-

vided by the narrative—in English—which precedes and follows the lines in Elvish. That the Rivendell song (3.2) is in "Sindarin," while Galadriel's (3.3) is in "Quenya" (*The Road to Middle-earth* 88) need not concern us here as the names of the Elvish languages are not mentioned in the text of *The Lord of the Rings* and obviously not supposed to be known by the novel's implied reader. As Tolkien points out in a letter to a reader: "Part of the attraction of The L. R. is, I think, due to the glimpses of a large history in the background [...]. To go there is to destroy the magic, unless new unattainable vistas are again revealed" (*Letters* 333)—as might happen, if "the ancient tongue of the Elves beyond the Sea" (368) were given a name. It is true that there is some discussion of the languages provided in the appendices (1087-93, 1101-02), but, to quote from another Tolkien letter (to his publisher, Rayner Unwin): "those who enjoy the book as an 'heroic romance' only, and find 'unexplained vistas' part of the literary effect, will neglect the appendices, very properly" (*Letters* 210).

[28]For another analysis of this phenomenon, see Zimmermann, who calls the narrative text which surrounds a poem "semantic co-text" (60), rather strangely, for what is "semantic" about it?

[29]This is not meant as a "joke," as an anonymous reviewer of this article supposes. I believe that analyzing the relationship between a text and its implied or intended readers is a legitimate critical concern, and I would like to suggest that (implied and actual) readers of *The Lord of the Rings* are indeed meant to join the game of trying to make sense of obscure textual material—as in detective stories, some modernist fiction (like Joyce's *Ulysses*) and, most prominently, children's and young adults' fiction (as in Kingsley's *Water-Babies*, George MacDonald, John Buchan etc.). This requires some philological competence—which we have all given proof of by successfully acquiring our mother-tongue.

[30]Cf. Shippey's interpretation of the poem and its variants (*The Road to Middle-earth* 140-42). According to Shippey, "the Road" can be seen as an image of life and Providence, and Frodo seems to be much more aware of his doubts about the future and the necessity of "will-power" to pursue it to its end. See also Zimmermann 72-74, who contends that the "empirical code" used by Bilbo has changed into a "figurative code" in Frodo's version. In Bilbo's song, however, the "Road" already carried a metaphorical meaning, which becomes obvious from Bilbo's Road philosophy as recounted by Frodo.

[31]As Shippey notes, "Hobbit poetry does not lend itself well to tidy listings," as it is characteristic of "a living oral tradition" rather than "a literary tradition" ("Indexing and Poetry" 236-37).

[32]On this poem see Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth* 147. While Shippey duly notices the romantic elements of the poem, he does not do justice to the metapoetical quality of Aragorn's comments.

[33]The poem, as Zimmermann notes, also offers a glimpse at Strider's/Aragorn's own outlook at the world, as the tale of Beren and Tinúviel clearly mirrors that of their descendants, Arwen and Aragorn himself (see 66-67).

[34]It occurs, for example, in Edward Lear's "The Jumblies" (*The Complete Nonsense* 71-74), published in 1871.

[35]It should be noted that the capacity of establishing intertextual connections is one shared by characters (like Sam who remembers the poem about Gil-galad [181]), readers (who will be reminded of the Ring poem by the line on Mordor [181]) and the narrator (who establishes a connection between Bilbo's song about the Man in the Moon and the nursery rhyme known from the primary world). The world of fictional myth is thus connected to the reader's textual world and may be considered as (in a certain sense) mirroring it.

[36]*The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (240-41) provides a list of theories about the poem's possible origins which only confirms the notion that the rhyme is indeed unexplained.

[37]The account of Tolkien scholarship published by Frank Weinreich and Thomas Honegger in the *Zeitschrift für Fantastikforschung* in 2011 provides an impressive survey of activities surrounding Tolkien's work, but on the whole confirms the general pattern: there are Tolkien societies, Tolkien periodicals, and publishing houses specializing in Tolkien studies. Tolkien is analysed and explained by means of Tolkien; material to work with is provided by biographical sources, posthumous Tolkien publications, and manuscripts. There is little input from contemporary English scholarship, linguistics, as well as literary and cultural studies. Nor does Tolkien scholarship appear to make attempts at influencing discussions about literary history or literary and linguistic theory.

[38]See Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth*: "The real horror for Tolkien would probably have come when he realised that there were people writing about him who could not tell Old English from Old Norse, and genuinely thought the difference didn't matter" (216).

[39]Some of the contributions to the recent volume on *Tolkien's Poetry*, edited by Julian Eilmann and Allan Turner, do address these issues (see Forest-Hill; Zimmermann; and Shippey, "Tolkien's Development"; see also Russom), albeit in a rather tentative way. Except for Shippey, the authors mentioned evidently approach their subject from the vantage point of Tolkien expertise rather than that of English poetry, prosody, and speech analysis.

APPENDIX

List of poems and songs inserted into *The Lord of the Rings*.

Note: Page numbers refer to the paperback edition published by HarperCollins (2004). The poems/songs contain rhyming couplets unless stated otherwise.

genre/first line	number of lines	metre
1. wandering/ walking:		
1.1 "The road goes ever on and on" (35, slightly changed 72, changed 965)	8	iambic tetrameter
1.2 "Upon the hearth the fire is red" (76)	30	iambic tetrameter (with irregular, strophic coda)
1.3 "Farewell we call to hearth and hall!" (104)	14	iambic tetrameter
1.4 "O! Wanderers in the shadowed land..." (110)	7	iambic tetrameter
2. riddling information/ prophecy:		
2.1 "Three rings..."(49, partly repeated 247 [in Elvish] and 248)	8	irregular
2.2 "All that is gold does not glitter" (167, repeated 241)	8	dactylic trimeter, alternate rhymes
2.3 "Seek for the sword that was broken" (240, partly repeated 644)	8	dactylic trimeter, complex rhyme scheme
2.4 "Where now are the Dúnedain, Elessar, Elessar?" (491)	6	irregular, four stresses
2.5 "Legolas Greenleaf" (492)	4	dactylic tetrameter
2.6 "Grey as a mouse" (632)	22	dactylic dimeter/ some unstressed first syllables
2.7 "Over the land there lies a long shadow" (764)	12	alliterative verse, unrhymed
3. hymn (evocation of mythological past):		
3.1 "Snow-white ..." (78)	16	iambic tetrameter
3.2 "A Elbereth Gilthoniel" [in Elvish] (231; partly repeated, 3 English lines added 1005)	7	iambic tetrameter (?)
3.3 "Ai! laurië lantar lassi súrinen" [in Elvish] (368)	17	iambic pentameter (?)
3.4 "Gondor! Gondor, beneath the Mountains and the Sea!" (412-13)	6	irregular couplets (alexandrines?)
3.5 "Ere iron was found" (531)	4	iambic tetrameter
3.6 "Tall ships and tall kings" (583)	6	irregular
3.7 "A Elbereth Gilthoniel" [in Elvish] (712)	4	iambic tetrameter

4. drinking:		
4.1 “Hey ho, to the bottle I go” (88)	6	irregular, four stresses
4.2 “There is an inn, a merry old inn...” (155-56)	65	irregular (four/three stresses) strophic
5. “bath-song”:		
5.1 “Sing hey! for the bath at close of day” (99)	16	irregular, four stresses
6 a). evocation of natural magic:		
6.1 “Hey dol! merry dol! ring a dong dillo! (116-31, 138-44)	84	irregular, seven stresses
6.2 “In the willow-meads of Tasarinan” (458)	19	irregular, unrhymed
6.3 “When Spring upfolds the beechen leaf” (466)	26	ballad stanza (iambic heptameter)
6.4 “O Orofarnë” (472)	8 (20)	strophic (iambic dimeter/trimeter)
6.5 “The cold hard lands” (606)	10	iambic dimeter
6.6 “Alive without breath” (607)	14	irregular, two stresses
6.7 “Silver flow the streams” (857)	7	irregular, unrhymed
6 b). seasonal advice:		
6.8 “When winter first begins to bite” (266)	4	iambic tetrameter
7. incantation:		
7.1 “Cold be hand and heart and bone” (138)	8	irregular, four stresses
7.2 “Annon edhellen” [in Elvish] (299)	2	irregular, four stresses
7.3 “When the black breath blows” (847)	6	irregular, two stresses
8. mythological tale:		
8.1 “Gil-galad was an Elven-king” (181)	12	iambic tetrameter
8.2 “The leaves were long, the grass was green” (187-89)	72	iambic tetrameter, complex(strophic) rhyme scheme
8.3 “Troll sat alone on his seat of stone” (201-03)	56	irregular, complex(strophic) rhyme sheme
8.4 “Eärendil was a mariner” (227-30)	124 (62)	iambic octometer
8.5 “The world was young, the mountains green” (308-09)	46	iambic tetrameter
8.6 “An Elven-maid there was of old” (330-32)	52	ballad stanza (4+3 iambic stresses, alternate rhymes)
9. meditation:		
9.1 “I sit beside the fire and think” (271-72)	24	ballad stanza (iambic heptameter)

9.2 "I sang of leaves" (363)	14	ballad stanza (iambic hep-tameter)
9.3 "Out of doubt" (829)	4	alliterative verse, unrhymed
9.4 "In western lands beneath the sea" (888)	16	ballad stanza (4+3 iambic stresses, alternate rhymes)
9.5 "To the Sea" (935)	12	irregular, four stresses
9.6 "Still round the corner" (1005)	6	iambic tetrameter
10. heroic tribute:		
10.1 "When evening in the Shire was grey" (350-51)	24	iambic tetrameter, alternate rhymes
10.2 "The finest rockets ever seen" (351)	4	iambic tetrameter
10.3 "In Dwimordene" (502-03)	10	iambic tetrameter
10.4 "From dark Dunharrow in the dim morning" (786)	21	alliterative verse, unrhymed
10.5 "Mourn not overmuch" (825)	3	alliterative verse, unrhymed
10.6 "Faithful servant" (827)	2	irregular, four stresses
10.7 "We heard of the horns of the hills ringing" (831)	27	alliterative verse, unrhymed
10.8 "Long live the Halflings!" [partly in Elvish] (932)	10	irregular, unrhymed
10.9 "Sing now, ye people of the Tower of Anor" (942)	16	irregular, unrhymed
10.10 "Out of doubt, out of dark" (954)	5	alliterative verse, unrhymed
11. complaint:		
11.1 "Through Rohan over fen and field" (407-08)	30	irregular
11.2 "Where now the horse and the rider" (497)	8	irregular
12. memorizing:		
12.1 "Learn now the lore of Living Creatures" (453)	11	alliterative verse, unrhymed
12.2 "Ents the earthborn" (572)	4	alliterative verse, unrhymed
13. war song:		
13.1 "We come" / "To Isengard"" (473, 474) (partly repeated 551)	9 (36)	iambic dimeter (some alter-nating rhymes)
13.2 "Arise now, arise, Riders of Théoden!" (506, text changed 820)	4/5	alliterative verse, unrhymed

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Names and Real Names in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*: A Response to Maurice Hunt*

KREG SEGALL

Maurice Hunt's study of the difficulty of successful naming in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* considers issues that would be familiar to the White Knight of Lewis Carroll's Looking Glass Land.[1] For example, if someone is named, but they are called by a name that is not really their name, have they then been *really* named? What if you strongly imply their name but never say it? Does that count as naming? Hunt is on to something important in this article: names and naming are very much at stake here, and his discussion gets at the structural importance of this theme to the poem as a whole. I do, however, want to offer some questions, objections, and provocations in response to some of Hunt's conclusions and arguments with the hope of stimulating further discussion of this poem.

In addition to names already familiar to readers of *The Shepheardes Calendar*, like Colin Clout, Cuddie, Rosalind, Hobbinol, as well as "Sir Walter Raleigh" and "Ed. Sp." from the dedication, *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* offers the reader a riot of names introduced for our delectation in the description of court, including Harpalus, Corydon, Alcyon, Daphne, Merifleure, Palin, Alcon, Palemon, Alabaster, Daniell, Amyntas, Amaryllis, Aetion, Astrofell, Urania, Theana, Marian, Mansilia, Galathea, Maa, Neaera, Stella, Phyllis, Charillis, Flavia, and Candida. The traditional reading of these names is that they refer to contemporaries who Spenser wished to discuss under pastoral pseu-

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*Reference: Maurice Hunt, "Naming and Unnaming in Spenser's *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*," *Connotations* 22.2 (2012/2013): 235-59.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debhunt0222.htm>.

donyms. In some cases, the riddle is easy: we can without difficulty discern that "Astrofell" is meant to be Philip Sidney; in other cases, there are only reasonable guesses, like Thomas Lodge for "Alcon." But some names are totally obscure ("Flavia" and "Candida") and may never have been intended to indicate anyone specific; and two names are wholly undisguised: "Alabaster" and "Daniell" for William Alabaster and Samuel Daniel (see Hunt 247). One thing is for sure: this list has no easy one-for-one translation of person-for-pseudonym.

Hunt's primary argument, then, begins with the recognition that naming is not always a straightforward process in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, and, as he suggests, this uncertainty about whether someone is named or not, is thematically at the core of the poem. Hunt's title is witty—he is not implying that people get named and then get unnamed—he is implying that naming and unnaming are difficult to distinguish, and melt into each other.

The story of Bregog and Mulla is a good test case for Hunt's thesis. Bregog the river, in seeking to secretly possess his love Mulla without the permission of Father Mole, is punished by being "scattred all to nought, / And lost emong those rocks into him rold," and thus "Did lose his name" (153-55). Hunt notes that the story serves also to allegorize Ralegh's loss of status at court (which Hunt equates to "equivalent to the erasure of his name"), where Elizabeth Throckmorton equates to Mulla and Queen Elizabeth to Father Mole. Hunt offers this reading as an example of the poem's "focus on the loss of identity" (240-41). Hunt's example here is a good one for his claim (though I would question whether Elizabeth "regularly" [Hunt 240] referred to herself with a masculine pronoun—Elizabeth as Mole seems a shaky analogy). I wonder whether Bregog's identity is as lost as we might first think, considering that the name *wasn't* at all lost: surely we can see that the sentence "the name Bregog has been lost" is a paradox. But the interesting ambiguity goes even deeper. As Hunt notes, "Bregog" means "deceitful" according to Colin Clout (118, see Hunt 238). But he is called "Bregog" *because* of his deceit that got his name destroyed—so what was he called before?

> Full faine she lov'd, and was belov'd full faine,
> Of her owne brother river, *Bregog* hight,
> So hight because of this deceitfull traine (116-18)

Hunt translates "hight" as "named"; I would prefer to take the etymological ambiguity of "hight" from *OE* hatan, "to be called." That is, Bregog is called Bregog, *called* "deceitful," after his scheme is committed, while his real, previous name is lost forever or morphed into his new name. So there is a plausible reading of this episode as one not only of unnaming, but renaming. This serves to underscore Hunt's central point: names are fragile in this poem.

The moment where Colin Clout most explicitly grapples with naming is his attempt to describe his queen:

> For when I thinke of her, as oft I ought,
> Then want I words to speake it fitly forth:
> And when I speake of her what I have thought,
> I cannot thinke according to her worth.
> Yet will I thinke of her, yet will I speake,
> So long as life my limbs doth hold together,
> And when as death these vitall bands shall breake,
> Her name recorded will I leave for ever.
> Her name in every tree I will endosse,
> That as the trees do grow, her name may grow:
> And in the ground each where will it engrosse,
> And fill it with stones, that all men may it know.
> The speaking woods and murmuring waters fall,
> Her name Ile teach in knowen termes to frame:
> And eke my lambs when for their dams they call,
> Ile teach to call for *Cynthia* by name.
> And long while after I am dead and rotten:
> Amongst the shepheards daughters dancing rownd,
> My layes made of her shall not be forgotten,
> But sung by them with flowry gyrlonds crownd.
> (Hunt 243; *Colin Clouts* 624-43)

Hunt notes that, in this passage, "[f]ive times Colin names the never-named name of the queen, which is Elizabeth—not Cynthia" (243). This reading of Colin's speech is central to Hunt's argument, as he

uses it to demonstrate the contrast between this failed naming of the queen and the later, more successful, paean to Elizabeth Boyle. Hunt's point is that this Cynthia-focused section is a failed bit of naming—that the naming does not work, because "Cynthia" is not the queen's real name. However, Hunt's reading of this passage brings up a number of questions. I would argue that, if we are playing with names in the way an allegory asks us to do, then "Cynthia" is indeed the name of the woman Colin is speaking of. Hunt continues, "(If Cynthia were in fact the queen's name, Colin—Spenser—would not in this passage express such frustration about naming her. He would have named her five or six times, not simply once as Cynthia)" (243-44).[2] If we can perform the dash-mediated hop of "Colin—Spenser," from pseudonym to real name, then "Cynthia—Elizabeth" seems a reasonable jump to make as well. This is not an isolated moment, as the name "Cynthia" or a form of it appears twenty-five times in the poem; further, Colin speaks his words in response to the request of his fellow shepherd, Aglaura, who specifically requests "the storie" "of great *Cynthiaes* goodnesse and high grace" (588-89).[3]

Hunt calls this passage a "remarkably sustained emphasis upon the indistinctiveness or loss of name" (245) in the poem. He offers additional evidence for this emphasis by observing how the Cynthia passage is "focused" by other figures like Aetion, briefly mentioned in the list of names at court, but not positively identified in the way "Astrofell" can be. Hunt notes that "[t]he point is not whether *Aetion* is Michael Drayton, or William Shakespeare, or someone else, but that knowing who he represents died with Spenser and those court readers in the know, so to say" (246). It is here that I find it most difficult to travel along with Hunt, as, far from focusing, Aetion makes Hunt's definition more fuzzy: if the *point* of Aetion is that his real identity is dead (an assertion that I think we could argue about as well) it is not clear how that operates as an analogue or focusing lens for the Cynthia passage, whose referent is perfectly clear.[4] Hunt, I suspect, would respond by noting that he is pointing to poetic frustration over *both* indistinct names and lost names—that Cynthia is an indistinct name

and Aetion is a lost name (or, rather, who "Aetion" stands for is lost). It seems to me that Colin's—Spenser's—frustration about failure to successfully name the queen is a different sort of frustration, a different frame of meaning, than contemporary scholars' frustration in being unable to identify Aetion.

Finally, Hunt comes to the numerical and aesthetic center of the poem, Colin's paean to his beloved:

> The beame of beautie sparkled from above,
> The floure of vertue and pure chastitie,
> The blossome of sweet joy and perfect love,
> The pearle of peerlesse grace and modestie:
> To her my thoughts I daily dedicate,
> To her my heart I nightly martyrize:
> To her my love I lowly do prostrate,
> To her my life I wholly sacrifice:
> My thought, my heart, my love, my life is shee,
> And I hers ever onely, ever one:
> One ever I all vowed hers to bee,
> One ever I, and others never none. (468-79)

Hunt introduces this passage by observing that "[s]ome commentators on *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* believe that Spenser's beloved [...] is the Rosalind of *The Shepheardes Calender*" while "others believe that she is his second wife Elizabeth Boyle, or that she is the queen herself" (248).[5] Hunt accepts Elizabeth Boyle as the subject of the passage, stating that "Spenser's beloved, described in *Colin Clout*, is not Rosalind" (248).[6] Hunt says of the passage as a whole: "Carefully, beautifully, Spenser never names his beloved, but intimately, privately, names her forever in his heart in the twelve-verse passage quoted above" (249).

I, too, feel the tremendous power of this passage, but Hunt's argument here seems like special pleading. Why, when the absence of "Elizabeth" or "Aetion" is problematic, is this name's absence not felt as a loss, a hole in the poem? "She, too, will one day die, but she will remain alive as long as printers reproduce *Colin Clout* and readers exist who can infer her name" (249). Why is this inference relatively

unproblematic, while the far easier connection between Elizabeth and Cynthia is vexed? Hunt makes the good point that the ubiquity of the name "Elizabeth" in the sixteenth-century would make it difficult to name Elizabeth Boyle with the loving precision and adoration that the poet might desire (235). However, I am less certain that we can clearly call this *absence* of name an "indistinct" name, an "unorthodox naming" and most surprisingly, "this central process of successful naming" (235-36).

In other words, to sum up my objection, in the Elizabeth/Cynthia section of Hunt's argument, the presence of pseudonym points to the *absence* of name, to the hole in the poem; in the case of Colin's beloved, the absence of any name at all (even a pseudonym), far from suggesting absence, indicates a transcendent *presence*. As I noted earlier, Hunt does say that naming and unnaming are difficult to distinguish. I would argue that this looseness of definition, however, makes it more difficult to accept Hunt's thesis that we are to read a sharp distinction between the beloved's successful naming at the center of the poem, and the problematized unnaming and failed naming of figures like Bregog and Queen Elizabeth.

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NOTES

[1]Carroll's White Knight and Alice consider the distinctions between "the song"; "what the song is called"; "the name of the song"; and "what the name of the song is called" (*Through the Looking-Glass* ch. 8).

[2]If one wanted to, one could then object that "Elizabeth" is not really any nearer the essence of the queen than "Cynthia"—that essence could only be achieved if the queen in the flesh could somehow be produced by Colin's song. In language we are always at a remove from the thing.

[3]Spenser's own words on the various names of his queen in "A Letter of the Authors," prefatory to the 1590 *The Faerie Queene*, read: "In that Faery Queene I meane glory in my generall intention, but in my particular I conceiue the most excellent and glorious person of our soueraine the Queene, and her kingdome in

Faery Land. And yet, in some places els, I doe otherwise shadow her. For considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royall queene or empresse, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull Lady, this latter part in some places I doe expresse in Belphœbe, fashioning her name according to your owne excellent conceipt of Cynthia, (Phæbe and Cynthia being both names of Diana)." I would offer this passage as at least a slightly analogous praising-without-naming moment, as his queen is only named "Elizabeth" in the dedication and never in the Letter proper.

[4]My main objection to this argument about Aetion is that it makes the poem's theme of indistinctiveness contingent on the reader's ignorance. If, in some dreadful future, the knowledge that Astrofell is a name for Sidney becomes lost, I would be hard pressed to agree that this loss of knowledge would enhance the thematic work of the passage.

[5]Hunt's primary source for this claim is Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life*; also see Hadfield's "Spenser's Rosalind."

[6]Hunt notes, rightly, that this passage is at the mathematical center of the poem, and, following David Burchmore, argues that "Spenser's verses create a symmetrical balance throughout *Colin Clout"* (248). However, in discussing the hypothesis that Colin's "gentle mayd" may be Rosalind and not Elizabeth Boyle, Hunt dismisses Rosalind, "who most likely represents the woman Spenser loved in *The Shepheardes Calender* (and who remains possibly in a latter part of *Colin Clout* composed at a time different from the writing of the poetry under analysis)" (249). These arguments seem at cross-purposes; if the poem is a carefully crafted, symmetrical whole, surely we cannot dismiss the evidence of "a latter part" of the poem.

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Signs of Life in Robert Lowell's "Skunk Hour"*

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Our colloquial phrase "signs of life" presupposes signs of death, and plenty of them, in the midst of which, or despite which, signs of life emerge. In order to detect any in Lowell's poetry, where illness and death threaten to prevail, we need to become textual exegetes, rogue semiologists, and adepts in sign reading ranging from biblical typology to textual phonology. In this article I will be linking textual phonology with three of Lowell's master tropes that participate in a contested formation of signs of life in "Skunk Hour": falling/rising/standing, hands/touch, and hunger/food/eating.

Illness and death pervade *Life Studies* (1959), and as Part IV progresses, heading toward "Skunk Hour," Lowell shifts attention to his own recurrent manic-depressive illness. "Waking in the Blue" adverts to a stay in "a house for the mentally ill" (183) that was neither his first nor his last. The following poem, "Home After Three Months Away," depicts his homecoming as a "cured" mental patient, "Cured, I am frizzled, stale and small" (186). The sylleptic play on "cured" here at the end harks back to the "gobbets of porkrind in bowknots of gauze" that were tied on a tree to feed hungry sparrows in line 5. The poet's bouts with mental illness reach a climax in "Skunk Hour," in which "the season's ill" (stanza 3), the speaker's "mind's not right" (stanza 5), and he hears his "ill-spirit sob" (stanza 6). Furthermore, the phoneme cluster *ill* infiltrates the entire poem, creating an acoustic chamber of *ill*-ness, until in stanza 7 it is consumed in an ameliorative

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debkearful0232.htm>.

trope of hunger, food, and eating, thanks this time not to sparrows but to hungry skunks.[1]

Ill first makes itself heard as a phoneme cluster in the opening line, "Naut*il*us Island's hermit," followed in stanza 1 by "heiress st*ill*," "her sheep st*ill*," and "our v*ill*age":

> Nautilus Island's hermit
> heiress still lives through winter in her Spartan cottage;
> her sheep still graze above the sea.
> Her son's a bishop. Her farmer
> is first selectman in our village;
> she's in her dotage.

Ill as an acoustic sign is augmented orthographically by *age* in "vil*lage,*" which joins "cott*age*" and "dot*age*" in an *age*-ing weak rhyme. At the outset, "us" follows the phoneme cluster "ill" in "Nautil*us,*" which also harbors an acoustic play on "Naut" / *naught*. The incorporation of *ill* in "st*ill* lives" fashions a sign of ongoing life that gives credit to the hermit heiress's pertinacity, however "ill" she may be. In "Skunk Hour," the terminal poem in *Life Studies*, the hermit heiress is the terminal "life study" of a dying New England aristocracy, to which Lowell himself belonged.

The opening stanza resounds with *ill* and is occupied by *her,* the "*her*mit / heiress." Everyone and everything are hers. Her cottage, her sheep, her farmer, her son fill designated roles—pastoral, agricultural, political, religious—within the mock-feudal domain of this lady of the manor. "Her sheep still graze above the sea" is the only line that does not end on a falling rhythmical note, and within it "above" rises. For a nostalgic, idyllic moment we are transported into a changeless pastoral world, a "still" world of *otium* and timelessness.[2] Little do they know it, but the sheep also inaugurate hunger, food, and eating as a trope that skunks will appropriate in the final stanza.

In stanza 2, the *her*mit heiress seeks to preserve her best of all worlds by removing visual signs of a new order, the "eyesores" facing "*her* shore":

> Thirsting for
> the hierarchic privacy
> of Queen Victoria's century,
> she buys up all
> the eyesores facing her shore,
> and lets them fall.

The phrasal verb "buys up" and the verbal phrase "lets fall" team up to invert the primal trope of falling/rising/standing that endows Lowell's poetry with signs of life restored. Pitch first rises—"she buys up all"—then falls—"lets them fall." The theme of the poem thus far might be summarized *ill all fall,* which also encapsulates the doctrine of original sin, that congenital spiritual "illness" which we all inherit. Puritan schoolchildren learned this while learning the alphabet as a rhyming system of religious signs in *The New England Primer.* Thus the letter A: "In *Adam's* Fall / We sinned all" (355). "Skunk Hour" adds, homophonically, the "I-sores" in "eyesores." But it is not just eyesores that disturb the hermit heiress, she also thirsts for "the hierarchic privacy / of Queen Victoria's century." "Skunk Hour" needs to be read against the foil of Cold War cultural, political, and legal issues that merged in major Supreme Court decisions regarding privacy.[3]

The phoneme cluster *ill* becomes a full-blown predicative adjective at the outset of stanza 3:

> The season's ill—
> we've lost our summer millionaire,
> who seemed to leap from an L. L. Bean
> catalogue. His nine-knot yawl
> was auctioned off to lobstermen.
> A red fox stain covers Blue Hill.

A long dash imposes a pregnant pause after two iambs, "The season's ill," before the verse spreads to iambic tetrameter in line 2. "The season's ill" was also the first line of an early draft of "Skunk Hour," which suggests the salience of "ill" in Lowell's poetic thinking during his composition of the poem.[4] After the pause, it immediately infects "our summer m*ill*ionaire," whom we have "lost." Did his "leap from an L. L. Bean / catalogue" anticipate a subsequent "leap," to be fol-

lowed by a fall?[5] Did he act upon what Philip Hobsbaum calls "the Death Wish" lurking in this and other stanzas (94)? I share Stephen Yenser's view that "the stanza intimates that 'the summer millionaire' was a suicide" and that "the means of suicide is implicit in 'leap'" (161). "His nine-knot yawl / was auctioned off to lobstermen" suggests that he has abruptly gone to meet his maker, leaving behind a *yawl*, that joins an *all / fall / ill* keening chorus, with "yawl" taking on its function as a verb, to wail.[6] Acoustically, "L. L. Bean" is not precisely "*ill ill been*," but is close enough for the alert textual exegete to take aural notice. The tone of the poem at this stage is complex, and simply to refer to it as "elegiac" would miss the boat. Lowell's fellow poet Richard Wilbur got the tone about as right as anyone has: "the humor grows more emphatic in stanza III, at the expense of a deceased conspicuous consumer who looked, when alive, like a sporting-goods dummy, and whose death is a blow to the summer resort's economy and distinction. At the same time, we are half aware in this stanza of accumulating ideas of death and decay: to the addled heiress and the collapsing eyesores we must add the dead millionaire, the passing summer, and the decline of a fishing port into a vacation town" (85-86).

Wilbur's evocation of the summer millionaire in his dummy perfection summons up Lowell's image of himself in "My Last Afternoon with Uncle Devereux Winslow," the inaugural poem in the "Life Studies" sequence, which introduces the theme of pervasive illness and death: "I was five and a half. / My formal pearl gray shorts / had been worn for three minutes. / My perfection was the Olympian / poise of my models in the imperishable autumn / display windows / of Rogers Peet's boys' store below the State House / in Boston [...]" (164). This first self-representation of Lowell standing in *Life Studies* comes to life by association with lifeless dummies standing in the windows of a traditional store favored by proper Bostonians for themselves and their suitably accoutred male offspring.[7] The last self-representation of himself standing, having resisted a suicide impulse, will initiate the final stanza of "Skunk Hour." In the meantime the

lobstermen provide a sign of life more vigorous than the hermit heiress who "still lives." Not infected by "*ill*ness," they fulfill their life-sustaining, traditional vocation of providing succulent food for the hungry.[8] Summer millionaires may come and go, but they remain, now making productive use of the yawl, which I fancy they acquired at a knock-down price in coordinated bidding.

That doesn't stop *ill* from infiltrating a rhyme-word at the end of the stanza, which moves back to the present tense of the opening line: "A red fox stain covers Blue H*ill*." The line progresses deliberately, slowly, sounding six even stresses and seven different vowels, one per word: "A *red fox stain cov*ers *Blue Hill.*"[9] "Red" initially modifies "fox," but spreads to "stain" before encountering a "Blue Hill." "Stain" bears within itself etymological traces of Old Norse *steinen* = "to paint," as a deranged sort of expressionist painting suggests itself, one in which a blue (= "despondent") hill (infected with *ill*ness) is covered with blood, thus evoking the "blight on the countryside" topos of the classical elegiac tradition (see Race 109-10). Taken together, "The season's ill" and "A red fox stain covers Blue Hill" form a rural New England pendant to Ezra Pound's haikuish two-line "In a Station at the Metro." There are no petals on a wet black bough in Lowell's poem, but the "stained" New England fall foliage is emblematically appropriate. The season's ill, a sign of which is that leaves are "ill" and dying, as they turn from green to orange to red.

The New England fall motif continues on into stanza 4, now as a decorative orange:

> And now our fairy
> decorator brightens his shop for fall;
> his fishnet's filled with orange cork,
> orange, his cobbler's bench and awl;
> there is no money in his work,
> he'd rather marry.

The line-break construction "fairy / decorator" replicates the "hermit / heiress" construct of stanza 1, but whereas "hermit / heiress" pulls

a surprise, "fairy / decorator" delivers a type figure to make sport of. His "cobbler's bench and awl" echoes the idiomatic phrase something-or-other "and all," connoting a motley assemblage. Whereas a red stain covered Blue Hill, orange covers his cobbler's bench and awl. Orange thus tastefully applied harmonizes with the orange cork that fills his fishnet. Lowell does not actually argue, in sync with enlightened thought of the times, that homosexuality is an illness, but echoing the pervasive *ill*ness of the poem, *ill* acoustically occupies "f*ill*ed." Within the socio-economic frame of the poem, the decorator is at home neither in the mock-feudal world of the hermit heiress, nor in the wheeler-dealer capitalist world of the summer millionaire: "there is no money in his work." The humorously crunched off-rhyme "cork" / "work" makes a jest of his plight. A parting shot, "he'd rather marry," rhythmically echoes "And now our fairy," with which the stanza began. The "fairy" / "marry" off-rhyme adds a final sarcastic note. William Doreski also has a bit of fun in juxtaposing the desperate straits of the summer millionaire and the gay decorator: "wealth leads to loneliness and death, homosexuality leads to thoughts of marriage" (90). A fate worse than death?

All this is, of course, good clean fun, at any rate in 1950s terms, before gays could tie the knot and homosexuality was still, charitably viewed, an illness. But if there is something ill in the state of this New England town, there is also something ill within Lowell's persona. Various critics have indeed found connections, homosexually inflected or otherwise, between the poet and the "ill" characters he sketches, all isolated figures: the hermit heiress, the summer millionaire, the fairy decorator.[10] The poet's own illness becomes life-threatening in stanza five:

> One dark night,
> my Tudor Ford climbed the hill's skull;
> I watched for love-cars. Lights turned down,
> they lay together, hull to hull,
> where the graveyard shelves on the town...
> My mind's not right.

"One dark night" evokes the opening line ("En una noche oscura") of St. John of the Cross's mystical poem "The Dark Night of the Soul" (38) and thus harbors a potential sign of life. But we should not get our hopes up. Lowell later wrote: "I hope my readers would remember John of the Cross's poem. My night is not gracious, but secular, Puritan, and agnostic. An existentialist night. Somewhere in my mind was a passage from Sartre or Camus about reaching some point of final darkness where the one free act is suicide" (*Collected Prose* 226). The headlights of the love-cars are dimmed this dark night, as if to ward off the canonical *night / light* rhyme that Dylan Thomas resoundingly employed as the governing *A* rhyme in his classic villanelle "Do not go gentle into that good night."[11] Lowell's rhyming response to "night" is "My mind's not right." In his second tercet, Thomas himself works a *right / night* variation on the seeded *A* rhyme, but as an affirmative, "dark is right." Lowell's mind is not. Lowell's "dark night" ends with a sign of illness, "My mind's not right." Blue Hill morphs into "hill's skull," evoking Golgotha, from Hebrew *gulgōleth* for "skull," a verbal sign for the shape of the hill on which Jesus was crucified. A "hull to hull" rhyme with "skull" moves toward a "graveyard" that "shelves on the town." "Shelves" as an intransitive verb signifies "to slope away gradually, to incline," but "shelves on" sounds somewhat sinister, as if the graveyard were purposefully, gradually moving closer to the "ill" town.[12]

The love-cars' lights are turned down, but one radio is turned up enough to be heard:

> A car radio bleats,
> "Love, O careless Love..." I hear
> my ill-spirit sob in each blood cell,
> as if my hand were at its throat...
> I myself am hell;
> nobody's here—

What Lowell's persona hears, however, is less the bleating of "Love, O Careless Love" than the sobbing of his own "ill-spirit": "I hear / my ill-spirit sob in each blood cell."[13] The *ill* in "ill-spirit" may denote

illness, but it can also be taken in the sense of "hostile," "harmful," or "pernicious," as in "ill will," or "it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good." Never speak ill of the dead.

The speaker's agon with his "ill-spirit [...] as if my hand were at its throat" evokes a tradition of debate poems between body and soul such as Andrew Marvell's "A Dialogue between the Soul and Body," in which the wretched body speaks of itself as "A Body that could never rest, / Since this ill Spirit it possest" (ll. 19-20). The diabolical associations of "possest" suggest that the soul, itself possessed, in turn possesses the body. In Marvell's poem the soul is indeed figuratively imprisoned in a prison cell within the body, and it complains of its ill treatment.[14] In "Skunk Hour," the poet's ill-spirit possesses each blood "cell," which in turn imprison the ill-spirit.[15] Lowell's line "as if my hand were at it is throat" also brings to mind, however, "your life is in your hands," the sign of life that brings closure to "The Exile's Return" in *Lord Weary's Castle* (1946). The idiomatic phrase now acquires a new twist: your life is in your hands, and it is there for the taking. Lowell's persona in "Skunk Hour" is on the verge of following as best he can the satanic directive in "After the Surprising Conversions": "'My friend, / Cut your own throat. Cut your own throat. Now! Now!'" (62).[16]

The diabolical associations of "possessed" in Marvell's no-win debate poem, in which the "ill Spirit" is imprisoned within the body, become more dire in Lowell's next line, "I myself am hell," as the speaker's voice is usurped by Milton's Satan: "Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell" (*Paradise Lost* 4.75). Lowell's "one dark night" culminates, unlike John of the Cross's, in a self-identification with the archetypal "ill spirit," for whom *hell* is his own private *cell.* Lowell's virtuoso rhyming and off-rhyming conjoin "cell" and "hell"; "hear" and "hell" alliterate; assonance links "bleats" and "hear"; and the homophones "hear" and "here" sound a rich rhyme. The one end-word that acoustically sticks out painfully on its own is "throat," which rang out in Satan's call to "cut your own throat" in "The Surprising Conversions."

The long dash after "nobody's here" would seem to leave the isolated poet-speaker on the verge of taking his own life, but it turns out to be a bridge leading in the next stanza to a change of place and to a vision of life persisting:

> only skunks, that search
> in the moonlight for a bite to eat.
> They march on their soles up Main Street:
> white stripes, moonstruck eyes' red fire
> under the chalk-dry and spar spire
> of the Trinitarian Church.

Whatever symbolic weight the skunks heft as they "march on their soles up Main Street," *ill* and its off-rhyming symptoms are nowhere to be heard.[17] Instead hunger/food/eating—earlier associated only indirectly with sheep and lobstermen—begin to emerge as the dominant trope of the last two stanzas, bringing closure to the poem and to *Life Studies*.

The skunks find what they are looking for in the final stanza, while the poet, standing "on top / of our back steps," now views them instead of love-cars. The graveyard gives way to the poet's backyard, and standing supersedes earlier tropes of falling. The poet himself stands:

> I stand on top
> of our back steps and breathe the rich air—
> a mother skunk with her column of kittens swills the garbage pail.
> She jabs her wedge-head in a cup
> of sour cream, drops her ostrich tail,
> and will not scare.

This is one of Lowell's several representations of himself standing, his own erect figure constituting a battered sign of life. In this instance, the back steps serve as a pedestal for his monumentalizing self-representation.[18] He also stands on top of the stanza, whose opening line—"I stand on top"—rhythmically counters the iambic dimeter—"and lets them fall"—that concludes stanza 2. In "Summer Tides,"

completed three weeks before Lowell's death, the back steps become a gradually rotting "bulwark where I stand" (853). I read "Skunk Hour" and "Summer Tides" as responses to the injunction "Stand and live" in "Where the Rainbow Ends" (69), the terminal poem in *Lord Weary's Castle*. There it is accompanied by remedial tropes of hunger/food/eating and of exile/return.

The spatial transition from the hill's skull, to Main Street, to the poet's backyard where the skunks head, has been rapid. Their march had an end in view. The skunks put in, as it were, a guest appearance, designed for the poet's viewing.[19] He is no longer a voyeur of "love cars," but a witness to an emblematic scene, a sign of life that is as much olfactory and acoustic as visual. The phoneme cluster *ill* which has spread through the poem like a virus is, finally, sw*ill*ed by a trope of hunger, food, and eating when the mother skunk with her column of kittens "swills the garbage pail." Surrounding sound patterns, also symptoms of *ill*ness, are simultaneously swilled. Pail, a homophone of "pale," harbors "ail" and off-rhymes with *ill.* But having been swilled, *ill* is converted into *will,* a sign of life. As a modal verb, *will* is, admittedly, part of a negation, "will not scare," that is potentially both transitive and intransitive. A reader who activates both grammatical senses ratifies an easeful mutuality: the mother skunk will not scare the poet and she will not be scared. She and her kittens will not run away, nor will he. But still the reader must choose, either / or, between two senses of "will": as staunch determination or, quite simply, a serene statement of fact. A reader who consciously opts for the latter joins in the formation of a healing fiction.[20]

On another level of twoness, there are now, thanks to "Skunk Hour," two indomitable mothers in *Life Studies*, and two families, one dysfunctional, the other marvelously functional. Hunger, food, and eating are recurrent tropes in *Life Studies,* and the family dinner that brings closure swills, as it were, those earlier family dinners that Lowell endured as a child, "absorbing cold and anxiety from the table" (147), as he puts it in "91 Revere Street." The dysfunctional family theme enters the closing "Life Studies" sequence at the very

outset in "My Last Afternoon with Uncle Devereux Winslow," which begins with a family dinner (163).[21] In "Skunk Hour" it ends with one. Thanks to a family of skunks, Lowell as an adult can now stand and live, breathing "the rich air." For the reader who has been keenly attentive to acoustic signs and their askew suggestions, the poem comes homophonically full circle. The hermit heiress is now superseded by a rich heir, as Lowell's persona, himself a "dotty" isolate, is reanimated.[22]

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NOTES

[1]David Kalstone draws passing attention to "[s]yllables [...] from the start [...] beating insistently through the poem" (51). His examples, confined to stanzas 1 and 3, include a few of the syllables that I foreground in conjunction with the phoneme cluster *ill*. John Frederick Nims remarks: "Rhymes and off-rhymes run from stanza to stanza: 'all'—'fall'—'yawl'—'skull'—'cell'—'pail,' etc" (88), but he does not associate them with "ill." Michael Toolan's linguistically oriented stylistic analysis of "Skunk Hour" shares none of my phonological concerns. Jackson Barry's "Robert Lowell: The Poet as Sign" contends that "in Lowell we find a very complex sign function where a physical signifier, the figure chosen, stands for a cluster of meanings attributed to but not inherent in the actual person" (180). Barry does not mention "Skunk Hour," and our essays in no respect overlap.

[2]Whenever I read "her sheep still graze above the sea" I hear in the background John McCormack singing "Sheep may safely graze" ("Schafe können sicher weiden"), aria 4 from Bach's Cantata No. 208. For a sign of Lowell's interest in Bach, see Mariani 213.

[3]See Deborah Nelson's chapter on Lowell in her *Pursuing Privacy in Cold War Culture* (42-73). Nelson reads "Skunk Hour" as "an epochal poem poised at a generational and temporal shift. The opening two stanzas of the poem register uneasiness with the upheavals in contemporary life occasioned by the loss of a certain kind of privacy" (47). Nelson traces the privacy issue throughout the poem.

[4]The draft, titled "Inspiration," is reprinted in Axelrod, *Robert Lowell: Life and Art* 250.

[5]Today one cannot leap from but may consult an online catalogue at www.llbean.com. I remember when Brooks Brothers ads and L. L. Bean ads in *The*

New Yorker would clearly be appealing to the same clientele. A New York or Boston businessman accustomed to wearing a Brooks Brothers suit could don his L. L. Bean outdoorsman's gear for use at his "summer place," quite often in Maine. The company was founded in 1912 by Leon Leonwood Bean in Freeport, Maine. For a fascinating history of the company, see the Wikipedia entry on L. L. Bean. In "Flee on Your Donkey" from her collection *Live or Die* Anne Sexton records: "I carried a knife in my pocketbook—/ my husband's good L. L. Bean hunting knife. / I wasn't sure if I should slash a tire / or scrape the guts out of some dream" (8).

[6]I have been asked: "Is there anything in the text that suggests he died and did not simply lose his money?" This query prioritizes one hypothesis as the obvious one, takes for granted that there is something "in the text" to justify prioritizing it, and leaves the hypothesis standing as one which will remain "true" as long as it cannot be disproved. I cannot disprove the hypothesis that the millionaire left town because he suddenly went bankrupt. Nor can I say what "in the text" grants it prioritized status. As for my own hypothesis, I grant that "the text" provides no explicit evidence that death, death by his own hand, was the "real" reason we have lost him. It doesn't provide any such indication for any other hypothesis, either. It could be that our summer millionaire just up and left after the summer was over, eager to get back to work and earn more millions. What else would one have expected of him after summer was over? He's gone, but why is never spelled out. "We've lost our summer millionaire" is phrased in the laconic manner of a Maine countryman's oral speech which Lowell adopts, using the communal "our" just as he does for "our fairy decorator." Perhaps "millionaire" is humorously hyperbolic, but the "our" suggests that he was a regular summer visitor, now never more to return. Did he suddenly go bankrupt during the summer? "Mebbe yes, and mebbe no" (to try to put it in rural New England speech). My hypothesis underscores a contrast between him and the pertinacious hermit heiress, made of sterner New England stuff, who "still lives." It also responds to the aura of mystery about the millionaire's departure and the auctioning off of his yawl to lobstermen. I don't want to invoke Wolfgang Iser's notion of "gaps" in a text for the reader to fill in, but Lowell often leaves open to the reader how to "fill in" a key line or phrase for which "the text" provides no clearly determined answer. Take, for example, the unidentified "kind hands" in Lowell's "The March 2" (546) and how the poem thematically hinges on the reader's construction of whose hands they are; see my article on "The March 1" and "The March 2." Textual exegesis, including exegesis of biblical passages, may call for a good deal of filling in gaps. The very absence of a stated "real" reason "in the text," combined with the laconic speaking manner assumed by the poet, helps form my hypothesis. In "Skunk Hour" the speaker resists a suicide compulsion, but during Lowell's lifetime five poets who were students of his or friends didn't: Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, John Berryman, Randall Jarrell, and Delmore Schwartz. Lowell foregrounds suicide in "A Suicidal Nightmare"(865), "Suicide" (724-25), and most chillingly in "After the Surprising Conversions" (574). *Life Studies* includes a poem "To Delmore Schwartz (157-58) and "Words for Hart Crane" (159), who committed suicide by leaping from a ship. None of this "proves" that the millionaire joined the crowd,

perhaps following Crane's example, but it may subconsciously affect my reading of what is and is not "in the text." It also reinforces my reading of "Skunk Hour" as, among other things, a celebration of the poet's triumphant resistance to a suicide impulse, thanks to some skunks.

[7]The "Marry the Man Today" number in the 1950 musical *Guys and Dolls* immortalized Rogers Peet as the place to send a gentleman in the making: "Slowly introduce him to the better things / respectable, conservative, and clean. / Readers Digest! / Guy Lombardo! / Rogers Peet! / Golf! / Galoshes! / Ovaltine!" (qtd. from Jones 185). Nostalgic fans of Rogers, Peet & Co. should consult <www.ivy-style.com/better-things-rogers-peet-co.html>, which offers numerous illustrations of Rogers Peet advertisements from times past, including for boys' wear. Its sartorial cousin, Brooks Brothers, still lives, but Rogers, Peet & Co., founded in 1874, gave up the ghost in the mid-1980s. I vaguely remember the store that Lowell refers to, at 104 Tremont Street.

[8]The best lobsters in the world are Maine lobsters. And the most expensive, although a current glut in lobster stocks due to global warming of waters off the Maine coast means that Maine lobstermen are earning catastrophically less despite consumers still having to pay premium prices; see Jess Bidgood, "Some Wary as Lobstermen Unite," *New York Times* 20 Oct. 2013, 14 April 2014 <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/21/us/some-wary-as-lobstermen-unite.html?_r=0>. A textual clue to the poem's setting as Castine, Maine, where Lowell frequently spent summers, is given at the outset, "Nautilus Island," which is at the head of Castine Harbor in Penobscot Bay.

[9]I cannot read the line without associatively thinking of Winslow Homer's painting "The Fox Hunt" (1893, now hanging in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts). Nicolai Cikovsky's *Winslow Homer* provides a large reproduction (115-16). In the painting, fall has already turned to winter in Maine.

[10]Helen Vendler comments: "The manuscript suggests that all of these are figures for the poet himself. Whereas the final version says 'There is no money in his work, / he'd rather marry' about the 'fairy decorator,' in the draft the poet says this about himself: 'There is no money in this work / I'd rather marry.' Lowell inherited his house in Castine, Maine, from his aunt who lived there, but he only went there in summers, like the 'summer millionaire.' No longer living in one of the roles proper to his Brahmin lineage—hermit, or bishop, or landowner—the speaker has declined into the unvirile role of the artist, comparable to that of the man whom the town contemptuously calls the 'fairy decorator'" (56-67). By indicating that it is the town that has given the decorator his label, Vendler leaves Lowell off the homophobic hook. Taking a deeper plunge into Lowell's psyche than Vendler ventures, Lawrence Kramer maintains that "the homosexuality of the decorator exposes a deep current of early childhood (Oedipal) homosexuality in the autobiographical speaker" (242). Kathleen Spivack, who knew Lowell well, writes insightfully of his publicly expressed homophobia as "protective coloration" in mid-century Bostonian cultural contexts (122). Ian Gregson does not touch upon "Skunk Hour" in his well-considered chapter on masculinity as a

recurrent topic in Lowell's poetry ("Men and Mermaids: Robert Lowell's Martial Masculinity and Beyond," 12-38).

[11]St. John of the Cross was stuck with "luz," Spanish for "light," and uses "inflamada" ("inflamed") in line 2 to rhyme with "oscura" in line 1. His English translator Willis Barnstone uses "light" at the end of the second stanza to parry "night" at the end of the first, so strong is the pull of the "night / light" rhyme, whereas John of the Cross uses "segura" ("sure" or "surely"). Lowell also identified two German poems as sources for his "One dark night" stanza, Friedrich Hölderlin's "Brod und Wein" ["Bread and Wine"] and Annette von Droste-Hülshoff's "Am letzten Tage des Jahres"["On the Last Day of the Year"], both of which he quotes in German (*Collected Prose* 228). Droste-Hülshoff's grim meditation employs six-line stanzas, beginning and ending with rhyming iambic dimeters, as in stanza two: "'s ist tiefe Nacht" (literally, "it is deep night") and "Einsam durchwacht" (translatable as "lonely, awake throughout"). Lowell quotes the entire second stanza and the beginning of the third.

[12]A "scull" is a boat, and as a homophone of "skull" it adds to the nautical imagery of the passage. Given the nautical context, the "love-cars" bring to mind, at least mine, the "love-boats" that in the good old days passed through a darkened "Tunnel of Love," giving an impetuous teenager a chance to steal a kiss before the boat emerged into the amusement park light of day. A tunnel-of-love cartoon in *The New Yorker* 28 Oct. 2013: 55 takes things a bit farther in the direction of "Skunk Hour." On the left, a couple in a boat is about to enter a darkened tunnel, over which a sign reads "Tunnel of Love." On the right, a lone male wearing a baseball cap, also sitting in a boat, is about to enter at the opposite end of the tunnel, over which a sign reads "Tunnel of Voyeurism." By line 7, transformed into boats, the love-cars lie together "hull to hull," as if beached, while "shelves" may awaken associations with sandbars.

[13]The "love-cars" provide dubious service as a sign of life for the speaker, and the song that "bleats" from the interior of one of them—the grazing sheep of stanza one felt no need to bleat—conveys signs of illness and of death. The editors of Lowell's *Collected Poems* cite lines from Big Joe Turner's February 1941 recording of "Careless Love": "Love, O Love, O careless love [...] / You worried my mother until she died / You caused my father to lose his mind / You worried my mother until she died / You made my father lose his mind" (1046). In connection with the "privacy" theme (see n3), Deborah Nelson remarks that "from the first elegy in *Life Studies,* Lowell had figured himself as a voyeur: 'unseen but all-seeing, I was Agrippina / in the Golden House of Nero' ('My Last Afternoon with Uncle Devereux Winslow')" (166). One need not assume, however, that Robert Lowell was himself a voyeur given to haunting lovers' lanes. He notes that "watching the lovers was not mine, but from an anecdote about Walt Whitman in his old age" (*Collected Prose* 228). The editors of Lowell's *Collected Poems* quote Lowell's source, Logan Pearsall Smith's *Unforgotten Years*: "Almost every afternoon my father would take Walt Whitman driving in the Park; it was an unfailing interest to them to drive as close as they could behind buggies in which pairs of lovers were seated, and observe the degree of slope towards each other, or

'buggy-angle,' as they called it, of these couples; and if they ever saw this angle of separation narrowed to an embrace, my father and Walt Whitman, who had ever honored that joy-giving power of nature symbolized under the name of Venus, would return home with happy hearts" (99; qtd. from Lowell, *Collected Poems* 1046).

[14]Marvell's opening lines, spoken by the soul, inaugurate the topos: "O Who shall, from this Dungeon, raise / A Soul enslav'd so many wayes?" The rest of the ten-line stanza elaborates on its ill treatment by the body. The body replies in the next stanza—beginning "O who shall me deliver whole, / From bonds of this Tyrannic Soul?"—with its own complaint about its ill treatment by the soul. Neither body nor soul wins the debate, each is in effect the prisoner of the other. David Reid observes that Marvell "develops the contradiction between the two sides of the one being to express, with every appearance of levity and control, an unbearable state of discord" (213). An emblem book illustration from Herman Hugo's *Pia Desideria* (Antwerp, 1624) depicting a soul imprisoned in a body can be found in Rosalie Colie's book on Marvell. The body is a skeleton whose ribs form the bars of the cell within which the soul, a rather hapless creature, is incarcerated (Illustration 2, facing 238).

[15]In his biography of Lowell, Charles Mariani reports on Donald Junkins's visiting Lowell in his "locked cell at McLean's" mental asylum in December 1957 (262).

[16]"After the Surprising Conversions," in *Lord Weary's Castle*, is a verse epistle closely based on the ending of Jonathan Edwards's letter known as "Narrative of Surprising Conversions" (November 6, 1736). A note in the *Collected Poems* quotes portions of it, including: "And many who seemed under no melancholy, some pious persons, who had no special darkness or doubts about the goodness of their state—nor were under any special trouble or concern or mind about anything temporal—had it urged upon them as if somebody had spoke to them. Cut your own throat, now is a good opportunity. Now! Now!" (1023). One inevitably thinks of the last line of Lowell's "Waking in the Blue," "each of us holds a locked razor" (184).

[17]Given the "dark night of the soul" evocation of the previous stanza, I grant that it is hard to ignore a latent pun on "soles" and "souls." These skunks' soles / souls are not "ill," and when they "march on their soles up Main Street," all *ills* are flattened. Far be it from me to point out that a cobbler's awl, such as may be found in the decorator's emporium, might be used in repairing soles. For punning turns on "awl" / "sole," see Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* 1.1.

[18]On the monumentalizing impulse in Lowell's poetry, particularly with reference to "For the Union Dead," see Guy Rotella (41-80).

[19]Elizabeth Bishop dedicated "The Armadillo" (83-84) to Lowell, and he dedicated his "Skunk Hour" to her. Lowell also sneaked a bishop if not Bishop into his poem: "Her son's a bishop." In a 1978 interview conducted by Eileen McMahon, Bishop sought to minimize affiliations between the two poems and the significance of the dedications. She also reports on Lowell's, and her, rather humdrum

encounter with the skunks in Lowell's backyard at Castine: "I visited Lowell in Castine, Maine in 1957 when I was up from Brazil with a Brazilian friend of mine. The skunk business then was going on at the back door, where we saw it with a flashlight. Then he wrote 'Skunk Hour'" (109). On the impact of "The Armadillo" on Lowell and "Skunk Hour" in particular, see Thomas Travisano (225-33). Bishop rhymes "night" and "height" in her first quatrain, before turning on the "light" in the next. Lowell's "dark night" is at least partially illumined by "moonlight" in the present stanza.

[20]Stephen Matterson focuses more on the poet's primary role in the creation of what I call a healing fiction: "*Life Studies* has explored the failure of the imagination to give order and meaning to objects and experiences, the failure to transform reality. Yet in the end Lowell's survival is engineered by a fiction, by the temporary restoration of his lost esemplastic power. The line "My mind's not right" and the following sentence represent a nadir. But then Lowell introduces the skunks, suggesting the presence of disinterested care in the world, and providing a kind of reproach for the introverted narrator. Thus Lowell interprets the skunks' actions in a self-conscious way, giving meaning to them. This ability momentarily transforming reality through language and imagination becomes fused with the ability to endure. The skunks are fictions" (68).

[21]Steven Gould Axelrod analyzes the "opaque, swirling linguistic signs" of the poem, in which "home becomes a nexus of isolation, paralysis, impoverishment, discord, and death. It is revealed as the most unhomelike space of all" (255). Home nevertheless was not short of garbage cans. In "91 Revere Street" we learn of three family garbage cans, each inscribed "R. T. S. Lowell—U.S.N" (148) to identify them as the property of the feckless head of the house, a former naval officer.

[22]The "Life Studies" sequence traces Lowell's family history from 1922 to 1957, with family members dying off one by one, leaving him as an heir of two distinguished but played out New England families, the Lowells and the Winslows, whose credentials go back to the Mayflower. "I [...] / breathe the rich air" resuscitates "I breathe the ether of my marriage feast," a line with religious and mystical import in "Where the Rainbow Ends" (69). Vereen Bell is not sanguine about any reanimation: "Breathing 'rich air' is not likely to contribute much more regeneration than a pang for one who is a hell to himself and whose ill-spirit is threatened by his own hand" (69). Adam Beardsworth thinks otherwise: "As the speaker watches the skunks, he breathes 'the rich air,' indicating that in the actions (and foul odour) he finds a sense of redemption, even within his own hell" (112). Richard J. Fein writes of Lowell as "a family heir in *Life Studies*" who attains "a reclamation in the 'rich air' of the self" (72, 48). Sandra M. Gilbert extends the salutary working of "the rich air" to the rest of us: "At the end of his poem Lowell pauses on the 'back steps' and breathes 'the rich air.' The air of 'Skunk Hour' is rich indeed, rich with the seething of ancient powers, rich with moiling Modernist and Postmodernist anxieties. Rich, most of all, with what is finally, odd as it may seem, a kind of nourishment for poets and their readers, a nourishment as necessary to us as the 'sour cream' is to the skunks" (78-79). One could add that even

the phonic "air" in the "Trinit*ar*ian Church" has been refreshed by the rich air and that the f*air*y decorator can breathe more easily. By contrast, in "The Prodigal," Elizabeth Bishop's ironic rendition of the prodigal son parable, pig-sty stink remains stink: "The brown enormous odor he lived by / was too close, with its breathing and thick hair, / for him to judge" (54). I think that "The Prodigal" may have been nearly as much of an imaginative influence on "Skunk Hour" as "The Armadillo." The personal illness to which Bishop's poem relates is alcoholism: "*The Prodigal* was suggested by my stretch with psychoanalysis—that, and the actual incident of being offered a drink of rum in a pig-pen in Nova Scotia at 9 o'clock one morning" [from a letter to May Swenson, Sept. 6, 1955] (806). Her use of "stretch" brings to mind the length of a prison sentence.

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Geoffrey Household's *Watcher in the Shadows* and *Dance of the Dwarfs*: A Response to Robert Lance Snyder*

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Robert Lance Snyder's recent article on Geoffrey Household in *Connotations* deserves praise on two counts. Firstly, it helps rescue Household from almost total critical neglect; and, secondly, it opens up helpful new avenues for interpreting his fiction. The discussion which follows is intended as a constructive extension of the analysis presented in Snyder's essay together with suggestions of its limitations.

One of Snyder's main arguments is that Household revises the generic conventions of the Edwardian thriller by removing characters' national features because he regards the latter as anachronistic. Thus, Household narrows down the action to a battle of wits between the narrator and his antagonist. As this battle develops, it gradually becomes evident that the narrator and opponent are in some way mirror images of each other. This doubling is signalled through exchanges of dress, hints of physical resemblance, and other details which suggest such a close relation between the two characters that the action of Household's narratives can be read as a psychodrama quite different from conventional thrillers.

Snyder's argument risks simplifying the action of Household's fiction in such a way that its political resonances and circumstantial detail tend to be lost in the emphasis on doubling. His reading of Household's thrillers as tales of detection similarly understates the generic variety of his fiction.[1] Household produced works ranging

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*Reference: Robert Lance Snyder, "'Occult Sympathy:' Geoffrey Household's *Watcher in the Shadows* and *Dance of the Dwarfs*," *Connotations* 22.2 (2012/2013): 301-17.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debsnyder0222.htm>.

from horror stories to science fiction and even shifts genre temporarily within individual works. Snyder compares Household's doubling to classics like James Hogg's *Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, but the Household's narrowing down of the action connects his novels with a different subset of thrillers, where the conspiracies of super-criminals have to be thwarted by the protagonist. Whether Denis Nayland Smith is pitted against Fu Manchu or Bulldog Drummond against Carl Peterson, the pattern stays of the protagonist engaging in a battle of wits against his opponent. Partly this process involves detection—the uncovering of the conspiracy—and partly strategy in anticipating and thwarting the master-criminal's plot. In Sax Rohmer's fiction, of course, the action is heavily coloured with racial threat as Nayland Smith battles to protect civilization as we know it, but in all these cases the evil genius possesses an unnerving ability to change appearance at will and manoeuvre his way through all levels of society.[2] Characteristically in these narratives protagonist and antagonist form an elite whose intellects match each other in reach, but it is crucial for the drama of these novels that the opposition between these characters be maintained throughout.

The popularity of the criminal mastermind in fiction between the wars may have been a factor in Household turning to thrillers in the 1930s. However, a direct influence which Snyder rightly stresses was that of John Buchan. The latter's evocation of suspense through the immediate drama of his protagonists' attempts to outwit their adversaries clearly feeds into Household's fiction, as does Buchan's use of reversals and his detailed attention to setting. What distinguishes his thrillers from Household's is that Buchan's most famous serial hero, Richard Hannay, never works in isolation from his friends in British intelligence and has important connections with the USA and South Africa. For all his versatility, Hannay remains a soldier, and for that reason we never lose our consciousness of national and political issues during the novels describing Hannay's exploits. Buchan's endings regularly signal the reaffirmation of institutional order through the removal of threats to the nation. In that respect, the politics of Bu-

chan's narratives contrast strikingly with those of Household, who described himself as a "romantic anarchist."[3]

Snyder suggests that Household tends to lose this broader institutional dimension by concentrating his action more and more closely on his protagonists' psyche, but it does not follow that the political and social issues are lost as a result. More importantly, we should note the framing devices and other strategies which Household follows to render his narratives ambiguous. *Rogue Male* (1939), for instance, carries an accompanying letter where he declares: "I write this from a pleasant inn where I am accustoming myself to a new avatar" (181). The suggestion of a serial re-invention of the self would be totally alien in Buchan, as would the suggestion in the letter that the narrator wrongly chose the countryside as a setting for pursuit which would have been more powerfully described in a city. The effect is as if the speaker had stepped out of his role and was approaching the position of the author himself.

Snyder focuses specifically on this novel's concluding scene for its evoked identification between the narrator and his pursuer, but by so doing fails to comment on the introverted, self-reflexive nature of the narrative. As frequently happens in Household, the narrator repeatedly stresses his process of recollection, describing his account as a confession: "I create a second self, a man of the past by whom the man of the present may be measured" (8). As early as this preamble we can see how the narrator has become his own subject. The narrative presents an extended exercise in self-examination, where the narrator looks out for signs of weakness and self-deception. And this is not an isolated case in Household. His narrators frequently incorporate comments on their own methods, thereby inducing in the reader an alert attention to representational technique. At one point in *Rogue Male*, for instance, he stresses the time lapse between the events and his description: "when I write that I did this because of that, it is true. At the time of the action, however, it was not always true" (61). Such reflective moments are rare in Buchan, who repeatedly attempts to maximize the immediacy of events.

Partly because he has discussed the novel elsewhere, Snyder uses *Rogue Male* as a springboard into his discussion of two post-war novels, but in fact this novel already demonstrates Household's method of selective exclusion.[4] The narrator is a lone adventurer who has travelled to an unnamed country in Europe to kill its dictator. A reader in 1939 would need no further information to pick up that contemporary resonance. By 1941, in his film adaptation as *Man Hunt*, Fritz Lang had explicitly made the target Hitler, as indeed he is named in Household's 1982 sequel *Rogue Justice*. In the novel, the narrator's plan misfires, he is arrested and then flees the country. Through a reversal which was to become one of Household's hallmarks, the hunter becomes the hunted, and the novel demonstrates the threatening reach of the European dictator through this pursuit.

Here we have one of the main features which distinguishes Household's novel from Buchan's. In the epistolary foreword to *The Thirty-Nine Steps* Buchan announces his intention to imitate the method of American "shockers," what we would now call thrillers, which are based on the rapid pace of events.[5] Accordingly, Richard Hannay opens that novel with a brief back story on his business activities in Africa and recent arrival in London. Having established that he is an enterprising and seasoned traveller, the action begins. In *Rogue Male*, the narrator's consciousness supplies the ground of the story, and the action centres on the persistent consequences of his original attempt at assassination. This does not mean, however, that *Rogue Male* is thin on specifics, only that Household selects his details according to the immediate necessities of his narrator's local situation. The latter flees back to London secretly stowed away on a cargo boat and is then followed around the London Underground, until he kills one of his pursuers. This estranges him from the authorities: "I was an outlaw in my own country," he admits (41). In *The Thirty-Nine Steps* Richard Hannay also becomes a fugitive, wrongly accused of a murder by the conspirators, but we never lose the background conviction that his actions are to protect the nation or that he will be ultimately vindicated.

Rogue Male, by contrast, opens more obliquely with a description not of events themselves, but of the reactions of the narrator's opponents: "I cannot blame them." The reader is thus drawn into a judgemental relation with the narrator even before we have the data to pass such judgements. Similarly, unlike Buchan, the end point is always uncertain. The narrator puts together his "kit" (63) and flees to Dorset, where he finally confronts his pursuer, one Major Quive-Smith, whose identity is bogus and who masquerades as a gentleman farmer. The latter's purpose is to make the narrator sign a confession that he had indeed tried to kill the "great man" (137). This presents a certain temptation to the narrator, who has from the very beginning admitted a confessional impulse in his account. When the narrator finally kills his pursuer, he takes on the latter's identity and leaves England. The novel ends inconclusively with the narrator temporarily in Tangier, at the time of publication still within the International Zone and therefore outside any nation.

The most dramatic section of *Rogue Male* is that where the narrator is being pursued round the Dorset countryside, and it is the physical detail of this terrain which Snyder's emphasis on doubling understates. The landscape is encoded through avenues of attack and escape, and the travel writer Robert Macfarlane has even argued that the narrator becomes a "hybrid version of the landscape itself" since both place and the narrator are conveyed to the reader through rhetorical oppositions like that between "cover" and "open" ("Rereading").[6] The grounded nature of Household's narratives can never be forgotten without over-simplifying their action.

As Snyder has pointed out, World War II marked a crucial transition point for Household and an end to his *Wanderjahre*—he had lived variously in Romania, Spain and America. During the war he served with British military intelligence, experience which fed into his 1960 novel *Watcher in the Shadows*. Here Charles Dennim, an Austrian former intelligence officer, is shocked out of his suburban peace when a letter bomb explodes at his door. Information gradually emerges that there have been a series of killings—probably from revenge—of

officials from the Buchenwald and Ravensbrück concentration camps, where Dennim had worked while within the Austrian resistance. In other words, the action has a clear historical dimension. It seems as if Dennim is being wrongly targeted, because he was active in an anti-Nazi movement; at least, that is what he tells the reader. Just as we have once again a Household narrator struggling with uncertainty, so the reader is left wondering about the reliability of the information he supplies. Throughout the novel he (and the reader too) can only work from what a character calls "intelligent conjecture" (140). Once again the action centres on flight, this time to the Buckinghamshire countryside.

Here again a preoccupation with doubling diverts us from the physical specifics of pursuit. In *The Three Hostages* (1924) and other novels Buchan evokes the landscape as an emblem of peaceful cultural inheritance, but one which is constantly under threat. The landscape in *Watcher in the Shadows* lacks this directly national significance because Dennim's relation to place is more oblique. He is revealed to be British by adoption and, even though he knows the countryside so well that one character mistakes him for a game-keeper, he reads the terrain strategically, mapping out possible routes of attack and avenues of flight. Thus, the features of the landscape are not simply picturesque. A wood, for instance, could offer the narrator refuge, or might even be a hiding-place for his opponent. As in *Rogue Male*, the countryside is described in close detail, and it is that detail which is used to evoke the drama. This tight focus on a protagonist using his survival skills to avoid pursuit was to become central to David Morrell's 1972 debut novel *First Blood*, where a decorated Vietnam veteran becomes a fugitive from a local sheriff. As happens in Household's fiction, the action results from a transposition of scenes, here of the traumas of Vietnam on to the American landscape. Morrell has acknowledged how skilfully Household managed the claustrophobia of his action by constantly evoking the concrete physical details of his protagonist's situation.[7]

Because Household uses the narrative first person, the pursuit of Dennim seems at times paranoid, ambiguous at the very least. Dennim evokes his enemy melodramatically as his "dedicated executioner" (45), or more generally as a featureless "dark gentleman" (80), uncannily shadowing his movements around the landscape. For Snyder this figure is yet another double, and yet Household historicizes the terrain by having Dennim rent a cottage near a disused aerodrome. In short, there is no escaping the past, and Dennim's painstaking mapping out of the area reflects his attempts to bring his situation under control. As Snyder has noted, these attempts have a rhetorical dimension because Dennim draws on the analogy of the hunt, whether by humans or animals. His chosen analogy in *Watcher in the Shadows* is with "German Intelligence chess" (60). Chess has been a traditional metaphor of strategy for many years, but Household adds the complication that the player cannot see his opponent, can only infer moves.

So far it could sound as if the novel's action is speculative to the point of abstraction, but then Household introduces a whole series of what Snyder calls "character and gender relationships unmistakably associated with a bygone time" (307): a retired admiral, a vicar who is an expert naturalist, a former general, and so the list could continue. In the second half of the novel a whole gallery of comic rural stereotypes passes before us, and consequently the suspense is temporarily lost, another characteristic lost by an emphasis on doubling. It is as if the novel temporarily changes genres. Dennim now figures the action as a private theatre where he is the sole spectator. The scenic comedy of this section pulls against the drama of the impending confrontation with his opponent, who reveals himself as the Vicomte de Saint Sabas. The last episodes in the novel contrast anachronistically with its modern setting when Dennim and the Vicomte engage in a duel, first on horseback and then on foot. Though Snyder notes the aristocratic throwback in these events, he understates the theatricality of the Vicomte's final confession that he is responsible for the killings. The

latter's ceremonial style, reminiscent of Alexandre Dumas, brings to a peak the unresolved disparity between style and subject.

Whereas *Watcher in the Shadows* evokes a story of revenge for earlier wrongs, the 1972 TV adaptation transposes setting and subject. In *Deadly Harvest* the protagonist is a defector from the Communist bloc living out a cover identity in California as a wine cultivator.[8] The suspense from his subjective point of view in the novel is lost in the film when the camera closes up on a bomb fixed under his truck, which explodes when a hitch-hiker tries to drive it away. The latter's girl companion questions the protagonist about the threat he imagines being posed to him, which she tries to dismiss as ancient history. However, there is no doubt of the protagonist's history, only that the agency supplying him with the cover is no longer interested in his situation. So, although we actually witness a gun battle between the protagonist and his would-be assassin, the film totally undercuts its drama through the laid-back questions of the girl and the repeated use of the song *Blowin' in the Wind*, which could imply that the whole subject lacks substance.

When Snyder turns to *Dance of the Dwarfs* (1968), his concern with doubling becomes more awkward because the terms of reference have shifted dramatically. This time Household uses the found manuscript convention, framing his narrative as the record of a solitary naturalist living on a field station in the wilds of Colombia. Owen Dawnay initially lives passively on his settlement and then, under the cumulative impact of native tales of pygmies living in the forest, begins to search not exactly for a primordial version of himself, as Snyder suggests, but rather for a primitive race he can appropriate. What had served as a metaphor unifying the action of the earlier novels—the hunt—now becomes actualized through Dawnay's need for survival, but in the wilds the hunter-hunted relation can reverse unnervingly. While he constantly dreams of discovering a new species, "Homo Dawnayensis," his sightings remain fleeting and ambiguous. It is never certain that he is seeing a human being and not an animal. Characteristically, his journal records this as a caution: "What you

think your eye is recording has more relation to your beliefs than to facts" (136). At some points he seems to glimpse a pygmy, and then he is gone; at other points he sees a "mustelid" (188), a weasel-like creature. As in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, however, the forest retains its mysteries. Near the opening of his journal Dawnay notes how the natives show no capacity for mapping out the terrain and, as the novel progresses, he himself falls prey to a process of disorientation which undermines his attempts to explore the wilderness. The explicit framing of Dawnay's journal distances the reader from his narrative and carries satirical implications for his colonial attitude.

Dance of the Dwarfs projects the narrator's gradual spiral into self-obsession. The lure of the "primitive" motivates his sexual relation with two native girls, who are repeatedly described as animalistic.[9] Dawnay blatantly uses Chucha (and a successor he does not bother to name) as a means of indulging his fantasies in the name of some elusive truth which eludes him right to the end. His last broken sentence ("I lack imagi") sums up the absence at the heart of his narrative, at once of a clear visual image and of self-knowledge. In this novel, Snyder's model of doubling works least well because the narrator lacks an identifiable opponent and because he appears to be indulging in an extended fantasy of evolutionary regression. While the novel presents many signs of danger, it could hardly be classed as a thriller. On the contrary, the action has a disconcertingly hybrid aspect. We are told in the introductory frame that Dawnay's death has been attributed to Colombian freedom fighters, and indeed several meetings take place between himself and revolutionaries from Cuba and elsewhere. Thus, we have on one level a quasi-scientific narrative reminiscent of Wells and Conrad, on the other passing references to the politics of the 1960s like Mao's Cultural Revolution.

What Snyder understates is the hybrid nature of Household's narratives, where characteristically setting pulls against subject. In *Watcher in the Shadows* the problematic legacy of the Nazi concentration camps is superimposed on a timeless rural landscape in the English home counties. In *Dance of the Dwarfs* ancient and modern are starkly juxta-

posed, as if Dawnay is trying to flee his own present. Household's 1985 novel *Arrows of Desire* even more startlingly disorients the reader in place and time by evoking a future where Britain has become a minor enclave in the Euro-African Federation. "Federal" names including Tito, Pasha, and Pretorius reflect a new regime where British identity has either been lost completely or is seen as a throw-back to an out-dated nationalism. The primitive wilderness which Dawnay tentatively explores in *Dance of the Dwarfs* has now become an estranged way of viewing mid-1980s Britain. Such reversals, the use of framing devices, the hybridity noted above, and meta-reference within the narratives are all features of Household's practice which reflect his variety of experimentation and which in turn suggest the difficulty of fitting his works into a single genre, whether that of thriller or the tale of detection.

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NOTES

[1]Snyder makes a similar argument in his essay "Eric Ambler's Revisionist Thrillers," collected in his monograph *The Art of Indirection in British Espionage Fiction*. The six novelists discussed there are Eric Ambler, Graham Greene, Len Deighton, John le Carré, Stella Rimington, and Charles Cumming.

[2]This pattern of opposition also figures in John Buchan's fiction, in the Anarchist intellectual Andrew Lumley in *The Power House* (1916) and Medina the hypnotist in *The Three Hostages* (1924).

[3]Mike Ripley discusses this aspect of Household, but also finds a certain nostalgia for pre-World War I Europe in his work.

[4]See Snyder, "Confession, Class, and Conscience in Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male*." Here he argues that the novel has more in common with the tale of detection than the old-style thriller and even anticipates some aspects of Postmodernism.

[5]In the epistolary foreword to *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, to his friend the publisher Thomas Nelson, Buchan writes: "You and I have long cherished an affection for that elementary type of tale which the Americans call the 'dime novel' and which we know as the 'shocker'—the romance where the incidents defy the probabilities" (3). The statement helpfully highlights shifts in generic labels.

[6]Macfarlane has co-written an extended homage to Household's novel in *Holloway* (2013), an account of exploring the Dorset countryside.

[7]See David Morrell, "Geoffrey Household's *Rogue Male* (1939)"; and also "David Morrell on Geoffrey Household." Morrell was recommended *Rogue Male* during his postgraduate studies at Penn State University. Among other novels showing Household's influence we could note *The Spy Who Came for Christmas* (2008), which describes the efforts of an intelligence agent to shake off his pursuers. The novel minimizes its back story in order to build up the moment-by-moment drama of this hunt.

[8]*Deadly Harvest* was made by CBS, directed by Michael O'Herlihy, starring Richard Boone as the protagonist.

[9]The narrator refers to his "mating" (146) as part of his nature watching and records his sexual experiences as if they were actions cutting across species: "So much for the intrusion into my bed of unity with my fellow animals!" (194).

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Fracturing the Critical Conversation on Pinter's Language: A Response to Maurice Charney*

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Maurice Charney's "Pinter's Fractured Discourse in *The Homecoming*" sets out to examine what is probably one of the central, most fascinating questions in Pinter criticism, namely, the playwright's use of language in his plays. Arguably, the article's main limitation is that it coins a term, "fractured," for Pinter's use of language in *The Homecoming* that rehearses well-worn arguments about "text" and "subtext" (244-45) and about conversations being "fractured in the sense that [they] are full of disconnected hints and subterranean suggestions that do not appear in the words of the dialogue" (246). These arguments can barely hold their ground in the light of the critical and theoretical turns that have taken place within Pinter criticism since the mid-1970s, much less provide fresh insights or signal a novel contribution to the ongoing critical dialogue.

The publication in 1975 of Austin E. Quigley's seminal *The Pinter Problem* was instrumental in re-framing the discussion of the playwright's relation to language in his plays. As is well known, Quigley began by examining in detail previous criticism of Pinter's use of language, which led him to diagnose a mismatch between the critics' often perceptive, accurate observations of its dynamics and an inaccurate theorization of those observations (see Quigley 32). In other words, Quigley identified a recurring, problematic pattern in Pinter criticism: "A widespread agreement that Pinter's language [was]

*Reference: Maurice Charney, "Pinter's Fractured Discourse in *The Homecoming*," *Connotations* 21.2-3 (2011/2012): 241-55. For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debcharney02123.htm>.

doing something new" (33) that coexisted with "a misleading attitude towards the ways in which language functions" (45). Specifically, Quigley questioned earlier critics' (unacknowledged) reliance on "the reference theory of meaning" (27), where language is conceptualized as a tool that serves the purpose of referring to things or concepts. He argued that "this function is not [...] the central function of language, and neither is it the one upon which meaning is centrally based" (40)—nor may it significantly illuminate the way in which language functions in Pinter's plays. Instead, Quigley articulated a theoretical paradigm based on Wittgensteinian linguistics, where meaning is a product of how language is used, rather than lying somewhere "beyond" or "beneath" the words used. This led him to posit what he called the "interrelational function" (53) of language as central to Pinter's plays:

> The language of a Pinter play functions primarily as a means of dictating and reinforcing relationships. This use of language is not, of course, exclusive to a Pinter play and is a common component [...] in all language; but, in giving this use such extensive scope, Pinter has [...] made his work unavailable to any critical analysis based on implicit appeals to the reference theory of meaning. (52)

Or, as he put it elsewhere: "The point to be grasped about verbal activity in a Pinter play is that language is not so much a means to referring to structure in personal relationships as a means of creating it" (66)—a change of paradigm that enabled Quigley to turn Pinter criticism into a new direction. Moving away from the arguably fuzzy notion of a "subtext" wherein meaning supposedly "hides" beneath the surface of the text (14-15)—a notion that had been espoused by Martin Esslin in *The Peopled Wound: The Plays of Harold Pinter* (1970) and its subsequent (retitled) editions—Quigley pinpointed the nature of the engagement Pinter's use of language requires of spectators and produced highly suggestive readings of *The Room* (1957), *The Caretaker* (1960), *Landscape* (1968) and—yes—*The Homecoming*.

Building on Quigley's insight, Marc Silverstein in his 1993 study *Harold Pinter and the Language of Cultural Power* pointed out that the

widespread reliance among Pinter critics on the reference theory of language—or on what Silverstein, focusing on subjectivity, terms the "expressive view" of language (13)—implies the metaphysical assumption that Pinter's plays seem at pains to steer clear of, namely, a "belief in an extra-linguistic realm [reality and the subject him/herself] that enjoys the status of transcendental signified" (16). In Pinter, instead, "truth and reality [are] negotiable concepts" (Quigley 70), and subjectivity, rather than being "given in advance" (Quigley 53), "becomes the effect of signifying practices, produced through a perpetual inscription and reinscription within language" (Silverstein 18).[1] At this point, however, Silverstein moved away from Quigley by appealing to the Saussurean distinction between *langue* and *parole*. In his attempt to conceptualize both the subject and reality as an "effect of language" (Silverstein 18), Quigley focused almost exclusively on *parole* (the individual speech-act), thus failing to consider "how the system of language [*langue*] both allows for *and* places certain constraints upon individual utterance" (Silverstein 18; empasis original). Therefore, Silverstein argued that Quigley tended to "resituate the subject outside of the language to which he remains superior" as an "absolute or free agent" (Silverstein 18), to assume "an unproblematic intentionality" and to neglect "the category of history" (Silverstein 19). In other words, from Quigley's perspective the power struggles encoded in Pinter's interrelational dialogues seemed to take place in a vacuum. Silverstein, in contrast, proposed to extend Quigley's argument about language in Pinter's plays "to include *langue* as well as *parole*" (21), that is, the Other—by which he refers not only to the symbolic order in a Lacanian sense but also, more generally, to the cultural codes or discourses that inform the subject positions we inhabit—as well as two (or more) individual speakers. As he further explicated in a passage worth quoting at some length:

> I propose to re-problematize "the Pinter problem," to rethink the question of how Pinter utilizes language by broadening the scope of Quigley's "interrelational function" to examine how the various battles for power enacted in these plays are fought on the terrain of the Other's discursive field with

> weapons consisting of the codes that speak the various forms of cultural power. In Pinter's works, the process of negotiating relationships is inseparable from the process through which the subject attempts to anchor himself firmly within the symbolic order [...]. To argue, as I shall, that questions of cultural power and the subject's relationship to that power are of central importance to these plays is to claim that Pinter's work explores some fundamental political questions of [...] marginalization, sexuality and gender, the ideological status of the family, the relation of violence to the coercive power of language [...] (Silverstein 22-23)

On this basis, he embarked on extended analyses of *The Birthday Party* (1958), *The Collection* (1961), *Old Times* (1971) and—again—*The Homecoming* from the perspective of "contemporary theory" (25), mainly Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Luce Irigaray, and Jacques Lacan.

No matter how one positions oneself in relation to them, Quigley's and Silverstein's are unignorable contributions to the field of Pinter studies, particularly as regards any discussion of the way language operates in his plays. However, Charney's article appears to be entirely oblivious to this twofold paradigm shift. It references some Pinter critics of the early- to mid-1970s whose work was arguably superseded by Quigley and Silverstein, but does not mention such a key contribution as Esslin's *The Peopled Wound*, whose arguments both Quigley and, to a lesser extent, Silverstein, engage with. In contrast, Susan Hollis Merritt's *Pinter in Play: Critical Strategies and the Plays of Harold Pinter* (1990) contains a comprehensive survey of the reception of *The Pinter Problem*, including a sensitive account of the debate between Esslin and Quigley about Pinter's language (see Merritt 137-64). Her nuanced discussion of Esslin's relentlessly negative, aggressive review of *The Pinter Problem*—which she sees as deriving in equal measure from Esslin's view of Quigley as "an opponent trying to wrest power away from himself" (147) and from Quigley's having perhaps failed "to practice what he preaches theoretically: what people say to one another has an effect on their relationships" (149) in his (somewhat blunt) dismissal of earlier critics—highlights the indispensable cooperation that must exist between critics, even when

they disagree, if "investigative progress" is to be made and "a more potent *community* of knowledge" is to emerge (Merritt 147-48; emphasis original). But for this to take place, the essential prerequisite is for critics to engage with the work of their predecessors in the first place, that is, to enter the critical dialogue in meaningful ways.

By remaining circumscribed within an earlier critical paradigm, Charney's article runs into revealing *cul-de-sacs* and contradictions. Thus, after stating that "the characters do not seem to act from obvious, plot-oriented motives" and that "[i]t doesn't seem to matter an awful lot what the characters say" (242), he goes on to discuss several episodes in the play—Ruth's interruption of the pseudo-philosophical discussion about a table between Teddy and Lenny (242-43), the first meeting between Lenny and Ruth (245-50), the ending of the play (250-51), and various moments involving Teddy (251-53) —in precisely the terms he has denied, namely the characters' motives and the importance of what they say. This brings to mind the comment by Quigley on Esslin's claim that Pinter's language "has almost totally lost its [...] informative element" (*Pinter: The Playwright* 238). As Quigley points out, if Esslin can, as he surely can, "perceive the 'emotional and psychological action' underlying the words, then the language is very informative" (*Pinter Problem* 25-26)—which it no doubt is in ways that reveal the inherent power structures of both *langue* and *parole*, as Quigley and Silverstein, among others, have thrown abundant light on. The key point here is that Charney's article does not contribute to advancing the critical conversation because it does not join it at the relevant point. It would have been an entirely different matter if his article had acknowledged Quigley's and Silverstein's—as well as other post-*Pinter Problem*—contributions and gone on to dispute them on the basis of reasoned argumentation, or else extend them in a fresh direction.

A couple of examples should suffice to further illustrate the points made so far. After having established that "the play is also Ruth's homecoming" (243), that she "plays mind games and language games with Lenny, Joey, Max, and Teddy" (245), and that her main conflict is

with Lenny, whom she "dominat[es] (and infantiliz[es])" (242)—surely descriptions of the emotional and psychological motivations of Ruth's (linguistic) behaviour in the play, albeit hardly novel ones—Charney homes in on the crucial first meeting between Ruth and Lenny (*Plays: Three* 43-51). Here, as is well known, Lenny eventually launches into telling Ruth two stories about violence inflicted by him on women, a young one who "one night down by the docks [...] came up to [him] and made [him] a certain proposal" (*Plays: Three* 46) and an old lady who "asked [him] if [he] would give her a hand with her iron mangle" (*Plays: Three* 48). While Charney describes both stories as "irrelevant" (247), he nevertheless places them in the context of the ongoing conflict between Lenny and Ruth and discusses them in terms of their respective motivations: "Lenny obviously wants to impress Ruth with his macho insouciance" but finds himself "blocked at every turn" by Ruth's flat answers, while Ruth herself "refuses Lenny's sexual gambits" repeatedly and successfully (247). Now, in order to gain some sense of what is being glossed over, it is well worth placing these (hardly fresh) insights into the Ruth-Lenny power dynamics alongside Deborah A. Sarbin's and Silverstein's respective discussions of the same scene.

Reading *The Homecoming* in the light of French feminist theory, Sarbin sees the play as "revealing the way in which normally unanalyzed assumptions about the roles of women in society are actually constructed and created through language" (34). In her view, Ruth performs a series of disruptive acts that "call into question the representation of women in language dominated by men" (36). A key moment in this respect is Ruth's response to Lenny's story about the young woman who made him "a certain proposal" which he would "normally [...] have subscribed to", except "she was falling apart with the pox" (*Plays: Three* 46). Ruth simply asks: "How did you know she was diseased?," which prompts Lenny's, "How did I know? *(Pause.)* I decided she was" (*Plays: Three* 47). In other words, Sarbin points out, Ruth forces Lenny to admit "that any representation in language must be arbitrary" and subversively calls attention to his "attempt to pass

off the arbitrary as fact" (37). Read in this way, the scene is no longer merely a personal confrontation between the "macho" Lenny and the sexually tantalizing Ruth, but rather it opens out onto key critical issues having to do with gender, language, culture and representation.

Along similar lines, Silverstein argues that "Lenny's dependence upon narrative [...] suggests the central role played by representational practices in the production of masculine power" (95), adding that the two stories he tells Ruth not only "detail acts of violence that allow [him] to dominate women who attempt to transgress the boundaries defining the marginal space patriarchy assigns them" (95), but are also themselves "act[s] of violence against Ruth" (95), who "resists [Lenny's] sadism [...] by challenging his ability to exercise narrative power" (95) through her question, "How did you know she was diseased?" (*Plays: Three* 47). Lenny's answer, "I decided she was" (*Plays: Three* 47), amounts to an "equation of narrative power and epistemological mastery" (Silverstein 95-96) that, in highlighting the "arbitrary bond between signifier and signified" (Silverstein 96), ultimately reveals that language cannot "create the kind of extra-linguistic power that transforms words into the Word, utterance into law, and representation into reality" (Silverstein 96-97). Lacking in a "material" basis for power, when Ruth "begins to mimic the image of woman he produces in his narrative" (Silverstein 96) and threatens to "take" him (*Plays: Three* 50), "Lenny inevitably [...] fails to declare his mastery through a saving act of nomination"—"What was that supposed to be? Some kind of proposal?" is all he can impotently ask as Ruth leaves the room having quenched her thirst (*Plays: Three* 51).

Sarbin's and Silverstein's approaches illuminate *The Homecoming* in ways that far exceed any imprecise references to the dated concept of subtext, and that have been deemed worth engaging with by numerous subsequent critics. Again, the key issue here is not whether or not—or the extent to which—one concurs with their views, much less any attempt to establish some essential "truth" about *The Homecoming* or Pinter's use of language in the plays at large, but rather the fact

that, unfortunately, Charney's article simply ignores all contributions to the post-*Pinter Problem* critical conversation. A similar point applies to his discussion of the ending of the play, which he concludes by stating that "There is *no doubt* that [...] Ruth dominates the scene" (251; emphasis added). It is, once more, a reading that harks back to earlier, pre-*Pinter Problem* ones such as Esslin's (see 159) or Anita R. Osherow's feminist account of the play (see 423), while it turns a deaf ear to other approaches that have drawn attention to the ambivalence embedded in the play's final moments. Thus, Quigley pointed out that for Ruth "the ending is of uncertain value"—she may, as Pinter himself put it, have achieved "a certain kind of freedom," but it is clearly also "a certain kind of captivity" (225). For Sarbin, Ruth's power at the end of the play is "paradoxical"; while she disrupts patriarchal language by "driv[ing] home the economic issue, refusing to treat prostitution in any other terms" (40), the play's final stage direction, "Lenny *stands, watching*" (*Plays: Three* 98), indicates that "Ruth is still the object of the male gaze" (41) and that the role of dominant male has passed on to Lenny (where it resided before is itself an open question). In my own discussion of the play's final moments, I suggested that "[Ruth] *both* subversively demonstrates the constructedness of the dominant sexual and gender relations and of the language which inscribes those relations *and* she is bounded by the patriarchal symbolic order, thus remaining an object in the men's homosocial traffic, 'inside' rather than 'outside'" (Aragay 288; emphasis original). In other words, there *is* ample room for doubt, from the point of view of these and other critics, as to the extent of Ruth's domination at the end of *The Homecoming*, so it hardly seems legitimate for any subsequent discussion of the play to simply state the opposite without engaging in conversation—in the form of critical dispute, if needs be—with those alternative readings.

Merritt's perceptive interrogation of the concept of progress at the start of her book-length metacritical reflection on Pinter criticism provides a fitting coda for the present metacritical commentary on Charney's "Pinter's Fractured Discourse in *The Homecoming*." In the

context of her discussion of Quigley's 1975 claim that the field of Pinter criticism was "proliferating but not progressing" (*Pinter Problem* 4), she points out that, to see change as occurring gradually and linearly, "progressing from ignorance to knowledge in unified patterns or stages can blind us to some developments in criticism [...] [and] actually hinder our progress" (Merritt 4). Change, she adds, is "an ongoing 'process'" (Merritt 7), involving "*both* continuities *and* discontinuities, similarity *and* difference, tradition *and* innovation" (Merritt 5; emphasis original), while progress "is both relative and instrumental to the aims and purposes of critics" (Merritt 10) rather than a matter of establishing "ultimate truth-value[s]" (Merritt 11). Absolutely so, of course. And yet, between a rigidly linear notion of critical "progress" and a largely reiterative proliferation of well-worn critical "truths," there lies the capacious territory of critical cooperation that Merritt advocates (47-48), where critics listen and respond to one another, agree with or (passionately) dispute each other's views—in other words, acknowledge the importance and significance of each other's contributions.

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NOTE

[1]That is why Quigley had renamed M. A. K. Halliday's "interpersonal" function of language "interrelational": "Interpersonal tends to suggest that the personalities, the identities of those participating, are given in advance" (53).

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