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Introduction: Scholarship as Literature? Poetic Resonances and Boundaries in Scholarly Publications

Heidi Nobles, Guest Editor

This essay cluster as a whole explores how writers' attention to literary styles in creative genres like fiction, poetry, or creative nonfiction might affect their styles in writing non-literary nonfiction like academic prose. In this introductory essay, I look specifically at authors who straddle the worlds of so-called creative and scholarly writing. I wanted to see how their academic style might open up creative possibilities, in both content and form, for writers who focus in scholarly genres. I have wondered for some time about the poetics of scholarly writing—particularly in English studies where we are conscious of poetics in what we *read*. I wonder how much that can resound in what we write.

When I say "poetics," I mean the theory and praxis of studying the structures of texts through linguistics—considering, for example, elements like syntax, semantics, and phonology and how they create meaning between author and reader. I realize that few of us have specialized in poetics in connection with our primary research areas. Regarding the authors I consider below, I don't know whether or not they could diagram the transformational rules of deep and surface structures in their sentences, if they could easily rattle off lines in dactylic hexameter, or if they could explain the psychological resonances of phonology in their consonant arrangement. I somewhat doubt it. And yet these authors practice a concentrated literary craft in addition to writing in academic genres—I wanted to see what resonances might be present in their work and, from there, to consider what the rest of us could learn that might breathe life into our scholarly writing.

I see *arguments* for importing so-called creative techniques into academic writing—mirroring content in syntactic form, for example, or using a subtle extended metaphor to convey a given tone—in articles like Tatjana Marjanovîc's "The (In)visibility of Academic Prose Writers." Marjanovîc discusses her reaction to and subsequent linguistic analysis of an English pedagogy article she found particularly compelling due to its style, saying:

> Trying to pursue a career as a linguist, I have hardly had enough time for anything other than linguistic publications that make their writers invisible, letting numbers and data speak on their behalf and going to great lengths to conceal their presence behind vocabulary devoid of personal expression and carefully chosen to get the formal tenor right. . . . No wonder I felt such an emotional rush upon reading an article that was a far cry from the impersonal and detached qualities of most scholarly works. (437)

Having found this article so personally engaging and "refreshing," Marjanovîc goes on to compare its linguistic features to those of the academic writing she usually reads, noting that much scholarly writing consists of "author-evacuated" prose,[1] a "strong preference for the passive," the exclusion of "emotional words," the obscuring role of syntax and "'objective academic vocabulary,'" abundant classifiers, and absent "attitudinal epithets" (439). In contrast, the article Marjanovîc admires favors animated personal pronouns (*I, you, she, he, we*, and *they*) over inanimate pronouns (such as *it*) and descriptive adjectives over classifying ones (for example, "full-blown" or "brave" vs. "public" or "remedial"). After analyzing and reflecting on why she found the alternate article so compelling, she adds: "From a reader's point of view, it is indeed tempting to peer into this carefully guarded world and know—rather than merely guess—that it is inhabited by human beings after all" (441). I would also infer that in addition to generating positive emotional responses from readers, more lively prose carries the potential to gain more readers and have wider influence on future research.

Still, in "The Problem Is: You Write Too Well," Rachel Toor points out that frequently, when scholars critique authors for writing that seems too polished or stylistic, what they actually mean is that the text lacks worthwhile content: "The difference between clear and simple is not always clear to the writer. Perhaps 'you write too well' really means that your writing is better than your thinking. Perhaps it's a way of saying that while your prose is solid, your argument is frail" (A27).

I certainly don't wish to degrade the quality of the ideas in scholarly writing by valuing style over substance, but I stand opposed to maintaining a dichotomy between "academic" or "scholarly" writing and "literary" or "creative" writing. After all, as David McVey reminds us, "creative writing" came into being as a term to enrich literature departments by including the creation of literature in addition to analysis and interpretation, yet the term obscures the reality that, in fact, "all writing is creative writing" because all writing "uses the raw materials of language, experience, knowledge, textual sources and the author's own ideas and imaginings to bring something into existence that did not exist before" (289). Pushing this argument further, Maria Antonio and Jessica Moriarty argue that for creative writers and academic writers alike, "the challenge is the same: to find a way to validate and encourage creative and experiential ways of knowing/doing, whilst also developing intellectual rigor, analytical excellence, and technical competence" (160).

Given the space constraints of this introductory essay, I have limited my examples to creative and scholarly pieces from two prominent author-scholars, Marilynne Robinson and Oliver Sacks, to observe what stylistic choices they import across genre lines. Marilynne Robinson is a novelist and essayist, famous for her Pulitzer Prize-winning *Gilead* and other literary works. Yet she also holds a PhD in English and publishes actively in theology and social philosophy, with articles like "Remembering Geneva's Calvin" (*Political Theology* 10.3 [2009]), "Calvinism as Metaphysics" (*Toronto Journal of Theology* 25.2 [2009]), "The Tyranny of Petty Coercion" (*Social Research* 71.1 [2004]), "The Conservative Devaluation of Value" (*Salmagundi* 126/127 [2000]), and others. How does this author—whose creative work is repeatedly described by critics as "luminous" and "luminescent"—translate her ideas in scholarly genres? Consider these two excerpts, one from her fiction and one from her scholarship. First, from *Gilead*:

> There was a young couple strolling along half a block ahead of me. The sun had come up brilliantly after a heavy rain, and the trees were glistening and very wet. On some impulse, plain exuberance, I suppose, the fellow jumped up and caught hold of a branch, and a storm of luminous water came pouring down on the two of them, and they laughed and took off running, the girl sweeping water off her hair and her dress as if she were a little bit disgusted, but she wasn't. It was a beautiful thing to see, like something out of a myth. (27–28)

Even in these few lines, consider how Robinson has built in semantic cohesion through her imagery and lexicon while also playing with rhythm and syntax—balancing shorter, more direct sentences, against the energetic complexity of the third sentence (four clauses, tied together with descriptive phrases and coordinating conjunctions that make the whole sentence feel like a rushed outpouring while sustaining technical structure, all in keeping with the narrator's rich educated/accessible/pastoral voice). And in her scholarly prose?

"I approach all this from an outsider's perspective," she writes to open her "Calvinism as Metaphysics," an article in the *Toronto Journal of Theology* in which she argues for a re-reading of Calvinism as a metaphysics with liberating power. She further explains, "I belong to one of those very liberal churches actually descended from New England Calvinism, where Calvin's name is never spoken" (175). One might note that she already is writing in first person, and she is using slightly broader phrasing than scholarship tends toward ("all this"—can't you just imagine a composition instructor writing in the margin, "What is 'all this'? Work on precision."?), and including subtle, wry humor. And then, a sentence rhythm reminiscent of *Gilead* shows up later in that first paragraph:

> I was, and I remain, interested in him, John Calvin, not in any of the religious traditions that by custom and convention are called by his name. Well, to be frank, I am a little bit interested in making the case that the most liberal traditions in contemporary Christianity, which, despite their origins, are never called Calvinist and never claim Calvin's influence, do in fact legitimately arise out of that very Renaissance humanism I was so surprised to discover in him. I feel that what is best in these traditions would be strengthened if they were to recognize these origins for themselves. (175)

Once again, Robinson is framing an extended and complex sentence with shorter and more direct sentences, piling up modifying phrases. This passage doesn't convey the sense of rushing forward that is present in the above excerpt from *Gilead*, but the continual asides to clarify voice and meaning ("I was, and I remain, interested in him, John Calvin"; "Well, to be frank"; "traditions . . . , which, despite their origins,") resound with the same intelligent almost-but-then-again-not-circuitousness that creates the voice in the novel.

Oliver Sacks presents an interesting companion example both because his background is outside of literary studies and because we have examples of his scholarly writing before and after he began his most active work as a creative writer. A neurologist educated at The Queen's College in Oxford and the University of California, Los Angeles, and practicing primarily at hospitals and care facilities in California and New York, Sacks first gained prominence in connection with his bestselling *Awakenings*, which narrated his experiences at the Beth Abraham Hospital in the Bronx in the 1960s, when he prescribed the then-new and experimental Levodopa medication for a group of Parkinson's patients suffering from *encephalitis lethargica*, more popularly known as "sleeping sickness." *Awakenings* bears the mark of a scholarly writer: lengthy sentences, lengthy footnotes; its style is formal, never breezy. Yet consider sentences from the book against sentences from the journal article Sacks published on the same topic, within a year of the book. Here is an example from *Awakenings*, describing patients like those he treated:

> They would be conscious and aware—yet not fully awake; they would sit motionless and speechless all day in their chairs, totally lacking energy, impetus, initiative, . . . or desire. . . . They neither conveyed nor felt the feeling of life; they were as insubstantial as ghosts, and as passive as zombies . . . . (14)

And from "Effects of levodopa in parkinsonian patients with dementia," published in *Neurology* in 1972 (Sacks was lead author, along with three co-authors):

> Of 72 institutionalized parkinsonian patients given long-term levodopa treatment, almost one-fifth (15 of 72) were considered to have significant impairment of higher functions. Of these 15 patients, 6 men and 9 women, 13 had idiopathic and 2 had postencephalitic disease. They ranged in age from 70 to 80 years and had exhibited parkinsonian symptoms for two to fifteen years and mental deterioration for one to ten years. (516)

What is especially interesting about Sacks as a cross-over author is that we have these two genre-distinct samples from early in his writing career, which we can then juxtapose with his later writing. Would his writing in the more creative genre of popular nonfiction affect his scholarly writing, or would his academic publications continue to sound like this early article? Here is the opening of Sacks's 2005 "Steroid dementia: An overlooked diagnosis?" (again co-authored, with Sacks as lead author; again published in *Neurology*):

> Mr. K was an intelligent and cultivated 72-year-old man, successful in the fashion industry and generally in good health (except for mild hypertension and an aortic valve replacement 15 years earlier.) In September 2000, he had joint pains, was found to have a very elevated erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR), and was diagnosed with polymyalgia rheumatic. (707)

Anyone who has read Sacks's later popular works, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (1985) and *Anthropologist on Mars* (1995), will likely recognize Sacks's well-known case study approach to this article, naming the individual with a title and initial (Mr. K) and blending personal with medical details. Sacks uses more specialized language in this scholarly piece—he is writing to an audience with shared knowledge and does not need to provide as much context as he does in his popular works. But his writing style is much livelier and, I would say, more humane in this later piece, as we can see in his moves from the simple declarative statements of the first to the narrative trajectory in the second; from citing the larger subject group in nameless collective numbers to using a single, specific person with a name; and from including only directly related medical facts to adding personal details that speak to recognizing Mr. K as a more developed person beyond his medical situation. This development of voice and style might also correspond to other kinds of maturity—gaining seniority allows for less guarded writing, less of a need to prove one's legitimacy through formality. Still, the clear resonances between Sacks's style in his later scholarly work and his evolving style in his popular work indicates a connection worthy of attention.

Authors working across creative and scholarly genres offer models to those of us who write primarily as scholars, reminding us that the poetic features we recognize and analyze as readers of literature—features of rhythm, metaphor, and a humane lexicon that form particularly "literary" syntactic and semantic meanings—are features we also have access to as writers in other genres.

The crossing over of styles among genres takes place beyond creative/scholarly writing, as the papers that follow in this essay cluster demonstrate. Each of these papers comes from an active contemporary scholar who studies and practices both scholarly writing and at least one creative genre, and each is responding to the broader question of how attention to literary style affects practice in writing non-literary nonfiction.

First, Shelly Sanders of Abilene Christian University considers the stylistic moves Cheryl Strayed makes in her popular memoir, *Wild*, in connection with embodiment and fascination in writing nonfiction, then reflects on how other nonfiction writers might use style to imbue their prose with fascination and aesthetic experience. Next, Hilarie Ashton of City University of New York juxtaposes details about composing her own grief memoir, in which she blended strategies of recovery, textual analysis, and representation to mourn her mother, arguing "that the ways in which the personal, academic, and visual converge intervenes in the grief memoir genre to create a broader way of mourning." And finally, Bhavin Tailor of the University of South Carolina reflects on how his work as a poet has influenced his style in crafting literary criticism and how employing the tools of poetry can infuse scholarly writing with more life and feeling. In each of these essays, the authors both explicate and demonstrate overlaps of style across genre, importing the writing styles of their respective creative genres into these academic works.

Notes

1. This term she credits to A. M. Johns, *Text, Role, and Context: Developing Academic Literacies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

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"As Certain as the Sky": Appreciating the Fox, Fascination(s), and Style of Cheryl Strayed's *Wild*

Shelly Sanders

I sat down to read Cheryl Strayed's *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* in the middle of a mild, windy winter break in west Texas in 2013, when I was eight months pregnant with my second child. A rocky and heart-breaking six-year journey to even have children had finally brought us to our first child, and now my husband and I were overjoyed at having another life to add to our family. But my second pregnancy wasn't an easy pregnancy like my first. After the morning sickness eased, I watched with fascination as my belly grew larger, this time around *much* larger, and I also experienced unfamiliar searing pains in my lower abdomen that made getting into and out of the supine position difficult, though my doctor reassured me the pain was nothing to be worried about. I spent those last few months in a state of physical exhaustion, forty pounds heavier, breathless and plodding up and down three flights of administration building stairs to teach my classes, bracing for the next sharp pain. It wasn't until months after my daughter was born that she was diagnosed with torticollis, a stiff neck, possibly from the way that she was scrunched and pressing on bone inside.

I tell this part of my own story because I am interested in the way that Strayed conveys, through the stylistics of her prose and the semantics of her content, the successes and failures of embodiment. Strayed's book strengthened and straightened me, like a metal rod in a scoliosis-curved back. She was writing about grief and physical pain, two things that I could identify with through my struggle with infertility and miscarriage and then, later, through pregnancy and childbirth. But more than this kinship I felt with her through my own personal bodily challenges, I was captivated by the beautiful experience of reading her struggle. More than just authorial prowess, shown in compelling details and an intuitive mastery of pace, something in Strayed's writing created this mutual identification. I wanted to explore further why Strayed's book was so well received by everyone from reviewers and academics to popular readers (including a random Rangers fan with whom I munched hot dogs and discussed the book on the upper deck at a ball game).

But I am starting this essay already thinking that perhaps there's been too much chatter about *Wild,* too much written on it and too much praise given to it. Initial descriptions of the writing included "sharp and compelling" (*People*), "loose and sexy and dark" (*New York Times*), and "stimulating . . . and soul-enhancing" (Oprah Book Club 2.0), fine praise if sometimes a little on the silly side. Critical scholarship on the novel grew in both style and substance after Nick Hornby wrote the screenplay for the film adaptation, which came out in December 2014, and both Reese Witherspoon and Laura Dern (who played the role of her mother) were nominated for Academy Awards. Strayed's story seemed to achieve a rare prestige when the hiking memoir made a cozy home on the *New York Times* Best Sellers list as well as at the box office.

Demonstrating an academic's response to the book, *Fourth Genre* reviewer Leigh Gilmore writes, "It carves a contour in the reader's imagination as indelible as the bold black line of the trail on the map at the front of the book" (187). Gilmore's adjectives and similes here strive to highlight the adventure of the work, describing the author's grueling 1,000-plus-mile hike on the Pacific Crest Trail. In her memoir, Strayed articulates the problems and possibilities of setting out alone on a grand journey, totally unprepared, after losing her mother and her marriage, in order to see if the trek made anything better. In her enigmatic words, "The wanting was a wilderness and I had to find my way out of the woods" (27). This "finding [her] way" also connects to something less definable, something she struggles to identify both with the athletic challenge she undertakes and with the writing experience and reflection. For Strayed, "being found" seems to take place through both activities, since the writing allowed her to lyrically connect her embodied challenge with her eventual transformation. The writing refines conceptions of narrative engagement with these questions by demonstrating the complexity of athleticism and embodied experience in the written text. In this memoir, the interplay of lyrical descriptions of physical empowerment, paired with both physical and natural beauty, seems to be the catalyst for Strayed's epiphanies. Embodiment is central not only to her hiking and grieving experience but also to her written narrative; throughout the book, she emphasizes how the contrasting moods of joy and suffering created distinct embodied experiences.

The reciprocity between these seemingly contrasting moods brings me to a thoughtful but strange little book by German-American theorist Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht called *In Praise of Athletic Beauty*, in which the author probes the pleasures of sports spectatorship in order to describe a new field of study: athletic aesthetics (that's a fun one to say out loud). Gumbrecht hails athletes as icons of muscular grace and argues that the spectacle of athletic competition thrives under the analytical terms that

Kant uses in his eighteenth century theory of beauty. One must point out early on that in a review of the book in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Joan Grassbaugh Forry rightly notes that Gumbrecht is practically useless for scholars looking to connect Gumbrecht with other resources or directions (as he doesn't include a bibliography), and he doesn't engage in the scholarly conversation about aesthetics and sport happening in the critical arena (In her 2008 article in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Forry points to relevant discussions made in the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sports* during the mid-1980s by David Best, Spencer Wertz, and Terrance Roberts.). But I'll argue that what Gumbrecht *does* is in some respects more interesting, as his "conversational philosophical musings and critical reflections on his experience as sport spectator" (Forry 218) prompt readers like me to follow suit. I often find myself mining true critical and writerly epiphanies out of the most personal and reflective of works (as with my favorite authors, Simone de Beauvoir, Helene Cixous, and Adrienne Rich—you can see where most of my critical interests lie, in women's corporeality and feminist interrogations of bodies and language, which I will address in the second section of this essay). Gumbrecht's work, in other words, underscores the idea that as we read nonfiction texts about bodily movement, we engage with them in a way that parallels the ways we watch our favorite sport performances—by appreciating the beauty and ugliness both of corporeality and movement.

In "Writing from the Body: Memoirs by Women," Suzanne Koven asserts that with the advent of memoirs such as Strayed's, as well as Renee D'Aoust's *Body of A Dancer* and Lidia Yuknavitch's *The Chronology of Water*, "perhaps a new subgenre is emerging: narratives in which women explore their physical as well as their emotional power. . . . Their strength lies in the fact that they never stray far from the body" (175–76). I agree that there is pleasure for readers within sport memoirs like Strayed's, of sport "spectatorship," through representation of these bodies but also through a very real corporeality that transcends representation. But let's back up and first consider Gumbrecht's definition of athletics, based on three components that will give us some working vocabulary for our interrogations of Strayed's text. In his view, whatever we call sport is a form of performance, or "any kind of body movement seen from a perspective of presence" (86). Among the many phenomena that qualify as performance, the forms of athletic performance are specific because they are permeated by the values of *agon* (competition) and *arête* (striving for excellence). And finally, what he calls sport is at a distance from the interests and strategies that make up our everyday world. What may be interesting to note early on is the concept of presence and distance, the athlete and the spectator, that is necessary for sport to happen. The same components are evident in sport literature of many kinds, and it follows, I would argue, that this dyadic relationship makes reading sport literature enjoyable on the level of watching a sporting event.

So let's get back to watching Strayed in *Wild*. From the prologue, we meet her as she is sitting at the top of a tree, throwing her boots "irretrievably off the side of a mountain" (5). As Gilmore writes in her *Fourth Genre* review, "Although the internal landscape of grief and healing is the memoir's main focus, the narration about the hiking is a joy of specificity" (187). And this section is just that, as we pan down with the camera of Strayed's eyes to gaze at her "bare and battered feet, with their smattering of remaining toenails. They were ghostly pale to the line a few inches above my ankles, where the wool socks I usually wore ended. My calves above them were muscled and golden and hairy, dusted with dirt and a constellation of bruises and scratches" (6). These are the grotesque legs and feet of an athlete, beautiful ("muscled and golden") and yet ugly (dirty and disfigured).

Throughout this memoir, Strayed's personal story and physical description of her athletic body are intricately interwoven with the physical climb, and a protracted sense of being in motion, while hiking and while climbing, seems to be important in creating a sense of what Gumbrecht calls "fascination" and in creating, ultimately, mutual identification on the part of the reader. As Gumbrecht writes, "The in-between status of these body movements makes the word *fascination* my concept of choice . . . the eye as attracted to, indeed paralyzed by, the appeal of something perceived (in our case, athletic performance)" (151). The athletic aesthetic in Strayed's style is important for two reasons: first, it creates fascination through multiple identification points for both Strayed and the reader by moving back and forth between "suffering" and "beauty" on the trail, terms Gumbrecht argues are vital to fascination; second, it creates epiphanies triggered by poetic glimpses of the natural world.

Gumbrecht says that there is no ugly in sport, only foul play or "lack": lack of excitement, lack of grace. And even then we would not call these lacks ugly, he argues. I, though, am arguing that eliding the term altogether is unnecessary. Ugliness is an important theme for Strayed. She not only recognizes ugliness on her own body, but she also remembers it in the form of her past and she recognizes it in others on the trail. What Strayed manages to do is then confront the ugliness with beauty or the desire to find beauty. This lends a back-and-forth motion while she is moving on the trail.

An obvious example would be the point at which Strayed almost trips on her own excrement after she unsuccessfully tries to dig a hole in “rocky, reddish beige” ground, an action she describes as being like “attempting to penetrate a granite kitchen counter” (64). Here, the disgust generated from this bodily necessity leads to a description of more painful memories when, just after this scene, she spies a small lizard “doing pushups” (66), then immediately moves her line of sight back to her body to discover a needle-injection site bruise on her ankle from shooting heroin with her Joe, her ex (66). It’s as if in every scene, there’s the clear, amazing present bumping into, trading places, and perhaps even narratively dancing with, the ugly past. Both groups of images reflect and transform and consider real lived bodies, highlighting what they have done and are doing. We are spectators in this scene, perhaps moving slightly with Strayed, as body and memory speak to each other.

Strayed does not ignore this pattern. Just a page later, she writes, “In moments among my various agonies, I noticed the beauty that surrounded me, the wonder of things both small and large: the color of a desert flower that brushed against me on the trail or the grand sweep of the sky as the sun faded over the mountains” (67). Yet the epiphany sparked by beauty then moves back to ugliness: “I was in the midst of such a reverie when I skidded on pebbles and fell, landing on the hard trail facedown with a force that took my breath away” (67). She has to crawl out from her backpack to assess the damage to her bruised and bloodied leg.

It’s these repeating contrasts of hope and despair, ugliness and beauty, that mimic the terrain of the hike—UP, DOWN, UP, DOWN—and that work so well to keep our attention. Moreover, this motion requires concentration, as the reader, similar to a person on a rocking ship, stabilizes his or her feet in order to stop the yawing of the boat and straighten out his or her body. The reading experience becomes an athletic feat, which is significant in that the bodily action is necessary for Strayed to review her life in the context of a transcendent experience, re-storying herself from a state of inaction to action.

Strayed’s writing style creates a sense of being in-between through this gradual rising and falling (a style that is sometimes also connected to Strayed’s literal bodily rising and falling, as in moments of waking up or resting, or perhaps standing and slipping) and also through the climbing and descending on the earth. But she always observes a moment of epiphany in, but also resignation to, the next portion of the hike: “And so I walked on,” she writes (69), through moments signified by a self-awareness that simply moving to a new place after a trauma will help her heal—“I was who I was: the same woman who pulsed beneath the bruise of her old life, only now I was somewhere else” (35).

Something about how we see our own existence in relation to the world we inhabit seems to be “in play” here. Gumbrecht writes that "complexifying the present and recharging the past with a glorifying and sometimes sobering aura" are the two aspects of a transfiguration that only sports can produce. He writes,

> And yet he [the athlete] does not know (and perhaps he doesn't even need to know) why watching sports irresistibly captures the attention and imagination of so many people like himself. It is a fascination in the true sense of the word—a phenomenon that manages to paralyze the eyes, something that endlessly attracts, without implying any explanation for its attraction. Through this ability to fascinate, sports exerts a transfiguring power, drawing his gaze to things he would not normally appreciate, like grotesquely overweight wrestlers, woolen caps with shields, or half-naked bodies that hold no sexual interest. (16)

Perhaps we should not rule out the possibility that watching "sports can allow us to *be* suddenly, somehow, one with those beautiful and beautifully transfigured bodies" (32). Gumbrecht is searching for exactly how athletic performance can produce this feeling—or this illusion—of oneness. Strayed's work offers one important answer.

Memoir writing, and alternately, memoir reading, becomes a transfigurative practice because it increases self-awareness, promotes healing, and elicits feelings of empowerment. Memoir can also incorporate methods such as reflective, reflexive, and embodied writing, as our experiences are relayed from the inside to the outside; by using words and vivid images as a vehicle, Strayed invites sympathetic resonance in us. When we read Strayed's description that ". . . as each new day began, I couldn't even tolerate my own weight; my feet tender and swollen from the previous day's exertions, my knees too stiff to do what a normal gait required of them" (93), we are invited into an experiential watching in mutual exhaustion and agony. In moments like these, we may witness a collapse of perceived experience between the spectator and the athlete. In this way, readers feel the pulse of Strayed's story, as if they are reliving details of the experience, emotions, and feelings with the author.

This closeness invites readers, too, to perceive both pain and beauty, for example, in the description of Strayed's first time putting on her backpack, an ungainly, cringe-inducing experience:

> I scooted over the carpet and situated myself on my rump right in front of my pack, wove my arms through the shoulder straps, and clipped the sternum strap across my chest. I took a deep breath, and began rocking back and forth to gain mo-

> mentum, until I hurled myself forward with everything in me and got myself onto my hands and knees. (43)

Once she gets her backpack attached (sort of), she writes,

> I propped the panel against the wall, buckled my hip belt, and staggered and swayed around the room, my center of gravity pulled in any direction I so much as leaned. The weight dug painfully into the tops of my shoulders, so I cinched my hip belt tighter and tighter still, trying to balance the burden, squeezing my middle so tightly that my flesh ballooned out on either side. My pack rose up like a mantle behind me, towering several inches above my head, and gripped me like a vise all the way down to my tailbone. It felt pretty awful, and yet perhaps this was how it felt to be a backpacker. (43–44)

In the first paragraph above, the short, hard sounds "rump/right/pack/wove/strap/straps" connect to the more lyrical sentence describing the "rocking back and forth/hurling myself forward/everything in me." The sounds themselves, especially the juxtaposition of hard and soft, begin the process of athletic fascination for the reader, as if Strayed in using this hard/lyrical technique is asking the reader to pay attention here. Gumbrecht, it seems, would approve. Those early lines serve as a warm-up of both literal and poetic sorts, leading to the athletic feat, which is the actual placing of the backpack on the body.

The change in Strayed's body is profound, one sounded through the pain implied by words like "weight," "cinched," and "squeezing." The two paragraphs are haunting in their ability to accurately convey the transformation of her body, yet they are also beautifully poetic with their alliteration, onomatopoeia, and repetition. This particular epiphany, reflecting Strayed's naiveté (for her dismay is in not keeping with the experience of an expert backpacker), is conveyed through these poetic devices, allowing us as readers to *feel* the epiphany as much as we read it.

Megan C. Brown observes in an article titled "Learning to Live Again: Contemporary US Memoir as Biopolitical Self-Care Guide," published in the journal *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, that as Strayed finds her own way on the PCT, readers can watch her move through the stages of grief: from a dumb denial of her family's dissolution, to tears, to howling rage, to epiphany. For example, as she considers her childhood fear of her abusive father, she ends a paragraph with a powerful realization—"it occurred to me that I didn't have to be amazed by him anymore"—and lets the next line, evidence of her changed perspective, stand alone as a dramatic one-sentence paragraph:

> There were so many other amazing things in the world. (234)

Here, the reader again sees Strayed turn from trauma to the transformative: her search for a meaningful sense of empowerment is always about the turn from looking inward to looking outward, a movement that we follow as readers when we shift back and forth between memory and the hike. Brown argues rightly that this stylistic choice signals the line's importance as an epiphanic moment, but she also underscores that the lesson for readers is "the possibility of looking to the wilderness for amazement" (365). As Strayed writes these lines about amazement, she ritualizes a turning-outward, a focused always-moving fascination with amazement. And amazement, to her, seems to be about joining lived experience with the living.

Moreover, as Brown argues, in terms of style, Strayed's realizations about hiking and nature tend to open out into metaphors for her emotional life. Consider, for example, Strayed's following lines: "I was amazed that what I needed to survive could be carried on my back. And most surprising of all, that I could carry it. That I could bear the unbearable" (92). Brown observes that Strayed often looks to the wilderness (or I would say, IS looking to the wilderness) when amazing or clarifying events happen; this looking to the wilderness is a reflexive, always-already motion.

Ultimately, in Strayed's memoir, "fascination" leads to growth (both for the athlete and for the reader-spectators), and growth helps us as readers to grasp the complex movements we enjoy in watching or while reading about physical activities in creative nonfiction. One last scene important to creating Strayed's revelatory style is one in which she becomes entranced by the closeness of a fox, thereby creating a micro-fascination within the larger fascination of the reader. In this scene, Strayed is now the spectator watching the athlete, who now is the fox:

> He was barely knee-high, though his strength was irrefutable, his beauty dazzling, his superiority to me apparent down to his every pristine hair. He could be on me in a flash. This was his world. He was as certain as the sky.
>
> "Fox," I whispered in the gentlest possible voice I could, as if by naming him I could both defend myself against him and also draw him nearer. He raised his fine-boned red head, but remained standing as he'd been and studied me for several

> seconds more before turning away without alarm to continue walking across the clearing and into the trees.
>
> "Come back," I called lightly, and then suddenly shouted, "MOM! MOM! MOM! MOM!" I didn't know the word was going to come out of my mouth until it did.
>
> And then just as suddenly, I went silent, spent. (144)

For readers, Strayed's moment of viewing becomes a double-lens. We see Strayed's fascination with the fox's movement reflected in our fascination with Strayed's movement, reflected in our own memories or prior knowledge of movement and grief. As I remembered and read and watched, I couldn't help but feel as if the whole world is a three-sided mirror, reflecting images into eternity. In her memoir, other natural triggers (earlier in the book, the lizard, a moose, a bear) culminate here in the haunting image of the fox, which not only symbolizes but also is the embodiment of her mother in motion, which Strayed yearns to keep nearby but finally knows she has to let go.

This particular scene made me feel grateful for the pleasure of watching Strayed, as she watched the fox, wiping clean the ugliness of "Paul's voice, telling [her] how foolish [she'd] been to trek into the snow like this alone" (142) and suggesting that the "undesecrated beauty of the wilderness meant [she] too could be undesecreated" (143), as the trail wound before her.

Without a doubt, Strayed did not perform for just me, in my eight-months-pregnant body, as I huffed and puffed up the multiple flights of stairs to my office. The satisfaction that I got from watching (and vicariously living through) Strayed's athleticism centered on the interconnectedness I felt with the ways that women can push through; "the effort itself meant something" (143). There was a palpable beauty and ugliness in the rising and falling of words and feet, in the pain I felt lifting my pregnant self out of the bed in the morning or climbing the stairs to my classroom. My goal wasn't the PCT, yet when I finished Strayed's book, I still felt the fascination left between us, and the fascination of watching my own self, the "full perfect and imperfect force of her humanity, as if her life was an intricately painted mural and I could see the whole thing" (269–70).

Throughout *Wild*, Strayed's work is undergirded by an awareness that readers are watching her on the hike, as one would watch someone running down a track lane or punching in a boxing match. Through her stylistic and poetic choices, Strayed argues that readers should be conditioned to look for aesthetic pleasure when we read a sports memoir, that as spectators we contribute to the creation of the body, its beauty and suffering, in the text, as a striving for oneness in nonfiction.

Through Strayed's re-storying of the body, *Wild* provides a critical lens for rethinking the generative and creative possibilities of translating embodied challenges or experiences onto the page.

In developing his idea of *fascination*, Gumbrecht writes that "[i]t refers to the eye as attracted to, indeed paralyzed by, the appeal of something perceived . . . [b]ut . . . also captures the added dimension that the spectator contributes" (151). This concept of fascination, dependent as it is on a perceived/experiential collapse between the spectator and the athlete, creates and informs a poetics of athletic nonfiction that seeks to help readers feel the pulse of the story being told, as if they are reliving details of the experience, emotions, and feelings with the writer. In other words, the reader is invited to be present with the memoirist in the experience. Strayed forms this invitation by slowing down and looking to the resonances within her own body, as she tries to relive her experiences and all their nuances.

Strayed's technique is particularly relevant in memoir writing, since memoirists often face the challenge of recalling events that might have happened many years earlier. However, the activities of recognizing the function of embodiment and seeking to create identification between reader and subject are approaches relevant to nonfiction writing beyond the memoir genre. When any nonfiction writers look at the ways that bodies have been written about, and in doing so, reflect on their own bodies and the way they write those bodies, the similarities can and should enrich the resulting prose. For effective rendering, bodies that rise and fall must find their aesthetic match in the language that seeks to convey them through linguistic embodiment.

Writers live in bodies that remember earlier incarnations of themselves, as our bodies are always in flux. Writers also continually write other bodies into existence. Because women's bodies have a legacy of silence and submission in texts, Strayed's memoir serves as a particularly important model for feminist nonfiction writing, especially in that one of her main aims seems to be interrogating how the corporeal body comes to life through imagery, lexicon, and alliteration. Strayed thereby joins feminist authors like Simone De Beauvoir, Adrienne Rich, Judith Butler, and Elizabeth Grosz, all of whom wrote their bodies, even as they did so in ways distinct from one another. As Helene Cixous said, "By writing herself woman will return to the body which has been confiscated from her . . . [c]ensor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time" (880). Strayed's work dares other authors to try writing the body for themselves.

We can understand the poetics of *Wild* more fully by reading the text in connection with feminist work that has been done in analyzing texts through material and corporeal theories. Because material theories work with the ways that human bodies are produced, they challenge mind/body dualist epistemologies and allow for new models of subjectivity that speak to feminist concerns—for example, by finding new ways of writing and liberating women's bodies in literature. Memoirs, particularly sport-themed memoirs such as Strayed's, reveal this activity in ways that demand critical recognition, since as a subgenre these texts focus on a unique stage and part of life that is intimately connected to bodies. Developing theories and definitions of "human corporeality that can account for how the discursive and the material interact with the constitution of bodies" (7) means, as Alaimo and Hekman compellingly argue, "rethink[ing] materiality, the very 'stuff' of bodies and natures" (6). They herald the arrival of the "material turn" in their Introduction to *Material Feminisms*, a collection of essays from "feminist theory that is taking matter seriously" (6). Their call to feminist theorists is that:

> We need a way to talk about these bodies and the materiality they inhabit. Focusing exclusively on representations, ideology, and discourse excludes lived experience, corporeal practice, and biological substance from consideration . . . . Moreover, bracketing or negating materiality can actually inhibit the development of a robust understanding of discursive production itself, since various aspects of materiality contribute to the development and transformation of discourses. (4)

Drawing on their argument, I would argue that by identifying and examining the "material" in the memoir, feminists can find an empowering textual kinaesthetics, an aesthetic discourse that accounts for the perception of body position, movement, and muscular tension.

Female memoirists and athletes are then able, to different extents, to shift from being seen in merely representational terms to a more "active," valuable kinaesthetics. By seeing women athletes beyond "representations," seeing them as moving, becoming, breathing, sweating, and straining bodies, memoirists and critics alike may participate in this "material turn." I do not want to do away with the term "representation" altogether, but as I see it, representation is a kind of flattening, a taking away of a crucial dimension needed in seeing and experiencing athletes' bodies in texts. The term "embody" is more active, alive and full of agency and resistance. Instead of merely representing, Strayed is able to "embody" herself in the memoir through prioritizing the descriptions of her body in its state of becoming. We see this move, for example, when we read Strayed's descriptions of herself after three weeks on the trail ("My body almost hurt with pleasure to merely sit on the bed, as if it were being the opposite of burned" [129]), which are then followed by a long passage of description of Strayed looking in the mirror ("Beneath the bruises and wounds and dirt I could see new ridges of muscle, my flesh taut in places that it had recently been soft" [129]).

Writing in retrospect, Strayed sees her body on her own terms, and more importantly, as "prepared." She knows what she is capable of doing; she understands her own potential: "I was three weeks into my hike, but everything in me felt altered . . . alone in a strange new land, while the actual world all around me hummed on" (135). As readers, we are witnesses to her change in self-perception. When she writes of her experience on the trail, she is able to see herself as both body and mind for the first time. That does not mean she is free from self-doubt. But her self-doubt and confidence are at once wrapped up in what her body can do and will do, without her thinking and ordering it to do so. Strayed is becoming woman, becoming athlete, and moving away from being "the Hapless Hiker" to being what she thought she had always wanted to be, "the hard-ass motherfucking Amazonian queen" (228), and eventually past that to being something even better: "fierce and humble and gathered up inside . . ." (234). Strayed demonstrates the possibilities of imagining mind-body interplay by deconstructing binaries, so that we can recognize embodiment as constituted through cultural prescriptions yet retain a site for resistance in creative language and style. Through her use of imagery, lyrical phrases, and figurative language in scenes like those wherein she puts on her backpack for the first time or expresses her fascination with the fox, Strayed takes apart binaries that were tied up in her own preconceived ideas of the world and that are likely at play in many readers' assumptions as well. Strayed's work to eschew those ideologies in favor of a more evolved embodiment results in her empowerment, and her work might empower other nonfiction writers to feel "safe in this world too" (234). Her stylistic choices allow for interplay between present and past and for renewed access to the complications inherent in writing the athletic body.

All of the poetic and stylistic moves noted above (working with lexical and syntactic crafting; kinaesthetics; fascination; performance; and embodiment) offer rich material for nonfiction writers, creative or academic, to consider in enriching their prose. The strongest impression the memoir leaves is that of Strayed's freedom of mind and body through the gradual rising and falling motions, of being in-between, simultaneous, whole. Strayed's discipline—on the trail, on the page—lets her grieve and frees her body, and as a byproduct, creates possibilities for other nonfiction writers to pursue.

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Shaping the Body of Grief: Converging the Personal, Academic, and Visual in Memoir to Create a Broader Way of Mourning

Hilarie Ashton

I have learned to cross-reference tidbits of information in making sense of evidence; to recognize an important story when I see it; to develop strategies for retelling it respectfully despite the inevitable missing pieces. What I have learned best, however, is the value of two virtues: the importance of caring about "the subject" and the importance of patience.

—Jacqueline Jones Royster (*Traces of a Stream* ix)

I have been writing a memoir of my mother's death since before she died. It began with a piece I started after she moved to hospice care, on the cusp of 2013. I began at my grief's beginning: writing about the spring of her diagnosis the previous year. I currently have over 100,000 words that trace her life, her illness, her death, my grief, and my (ongoing) healing; the first chapter begins with that first piece, which I will excerpt later on. As I edit, I'm shaping the body of the text, as though it's a person, as though it's my own body, or my mother's, modeling in some ways how I've used movement and physical exercise to help me through the stages of her illness and the space left without her. I'm also shaping my own therapeutic response to grief through my editing, shaving off the repetitions of my own pain and weaving in reflections of my mother's healthy, well-lived life, and including a lot of the concrete actions I have taken to change my life since she died, both purposefully and accidentally.

In this article, I consider sections of my in-progress manuscript alongside others' published memoirs of losing a mother. Some of what I think is distinctly creative about my work is the addition of other modes of composing. This article, for example, incorporates memoir, scholarly analysis, multimodal video, and my mother's own words. Using Megan Brown's 2010 invitation in *College Literature* to consider my writing as a prism, I analyze Eggers (mostly, following Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's 2001 analysis, through its appended paratext) using theories and texts developed by Jacqueline Jones Royster in her *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women*, all mediated by sections of my own grief memoir and by portions of my mother's introductions to her master's thesis and doctoral dissertation. I have also added two layers of video to the manuscript and essay, one that traces memory and grief through my own relationship to books and reading and one that chronicles my grieving process through my athletic practices. Ultimately, with these combinations of texts and approaches to life writing, I posit that the ways in which the personal, academic, visual, and aural converge in my work about my mother could intervene in the grief memoir genre to create a broader way of mourning.

Autobiography continues to grow as a means many see to broaden academic writing. Megan Brown's 2010 piece in *College Literature* argues a case for "Me Studies," her informal name for courses based on autobiography. She "argue[s] for the memoir as an educational tool—more specifically, as a provocation for thinking critically about cultural definitions of self-hood and authenticity" (123). Beyond the classroom setting, Brown's notion can be usefully applied to academic writing and inquiry, putting texts in conversation with each other within a life writing framework that can help to forge connections. In a sense, by using her own history to examine broader issues, a writer is using herself as a one-person case study, modifying a common technique used by writing studies teachers in part as a way to locate the individual writing subject. Memoir, and grief memoir in particular, intensifies this process.

* * *

My mother, Nancy Lynn Ashton, was a tenured professor of psychology and women's studies when she died. She had had tenure since 1982, right before I was born, from the college at which she taught for thirty-five years. After getting her PhD in psychology at the University of Florida, she spent a year teaching in Nebraska before she started teaching at what was then Stockton State College. (It's now The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, after an upward-aiming name change that took place sometime in the nineties.) Mom taught in Stockton's psych program for thirty years, and she was instrumental in founding the Women's Studies program.

Writing parts of that preceding paragraph feels like writing her obituary all over again. When I stopped ignoring the task and actually wrote it, I mostly listed her accomplishments, finding it too hard to share anecdotes. She'd been gone for five months before I felt able to even attempt the project, because "Nancy Ashton" and "obituary" didn't belong in the same sentence. (They still don't, but I managed to write it all the same, keeping uppermost in my mind the thought that she had had to write one for her mother, too.) In a way, it was my version of keeping up with tradition—most people we know had already found out via social media, email, or old-fashioned snail mail, phone, and word of mouth. It still felt like a surreal news update, even though I didn't know who received it in the actual paper.

When my mother wrote updates to her college alumnae magazine, she always included news about me. Some years, she spent more time on me in her annual holiday letter than she did on herself. We were writing her last one when she died, along with the student recommendations she insisted on working on. We didn't finish the holiday letter, but she finished the recommendations. The bit of the holiday letter we managed to write is only two sentences long. I keep it as its own kind of memoir as a draft email in my inbox. I do not read it, but I keep it there with my other drafts, having nowhere that I want to save it or send it.

The timeline of my return to academia converges directly with the loss of my mother. I started my own PhD, in English, at CUNY Graduate Center nearly eight months after my mother's death. I was admitted on Valentine's Day 2012, and she was diagnosed with cholangiocarcinoma (bile duct cancer) barely a month later, on March 13. Even though we thought then that the doctors would be able to vanquish the tumor with one surgery, I decided pretty quickly to defer my admission. I spent much of the next nine months on buses and in hospitals and in my mother's living room, sitting with her in our uniforms (mine: yoga pants and a sweatshirt; hers: a nightgown). I tried to keep up with work at a job I grew to hate, lugging my laptop around with me and remote-accessing my work computer from my chair next to my mother's bed.

The year she died—a jarring three years ago—wasn't light. It sat on my shoulders and pressed me closer to the earth, the earth they say receives us when we die. I saw the worst ravages of cancer claim her formerly healthy body. It only took nine months. She fought her physical demons and I fought my emotional ones, both of us staring down the prospect of our little unit of two being torn apart. It was unthinkable. I spent most of my childhood thinking it was unthinkable. Now that prospect has become my reality. In another sense, though, the year was suffused with glow. It was the year I learned to take myself upside down in the advanced yoga classes I used to shy away from. It was the year I learned to lighten my own load of grief, discovering a fierce kickboxing warrior inside my runner's frame, physicality as sublime, punishing therapy. It was a year with a lot of self-discovery and love along with grief and loneliness. It was the year in which I had to find a middle way—between that of my life with my mother and my life without her. It would take a book to tell you our story, a book that I'm writing, a book that will include the words you are reading now.

I started writing again after an unintentional hiatus of about a year, during which I did only the necessarily impersonal writing for work that was characterized by the passive voice. Mom was still with me when I picked up again. I started by writing about Mom and the illness and my fears, intending to share the piece with her. I thought from the winter we were moving through back to the prior spring, when it was warm and everything seemed like it would turn out differently. This is how the piece began:

> Two little girls twirl on the sidewalk, watching their shadows skip across the light that lattices the pavement. They twirl near a card table laden with sweating pitchers and a crayoned sign. A prodigious Bernese mountain dog lumps along toward them and settles near their feet, unconcerned with getting tangled in their legs. I am in the town where my mother lives, far from the one where she raised me, and just as far from the place where I now live. It is late spring, and the weather is nearly perfect—the light, the breeze, and the deep blue of the sky.
>
> I look behind me and confirm that Mom is still standing talking to a neighbor. I'm not in earshot, but I know what she must be saying. She is telling the painful, uncertain story of our recent months. Somehow she always gets back to asking the neighbor how she is doing. Some weeks later, when she is in the hospital, my mother asks about the nurses, and about their children, husbands, wives, where they got their degrees, where they grew up. Months after that, when she can't speak in the ICU because of the drainage tube down her throat, she scrawls friendly questions to the staff on a piece of paper. She uses the little energy she has to consider others.
>
> On that spring day in 2012, midway through my mother's last spring break, I had no idea what was going to hit us, what was already hitting us. The coming clouds rattled my foundation like nothing else, shaking me out of a version of mid-twenties complacency that I would give anything now to be able to revise. My mother, Nancy, was my best friend and my strongest champion. I spent my childhood actively afraid of losing her. Now I am a new kind of adult, and I can't call her or hug her or listen to her. I know she makes my spirit stronger. She will never stop being my mother.

My writing above is not academic, not in traditional style or in substance. In the academic writing classes I teach, I encourage students to open their papers in a version of this way—to tap into a personal memory that is made topical by a link to whatever we are studying. When I teach literacy narratives, that is the explicit frame. What I notice very sharply in the classroom is that most beginning students enter in to academic writing through imitation, the kind that reproduces jargon and doesn't allow them to find their authentic voices. Every semester, at least one student always asks if they can use "I" in their writing, and when I tell them yes, they can, as long as they have a reason for it, several jaws drop open. Last fall, when I taught an introductory composition class on literacy narratives, I had a quiet group, discussion-wise. When they wrote, though, everything changed. They melded their whole selves into their discussions of literacy, drawing on their own experiences, good and bad, to complement their analyses of academic texts we had read. I learned more about some of them from those papers than I had about them all semester.

In her essay, Brown asks, "What can we come to understand—which questions can we consider—when we write about ourselves?" (123). Her way of formulating an arrival at understanding aligns so nicely with the efforts of the FYW writers I have taught. I'd merely tweak the verb to make it ongoing—as people and as academic writers, we are always already coming to understanding, and even when we arrive there, we are moving on towards it in some other capacity. Understanding and writing—and, indeed, selfhood—are always in flux. My preliminary answer to Brown's question, which aligns with her general project, is that autobiography, for college students and other beginning writers, as well as for advanced academics, can be an entry point into broader, more complex fields of inquiry. By using ourselves as a prism, we can move from the familiar into the unfamiliar, and draw connections where perhaps at first we didn't think any existed.

A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius grabs attention from the get-go. The title is so hyperbolic that it must, one thinks, be intentionally ironic. The heartbreaking part is pretty straightforward: Eggers loses both parents within months of each other. At twenty-one, he becomes the primary caregiver for his eight-year-old brother, Toph. They move to San Francisco, and interesting non-grief things happen—including, in a pre-mashup world connection, the time when Eggers auditions for *The Real World*, a show that was to become a defining cultural product for members of the MTV generation, and that ushered in the all-too-ubiquitous eye of reality television. Megan Brown links the show explicitly to Eggers's project, arguing that it "traffics in the same sort of lives-as-commodities idea as memoirs do" (130).

In their article for *Biography*, Smith and Watson beautifully describe the book's avant-garde structure—and explicitly connect its personal elements to academic writing:

> Like a Cervantes novel, *A Heartbreaking Work* includes nearly forty pages of advice on how to read its narrative of loss and survival. Its introduction is divided into "Rules," a Preface, Contents, extensive Acknowledgements, and an Incomplete Guide to Symbols and Metaphors; there are also outtakes printed on the book's front end flap. In other words, the analytic conventions of the scholarly book are assembled to self-consciously frame a first-person narrative that announces itself as 'a work of pure non-fiction' (ix), 'a memoir-y kind of thing' (xx)"? This elaborate set of introductions both draws readers in, and warns about the traps of sincerity and authenticity in personal narrative. (6)

I would go even further than that last line and posit that this very self-consciousness of Eggers's framing humanizes him expressly as it calls attention to the construction of his project. Seeing Eggers as a craftsperson of the word pulls apart the hyperbole of the title, marking him as a writer attuned to certain details and conventions, willing to play with them and mock the unavoidable hubris of the memoir genre itself.

Viewed from a certain angle, many other small moments also cut against this projected hubris, like the page before the title page, which says simply, in capital letters, "THIS WAS UNCALLED FOR." I read that moment as an ironically understated rail against the injustice of his parents' deaths. Caroline Hamilton, in her book on Eggers, reads the line differently:

> Eggers does not simply address the problems of representation and media affirmation in his memoir, he has his book enact them. . . . A text looking at itself brings to mind a book regarding itself in a mirror, in the manner of young Narcissus. *A.H.W.O.S.G.* not only looks at, but comments on itself: "THIS WAS UNCALLED FOR" reads an otherwise blank page. (38)

Early death and excessive loss being uncalled for—and unfair and impossible and shocking and debilitating—is a common feeling among mourners. It's also a plain fact. Remarking that fact, especially in capital letters, reminds us that, for all his possible posturing, Eggers is at the core a grieving son, processing his losses in the ways that he knows best. To Hamilton's point, however, the very necessity for a title acronym supports the title's complex hubris, which Eggers uses freely in the additions to the book's second edition.

Eggers isn't attempting an academic project like Brown's or even like mine, which is still academic even while its form is experimental, but he does make free and ironized use of academic conventions like footnotes and meta-commentary. And while his book has a different focus than mine, we make similar moves in writing about ourselves. In many ways, his book is about the aftermath of his parents' deaths. Much of it has nothing directly to do with death or grieving—it's more of a survival memoir (an interesting genre that barely exists outside of adventure narrative books). Mine, still in progress, began as a therapeutic exercise. I shied away from describing my mother's death and from getting into her brave acts—both feeling too painful—but I wrote about my grief in great detail.

I write more small moments than Eggers does, in a less novelistic way, and I make far fewer sweeping statements (with the goal of not making any). I intend for the small moments I articulate to build up into a broader picture. I also try to balance the sad moments with happy ones, but in a more rhythmic, back-and-forth way than he does. My optic now as I write and edit is the academic thread that forms one of my many links to my mother. This is where I find my plot. Eggers, by contrast, jumpstarts his with a big (literal, cross-country) move, and has the built-in drama of having to raise Toph after his tragedy happens.

He also frames his narrative very consciously with the errata of book publishing and book making, as I've mentioned in an academic context. Rather than calling it an introduction, he titles it "Mistakes We Knew We Were Making" and lists what it contains:

> Notes
> Corrections
> Clarifications
> Apologies
> Addenda. (n. pag.)

Eggers's attention to detail and flouting of convention can be read in a couple of ways. When in counterpoint to a more traditional introduction, Eggers's approach looks very clearly like one that wouldn't work within academia. On the other hand, it's creative and rather daring even when considered within the *McSweeney's* model that it follows (and that Eggers helped create). On both hands, perhaps, is the troubling "we" of the title. Who is being signified? Is he implicating little Toph? The creative team behind the book? Other memoirists?

The appendix brings the tongue-in-cheek egotism of the book's title into full view, along with a partial acknowledgement and subsequent takedown of it from the author himself:

> A version of it was nearly complete, when its author made the mistake of telling a writer friend about it, with, let's admit, a certain smugness. I was, I figured, the first to think of adding a corrective appendix to a nonfiction work . . . But upon telling this writer-friend about the idea, she said, while looking much too ravishing over an open candle and with wet hair, "Oh, right, like Mary McCarthy." There was, in the distance, the sound of thunder, and of lightning striking, presumably, a kitten. *Um, what do you mean, pray tell, Just like Mary McCarthy?* I thought, while, fear-stricken, managing only "Huh?" She noted that McCarthy had done almost the same thing in *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*, a book about which I was of course unaware, because I am a moron. (5a–6a)

This passage intrigues from a few angles. One is the way in which Eggers includes both himself and his authorial persona ("the author") in the same couple of sentences. This is a deepening play with the use of the subject pronoun I mentioned above in a composition classroom context, including two different selves (or, at least, two different representations of a self) while privileging the most immediate one (the "I"), the one with which it is easiest to connect directly to the reader. The "I" becomes a little clearer with the added presence of the "writer-friend"—what's important is not only the trenchant commentary she provides on memoir (important both for Eggers as author and, perhaps, for audiences who might be unfamiliar with memoir doyenne McCarthy), but also the dual sense of how Eggers as author and Eggers as subject feel about her. That latter detail is a bit of a non sequitur, since we don't find out if anything more than friendly ever happens. Eggers concludes with a dash of humility threaded with informality: "after reading McCarthy's perfect execution of the idea, I abandoned my own appendix, not wanting to invest too much in a notion already used. And besides, I felt, the stupid goddamn book was obviously long enough" (6a).

Under the blaring heading "POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND," Eggers lets the reader know that "This appendix need not be read to understand or enjoy the book proper. It is only for: 1) the author; 2) those with extra time; 3) those with interest disproportionate to what is warranted" (7a). Nonetheless, and a bit surprisingly given these parameters, grief comes up explicitly in the appendix in a visceral way that cuts against Eggers's slightly ironized attempt to push the importance of the central text as opposed to the appendix (ironized because if he didn't want us to read the appendix, he wouldn't have published it). The moment is this: "So the first chapter in particular will have almost no changes, because I just, a few minutes ago, tried to get in there, and after scrolling through the first half-page, I was already having trouble breathing. Now, twenty minutes later, I am still having trouble breathing" (8a).

Eggers makes it clear that grief is the reason for this reaction when he goes into more traditional grief memoir material later on the page (barely into the appendix):

> I hate being in that chapter again, in that brown low-ceilinged room. I can feel the air in that room of fake wood paneling, and smell those medicinal smells, can smell the bile, which has a smell, a robust scent, and I can see her eyes, and I didn't like her eyes that way, so tired and angry and yellowed and sunken, when they should be bright and angry and laughing and piercing and able to murder people and love people. (8a)

Anyone who takes him to task for his ego or his brand (about which, more below) has that right, but they ought to do so with this passage firmly in mind as a corrective force. As I argued above, Eggers's grief is a core motive force behind the story (and even behind part of the bombastic title), and passages like these bring us closer to that motive than any other part of the book.

Caroline Hamilton argues, somewhat problematically, that "Eggers's memoir reveals that self-knowledge is felt to be deepest when one is recognized by *others* for what one is," a notion she calls "one of the significant developments of self-perception since the early twentieth century" (34). While she's right to point to the degree to which Eggers points at himself in the narrative, and especially to pinpoint the lack of previous critical attention to his conception "of his readers *in his own image*: an audience composed of young people just like him" (31, original italics), I think she's pressing the point too firmly. I'm not convinced that the memoir gives "others" (limited to/including whom? Eggers's fanbase? Critics? Readers who buy the book? *McSweeney's* types?) that clear a view into Eggers's psyche. I know from my limited experience with memoir writing that I have very little confidence in my own ability to accurately (and, more to the point, completely) represent myself on the page, any more than I have confidence that readers would absorb my selfhood in the right way.

When Hamilton claims that "Eggers's memoir is less an instance of autobiography than it is a process of formulating the literary celebrity called Dave Eggers, constantly devising new strategies for marketing his brand to a target audience . . . who also crave the insubstantial rewards of fame" (44), her assumptions outnumber her points. For one, the only reason this formulation works is because Dave Eggers actually became a literary celebrity. Had he not become a brand, or had his brand fizzled in a year or two, the expertise in celebrity that Hamilton imputes to him would not apply. Another issue is her attempt to read the minds of Eggers's readers. This is an instance where, to anticipate my discussion of Jacqueline Jones Royster, I think it's instructive to assume ethical space as far as one can, even in the realm of irony, and apply it just as much to readers and writers. Smith and Watson are more forgiving on this point, even borrowing and modifying Royster's most important adjective, *ethical*:

> Posing "self-aggrandizement" against "self-flagellation" as the motives of autobiographical writing and its search for "self-canonization," Eggers's performance of memoir-writing is profoundly ambivalent. It suggests, finally, that being suspicious about the ethics of autobiographical writing may be the one ethical act available to it. . . . Claiming to tell a true story in a genre about whose maneuvers he is acutely, endlessly self-conscious, he invites readers to confront the undecidability of autobiographical acts. (9)

Despite passages like the above and despite the book's reputation as the story of a terrible tragedy (which it is), Eggers spends little time retelling his losses. He doesn't write anything about his father's death and he writes little about his mother's: he slips from her loss to his father's funeral. The book is really, at its core, about him. Now that I'm writing a memoir about the loss of my mother that is also a book about me and that is shading into some of my professional work, I understand what might have motivated him. I think it's more than ego—more than, as Hamilton puts it, the linked ideas that "suffering offers the individual the mark of social distinction" and that "fame is its reward" (36). I think that at the core of every memoir is the idea that the memoirist has had an experience that others might find worthwhile. Putting oneself into a text, warts and all, is never easy, no matter how much an author might be driven by ego, and that willingness to be vulnerable shouldn't be discounted as long as it is authentic.

Royster's book works to fill in the gap in people's general knowledge of African American women's literary successes—in her introduction, she writes about being told at conferences that people have "never heard of these women" (3). In this sense, her book is an intervention in that lacuna: she aims to offer "some trends about the general landscape of African American women's literate experiences within the context of systemic matrices of oppression" (3). While I believe deeply in the importance of this work, the secondary achievement of her book is what I want to highlight here in relationship to my work and to Eggers's: she writes with deep attention to time (both historical, in terms of subject matter, and productive, in terms of writing) and to feeling, leaving the reader with a sense that these values can and should apply more broadly in both academic work and in memoir. What I see her doing is putting the personal back into the academic, and specifically the theoretically and historically-based academic.

Royster herself points to this broader applicability: "I recognize that, to the extent that the experiences of African American women overlap with the experiences of others, so too is it likely that any conclusions I draw about their literate practices might well apply to the literate practices of others" (8). She wrote these words in 2000, broadening the way for shining achievements like Saidiya Hartman's part-history, part-memoir *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. Our current historical moment complicates this move a bit. In the age of blogs (which can be at least semi-anonymous) and Facebook (within which safeguarding privacy is getting increasingly difficult), the writing subject is both situated and not. Royster comes back with a further caution, however, that I take very seriously: "I have come to see advantages in acknowledging connections, in considering the ethical implications of these connections, and in admitting the biases that must inevitably inform any scholarship that might be produced as a result of an acknowledgment of ethical space" (13). She's pointing us toward a mode of thinking and writing that acknowledges humanity both in terms of bias and in terms of relationship to a subject, for which, as the epigraph shows, she feels a deep responsibility.

The notion of ethical space is extremely important for any piece of writing, it seems to me, and for memoir in particular. Part of the reason for this is the necessity of at least some measure of transparency in memoir, which can lead the reader toward something like a feeling of authenticity. This transparency works to broaden the process of grieving—as when Eggers lets himself get most vulnerable on the page, many of the rawest moments in any grief memoir are both very difficult and very therapeutic for the writer to create. When I write about my mother, the grief moments are easier than the happy ones, since in the latter, I feel the pressure of trying to make my mother live on the page for people who didn't know her. The added difficulty of grief memoir about a lost loved one is how much those gaps sizzle with the terrestrial loss of the subject. This pressure, though, is useful in that it forces me to face all the feelings that frame loss in a murky maelstrom. Eggers's most ethical spaces, and least self-aggrandizing, to come back to Hamilton's critique, may well be his most openly grief-oriented passages. As Royster articulates in her preface (used as the epigraph for this article), the honest mode with which gap-filled stories are retold is actually more important than those gaps themselves, and, I think, helps a thoughtful writer work around them.

My mom's version of Royster's mode, combining history and expression of feeling, are the moments in her dissertation bio (also called "Biographical Sketch") where she veers away from purely traditional statements of fact (of the manner in which I wrote her obituary) and lets her personality shine through next to the moments of reportage. It starts in the first sentence, where she moves away from the third-person narration of her thesis bio and lets herself enter the narrative in the first person: "I, Nancy L. Ashton, born April 20, 1950, received early education in life's many facets in New Jersey and Connecticut . . . . Fortunately, I shortly thereafter left that locale forever" (111). She writes that she "began graduate school in the sunshine of the University of Florida," refers to her qualifying exams as "the next hurdle," and notes, "Throughout this period I was able to feed and house myself with the aid of a USPHS traineeship and many babysitting hours." She announces her first job by saying that she'll "trek to parts West, where [she] will be an assistant professor on the Psychology faculty at Kearney State College, Kearney, Nebraska" (111).

I'm moved to report that I recognize that tone—awash in humor, intelligence, and a bit of a wink at the reader—from the thousands of emails we exchanged and the piles of snail mail cards she sent me, sometimes providing me with my only personal mail for weeks at a time. Her prose is crisp but has personality—she will "trek to parts West" rather than just "go" or "move," and she will "be an assistant professor on the Psychology faculty," rather than do something like "obtain an academic position." I'm biased, of course, but I think she's letting her wit decorate her elegant prose rather than bang her reader over the head with it. She's also anticipating both Eggers's play with academic narrative convention and Royster's intervention of greater honesty, decades before either of them wrote their books.

My mother was a professor, but she never described herself that way. When asked what she did, she would always say, "I teach college." It always seemed too unassuming a phrase to encapsulate all that she poured into her work. She was the dedicated type, much to some of her less dedicated students' annoyance. I always thought of her as a Professor, capital P. Her students were different from those at Williams, where I went for undergrad, and Smith, where Mom (and her mom before her) went. She worked constantly to get the disengaged ones to read and study, and to challenge the interested ones.

She raised me with careful attention to words, as many academic parents do. Our living room, just for Mom and me (and two cats who came along when I entered third grade), had lots of chairs that were good for a small child to clamber on. Most of the many, many books we owned lived in the next room and in our bedrooms; the living room's walls were reserved for family photos. The best chair was a tan Spanish-style one that, for a while, we placed next to the photo of my great-grandfather sitting in it with about six of his grandchildren climbing on the sides and the back. One summer day, Mom walked into the living room to find toddler me sitting in the chair, feet not even hitting the seat's edge, holding an experimental psychology book on my lap. "What are you doing?" she cooed. I looked up, and very emphatically replied, "I reading."

We have a photo of that moment or a moment like it. I look like a little elf, partially aware of the camera but mostly engrossed in holding the book. I use that photo in one of the video projects I made as an outgrowth of the memoir draft. That piece, which I titled just "Multimodal Piece," uses photos and voice-over to trace my literacy development across my early childhood, tying my early reading experiences with my mother's own love for books in her own life. (There is an amazing photo of her in graduate school sitting on the couch in her sister's house, holding a pile of books.) The second video earned a real title ("Moving Through") and allowed me to experiment more with form and content. I adapted a written piece about the ways that kickboxing, a hobby I picked up with verve right after my mother died, and other movement practices have helped me navigate my grief.

Making the videos was one of the most personal and public ways I've shared my grief so far (until the publication of this piece). I had to learn iMovie from the ground up, which destabilized my composing process in some really frustrating and ultimately fruitful ways. I couldn't rely on my normal fallback skills, like being able to write complex sentences really quickly. I remember a long slog of a Saturday where I screamed at my laptop as sound files got moved or as I forgot how to sync a Ken Burns-style photo scan with an audio track. The inert blank of the title of "Multimodal Piece" reflects my initial discomfort with the medium: I didn't initially see that video as *enough* to honor my mother. Even now, when I watch it, I see the gaps in my own knowledge, and I can still picture the video I wish I had had the skills to make, even as it's become easier to honor the effort in the version that actually exists.

Doing video work also forced me to think about how I wanted to use images of both my mom and me and audio of myself. Each video began as a written piece that I adapted for the voiceover track, and I got to know the words so well by rehearsing and recording and re-recording them. There is a section in the second video where I film myself talking to the camera—a first for me at that time and not something I was entirely comfortable with. I wanted to film and re-film until I was satisfied with the way my face appeared in the light from the window behind me. But I used the footage anyway, feeling like that very discomfort and vulnerability during the creative process, whether visible to an audience or not, was integral to the emotionally open narrative I was trying to express.

Even more powerful than creating the videos was watching them with a group of colleagues. I found that I felt lonely at the front of the room, which is not a typical feeling for me; I was wanting to be sitting at the table with them but also felt a paradoxical need for distance. I couldn't watch them watching it, either—I had to watch the screen, focusing on my mother's face in the pictures I had included. I'm very comfortable with speaking in front of groups and reading aloud, but watching myself on video made me feel performatively vulnerable in a way that I hadn't before. I don't think I breathed fully and deeply until the video was over and I got to hear their generous, heartfelt comments.

Using video allowed me to shape my written words into a different medium, broadening the kind of thinking I was doing about grief itself, but it also affected my feelings, both physical and emotional. I felt my grief in my body differently. Seeing my mother's face as I worked with images, moving them to match with my words, was absorbing and hard. The work took different sides of my attention than writing does—one rainy day I spent eight hours wrestling with the way I wanted all the pieces to come together. Prior to making and showing the videos, I had read excerpts of the memoir in front of people, but video made me experience my public grief in a different way. There was nowhere else to look but the audience or the screen.

I wrote my master's thesis on authors who write themselves into their fiction. The act of writing myself—and my mother's self—into my non-fiction is one of the most challenging and rewarding intellectual pursuits I have taken on. I'm not sure where it will lead, but the process of weaving it into an academic work will shape the way the manuscript goes. Eggers and Royster, as well as Smith, Hamilton, and my mother, all have lessons for me and other life writers. Some are easier to incorporate than others, but they all point back to what a brave act writing is, even when it's also a selfish one. We all have great force within us, as writers, as embodied texts, as those who remember, and as beings of love.

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Crossing Genres: Exploring the Interplay Between Academic and Creative Writing

Bhavin Tailor

In his 1974 lecture at the Royal Society of Literature, Seamus Heaney stressed what he saw as the key difference between craft and technique for poets. He defined craft as "what you can learn from other verse" or "the skill of making," by which he meant the structural or formal aspects of poetic writing as it had long been taught (*Preoccupations* 47). Technique, however, was "what allow[ed] that first stirring of the mind round a word or an image or a memory to grow towards articulation: articulation not necessarily in terms of argument or explication but in terms of its own potential for harmonious self-reproduction" (48). What Heaney demands is a different kind of poet—one not full of the learned craft that he says wins competitions, but one who leaps and bounds organically and with technique from one line, image, or idea, to the next. As a young poet, I certainly found alluring the idea of reaching for the ineffable from the concrete blocks of craft; working to attain this goal dramatically changed my writing. My poems were more personal, even though they were not about me. Every poem I wrote, and write, contained and contains shreds of me as a self or presence, observing and mediating content, so that I am less like a narrator constructing a story and more like a lens through which images filter and distort—a passive rather than an active figure in world making. Perhaps we allow for processes like Heaney's technique more in poetry and creative writing than in other writing we undertake. Yet his lecture, nearly half a century old, still offers ways for readers and writers of all genres to identify and infuse their linguistic endeavors with more intense feeling.

One specific area suffering from a lack of feeling in words, to again to borrow from Heaney, is contemporary academic writing. As literary critics and academic writers, we expect our words to be surgically precise, our metaphors to be contained and exactingly employed. We expect logic and structure in our writing—the same logic and structure that helps us, as readers, to leap over paragraphs and pages when consuming a large number of texts. Even the anecdotes and asides we use are shrewdly planned, gulling the readers at the text's opening or marking a transition between sections of logic. Academic writing is, largely, mechanical; it is *logos*-driven and decisively unfeeling, as Eric Hayot highlights in substituting the word "procedure" for the writing processes that produce this kind of academic writing. On that process, he elaborates:

> All of this procedural activity, among which I include, then, the entire practice of writing, from doing research to drafting to revising or copy-editing, as well as the institutional, professional, and stylistic structures and patterns that teach, mandate, and reproduce the major scholarly genres, produces a significant metadiscourse. And all of this metadiscourse and procedure is mediated, not so much finally as simultaneously, by the vast numbers of people making up its audience, or audiences, most of whom are also participants in the production of scholarly writing . . . . (65–66)

As a result of this solipsism, the wholesale product of this academic procedure becomes a sort of *ouroboros*, creating the sort of discourse it seeks to consume. The corresponding feedback loop, while self-sustaining, ultimately perpetuates myths of ivory-tower academic elites through its exclusivity, keeping at a distance people not fully literate in this academic discourse. At the same time, the loop also excludes disparate ideas that can emerge from linguistic play, in the Derridean sense. There are other ways, however; and more importantly, I would argue, there are *better* ways, and Heaney's call for writers of technique in creative writing practices can help infuse academic nonfiction with more *pathos*, creating more evocative works that we as readers would more enjoy reading and that we as writers would more enjoy writing, works that would cater as much to the imagination as to logical processes and could spur on more imaginative reading and writing.

Heaney calls for poets to recognize their crucial but intermediary role in the writing process, which, as he puts it, "involves the discovery of ways to go out of [one's] normal cognitive bounds and raid the inarticulate: a dynamic alertness that mediates between the origins of feeling in memory and experience and the formal ploys that express these in a work of art" (*Preoccupations* 47). Yet both halves of Heaney's equation here, feeling and expression, rely on the presence of an author—of a person—in whom such a transformation can take place. The academic writing procedure does engage in part of this process, namely the ingesting of raw materials. In academic writing, we expect authors to situate themselves and their ideas in larger academic contexts via lit reviews and schools of thought, and as readers we can trace the intellectual paths authors have traversed based on their citations and footnotes and works cited, much like we could maps they may have travelled and marked. As a reader, academic writing often seems like a direct route from one point to the next, a street with few alleyways down which the author may have meandered, but we know as writers that the process is much more intricate. This reality is one that poets and creative writers of all sorts have not only accepted but also embraced. As Heaney states, in a sentiment that is hardly unique, "a poem always has elements of accident about it, which can be made the subject of inquest afterwards" (52), and I would argue that the same is true for a great deal of academic writing as well.

Much of the academic writing process relies on a sort of academic *sprezzatura*, a practiced performance of direct and linear progression of thought, often cool, collected, and somewhat emotionally distant from the ideas being presented. Yet just like poets, writers of academic prose are not—typically—writing in the vatic mode, pulling fully formed ideas from the ether. Instead, the role of discovery is immense to both groups of writers: discovery by accident, discovery by anecdote, discovery by tip-from-a-friend, or even discovery by mere word association. Further, human cognitive processes are rarely linear—which is in part why techniques such as automatic writing can be incredibly useful: they allow us to tap into thoughts and phrases before our internal editors have begun their pruning. While allowing for such methods of discovery and revision is integral to both types of writing, creative writing is often much more transparent with this part of the process and so can be more pedagogically beneficial to its readers. Heaney cites a letter from William Wordsworth on the origination of the latter's poem "The Thorn," the idea for which Wordsworth says came to him while passing a thorn (tree) on a stormy day, after which he began the poem with much "rapidity." Says Heaney:

> And in order to . . . transpose the awakened appetites in his consciousness into the satisfactions of a finished thing, he needed his "objective correlative." To make the thorn "permanently an impressive object" [as was Wordsworth's goal, according to his letter], images and ideas from different parts of his conscious and unconscious mind were attracted by almost magnetic power. The thorn in its new, wind-tossed aspect had become a field of force. (51)

For Heaney here, the writing process from moment of external inspiration to finished written product—and from object to objective correlative—relies on passage through and emotional investment from the writer. In saying as much, Heaney, and surely Wordsworth as well, attempts to elucidate the invisible connections of his thought processes in ways that poets can use to further their own creative ventures.

Heaney's call for poets to put more "feeling" into writing essentially calls for a humanizing of the writing process, a goal achievable not only through contextualizing the self as writer but also through contextualizing the sporadic and simultaneous ways in which thoughts often bloom. I would argue that part of the academic performance *is* suppressing such analogous thoughts in order to present a product that progresses linearly, unlike the much less linear—and sometimes sideways—progression of thoughts in the process of creation. In less abstract terms, poetry and creative writing as a whole have long been more accepting of products that seem to more faithfully reflect their processes. Heaney speaks of poetry as divination at times, and archaeological excavation at others, and despite the seemingly competing narratives inherent in each, each action helps to elucidate different aspects of his view of poetry—sometimes in the same sentence—and poetry is always a product of both actions.

Poetry has not only allowed for such simultaneity but has both embraced and codified its uses. The twentieth century alone with the rise of imagism brought to poetry a renewed sense of the multivalent power of images and the possible effects of their juxtaposition. Take for instance two standout examples from the movement, Ezra Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" and H. D.'s "Oread," both of which gain their complexity through juxtaposition and the layering of images. Pound's lines especially are near non sequiturs and yet form an admittedly vague but strikingly comprehensible narrative when paired together: "The apparition of these faces in the crowd: / Petals on a wet, black bough." Similarly, H. D.'s lines conflate images of the sea and of a forest in order to make sense of the former through the latter. She says, "Whirl up, sea— / Whirl your pointed pines. / Splash your great pines / On our rocks" (1–4). Through imagistic language alone, H. D. conveys the worldview of the mountain nymph at its point of broadening, and puts into familiar terms—that of the forest—descriptions for which the nymph lacks words—her encounter with the sea. Both poems attempt to capture a moment but do so in ways that break the bounds of straight linear narratives or images, and each instead works by analogy or by collage, where a number of images/ideas/observations simultaneously come to fruition and where meaning arises through the varying perspectives or focuses. In "Oread," the splash of the sea on the rocks is always prefigured through the language of the forest, and the splash has always already happened; the two are inseparable, and yet the language allows us to view them as two separate entities. Although he is less explicit about this topic than a number of others, Heaney's lecture reflects upon poems produced through similar methods of ideological layering, especially in his discussions of his Bog poems, where his exploration of the motifs of digging and memory met with the very literal archaeological discoveries of bodies buried and preserved in European bogs, in addition to the resurgence, at the time, of issues of Irish political history. In my own experiences as a writer, the intersection of such disparate events have led to some of my most profound growth, and it is little surprise to find the same true for Heaney.

To my mind, one of the most successful incarnations of simultaneity and process in academic writing was the advent of New Historicism, which often employed lengthy digressions and anecdotes through which the authors could segue into complicated discussions of texts. While not the compact collage offered by modernist poets, scholars in the New Historicist tradition still relied—and still rely—upon the juxtaposition of time and narrative to create meaning, albeit in a more straightforward and *logos*-driven way. However, the lengthy narrative digressions of new historicists were at once a boon and a curse; at best, the digressions offered alternative contexts in which to understand complex theories, but they were relegated to near-tangential status when used less effectively. A seminal and emblematic essay in the tradition, Stephen Greenblatt's "Invisible Bullets" does, with some amount of stagecraft, make effective use of historical narratives to work out his examination of subversion and containment before "consider[ing] the relevance of what [he has] been saying to our understanding of more complex literary works" (29). The narrative is then abandoned, and the analysis begins. Yet more juxtaposition throughout, more *bricolage*, would help elucidate meaning on levels much more beneficial to readers, and especially to readers who would be writers, as points of recapitulation; these could help at the levels of sentences and paragraphs rather than overarching conceits and provide methods that learning writers could then emulate.

In academic writing, simultaneity and humanization do not need to produce full-on collages or the textual equivalents of Jackson Pollock paintings, nor should they produce pure autobiography. Instead, introducing comparative elements such as metaphors and similes and using anecdotes and stories often proves more effective at conveying ideas than making outright statements. John D'Agata calls attention to the tradition of the didactic use of stories and says the lesson of Plato's *Symposium* is that knowledge is layered: "[i]t's . . . very messy, and we probably couldn't agree on what it really is or how it's ever made or the best way it to frame it for someone else to appreciate" and because of that, "the *Symposium* is itself so very messy, multi-dimensional, multi-layered, and difficult to interpret with any kind of confidence" (9). His point here is a notion with which theorists, critics, and writers of all sorts would agree, namely that "[k]nowledge, real knowledge, is problematic the moment we start trying to nail it down" (9). Rather than pinning knowledge down like a beetle in a shadow box, metaphors and similes make it possible for a writer to pen it into an ever-closing circle, one that allows knowledge to remain intact but also allows readers the vantage point from which to observe and interpret. Similarly, Greenblatt borrows from Eric Auerbach the term "representational plenitude" to describe the intersection of historical anecdote and cultural contexts, and often relies on this device to lead readers "to a felt sense of [an] existential whole" alongside the pure logic of argument (Simpson 25).

While much of my focus thus far has been on content, what is perhaps the clearest and most straightforwardly applicable definition of technique we can borrow from Heaney is more a matter of style as it relates to a humanized writing process: "Technique . . . involves not only a poet's way with words, his management of metre, rhythm and verbal texture; it also involves a definition of his stance towards life, a definition of his own reality" (*Preoccupations* 47). The former is another aspect of craft: the crude tricks and tools of the trade that poets deploy to structure their language. The mimetic learning process in creative writing, especially in poetry, has a long and storied tradition of copying the language and style of well-regarded poems. Though academic prose lacks some of the structural frameworks offered by formal poetry, it too could learn from the tools of formal poets. Part of the appeal of repeating and enacting formal verse is the strict set of constraints that come with the territory; in writing a traditional sonnet, the lines and their lengths, as well as rhyme scheme and rhythm, are largely set as framing material, and poets are then better able to focus on the creative process in a narrower workspace. Yet Heaney, whose writing is very formal at times, calls for something in addition to form and structure, and that something is a sense of self through style.

He notes how his early writings were influenced heavily by Gerard Manley Hopkins because of a connection between "the heavily accented consonantal noise of Hopkins's poetic voice and the peculiar regional characteristics of a Northern Ireland accent" (44), and we can look to the opening of a poem like "Death of a Naturalist" for an example of this: "All year the flax-dam festered in the heart / Of the townland; green and heavy headed / Flax rotted there, weighted down by huge sods" (1–3). Given the opening lines, their lengths and the music therein, we as readers have a sense of how the subsequent lines may take shape. The same is true for a poet, and the writing process then has a direction in which to move.

Despite the pure aesthetically joyful language present in "Death of a Naturalist," the other role that language serves here is to mark emphasis and pacing in addition to advancing logic and meaning. Iambic language flows smoothly, but also quickly; in writing long pieces of prose, attention on the level of syllables is, admittedly, not always practical. But we as writers can slow down when necessary to help accentuate difference, whether to highlight important ideas or signal a shift in tonal direction. James Wright's prose poem "The Ice House," for example, makes use of syllable length to great effect. "The slow door gave" (4) he says, a sentence all on its own, lodged between the active arms of a father pulling open a heavy door and his children walking through. The three words in particular, with their long vowel sounds lodged between driving consonants, force the reader to slow down, as does the short length of the sentence. The image is an important one as it marks the meeting point of a number of binaries: inside/outside, dark/light, young/old, father/son. Wright conveys to his readers the importance of the moment less through what he says than how he says it, through showing, not telling, as the near-clichéd model of creative writing teaches us. In "The Ice House," the mouthful of long syllables and consonants slows us down more than hearing the simple movement of a door.

Surprisingly, the process for attentiveness to language in academic prose is not entirely different from that in poetry; yet scholarly writing often tends to view prosody and texture in language as an afterthought. To again quote Hayot:

> The theories of language and literariness that govern almost every instance of critical reading in the profession do not stop applying to sentences once we move beyond the realm of poetry or fiction. Minimally it's weird for a profession to have one theory of language for its object and another for its products. (68)

Yet neglecting linguistic style in writing, and focusing more on content is not just weird; rather, it limits the persuasive tools on hand for an author, a sentiment that holds true for all forms of writing. In fact, a reexamination of style in the process of academic writing "would offer composition scholars, teachers, and students access to and facility with a rich array of language resources that would allow them to gain expressive ability, eloquence, clarity, precision, and other valued 'writerly' qualities" (Butler 65). While this linguistic attentiveness seems second nature to creative writers who also write academically, the burden perhaps lies more upon the shoulders of academics who are not self-professed creative writers—and who devote much of their lives to analyzing the words of others—to breathe life into the words they themselves relay.

Here I offer two examples, both from Katharine Eisaman Maus's introduction to her book *Inwardness and the Theater of the English Renaissance*. The first excerpt is as follows: "The startling logical leap in this passage does not seem to trouble Perkins, despite his normally rigorous argumentative style" (11). The first clause of the sentence is especially attentive to the play of sounds with the emphasis on the letter *L* for the first three words, an emphasis that gives way as we move through the clause to an emphasis on *S* in the words "does" and "seem" and yet also draws on the word "startling" at the beginning of the sentence, not to mention the *P* sounds weaving in and out. However, the compacted repetition of the *L* sound in "startling logical leap" has the effect of drowning out nearly anything that comes afterwards because, as with the short syllables in James Wright's poem, it forces the reader to slow down relative to a rather flowing sentence.

A similar pattern arises further on the page: "Renaissance religious culture thus nurtures habits of mind that encourage conceiving of human inwardness, like other truths, as at once privileged and elusive, an absent presence 'interpreted' to observers by ambiguous inklings and tokens" (11). Here the *R* overpowers four of the first five words—renaissance, religious, culture, and nurtures—before trailing off and bubbling back to the surface here and there. If we as readers slow down even further and trace the *R* sound through the entire sentence, what we end up with are all of the most important words in the sentence, which can be read together almost like an erasure poem while still capturing the meaning of the sentence: renaissance religious culture nurtures encourage inwardness truths presence interpreted observers. Of course, I can make no clear proclamations as to whether Maus intentionally crafted this sentence to function as I just described, but the effect it has on a reader is clear: the form and syntax serve to emphasize the same points as the logical structure of the sentence. More impressive is the fact that Maus does so without sounding overwrought or like a tongue twister; instead the sentence flows effortlessly until it ends on the near rhyme of "inklings and tokens."

Despite my own emphasis here on formal technique, arguably for Heaney the most important part of the poetic process is locating the self. I do not believe he means this in terms of the old lie of a poet's voice, but rather as part of the process of discovery. Heaney took "digging" as his driving metaphor after having written it into a poem, and he replaced a digging spade with his pen. For him, discovery of the self was a process of relations, and digging into the Irish countryside was akin to digging into memory layer by layer. For me, however, writing has never been as tidy or as linear a process. Writing involves missteps and results in changing opinions and questioning the self. It allows for veering down alleyways knowing that you can return to the main road at any point. And it is here that I think creative nonfiction offers necessary aid, especially creative nonfiction pieces that incorporate the exploratory work into their narration. The origin of a thought, what Heaney calls the genesis or occasion of the poem, is part of a grander story, the ever-present process of contextualization that can reintroduce elements of human feeling and thought into writing. The narration of excitement, joy, apprehension, or bewilderment that leads to connection or discovery can be a useful tool not only for making academic writing more interesting on the level of basic human connectedness but also for making academic prose less mechanical. Doing so makes room for anecdote and personal memory among other imports of the human experience that often spur our seemingly autonomic associations. In addition, importing the human element allows, I think, for fallibility and uncertainty without damning the ethos of the self as author, for certainly we tolerate trepidation more from humans than machines.

My desire to consider the interplay between academic and creative writing sprouted in the final year of my MFA degree, while focusing on creative writing and in transition to doctoral studies. In my academic work in early modern British literature, I was struck by just how poetic and creative many of these prose texts were. I spent a great deal of time working with Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesie* before I realized that something more was going on. In his tract, the different parts of his argument emerged like characters, each boasting their merits before dueling and disappearing. I believe this crafting in part has led to the staying power of the piece, as well as led to its influence; yet, the text is still a nonfiction prose defense of poetry that reaches outside of its own parameters in order to strengthen its central argument. It is not poetry, nor is it drama; but is both poetic and dramatic.

At about the same time, I became enamored with Thomas Browne's *Hydriotaphia*, which I still consider one of the most impressive poetic prose pieces I have read: "Time hath endlesse rarities, and shows of all varieties; which reveals old things in heaven, makes new discoveries in earth, and even earth itself a discovery. That great Antiquity *America* lay buried for a thousand years; and a large part of the earth is still in the Urne unto us . . . ." (97), Browne says nearly iambically as he begins his conceit of what an urn is, and what it can mean. Much like Heaney's digging, Browne's investigation of the urn is crucially related to the self, in what it means to be contained and preserved, as well as in consideration of which human traits merit preserving. From this, a portrait of the author and the values of his era emerges with archaeological care through the various literary illusions deployed therein; yet the poetic qualities of his words are never subdued. His images are bright and descriptive, and his words speed up and slow down, the iambs hitting stride before hurdling commas and haltings and periods.

Browne's treatise reads like a metaphysical poem more than it does an examination of unearthed artifacts, and perhaps that is the point, both for Browne and for myself. Heaney echoes Browne, and both are clear that the importation of the human is what separates technique from craft—or metaphysical examination from medical examination. And as a reader, I find the human often in poets and in fiction writers. Heaney is prominent among the former, but of course there are countless others. Nonfiction at its best beautifully blends genres, making poetic, engaging, and far more interesting the narratives of our thoughts and lives. Poets in their academic writing are just as likely to make use of the human as they might in their other work, as I think Heaney's lecture helps demonstrate, and that tradition is well established—by Sidney, certainly, and by Wordsworth, Eliot, and Heaney, to name, very briefly, a few. Academic writing can benefit from the very tools and techniques that every other genre of writing has already begun to incorporate, and we need not sound like Dr. Seuss in order to remember that our words are sounds as well, sounds with which we can create some startling effects.

As Jay Glaser points out in *Understanding Style: Practical Ways to Improve Your Writing*, writers can very easily emphasize ideas and words through carefully selecting the placement of a word within a sentence and within the phrases that make up a sentence: "Spoken or written English moves along in a series of **breath units**, each one containing a separate bit of information. Within each breath unit a distinctly stressed syllable or **nucleus** highlights a certain word . . . [and] a **sentence nucleus**" marks the sentence chunk given the most emphasis (141, emphasis in original). To return to my examples from Maus, a clause like "The startling logical leap in this passage does not seem to trouble Perkins" enacts the very emphatic technique Glaser notes, with a natural and logical caesura after "passage" that splits emphasis primarily between the logical leap and Perkins. Again, this is only an example of how the sonic texture of words can help emphasize meaning, but there many other tools that writers can employ.

In a lecture to students at Harvard, Greenblatt called for students to consider "writing not only as if it were a performance but also as if it constituted, for the moment, an ethically adequate object for your deepest ambition" ("Writing as Performance"). His lecture stands out, as Heaney's does, for the very fact that it is a lecture, highlighting a rare moment of a scholar lifting the academic curtain on his own process.

Moments like these, and the countless others where writers step outside of their writer personas and more authentically connect with their audiences, seem to be among the most fruitful for writers of scholarly prose to emulate, despite the inherently creative and public aspects of such instances.

At these much more public moments, writers are less concerned about dazzling readers and audiences with brilliant ideas and can instead focus on *how* they dazzle, or have dazzled. Like characters on stage feigning private revelations, the writers in these contexts can demonstrate for their audiences the breakthroughs they discovered and explain how, in so many cases, the perfect logical connection between ideas does come from nowhere or someplace unexpected, or is completely disregarded until some later date. In these contexts, the writers try harder to connect with their audiences. They are often vulnerable and witty. They strive to entertain and instruct. They work hard to keep their audiences on track but not bore them. They educate teachers in how to teach and writers in how to write. And in these contexts more so than any others, these writers are evocative and earnest and relatable.

As a poet, Heaney's essays have inspired my poetic growth more than anything else I have read—certainly more than any poetry did. And the same is true of my advancement as an academic. As a teacher, my thinking about creative writing workshop tactics has helped me to train my students to become better writers and readers of academic prose because I have been able to show them much more they can do with their language. I can teach them to consider how a sermon reaches beyond the realms of pure didacticism through human stories and figurative language in order to reach larger audiences, or how every major speech they can remember only sticks in their minds because of its driving metaphors. I have been trained to instruct students in how to employ *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* in their writing, but the ability to describe carefully or evocatively enough to move a reader can be just as important, as is the willingness to repeat an idea in several different ways to leave an impression rather than a word in the mind of a reader. As a poet, a teacher, and an academic, I believe that letting our objects of study inspire and torment us can, to some extent, allow for what Heaney called "harmonious self-reproduction," injecting a little more feeling into our own words.

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Material Matters and Millinery Work in *The House of Mirth*

Monica Carol Miller

As the tragic 1911 Triangle Factory Fire revealed, the turn of the century in New York City was a time of great crisis in the garment industry. Despite the changes from individual tailoring to large-scale manufacturing, the industry was still reliant upon large-scale labor, much of which remained invisible to the consumers of the final product. The hidden human costs underneath the production of fashion were only beginning to be realized at the turn of the century, and most of its most devoted consumers were rarely aware that they even needed to turn a blind eye to the human misery their sartorial splendor created as a by-product.

Though not a novel of social realism in the tradition of, for example, Sinclair Lewis's 1906 *The Jungle,* Edith Wharton's 1905 novel *The House of Mirth* does, in its way, not only gesture toward the realities of the garment industry but also in fact utilizes the millinery industry as an emblem of the larger changing social realities of the changing upper echelons of New York society. When Katherine Joslin observes that "*The House of Mirth* is, in many ways, a novel about the wearing and making of hats" (76), she is referring to the fact that protagonist Lily Bart relies upon hats not only as a fashion accessory, necessary for distinguishing her place in society, but also later for her livelihood, when she turns to millinery work in an attempt to support herself financially. Lily's involvement in the millinery industry both as a consumer and as a producer is significant, for the very nature of millinery work (with its wide variety of mostly unregulated shops) at the time of the novel's publication reflects the growing pains of capitalism in America. From the perspectives of both material culture and Marxist analysis, *The House of Mirth* not only uses hats as objects but also uses them and the changing millinery industry system as symbols to illuminate the gendered systems of exchange and power on which the novel's New York society is based. The hats and hat-making that pervade the novel highlight the commodification of women that takes place under such systems, a process that women such as Lily Bart find nearly inescapable. While characters such as Gerty Farrish and Carrie Fisher serve as critiques of the system of commodification that they inhabit, Lily's ultimate demise exemplifies her status as a "thing" within this system, an item for sale with a limited shelf life.

Hats are a consistent image and theme throughout much of Wharton's work. As early as her 1892 short story "Bunner Sisters,"[1] Wharton incorporates both the meaning of the hats women wear and the situation of women involved in the making of hats into her work. In *House of Mirth*, once Lily Bart faces the reality of her marriage-less future, she looks to millinery work to support herself. While such manual labor reflects a certain descent in her previously aristocratic social status, being the proprietor of such a shop would not be as complete a descent: her friend Gerty Farish claims to know of "[i]nstances of young lady-milliners establishing themselves under fashionable patronage, and imparting to their 'creations' that indefinable touch which the professional hand can never give" (297). It is to such employment that Lily aspires. Her friends help her acquire a job in Madame Regina's millinery shop as a worker, a position which they see as temporary: "[T]hey believed that the apprenticeship she was serving at Mme. Regina's would enable her, when Mrs. Peniston's legacy was paid, to realize the vision of the green-and-white shop with the fuller competence acquired by her preliminary training" (310). Running a fashionable hat-shop seems an acceptable occupation for a society woman for whom marriage is becoming a more and more elusive future.

However, Lily knows without a doubt that this dream is not feasible. While she waits for Mrs. Peniston's legacy, her life of continual debt has already consumed the smaller-than-expected inheritance from her disapproving aunt. Also, Lily has neither the training nor the background of the other millinery workers, who trim hats with "hands formed from childhood for their special work" (310). Further, the millinery trade is not a secure one: even in *The House of Mirth*, Madame Regina's work is described as seasonal, as she lays off most of her workers on the first of May (312). In her 1917 study of the New York millinery industry, Mary Van Kleeck observed that "[u]nemployment is the most important fact in the occupation of being a milliner" (70). Even in the "Bunner Sisters," written in 1892, the women must be content with their "humble prosperity" (166) for such work is tenuous and becoming ever more so by *The House of Mirth's* publication date of 1905.

By the time of Van Kleeck's 1917 study, such shops still existed but were on the brink of extinction; the study describes, for instance, one "forlorn little shop in a tenement on Columbus Avenue" (63), whose owner trained in one of the best shops on Fifth Avenue. Though she had been able to support herself as an independent milliner for four years at the time of the survey, her hold on financial independence is described as weak, as "she has neither space nor capital for a supply of hats trimmed in advance and can only take orders, having the customers, if possible supply their own materials" (63). The best that a woman in Lily's position might hope for, then, is keeping her head above water. Even basic financial security is an unrealistic expectation for Lily.

While there still existed such small, fashionable shops as that to which Lily Bart aspires, Van Kleeck's study reveals that the New York millinery system at the time disguised a much larger wholesale, industrialized infrastructure. Hat production involved many more stages than take place within a small shop. Rather, such a shop was simply the end stage of a long process of predominately wholesale production: "[A] woman's hat may be acquired not only in such variety of styles but at so many distinct stages of completion, from the purchase of the materials for its home creation to the buying of a complete structure from a highly organized establishment, [which] indicates that the millinery industry includes more different trades than we imagine when we enter the little shop around the corner" (Van Kleeck 40–41). This description reveals a very different reality from the vague fantasy Lily has throughout the novel that she should be able to support herself through her millinery skills. Early in the novel, for instance, she imagines an impecunious future with Selden: "I shall look hideous in dowdy clothes; but I can trim my own hats" (76).[2] At this point, such a life seems to require only sartorial sacrifices, though not including those involving hats.

Her faith in her abilities is not completely unfounded. During her employment by the newly moneyed Mrs. Hatch, for example, Lily's aristocratic background and upper class pedigree give her the ability to imbue inanimate objects with a certain indefinable aura of respectability and class. Mrs. Hatcher looks to Lily's "adroit feminine hand . . . [to] give the right turn to her correspondence, the right 'look' to her hats" (289). Such a talent for conveying such a priceless quality is one recognized even by professional milliners, like the one in Van Kleeck's study who complained about the difficulty of finding workers with such artistic vision: "I don't think I've ever had a girl in my workroom who could see a line. . . . That is where we are weak in this country. We are not artists. You tell a girl a line is not right and she tells you the measurements are correct. A bow may have just the right measurement but because of a touch there will be a wrong curve" (161). Lily may not be able to sew a spangle on straight, but she does have a certain artistic touch.

If such an artistic vision were a marketable skill, Lily would never be in want. Throughout the novel, Lily's appearance and her use of accessories, particularly hats, is shown to be superior to that of other women. In her consideration of the significance of fashion in Wharton's work, Joslin notes that "[f]rom the opening scene on the train platform, Lily is shown in contrast to 'sallow-faced girls in preposterous hats, and flat-chested women' of the working class that [Hull House founder Jane] Addams describes, a group that our hero Lawrence Selden sees as dingy and crude" (76). This contrast is made particularly clear through their difference in hats; unlike the "preposterous hats" of the workers (Wharton, *House of Mirth* 5), Lily's "dark hat and veil" are placed artfully enough that they allow her to "regain[] the girlish smoothness, the purity of tint, that she was beginning to lose after eleven years of late hours and indefatigable dancing" (3). Lily's talents at hat wearing and trimming are so great that they appear to turn back time.

If *The House of Mirth* is a novel about hats and hat wearing, their primary purpose seems to be to assist in focusing the scopophilic gaze. Hats in *The House of Mirth* are made for framing women, and Lily, as an exquisite model of her sex, is frequently the object of such framing. Lily's existence as the object of multiple gazes is a particularly gendered one, as Benjamin Carson describes in his feminist reading of the novel. For Carson, that Lily's identity relies so much on her being viewed by others (whether Selden, Gerty, Nettie Struther, or the *tableaux vivants* audience) reveals not only the constructed nature of her own gendered identity but also the role played by ideology in this process: "That both Gerty and Selden, a woman and a man, construct Lily through their gaze as such is important in that it reveals the complicity of both men and women in the reproduction of the real (though imaginary) Woman" (704). Carson uses Teresa de Lauretis's term "double vision" to describe the double bind in which Lily finds herself—specifically, that she realizes her trapped state inside a system in which she is only a cog or commodity—defining "double vision" as "the recognition that one is both inside, that is, constructed by, ideology and outside ideology, outside in the sense that one recognizes one's constructedness by and through the ideology of gender" (698). The repeated references to Lily's being "made"—for example, "she was not made for mean and shabby surroundings, for the squalid compromises of poverty" (Wharton, *House of Mirth* 27)—reinforce the constructedness of her identity, a trap from which there is no escape.[3] What makes Lily's entrapment particularly binding is that she is both consumer and commodity within this system, a particularly paralyzing position.

In her discussion of the "aesthetics of consumption" in Wharton's fiction (135), Jennifer Shepherd explains that "[t]he American garment industry's role in social destabilization at the turn of the century involved more than just creating new members of the nouveaux riches: it revolutionized the way in which fashion functioned as a system of class signification" (138). Along with the influx of the newly rich who made their fortunes from the rise of industrialization in fashion, this industrialization also meant an increase in the number of garments available. Further, as Shepherd explains, another result of this industrialization, which was of considerable interest to the upper classes was the problem of the "knock-off": "Falling prices, standardized sizes, and rampant design piracy—facilitated by the increased circulation of design concepts through the popular press—paved the way for the fashion knockoff, a ready-to-wear garment which offered the consumer the cachet of couture styling at a fraction of the cost" (138). Fashion, once a fairly reliable marker of social class, now instead worked to muddy such distinctions.

For Shepherd, the idea of the "knock-off" is key to the societal insecurities in the changing world of Wharton's work, and, she argues, "In the closed social economy of Old New York, Rosedale and other sartorially camouflaged *arrivistes* are invariably met with the suspicion given any counterfeit garment" (140). Echoing Walter Benjamin's concerns regarding the effects of mechanical reproduction on aesthetics, Shepherd notes that these newcomers (whose money was made, rather than inherited), though they appear to be visually similar to the older "established leisure classes," have a relationship to the older class analogous to that between the "knock-off" and the couture original:

> Like the pirated garment, when subjected to the rigorous visual appraisal of Lily and her set, social aspirers such as Rosedale, the Brys, and the Gormers are judged as "knock-offs" whose social capital, once they are detected, likewise "declines precipitously." In fact, though it appears to be a "flamboyant copy of . . . [Lily's] own world," the Gormers' entire social set strikes Lily as counterfeit, its difference from the original belied by "a hundred shades of aspect and manner, from the pattern of the men's waistcoats to the inflexion of the women's voices." (140–41, ellipsis and brackets in original)

This explains in large part why the *nouveau* Mrs. Hatch is willing to employ Lily in a manner reminiscent of Madame Regina's wish to employ Lily as a displayer of hats—Lily's aristocratic sensibilities allow her to appraise and detect the aura of the "knock-off." In her discussion of Lily's existence as a commodity, Joslin observes that "[t]he truth is that she has performed as a displayer of goods throughout the novel and has changed garments to fit into various scenes" (77). In the marketplace of New York City, Lily's aristocratic sensibilities make her both a skilled appraiser of commodities as well as a commodity herself.

Unfortunately, her entrapment within the system does not allow her to use her skills for her own benefit.

As Dimock (among others) has noted, Lily understands herself as a commodity in a marketplace wherein marriage is her most pressing goal. In an early conversation with Lily in the novel, Selden points out the centrality of marriage to her position as a woman in their society: "Isn't marriage your vocation? Isn't it what you're all brought up for?" (9). Earlier in this conversation, Lily has admitted that it is precisely this quality of "marriageability" which distinguishes her from other women her age—women like Gerty Farish or Nettie Struther, who must find ways to support themselves and live outside of this market. Lily's purpose within the larger society is thus pre-determined and inescapable: that she exists solely for marriage and aesthetic appreciation is set in stone (or perhaps ivory).

Shepherd sees Lily's marital/material[4] commodification in the larger context of the consumer-driven culture: "In hopes of closing the marital deal with Gryce, Lily speculates on the aesthetics of consumption, investing in the temporary commodification of her person as a reasonable price for the ultimate ability to choose the best product available in the marriage market" (148). While Shepherd sees Lily's commodification as a temporary stage on her way to attaining a level of autonomous choice and agency, I see it instead as an interpellation of Lily within a system whose extent she is only beginning to realize. Lily is even described in Darwinian terms as "the victim of the civilization which had produced her" (Wharton, *House of Mirth* 7), which implies that she is a product of outside forces; she has had little or no agency in her own development.

Ironically, many of the married women in the novel are portrayed as having the agency that Lily lacks to make choices. Women such as Judy Trenor and Bertha Dorset are able to use their own married status to safeguard their pecuniary status or extramarital affairs. However, they, too, are still trapped within the marital/material system, which is exchange-based and requires sacrifice. Lily's inability to commit completely to this commodity-based system further immobilizes her; as a woman, she is a commodity in this system, and her realization of her own interpellation only makes her reluctant to act in complicity with the system, trapping her further. I agree with Shepherd's contention that the double bind in which women such as Lily Bart found themselves was intricately tied to the new "dynamics of modern consumption," which

> significantly problematized and frustrated the contemporary ideological economy of romance, interpellating women into

> new and sometimes contradictory roles in both their imagined conceptualizations and lived experiences of romance. Though women were imaginatively empowered by the ability to choose the perfect suitor in the same way that they would choose the best product, factors such as women's unequal access to employment simultaneously reduced them to commodities within the actual economics of marriage. (147)

Shepherd's use of the word "economy" in connection with both romance and marriage is key here. Just as the small millinery shop disguised a larger wholesale infrastructure, so too does Lily's aristocratic society façade hide the unacknowledged larger narratives of power plays and exchanges at work.[5] What drives the marketplace's success is, in part, the very invisibility of its machinations; open acknowledgment of one's place in the market means certain failure.

Lily's problem, then, is that she realizes just enough of the mercenary realities of this society to find taking the kind of actions that lead to financial security—attending church with Percy Gryce, for example, which would have convinced him to propose to her, or accepting Rosedale's early marriage proposal—too distasteful to follow through on. Carson attributes Lily's apparent indecisiveness to her position as "both an insider and an intruder. She . . . is both complicit with the ideology of the leisured class and in rebellion against that ideology" (707). Carson's explanation of Lily's failure reflects that of Carrie Fisher, one of the more successful navigators of the market-based society in the novel. Carrie points out, for example, that Lily "at heart . . . despises the things she's trying for" (197). Indeed, Lily sees clearly some aspects of the realities of her position, the economic dimension to her society, which she explains to Gerty Farish:

> You think we live *on* the rich, rather than with them: and so we do, in a sense—but it's a privilege we have to pay for! We eat their dinners, and drink their wine, and smoke their cigarettes, and use their carriages and their opera-boxes and their private cars—yes, but there's a tax to pay on every one of those luxuries . . . . [T]he girl pays it by tips and cards too . . . and by going to the best dress-makers, and having just the right dress for every occasion . . . . (279–80)

Access to Lily's world requires not only an entrance fee but also considerable maintenance dues and taxes. One particularly enlightening detail in her description here is her inclusion of concrete entities, such as flowers and dresses, within the same category as more difficult to calculate entities, such as tips and card game losses. Everything in Lily's world is commodifiable, replaceable, and subject to exchange and appraisal in terms of current market value.

While many critics point out the general marketplace themes in *The House of Mirth*, I see it as significant that the commodity of hats (and hat-making) plays such an important role in the novel. Both hats as objects and the millinery trade in general provide important mirrors for these larger themes of exchange and commodification in the novel. Millinery work at the time was primarily done by women; the only men employed in the millinery industry worked in heavy manufacturing rather than trimming or in retail shops (Van Kleeck 13). Van Kleeck's study characterizes earning a living through millinery work as being as uncertain as Lily Bart's standing in society (137). Like the invisible taxes she is expected to pay and the tasks she is expected to perform, the millinery industry also consists of a series of unarticulated and ongoing exchanges and appraisals.

In one interview with a shop owner in Van Kleeck's study, for instance, the unnamed owner explains the similarly unarticulated hiring process:

> The usual practice in the wage bargain is to try a girl for two or three days or longer "to find out what she is worth" . . . . A girl is engaged at the wage she specifies, and then, after a few days' trial, if she has not impressed the forewoman as being worth what she asks, she is offered a lower wage . . . ."They usually stay for what they are offered." (136–37)

If a worker survived this initial hiring process, there were then no set standards for her to meet; rather, wages were arbitrarily determined through a "casual observation of a girl's work by the forewoman" (Van Kleeck 137). Without union organization, standardized hiring practices, regular or reliable schedules, or even articulated standards of quality, millinery workers were completely at the mercy of the shop owners, just as in Lily's society unmarried women of dubious financial backing were at the mercy of the more powerful.

Lily's place in this hierarchy is highlighted by her claim that "a woman is asked out as much for her clothes as for herself. The clothes are the background, the frame" (12). As I have already discussed, hats, in turn, are used throughout the novel to provide a frame for the scopophilic gaze of an objectified woman, and considering the larger meaning of hats in the novel illuminates Wharton's themes of commodification and exchange. In his consideration of material culture in Wharton's work, Gary Totten takes as his starting point Wharton's own definition of art in her early nonfiction work *The Decoration of Houses*: "The most convenient way of defining the real object of art is to describe it as *any ornamental object which adequately expresses an artistic conception*" (Wharton and Codman 184). According to Totten, Wharton's definition of art here coincides with modern-day material culture analysis. Totten's definitions of material culture, for which he relies on scholars such as Jules David Prown and Thomas Schlereth, all revolve around a primarily Barthesian idea that the most vital information about a society—how it functions, what it values—can be read in its everyday objects. In Totten's analysis, he "consider[s] Wharton's use of material culture as 'evidence of cultural belief'" (2–4). He notes that "[m]aterial culture functions in fiction not only as a prop and décor, but also as the metaphoric manifestation of ideology, evidence of deep engagement with intellectual, philosophical, and moral issues" (5). While Totten's analysis focuses primarily on the material culture in Wharton's 1911 novel *Summer*, it is equally appropriate to employ materialist methodology in consideration of *The House of Mirth*.

Specifically, Bill Brown's materialist perspective, which he calls "thing theory," is quite useful in considering the messages embedded in such meaning-laden objects as hats. His contention that we only notice the "thingness of objects when they stop working for us" ("Thing Theory" 4) coincides with the revelations in *The House of Mirth* of the workings below the surface of things taken for granted—whether the seemingly insignificant fashion accessory or the larger working of aristocratic society. Brown says that "[t]he story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is . . . the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation" (4). Wharton, by incorporating moments of millinery work throughout her fiction—in particular, by having moments of unsuccessful millinery work—is not only pulling aside the curtains of production and drawing attention to the underpinnings of society but is also pointing to the significance of things. By showing where these material objects break down, she highlights the relationship between women and their hats—or, in Brown's terms, calls attention to this subject-object relation.

However, the particularly gendered nature of this relation, namely between women and hats, complicates this subject-object relation. Tracy Lemaster's "feminist thing theory" describes how gender complicates materialist analysis in her essay, "Feminist Thing Theory in *Sister Carrie*." Quoting Rosemary Lloyd, Lemaster explains that, "Feminist thing theorists, recognizing the political in the personal, investigate 'an aesthetics of everyday life to ponder questions about gender,' . . . including questions about women's marginalization from democratic processes and their historical positioning as objects" (42). Hats are an important target for such theorizing; indeed, Joslin argues that "[p]erhaps no piece of apparel has signaled fashion and social class more than a hat" (72): hats were a requirement for all women of the time, as even the char-woman wears a "battered bonnet" (Wharton 106). Typically, women wore two kinds of hats each year, reflecting the seasons of spring and fall (Van Kleeck 174); as industrialization took over the fashion industry, particularly the millinery industry, it fed the growing consumer culture, which reflected shifting cultural expectations and class lines, requiring, in turn, that women of all socioeconomic classes continue to buy and wear hats.

It is in this sense that *The House of Mirth* represents what Shepherd calls the "aesthetics of consumption," as the novel is populated not only with Brownian "things" but also with things that are both of gendered significance and that reflect the increasingly ephemeral nature of social status. In his consideration of things in American literature,[6] Brown sees in material objects in fiction "not just the physical determinations of our imaginative life but also the congealed facts and fantasies of a culture, the surface phenomena that disclose the logic or illogic of industrial society" (*A Sense of Things* 3–4). The inclusion of material objects (particularly fashion) in Wharton's fiction reveals just this: both the rise of industrial society as well as the underlying marketplace logic of aristocratic society. The hats throughout *The House of Mirth* draw attention to the ubiquity of this system.

Tim Dant points out that clothing plays many roles simultaneously: "[C]lothes are like rooms and houses—containers in which we are able to live out our lives . . . . They cover us, affording us protection, but they allow us to look out, over or through the screen" (85). Dant describes the protection that clothing provides as multivalent: "Clothes are objects that we co-opt as we confront the natural world of sun, wind, rain, heat and cold and the social world of sex, status, power, and communication" (86). In Lily Bart's society, hats are as much a requirement for societal protection as shoes are for physical safety; one would not consider appearing in public without either. While the idea of a hat may have once had a dimension of physical protection to it, those worn by women like Lily exemplify this split between actual and implied values and meanings.

Lily has been taught to distinguish between such shades of meaning. She knows that not only are accessories such as hats necessary for living but also that living requires hats of a certain kind. Part of Lily's ability to appraise and provide a fashionable aura for her persona as well as her "capacity for knotting a ribbon or placing a flower to advantage" is a result of her early training in her mother's household (298). From her mother she learned that the fate of dinginess is one worse than death. Not to meet these standards was to "live like a pig," which Lily understands to mean choosing to live without any standards of proper conduct (35). After the financial ruin of the Barts and the death of her father, Lily's mother resents living in such reduced circumstances. She teaches Lily that her only chance at life is to wield her beauty like a weapon against those who were more successful than they. Eventually, unable to bring her lifestyle back up to a less dingy level, Mrs. Bart "died of disgust" (37).

This "dinginess," which proved to be so mortally dangerous for Mrs. Bart, is ambiguous in that it is ultimately impossible to pin down any concrete standards of this quality. Even the direct statements that Mrs. Bart makes regarding the avoidance of dinginess—namely, that "whatever it cost, one must have a good cook and be what Mrs. Bart called 'decently dressed'" (31)—are vague. Lily knew that "dinginess" was not necessarily a matter of financial standards, for many of her relatives judged by Mrs. Bart to be among those who "live like pigs" were rich (32). Thus, "dinginess" is not a state which one can buy one's way out of. Additionally, Lily's ambiguous values have been further shaped by her "extensive perusal of fiction" (35), which leads her to expect a certain sentimental aura to life. Her reading habits complement her mother's fear of dinginess, as they emphasize the importance of the difficulty to define "sentiment," which, like dinginess, was not overtly connected to money: "She would not," she insists, "indeed have cared to marry a man who was merely rich" (36). Like the difference between the revered couture and the debased "knock-off," the system of values that Lily inherits from her family and culture is one understood by osmosis and exceedingly difficult to articulate.

Brown notes a similar system of valuation in the portrayal of material objects in Henry James's fiction, which is applicable to that portrayed in *The House of Mirth*: "James was both obviously attracted to things yet somewhat embarrassed by them, eager to describe the physical object world yet eager to chart a kind of consciousness that transcends it" (*A Sense of Things* 141). I agree with Shepherd, who blames the growing consumer-based culture for this tension: "[S]hop windows and in-store exhibitions increasingly influenced American taste toward an aesthetics of consumption predicated on the transfer of value from an object to its representation and display" (136). The tension between the sensual enjoyment of the material world and the knowledge of the failure of commodity culture to provide satisfaction (as value is found in its representation rather than itself) is exactly what keeps the push of the consumer culture of the time going. If one finds satisfaction in the objects with which one is surrounded—if one could ever find the perfect hat—there would be no need to buy another one; but, this would be as fatal to the capitalist system as a life of dinginess was to Mrs. Bart.

Brown also echoes Shepherd's analysis of the changing system of values in his focus on the commodification of things, explaining that "the doubleness of the commodity (its use value and exchange value) might be said to conceal a more fundamental difference, between the object and itself, . . . on which the success of the commodity, the success of capitalism, depends" (*A Sense of Things* 13–14). Once again, the key to commodification is this "difference . . . between the object and itself," or "use value and exchange value"; this split exists in *The House of Mirth* both in objects of fashion, as we see hats as both objects to be made and sold and as frames through which to view women, and in the women themselves, who are both objects or pawns in the larger exchange-based system and agents of the system as well. Lily Bart's existence "both inside and outside her society and the ideology to which that society is manacled" (Carson 705) represents the difficult "doubleness" of female identity, one which Carson characterizes as "crippling" (711).

Unlike actual objects (such as hats), though, this split does not necessarily work so neatly for women. It takes a unique perspective of the system in order to survive it as both subject and object: "The will to rebel or resist . . . presupposes a knowledge that there is something to resist, something to rebel against" (Carson 706–07). Dimock reads the novel as an indictment of aristocratic society and the capitalist system on which it is based. She sees the tenement mother Nettie Struther as Wharton's proposed solution. According to Dimock, Wharton rejects the basic system of exchange but "is not quite willing to give up the idea of transcendence":

> She finally compromises, ingeniously if not altogether convincingly, by grafting her ideal on a lower social order, the working class. The fantasized ancestral house does appear in the book after all, if only in the modernized form of a working-class tenement. And to the occupant of this humble habitation, Nettie Struther, Wharton entrusts her vision of a life antithetical to the one she condemns. It is in Nettie's kitchen that Lily catches her "first glimpse of the continuity of life." She sees in Nettie someone who seems "to have reached the central truth of existence." (80)

Unlike Dimock, I find it difficult to accept such a seemingly minor character as the hope for the future. Even Dimock acknowledges that, "[a]s an ideal, Nettie remains curiously unsubstantiated, curiously unexamined" (80). Our understanding of what Nettie looks like is vague: she is described only as "poorly dressed" (329), and her apartment is only described as warm, unlike other settings which are much more fully detailed and populated with objects. Nettie is "poorly dressed"; even the char-woman's clothing is given more detail—even she is described as wearing a bonnet (106). Further, it is not clear how Nettie has reached the level of scant financial security that she controls; Dimock points out that her level of security is merely a result of "her good fortune in having found a trusting husband" (80). Even in the tenement house, success on the marriage market is a requirement for survival.

For Dimock, it is the abstract nature of Nettie's character that allows her to stand for Wharton's ideal: "[I]n her search for a redemptive figure, she sees Nettie less as the representative of the working class than as the embodiment of a private idea . . . . Nettie, then, is to be *from* the working class but not too militantly, not too clamorously, *of* it. To be all that Wharton wants her to be, Nettie must be abstracted from the all-contaminating exchange system" (80). What makes Nettie a tempting solution is her very removal from the system of exchange that Lily Bart cannot seem to escape. Nevertheless, while Nettie is sketched, Lily is drawn in detail. Nettie's humanness is emphasized by references to her previous illness and her having given birth, while Lily's commodification is clear from her comparison to inanimate objects such as ivory.

In fact, Shepherd reads Lily as a mannequin, particularly in looking at Lily's employment at the millinery shop. Madame Regina sees Lily's greatest asset not as a trimmer of hats but as a "displayer of hats" (299). As the proprietor of a shop, Madame Regina occupies a position with a certain amount of agency and authority within the capitalist system, and in her appraisal of Lily's value, it is Lily's "fashionable beauty [that] might be a valuable asset" (299). It is Lily's beauty, her externality, that is being valued: as tastes change (and women age), this value is impermanent and has a steep depreciation rate. Shepherd's reading of Lily's portrayal as a mannequin is quite astute: "In rendering Lily as a mannequin, Wharton strikes upon a figure equal to the task of representing the tragic aspects of consumer culture and spectacle. The ostensibly glamorous figure of the mannequin has struck commentators since the turn of the century with an uncanny or tragic recognition of human bondage" (151). Joslin concurs with this reading of Lily as a mannequin, noting that Lily "has performed as a displayer of goods throughout the novel and has changed garments to fit into various scenes" (77). Lily is herself as much an ornamental object as the hats that frame her face.

As Joslin notes, the working title of the novel, *A Moment's Ornament*, "reinforces Wharton's intention to create a heroine who is herself an object, much like the hat she buys" (76). The tragic death of Lily Bart, when read in light of the dehumanizing commodification of her character, can be seen as an exemplar of Brown's theory of things, particularly in light of his assertion that "we begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us" ("Thing Theory" 4). If the articulation of the underlying marketplace logic is illuminated by the wearing and making of hats in the novel, then the death of Lily Bart can be seen as a "breakdown" (both mental and physical) of the objectified female trapped within the exchange-based New York aristocracy. Or, in Carson's words, "When the process of interpellation breaks down . . . Lily no longer sees herself as 'real' but rather as the social construct, that is, 'imaginary,' woman she is. Far from being emancipatory, this discovery proves deadly" (712). Brown claims that the key to understanding our relation to things is the realization that "human interaction with the nonhuman world of objects, however mediated by the advance of consumer culture, must be recognized as irreducible to that culture . . . . It nonetheless concerns the slippage between *having* (possessing a particular object) and *being* (the identification of one's self with that object)" (*A Sense of Things* 13). While Brown admits that this slippage leads to a system in which "things seem slightly human and humans seem slightly thing-like" (13), the rigid market system underlying aristocratic society requires that women are more than "slightly thing-like"; instead, they are objectified commodities to be appraised, exchanged, or discarded, as suits those who can afford agency in this system best.

While Gary Totten sees Wharton's use of material culture, including clothing and hats, as "evidence of cultural belief" (4), I see it as a call to arms. Rather than reading Nettie Struther as Wharton's ideal, as Dimock does, I instead read Gerty Farrish and Carry Fisher as more intriguing options. Gerty, a social worker, has a life on the margins of the system. Though Lily Bart deplores the dinginess of Gerty's life, one in which she "has a horrid little place, and no maid, and such queer things to eat" (7), Gerty appears to be genuinely happy, is self-supporting, and, at the end of the novel, is left with her beloved Selden. There is what might be termed a "heterosocial triangle" between Lily, Gerty, and Selden, as Lily is what quite often draws Gerty and Selden together. In fact, Gerty's last line of the novel to Selden—"this is what she would have wished" (344)—while ostensibly referring to Selden's being left alone to go through Lily's things, might also be interpreted to refer to Gerty and Selden being left together.

Carry Fisher is, in turn, a more complicated character, as she seems to be a successfully mercenary agent in the system, able to manipulate her way through society. Her first mention in the novel directly connects her with vice and gambling, as the naïve Ned Silverton is described as having "developed a taste for Mrs. Fisher and bridge" (27).

Being a divorcée, Carry should be shunned, but she is instead adept enough not only to negotiate the system and play it to her advantage but also to advise newcomers to the system on how to adapt successfully. As Judy Trenor admits, Carry is not necessarily approved of by the old guard, but she makes herself useful enough that her presence is unavoidable—"As if one could help having Carry Fisher!" (43). Carry's success, then, seems to stem primarily from her overt mercenary motives and from her having a partial existence, like Gerty, on the margins of the system.

Ironically, though they seem to live in different worlds, both Gerty and Carry have much in common, such as their devotion to charity work. Though Carry's charity work is often ridiculed by those in society and is implied to be insincere, she is successful in calling attention to and raising money for the causes she adopts. The assistance she provides to Lily alone suggests that her charity work should be read as sincere. Further, though they both interact with the aristocratic society that is ultimately fatal to Lily, they both work to undermine the rather insidious system: Gerty, by living a life in some ways outside of the system (not even getting married herself) and devoting herself to helping its victims, from Nettie Struther to Lily Bart; and Carry from within the system, by mercenarily draining the system of its money and simultaneously diluting the gene pool, as she assists outsiders (Simon Rosedale, for example) to integrate themselves successfully into the system.

Further, neither Carry nor Gerty is associated with commodification in the way that Lily is. Neither of them is ever described in terms of what she is wearing: Carry Fisher is described only as possessing gowns (albeit "emphatic" gowns [27]), which emphasizes her own agency and ownership position; in contrast, Lily only exists as a "displayer." Lily is a commodified, aristocratic woman trapped in her role within the system as the millinery worker in Madame Regina's shop; for Lily to be able to escape the system would be as unthinkable as for her to leave her home without a hat. The hats and hat-making on display in *The House of Mirth* illuminate the commodification of women such as Lily Bart within the larger exchange-based society of turn-of-the-century New York City. If the novel is, as Carson suggests, "Wharton's working through to the outside of the ideology of gender" (707), then Lily's tragic ending acts as a warning note and call to action to subvert the system, even if it means a farewell to hats.

Notes

1. Though written in 1892, "Bunner Sisters" was not published until 1916. *See* "Bunner Sisters" in *Edith Wharton: Collected Stories*.

2. Though, at this moment in the text, Lily is thinking of her millinery skills only as a potential opportunity for personal economizing, it does foreshadow the (to a certain extent misplaced) faith in her own skills, which will later disappoint her when she tries to market them in the millinery shop.

3. Wai Chee Dimock, in her Marxist analysis of the novel, sees the central theme of the novel as that of exchange (63), and, to that end, notes that "of all the characters, Lily Bart has the most puzzling and contradictory relation to the marketplace. As self-acknowledged 'human merchandise,' she is busy marketing herself throughout most of the book, worried only about the price she would fetch" (64). That is, Lily is puzzling precisely because she is aware of her own commodified, objectified nature and usually acts in seeming complicity with this process.

4. The phrase "marital/material" is meant to utilize the similarity in the sound of both words to highlight the connections between the marriage market and that of material, consumer goods: both marketplaces rely upon capitalist principles and commodification in their functioning. Additionally, I have yoked them together to emphasize their symbiotic relationship: the capitalist economy requires the perpetuation of the nuclear family and the "wedding industrial complex," while aristocratic marriage requires the commodification of women.

5. Shepherd's analysis echoes Dimock's critique of the novel, which Dimock reads as having a "marketplace logic at its center": "As a controlling logic, a mode of human conduct and human association, the marketplace is everywhere and nowhere, ubiquitous and invisible. Under its shadow, even the most private affairs take on the essence of business transactions, for the realm of human relations is fully contained within all-encompassing business ethic" (75).

6. Though Brown does not directly address the work of Edith Wharton in *A Sense of Things*, he does look at the fiction of Henry James; despite the potential tiredness of comparing Wharton and James, in their use of material objects in populating their fiction, I think the comparison is apt.

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The Dickens in Esther: Autobiographical Implications in *Bleak House*

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From the time John Forster revealed that Dickens incorporated portions of his unfinished autobiography verbatim into *David Copperfield*, readers have understood that in writing *Copperfield* Dickens was attempting to come to terms with his now famously traumatic past. We have long noted such hints at the autobiographical nature of the novel as the transposition of initials, C. D. becoming D. C., and the naming of Mr. Dick, the would-be author whose "Memorial" is thwarted by the severed head of King *Charles* I creeping in whenever he writes—we know that Dickens referred to himself in letters as "Dick" as early as February 1844, five years before *Copperfield*'s publication (*Letters* 4: 56, 70–71, 528). Dickens clearly enjoyed many an author's game of planting hints and "inside jokes" on the autobiographical nature of this novel he considered "a very complicated interweaving of truth and fiction" (*Letters* 5: 569).

It is also widely recognized that Dickens rewrote David's story, and thus his own, in his other entirely first-person full-length fictive autobiography, *Great Expectations*, with the consensus that the two works show progress in Dickens's dealing with the painful Warren's Blacking experience. Kay Puttock, for example, concludes that in *Great Expectations* Dickens managed "a working through of his own childhood trauma to a mature acceptance of his and his parents' failings" (19). In this later novel, too, we find more of these inside jokes, such as the cameo appearance of Warren's itself when Joe mentions that he and Wopsle "went off straight to look at the Blacking Ware'us. But we didn't find that it come up to its likeness in the red bills at the shop doors" (222). More generally, it is understood that in portraying so many orphaned, abused, and abandoned children, from Oliver Twist through David Copperfield, on to Pip and beyond, Dickens remained essentially fixated on the trauma of being separated from his family and put to work as a sensitive child of twelve.

However, while the most pointedly autobiographical aspects of David's and Pip's stories are now axiomatic, what has not been sufficiently appreciated is that Dickens's *other* novel-length fictive autobiography, the thirty-three *Bleak House* chapters narrated by Esther Summerson, is just as pointedly and significantly autobiographical as are *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*. Under the cover of writing as a woman, with Esther's narrative itself submerged as the "quiet" half of a novel shared with Dickens's more characteristically vociferous third-person narrator, Dickens was able to grapple more deeply with those carefully concealed demons of his past, which he had begun to face most in earnest in the autobiographical fragment in 1846–1848; in the 1848 Christmas book, *The Haunted Man* (in which the protagonist learns the importance of "owning" a painful past); and in *David Copperfield* (1849–1850), the novel immediately preceding *Bleak House* (1852–1853).

As with *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, Dickens plants hints of his integral connection with Esther through the same sorts of inside jokes in *Bleak House*. With the careful attention Dickens devoted to naming characters, especially protagonists, it is interesting that, like David Copperfield, Esther is called by many different names in her narrative. David's various monikers include Brooks of Sheffield, Daisy, Doady, and Trotwood, sometimes simply "Trot"; Esther's include Dame Durden, Little Old Woman, Cobweb, Mother Hubbard, and Dame *Trot*. While this sharing of nicknames between David and Esther may be coincidental, more assuredly suggestive is Dickens's bestowing his own name upon a *female* character in *Bleak House*, the orphan girl Charley Neckett. If we agree with Claudette Kemper Columbus that "[n]o author accidentally inscribes his own name in a novel," it is interesting indeed that the boyish familiar version of his own name is given to this thirteen-year-old child who, like David Copperfield and Dickens before him, is forced to enter the world prematurely "on her own account" to provide for her family as a little working "drudge" (618). As Columbus observes, "Esther and Charley and Charles are intricately intertwined" (620). It is as though Dickens is winking to signal that he, Charles himself, appears disguised in female form in this novel.

The most dramatic and important shared element between Esther and Dickens is of course trauma suffered in childhood: Dickens's experience at Warren's when he was twelve years old, and Esther's powerfully scarring twelfth birthday, when Miss Barbary says, "Your mother, Esther, is your disgrace, and you were hers. . . . For yourself, unfortunate girl, orphaned and degraded from the first of these evil anniversaries, pray daily that the sins of others be not visited upon your head, according to what is written" (17). Miss Barbary adds, "You are different from other children, Esther, because you were not born, like them, in common sinfulness and wrath. You are set apart" (18). Esther recalls reading the expression of her godmother's face in this crucial scene as if it said, "It would have been far better, little Esther, that you had had no birthday; that you had never been born!" (17).

The trauma of this episode is tremendous. Esther's abandonment by her unwitting mother, first, and then the cruelty of Miss Barbary, ostensibly Esther's godmother though actually her aunt, may even exceed the abandonment David Copperfield experiences in being sent to work at Murdstone and Grinby's after his mother's death. Esther's "guilt in innocence" is certainly more exaggerated: the anniversary of her birth is "evil," and through no fault of her own but simply by being born, Esther is set apart in "uncommon sin." As Hochman and Wachs see it, the moral abuse Miss Barbary inflicts upon Esther is unprecedented in the Dickens canon: "It is as though Dickens is giving us as extreme an instance of abandonment as possible" (86). The centrality of the concern with parental neglect and abandonment in *Bleak House* as a whole is suggested by the proliferation of other orphaned, abused, neglected, or abandoned children in the novel: Ada and Richard, Charley and her siblings, Jo the crossing sweeper, the Snagsbys' servant Guster, Skimpole's children, Prince Turveydrop, Caddy Jellyby and her siblings, and the Pardiggle children. As Hochman and Wachs point out, throughout *Bleak House*

> there is the resonance of an insistent, keenly orchestrated sympathy for all the victimized children in the novel. No Dickens text—not even *Oliver Twist*—pivots so largely on the image of the abused, abandoned, and doomed child. . . . all these figures embody the intrinsic exposedness of the infant Esther, whose initial abandonment . . . resonates richly in the representation of others. (98–99)

And then Esther's abandonment at birth is effectively reenacted when Lady Dedlock reveals to the grown-up Esther that she is her mother, only to insist, "We shall meet no more," burdening Esther with the realization that if their relationship is revealed, Lady Dedlock will be "ruined" (512). Esther says at this point, "I had a terror of myself, as the danger and the possible disgrace of my own mother, and of a proud family name. . . . I was so confused and shaken, as to be possessed by a belief that it was right, and had been intended, that I should die in my birth; and that it was wrong, and not intended, that I should be then alive" (514). Esther's childhood trauma clearly persists in her adult life—as Dickens's apparently did as well.

In *Charles Dickens and the Romantic Self*, Lawrence Frank asserts that autobiography, fictive or actual, has striking parallels to patients' case histories in Freudian psychoanalysis: in both, the aim is the production of a coherent and essentially complete "narrative account of the self" (13). Frank observes that in novel after novel, Dickens portrays characters trapped by a past in which they are paradoxically and inextricably both guilty and innocent—emphatically so in the case of David Copperfield and Esther Summerson (116). Frank considers Dickens's ability to portray the sort of psychic dislocation we see in David, Esther, and numerous other characters "hauntingly proto-Freudian" (29). He says that "Dickens in his novels and Freud in his case histories record the experiences of fictional characters and living men and women '"fixated" to a particular portion of their past, as though they could not manage to free themselves from it and . . . [are] for that reason alienated from the present and the future'" (Frank 29, quoting Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* 16: 273). In examining *Copperfield*, Frank concludes that David is at least tentatively successful in his narrative journey to the creation of a "legitimate self," integrating his "troubling past into a narrative account of his self in his effort to move forward in time toward an elusive, integrated self" (29). But Esther's attempt at defining and creating a legitimate self through her narrative in *Bleak House* is more problematic. As Frank says, "The impetus to health informing the autobiographical project is always shadowed by the potentiality for impasse" (75).

Just as in *David Copperfield*, the protagonist's childhood trauma in *Bleak House* is more extreme, more exaggerated than was Dickens's, but what unites Dickens's and Esther's traumas most significantly is the mother's perceived culpability in each case. In *Copperfield* David's mother is loving, and before Murdstone appears their life is an idyll of closeness and warmth between mother and son. David's mother is not responsible for his trauma, unless it is through her poor choice in remarrying and her death. The father, on the other hand, is the obvious target of Dickens's hostility and ridicule in *Copperfield*, in the melodramatically cruel Mr. Murdstone and in the absurd yet lovable Mr. Micawber, whom Dickens acknowledged as based on his father. It was, of course, John Dickens's financial irresponsibility that landed him in debtors' prison and led to the degradation his son suffered at the blacking factory. But in *Bleak House* there is relatively little attention to the father where Esther is concerned. Her father is "Nemo," or "no one," after all, and he dies before Esther learns of her relation to him. But throughout *Bleak House* mothers are treated, in Carolyn Dever's words, "with venom," especially Mrs. Pardiggle and Mrs. Jellyby, who are the "clearest instances of misplaced priorities and malign neglect" (43). Esther's surrogate mother, Miss Barbary, is an even stronger instance of "misplaced priorities and malign neglect."

If Dickens did at one time feel animosity regarding his father's responsibility for the Warren's experience, we know that despite the continuing financial problems and embarrassment his father caused him, Dickens came to regard John Dickens in a mostly positive light. After his father's death in March 1851, a year before the first installment of *Bleak House* appeared, Dickens regularly referred to him as "my poor father" in letters, and as Peter Ackroyd says, "all his resentment and anger seemed to have been dissipated, leaving only the pity of circumstances behind. Circumstances to which John Dickens had been as much a victim as his son" (624). In the autobiographical fragment, Dickens expresses gratitude and credits his father's "kind nature" for getting him a room closer to the Marshalsea during the Warren's period so that he would not be so cut off from the family as in his original Camdentown lodgings (Forster 1: 30–31). And in the end it was John Dickens who insisted that his son's employment at Warren's end. It may not be entirely coincidental that in the first novel after his father's death, the benevolent "savior" Mr. Jarndyce shares John Dickens's first name.

But as we know, Dickens's feelings about his mother's culpability in the Warren's experience—her urging that Charles continue working there after his father insisted that it stop—seem never to have been so successfully worked out. It is perhaps a small thing that it was through her family connection with James Lamert, Elizabeth Dickens's cousin by marriage, that work was found for Charles at Warren's. Of clearer importance is that when John Dickens quarreled with Lamert, his mother wanted Charles to continue working there. As Dickens records in the autobiographical fragment, Lamert felt insulted by a letter from John Dickens and responded by dismissing Charles from his employment. Elizabeth Dickens took it upon herself to smooth over the rift and succeeded in arranging for her son to return to work. But Dickens's father insisted that he not return to Warren's, determining that he should instead go to school, which is indeed what happened.

Michael Slater points out in *Dickens and Women* that Elizabeth Dickens was actually very solicitous with concern for her son during the Warren's period and probably thought that she was entering him on a promising career in a family business. Apparently, she either did not comprehend her son's aspirations to something much greater, or given the family's straitened circumstances, could not take them seriously. Slater also demonstrates that Dickens usually treated his mother with kindness, and on a conscious level it seems certain that Dickens never thought she had purposely wanted to harm him by prolonging what she did not know was so traumatic to him. Dickens surely knew, consciously, that his mother was innocent, but somewhere in his psyche, it appears that he still considered her quite guilty as well—his mother's desire that the degradation of the blacking factory continue was forever stamped upon Dickens's memory. As he says in the autobiographical fragment, "I do not write resentfully or angrily: for I know how all these things have worked together to make me what I am: but I never afterwards forgot, I never shall forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back" (Forster 1: 38). Slater asserts that no reader of the autobiographical fragment "can fail to notice, as Dickens's wife noticed, his greater harshness towards Elizabeth than towards John Dickens" (*Dickens and Women* 10). Slater observes, "'Resentment' and 'anger' are indeed terms too mild for the emotions that must lie behind such rhetoric as this. An enduring sense of horrified dismay and ultimate betrayal—such feelings as these must, at the deepest level, have been those of Dickens towards his mother for the rest of his life" (11). In *Bleak House* the unwitting abandonment by her mother and the influence of the horribly "'bad mother' figure" of Miss Barbary produce devastating, scarring consequences in Esther's character. Dickens underscores Lady Dedlock's role in causing the literal scars her daughter bears, which are clearly symbolic of the scars left on her psyche by her abandonment at birth to the cruelty of Miss Barbary. Lady Dedlock is instrumental in Jo's contracting the deadly fever when she hires him to lead her to the graveyard where Captain Hawdon is buried—the fever that kills young Jo and which he passes on to Esther through Charley. In a roundabout way, Esther's mother "innocently" sets in motion the chain of events that nearly kills her daughter and leaves her with disfiguring scars on her face. The mature, narrating Esther Summerson is in many respects, I believe, Dickens's keenly insightful exploration of the scarring effects of the far less dramatic and surely overblown maternal abandonment he felt himself, and many of the scars Esther bears likely had their origins in Dickens's own makeup, albeit in less extreme forms.

The simplest manifestation of trauma Esther shares with Dickens is recurring nightmares about the traumatic period. In moments of distress, Esther's mind returns to her twelfth birthday, and she is haunted by her godmother in nightmares. Esther says, "I am not sufficiently acquainted with such subjects to know whether it is at all remarkable that I almost always dreamed of that period of my life" (121). Esther *suspects* it might be remarkable that she dreams continually of this painful time, and with characteristic obliquity she suggests indirectly that it is indeed significant that these dreams recur. Dickens records in the autobiographical fragment that he, too, tended to dream of the period of his trauma. As he describes his despair at his bleak prospects at the time, he writes, "My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations, that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; even that I am a man; and wander desolately back to that time of my life" (Forster 1: 26–27). If the narrating Esther is uncertain about the significance of these dreams, Dickens knew their meaning quite well: one cannot escape a painful past, at least in the subconscious.

In her examination of nineteenth-century conceptions of emotional trauma and its portrayal in literature, *Shock, Memory, and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction*, Jill Matus also sees Dickens as remarkably "proto-Freudian," particularly regarding the dreams of trauma victims. The formal recognition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the 1980 edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychological Disorders* (*DSM III*), impacted largely by the prevalence of the disorder among Vietnam War veterans, established that flashbacks and dreams of traumatic experiences are hallmarks of the condition. In Dickens's time, however, there was no such clear recognition of the significance of dreams returning trauma victims to the time and scene of their traumatic experiences. Only in his work with World War I veterans suffering "shell shock" would Freud pinpoint the true significance of trauma victims' dreams. Whereas "the dreams of the ordinary," in Freud's view, were important in providing access to the repressed unconscious, as typical dreamlike distortions and manipulations of actual experiences or memories offer insight through their symbolic import, the dreams of trauma victims differ appreciably in that they are often not distortions of remembered experiences, but straightforward and often recurring literal re-experiencing of traumatic episodes. As Matus describes, Freud recognized that "Whereas ordinary dreams were the royal road to the unconscious, the dreams and hallucinations of traumatized patients were too literal and self-referential to lead anywhere but back to the traumatic event itself. They were a reliving rather than a representation of the event, a snapshot rather than a symbology" (93). Dickens's portrayal of dreams is one reason, among many, that we little wonder at Freud's finding Dickens such valuable reading.

A less obvious point of connection between Esther and her creator is their compulsive attention to domestic order and neatness. Esther's perpetually jangling household keys are something of a talisman for her as she obsessively devotes herself throughout the novel to managing and maintaining perfect domestic order. Esther is such the domestic paragon that she tutors Caddy Jellyby in keeping house, and for a time she manages both Jarndyce's household and the newlywed Turveydrops' at the same time. Esther describes herself in this period as "working and working in a desperate manner" (686). Among the last rational thoughts Esther experiences before succumbing to her lengthy illness are her housekeeping duties: "it caused me great anxiety to think that they were unperformed," she says (488). Once on the mend, she is for a number of days engaged in "so much bustle and business, devoted to such settlements of accounts . . . , so many re-arrangements of drawers and presses . . . that [she] had not a moment's leisure" until her own "just-so" order is restored (536). The compulsive devotion to "duty" signified by the jangling keys may be something of a coping mechanism for Esther's sense of being worthless as a child, part of her determination to be as industrious and dutiful as possible, hoping, as she says, "to repair the fault I had been born with . . . and win some love to myself if I could" (18).

One recent study published in the *Journal of Depression and Anxiety* found that among 938 college students completing a battery of targeted questionnaires, "childhood trauma, most consistently emotional abuse . . . had a small but [statistically] significant association with OCS" (Obsessive-Compulsive Symptoms, as distinct from full-blown OCD, or Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder) (Mathews, Kaur, and Stein 747). In addition to the direct association between childhood emotional trauma and OCS this study identifies, the authors note that their work supports the findings of other studies focusing on OCS with respect to the personality trait of "conscientiousness" (one of the broad domains of personality in the "Big Five," or the Five Factor Model that identifies personality types). In this Five Factor Model, conscientiousness includes both "dutifulness" and "order" among its six primary "facets," with order including attention to neatness, organization, and orderliness in one's surroundings (Costa and McCrae). Of particular interest, Mathews, Kaur, and Stein note that in their study conscientiousness associated with significant OCS scores "and not with probable OCD suggests that any role of childhood trauma mediated through conscientiousness is most important in the development of low to moderate rather than high OCS, and is therefore likely to be associated with adaptive rather than maladaptive behavior patterns" (748). In other words, having some small to moderate measure of obsessive-compulsive symptomatology related to childhood emotional trauma would not appear to lead to pronounced mental dysfunction ("maladaptive" behavior) but rather indicates positive, *adaptive* response to the trauma as a coping mechanism, which would certainly be consistent with Esther's obvious "conscientiousness" in *Bleak House*.

Esther's compulsive "gift" for household order had clear roots in Dickens's own character. Like Esther, Dickens was himself "generally preoccupied with household efficiency," going so far as leaving notes in his children's dresser-drawers "complimenting their tidiness or remarking their need of attention" (Goodman 166n1). As Gwen Watkins says, Dickens "regulated" his household "in an almost military manner, down to its smallest detail. His children's rooms were inspected every day . . . ; each boy must use his own hatpeg and no other; a boy brushing his coat in the dining room instead of outside 'never by any chance committed that offence afterwards'" (77 [Watkins quotes Alfred Dickens's 1911 article, "My Father and his Friends"]). Slater notes in his biography, *Charles Dickens*, that Dickens joked with his wife about his "obsessive behaviour" in his "compulsion to re-arrange the furniture in any room of his inhabiting" (148). Dickens routinely rearranged furniture in hotel rooms to suit his very particular preferences, and his need for order was so great that he could never write until the chairs and tables in the room were in "*precisely* the right position" and the knick-knacks on his desk arranged *exactly* "just so" (Ackroyd 222, 503). While Dickens may not have consciously recognized the source of his own compulsive need for order, it is suggestive that Esther wills herself to recall hers with the jangling keys when she is out of sorts, particularly when she is about to pity herself or dwell on her childhood troubles. For one instance, after Esther's thoughts "wandered back to [her] godmother's house," she records that "It was not for me to muse over bygones, but to act with a cheerful spirit and a grateful heart. So I said to myself, 'Esther, Esther, Esther! Duty, my dear!' and gave my little basket of housekeeping keys such a shake, that they sounded like little bells, and rang me hopefully to bed" (80). Through Esther, Dickens appears to have anticipated the causal relationship between a compulsive need for order in one's domestic surroundings and childhood trauma that is only now being fully recognized.

Esther and Dickens also share a professed inability to articulate particularly powerful emotions. William Axton notes that Esther's reticence about her illegitimacy is a "fundamental part of her character," for there are "psychological sores, disfigurements, and tender places that she cannot bring herself to look at or touch directly" (552). Esther's suppression of powerful feelings about Allan Woodcourt and other matters close to her heart is not merely coyness or modest self-deprecation, as some have suggested, but an indication that at times she simply cannot voice her deepest feelings. Of her gratitude for Mr. Jarndyce's offer to arrange her schooling after Miss Barbary's death, Esther says, "What the destitute subject of such an offer tried to say, I need not repeat. . . . What she felt, and will feel to her dying hour, I could never relate" (22). Later, when Lady Dedlock looks at Esther strangely and expresses concern about her illness, Esther says, "I cannot say what was in my whirling thoughts," and when Lady Dedlock tells her, "I am your wicked and unhappy mother!" Esther says, "I cannot tell in any words what the state of my mind was, when I saw in her hand my handkerchief, with which I had covered the dead baby" (509). Martha Rosso claims that Dickens was fully aware that "like himself, [Esther] feels many things too deeply for words. Esther never openly reveals all that is locked inside her, and it is in this respect that she bears a startling resemblance to her creator" (92). In one passage from the autobiographical fragment copied verbatim in *David Copperfield*, on the degradation he felt at Warren's, Dickens indicates just how he, too, felt some things too deeply for words:

> No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship; compared these henceforth every-day associates with those of my happier childhood . . . and felt my hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man, crushed in my bosom. The deep remembrance of the sense I had, of being utterly without hope now; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart . . . cannot be written. (133; cf. Forster 1: 26)

"How much I suffered," Dickens writes in the autobiographical fragment alone, "it is . . . utterly beyond my power to tell" (Forster 1: 30).

Despite their professed inability to express profound emotions at times, however, Esther, Dickens, and David Copperfield, too, all reveal a driving need to tell stories—*their* stories in particular. Like David, Esther has a "narrative urge," established in childhood as an "early need, impulse and habit" through the frequent retelling of the story of her birthday to her doll (Hardy 173). Just as David must tell Steerforth stories repeatedly, under literal compulsion, to secure the older boy's protection at Salem House, Esther's storytelling with her doll seems for her too a matter of survival. Shy, lonely, despised by her godmother, Esther has no other friend or outlet for unburdening herself of the pain she feels as a neglected child. Esther recalls, "Dear, dear, to think how much time we passed alone together afterwards, and how often I repeated to the doll the story of my birthday, and confided to her that I would try, as hard as ever I could, to repair the fault I had been born with (of which I confessedly felt guilty and yet innocent) . . ." (18). She is compelled to keep retelling the painful story of her birth much as Dickens, the professional storyteller, evidently felt compelled to keep revisiting his painful story—sentimentalizing abused, abandoned, or otherwise traumatized children in all his fiction and addressing it at most length in the three full-scale fictive autobiographies.

Marcia Goodman suggests that Esther's storytelling is, as David's is with Steerforth, "a method of establishing human connection. . . . For both Esther and David, storytelling creates intimacy without overwhelming the self; a narrative about somebody else's life creates the illusion that the writer is not talking about the self, even as we may know that she or he is" (163). Notwithstanding Esther's protestations that her narrative is not *her* story, saying her "little body" belongs in the background, Goodman argues that Esther's entire narrative is intended to soothe and effectively "mother herself" (163) through the writing of what she does eventually come to call "my story" (Dickens, *Bleak House* 508, 831). Ultimately, Goodman suggests that through her narrative as a whole, Esther asks the reader to "be her friend" and "take care of her" (Goodman 164). Like her doll, Goodman says, "We will listen in the right way; we will read between the lines and understand" (164). Thus it is not merely novelistic convention when Esther bids farewell to the reader: "The few words that I have to add to what I have written, are soon penned; then I, and the unknown friend to whom I write, will part for ever. Not without much dear remembrance on my side. Not without some, I hope, on his or hers" (877).

Dickens sought a similarly comforting and intimate yet arm's-length relationship with his readers throughout his career. Robert Garis's assessment of Dickens's "theatrical" verbal tendencies addresses this facet of Dickens's writing at length, arguing that Dickens novels are patently "theatrical" in presenting both author and characters as objects to be seen as dramatic performers (63). With the release of each new book, the "self-exhibiting master" (24) grew in contemporary public stature as "the Inimitable Dickens"; at the same time, the highly personal nature of the authorial "performer" fostered a growing intimacy between author and audience. "The Inimitable" would doubtless have been pleased to hear Geoffrey Ellis say nearly seven decades after his death, "It was not mere rhetoric that made *The Times* liken [Dickens] to a personal friend. In every book we meet him, swinging along at our side . . . till, with a sort of infection, we catch his mood. . . . When afterwards, in soberer mood, we find his world largely fantasy, his own vivid presence remains with us, as someone we are personally fond of" (121). It is evident that Dickens craved this "distant intimacy" from an urgent desire for public approval and admiration. Sylvère Monod observes that the sales numbers for each of his novels were always important to Dickens not merely for financial reasons, but because of his "need of mutual sympathy and his desire to be loved" (257)—a need and desire very similar to those portrayed so pointedly in Esther Summerson, a need and desire we might expect to find in heightened degree in survivors of childhood trauma, a need and desire Freud would massage so fruitfully in his patients' case histories.

Ultimately, both Esther and Dickens write their "lives" for therapeutic purposes. While Esther is reticent about why she is writing her narrative, one theory suggests it is prescribed as therapy by her husband, Woodcourt the doctor (Kearns 128). It bears noting that Dickens titles the first chapter of Esther's narrative "A Progress." Whether or not we believe Esther's narrative is the good Dr. Woodcourt's prescription, her writing of it does clearly allow her the attempt to renew her identity by *re-writing* her life in therapeutic fashion. As Michael Kearns observes, Esther can be seen as "defining a more healthy self in the writing of [her life]" (127). She is certainly in need of a new, healthier identity, for she is a non-entity in more dramatic respects than is suggested by her self-effacing "feminine" discourse alone. Esther describes herself literally as nothing when she reports that her doll "used to sit propped up in a great arm-chair, with her beautiful complexion and rosy lips, staring at me—or not so much at me, I think, as at nothing—while I busily stitched away, and told her every one of my secrets" (15). In the parenthesis Esther refers not just to the vacant stare of the doll, but to the utterly self-effaced void she considers herself. When she records learning that her mother thought she was stillborn, Esther says she felt her place in the world "strange": "I had never, to my own mother's knowledge, breathed—had been buried—had never been endowed with life—had never borne a name" (513). According to Dever, "Language is the vehicle by which Esther can create something—herself—out of nothing," and she suggests that Esther's narrative is "a fight for her life, an attempt to replace her death with her birth, to rewrite the biography of an animated corpse" (49, 46). In the view of Lawrence Frank, Esther's quest to establish a coherent and legitimate self in her autobiography is complicated by her continually having to grapple with "selves" others have created for her—first, the version of herself Miss Barbary instills when twelve-year-old Esther looks up from her sewing and sees in her godmother's expression the message that "It would have been far better, little Esther, that you had had no birthday; that you had never been born!" (17). As Frank observes, "This conception of herself is frozen in her consciousness so that, rebel as she might, Esther will remain haunted and impelled by the aunt's version of her" (43). Later Esther assumes the role Jarndyce, Richard, and Ada construct for her as the masterful housewife "Dame Durden." Frank says Esther "moves between her aunt's twisted definition of her ward and her own, understandable, desire to take refuge in the role of a Dame Durden" (98). But in accepting the image others have of her as "Old Woman, Little Old Woman, Cobweb, Mrs. Shipton, Mother Hubbard, Dame Durden," Esther's own identity becomes lost, such that she ultimately "participates in a communal fiction that, in part, alienates her from herself" (Frank 103).

Esther's success in *re*-writing her life and establishing a healthy, legitimate identity, overcoming the burden of her illegitimate birth and the cruel treatment of her godmother, is suggested by her story's happy ending, which like David Copperfield's, involves a worthy marriage, children, and a presumably bright future. However, the personality revealed as the mature Esther's in the time of her narrating throughout her autobiography suggests not quite such a "happily-ever-after" ending for Esther after all. If her autobiography is therapeutic, her narrative discourse suggests that it proves not to be a final cure. As Frank notes, among many others, Esther's supposed happy ending as Mrs. Woodcourt strikes something of a "discordant note" (121).

In "rehabilitating" Esther some decades ago, after a century of criticism of Dickens for Esther's "unconvincing" false modesty and often irritating self-deprecation, Alex Zwerdling made a compelling case for Esther as "one of the triumphs of [Dickens's] art, a subtle psychological portrait clear in its outlines and convincing in its details" (429). And thus many of the perceived weaknesses in Dickens's characterization of Esther—all rooted in her persistent self-abasement—indicate Dickens's keen recognition of the effects of a severely damaged self-esteem. For Esther is not merely self-conscious or insecure in small ways: the result of her traumatic childhood as we see it in the mature, narrating Esther Summerson is an acute inferiority complex. She is not just politely self-deprecating in her self-effacing modesty, she continually disparages herself because at heart she accepts Miss Barbary's assertion that she is a worthless person, a burden to others, a disgrace to her mother and to herself. As Thomas Linehan suggests, Esther's childhood teaches her to accept "Miss Barbary's estimate of her own worth. She assumes a false sense of guilt and shame and builds a large part of her adult life on a belief in her own unworthiness, even worthlessness" (136).

Esther's self-abasement is seen in the difficulty she has accepting compliments. When Esther records Ada's calling her a "quiet, dear, good creature, . . . 'so thoughtful . . . and yet so cheerful!'" and saying that Esther could make a home even out of the chaos of the Jellyby household, the narrating Esther cries, "My simple darling! She was quite unconscious that she only praised herself, and that it was in the goodness of her own heart that she made so much of me!" (42). Esther feels Ada was only praising herself because she seems really to think that it takes a great deal of "goodness of heart" to see admirable qualities in one such as herself, one whom Esther the narrator is certain does not deserve such praise. After reporting Ada's expression of confidence in her abilities when she is given the Bleak House housekeeping keys, Esther says that she "knew, to be sure, that it was the dear girl's kindness" to encourage her so, and she adds, "I liked to be so pleasantly cheated" (68). The implication is that the narrating Esther thinks she is "cheated" because the confidence and encouragement are not legitimate—they are only reflections of Ada's kindness to one so undeserving as herself. Or when she reports teaching her housekeeping methods to Caddy Jellyby, Esther says in direct address to her "unknown friend" the reader, "if you had seen her, whenever I jingled my housekeeping keys, get up and attend me, certainly you might have thought that there never was a greater imposter than I, with a blinder follower than Caddy Jellyby" (418). This is not merely modest self-deprecation. Esther is one of the most capable housekeepers in the history of fiction, but even in this area of obvious strength she feels she is "an imposter," not the genuine article, and that anyone who would follow her would necessarily be "in the dark." The deeply ingrained lesson of her childhood, that she is worthless, that it would have been better if she had never been born, prevents Esther from taking even the smallest credit where it is most obviously deserved.

Along these same lines is the recurring refrain of "The old conspiracy to make me happy! Everybody seemed to be in it!" (495)—the conspiracy that Frank considers a major stumbling-block in Esther's pursuit of realizing a healthy identity through her narrative. People can of course conspire to do good deeds, but the usual connotation of the word "conspiracy" is that the conspiring is illegal or improper. One typical definition of this word is "An agreement to perform together an illegal, wrongful, or subversive act," with alternate definitions containing such words as "criminal," "illegal," and "sinister" ("conspiracy"). The implication of this refrain of the "old conspiracy" to make Esther happy is that people who care for Esther and show her kindness and affection are doing something "wrongful" and subverting the truth, which according to the narrating Esther is that she is not worthy of praise, kindness, and affection. And though some would claim that Esther's narrative charts a progression of growth or psychic healing of the scars she bears from her childhood, it is crucial to note that these comments going beyond mere self-deprecation are made in the present moment of narration, in the narrative discourse, and they continue to the novel's last page, where Esther says, "The people even praise Me as the doctor's wife. The people even like Me as I go about, and make so much of me that I am quite abashed. I owe it all to him, my love, my pride! They like me for his sake . . ." (880). Esther is certain she is not liked for her own qualities, sterling as they clearly are, but only "for Allan's sake," as if people must force themselves to like her in spite of their true feelings.

Esther's sense of unworthiness is also apparent in her discourse insinuations that she does not deserve the romantic love she so (discreetly) desires. When the unsavory Mr. Guppy's proposal takes Esther by surprise, she shows that she does esteem herself well enough to reject him out of hand. But she reports that afterwards she is moved to laugh and then cry. "In short," she says, "I was in a flutter for a little while;

and felt as if an old chord had been more coarsely touched than it ever had been since the days of the dear old doll, long buried in the garden" (126). The notion of her being romantically attractive to someone, the idea that she might marry and start a family, puts her "in a flutter" and takes her back to the only companion she has ever felt truly comfortable with, her dear old doll, buried long ago when she unconsciously echoed her own mother's action by giving up her "motherhood." While Guppy is not a serious option for Esther, Woodcourt certainly is, and despite her coyness or "feminine obliquity," we know that Esther does truly desire him. Zwerdling observes that whenever she mentions Woodcourt, Esther becomes a "grammatical cripple," which he interprets as "an expression of her anxiety" (434). Esther's halting and awkward syntax is evident in such comments about Woodcourt as "I believe—at least I know—that he was not rich. . . . He was seven years older than I. Not that I need mention it, for it hardly seems to belong to anything. I think—I mean, he told us—that he had been in practice three or four years" (238).

What is most interesting about Esther's being a grammatical cripple and having anxieties when it comes to Woodcourt is that the halting syntax suggests anxieties not in Esther the narrated character, but in the extradiegetic, narrating Esther who has been Mrs. Woodcourt for seven years at the time she is writing. To Michael Kearns, the difficulties Esther has in writing about Woodcourt, the grammatical troubles and the omissions and "lapses" surrounding Woodcourt in her otherwise very competent narrative, "reveal an Esther who even from her apparently secure and happy vantage point still lacks self-confidence and awareness of her own deserving nature" (126). Part of Esther's problem is that she feels she is not deserving of love or affection on her own merits but must "win some love" to herself if she can, a notion that Rosso calls a "painfully stunted . . . conception of love," but one that Rosso demonstrates fits a pattern of actual living persons who are made to feel unwanted in childhood and who grow up thinking that love is earned by serving others selflessly, that love is a "reward for a job well done" (91). So far as her narrative discourse suggests, Esther will never feel comfortable enough with herself on her own merits or be able to work hard and selflessly enough to deserve such a reward.

Despite her continuing feelings that she does not deserve kindness, praise, affection, and love, Esther obviously does crave these important things she was deprived of in her formative years, largely, of course, *because* she was deprived of them. In a position of prominence at the end of chapter thirty, Esther records the "conspirators" Richard, Ada, and Mr. Jarndyce saying that the East wind that symbolizes Jarndyce's unhappiness or unease could never be where "Somebody was; they said that wherever Dame Durden went, there was sunshine and summer air." Esther's discourse comment is, "Well! It was only their love for me, I know very well, and it is a long time ago. I must write it, even if I rub it out again" (426). She *must* write it, is under compulsion to write down their praise of her because her need of praise is so urgent, even as she dismisses it as being "only their love for me" and even as she compulsively wants to erase it. As Zwerdling says, "The innumerable compliments on her wisdom, shrewdness, affectionate nature, and beauty she compulsively records and compulsively dismisses as absurd. She has an insatiable hunger for them, yet they are never the right food, for the damage to her sense of self-esteem has been permanent" (430). If we realize that Dickens was covertly exploring aspects of his own personality in Esther, the implication is that in some degree or fashion, Dickens must at least at times have felt similarly valueless from the inescapable shame of his secret past.

We know that Dickens, like Esther, had a fairly insatiable hunger for praise and admiration, which, as noted above, he found in an affectionate audience an arm's length away through the green covers of his monthly parts or beyond the stage lights at public readings. In the words of Kathleen Tillotson, "the sense of a sympathetic, applauding public seems to have been profoundly necessary to him" (35). This need for approval would seem obviously to indicate insecurity, the insecurity that Garis uncovers in the ever-performing "theatrical Dickens," continually "showing off" his verbal virtuosity. The penchant for extravagantly colorful clothes that made so many of his contemporaries describe Dickens as a dandy—dressing himself in "geraniums and ringlets," as Thackeray once put it (qtd. in Tomalin xlv)—suggests that even in his appearance Dickens was calling attention to himself, another classic sign of insecurity. His great sensitivity to insults and criticism and his perpetual restlessness suggest further that Dickens was insecure and uncomfortable with himself, as does his reserve with those closest to him. Dickens acknowledged in himself "a habit of suppression which now belongs to me, which I know is no part of my original nature, but which makes me chary of shewing my affections, even to my children, except when they are very young" (*Letters* 7: 543). Peter Ackroyd quotes an acquaintance of Dickens's saying that "with all his sagacity, Dickens is eternally afraid of being *slighted*. He never seems to be at ease—not even in his own house. . . . He has always seemed to me as if he had something *on* his mind as well as *in* it . . ." (828, ellipses in original). Ackroyd adds, "There is always to be found within Dickens that inner person—hurt, watchful, afraid—who looked out through the eyes of the successful writer and the famous man. . . . [with] the susceptibility of the anxious child" (828). Despite his starstatus as the most popular and famous writer of his time, it would seem that Dickens's own self-esteem required the constant reassurance he received from his public, because in his innermost heart he was, like Esther, insecure and afraid—afraid of being abandoned, rejected, and unloved, afraid that he might really be worthless and perhaps even deserving of his mother's rejection.

In sum, the mature, narrating Esther is an anxious, compulsively self-effacing and grossly insecure woman whose self-esteem is so damaged by her childhood that she is almost paralyzed with a guilty sense of worthlessness. She craves the affection and approval she was denied in childhood but cannot accept praise and affection as her legitimate due. The reason Dickens was able to imagine and portray the effects of childhood trauma so accurately in Esther is that under the cover of her feminine façade, he was writing about himself, just as pointedly as in *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*. In the small ways and the large, the similarities between Dickens and Esther take on significant weight as they accumulate—their shared tendency to return to the time of their trauma in dreams; their shared compulsion for household order; their compulsion to tell *their* stories though they present those stories as not being about themselves; their tendency to reticence about their deepest feelings; the insecurity that makes both crave praise and affection; their secret feelings of being "guilty and yet innocent"; and most importantly, the fact that many of these similarities indicate scars from trauma at the hands of their mothers, who are themselves "innocent and yet guilty."

Edgar Johnson suggests that "Through *David Copperfield*, for all the evasions and omissions in its public self-revelation, [Dickens] had achieved some inner catharsis, some coming to terms with himself, that left him more at peace" (752). The course of Dickens's fiction after *Copperfield* suggests otherwise, as his next novel, *Bleak House*, initiated Dickens's "dark period," where the humor becomes less buoyant and genial, and more satirical and harder-edged, and his themes become more harshly critical of "the system"—Chancery in *Bleak House*, or governmental indifference and inefficiency in *Little Dorrit*, for instance. In Esther's narrative, Dickens explores the darkest demon of his own childhood trauma, his complicated feelings about his mother. He may have hoped to confront and lay to rest his demons in *Copperfield*, but under greater cover he clearly explores them again in *Bleak House* in much deeper and "darker" ways through the more crippling effects worked out in greater extremes in Esther Summerson. Most assuredly indeed, "Esther and Charley and Charles are intricately intertwined" (Columbus 620).

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"The Porto Rico Campaign" in George G. King's *Letters of a Volunteer in the Spanish-American War*

Rafael Ocasio

It has been a splendid little war, begun with the highest motives, carried on with magnificent intelligence and spirit, favored by that Fortune which loves the brave.

—John Hay (qtd. in Walker 14)

Our force numbers thirty-five hundred. A while after we have done our work, thirty thousand troops are to be sent to do the aggressive fighting. Until they get there, there will be no attack on San Juan or any other fortified place.

—George G. King (*Letters* 51)

This is not a war of devastation, but one to give to all within the control of the military and naval forces the advantages and blessings of enlightened civilization.

—Commander Nelson Miles (*Serving the Republic* 302)

Technological advances throughout the nineteenth century encouraged a boldly "unprecedented discovery and exploration throughout the globe, a period when the 'blank spaces of the earth' were systematically investigated, occupied, and exploited by the major imperial powers of Western Europe and the United States" (Michie and Thomas 1). Travelogues documented such exploratory adventures, offering popular cheap publications distributed by means of a booming printing industry. Throughout the nineteenth century, travel writing was a profitable business; according to David M. Wrobel, between 1830 and 1900, close to 2,000 travel books were published in the United States (29), providing book publishers "much of their income" (5). The appeal of travel books, it seems, fed the appetite of readers who eagerly consumed "a lively and perceptive discourse about the world around them" (5).

The Spanish-American War of 1898, the formal entrance of the United States as a world power, was recorded extensively, and subsequently remembered in an excessively patriotic political rhetoric. As the war unfolded, a pro-expansionist discourse kept the American public mesmerized through a huge amount of data disseminated by means of multiple types of texts, such as war correspondents' coverage for newspapers, personal correspondence by military crew deployed in war-affected zones, official high-ranking military reports, and policies' recommendations and laws. Specifically, the "splendid little war," as Secretary of War John Milton Hay (1838–1905) called the Spanish-American War, depended heavily upon a booming late-nineteenth-century press that produced publications in massive numbers.

The vast printed media was supported by ". . . the processes of full-blown industrialization and technological development that had been dramatically altering the American landscape since the Civil War" (Stabile 5). Improvements in printing methods facilitated publications in bulk. The Merganthaler Linotype machine, for example, had allowed cheap and fast newspaper and magazine printing with photographs in large quantities (Collin 106). These commercial publications kept Americans well informed about a war that was fought right before their eyes.

New technology produced vibrant news sketches, energetic photographs and exciting filmed newsreels.[1] The graphic war coverage of newspaper moguls Joseph Pulitzer (1847–1911) and of William Randolph Hearst (1863–1951) came to be known as a new type of mass-media, reporting through so-called yellow-press techniques that used pictures and sensational reporting (Collin 106; Gould 63; Walker 19).[2] In short, visual aids (photographs and cinema) and printed news (mainly newspaper reports from seasoned war correspondents) fully documented a war that was fought in the Philippines and in Cuba, ending in a military takeover of Puerto Rico.[3]

Historians and literary critics have traditionally examined printed data, mainly newspapers' coverage, produced during the Spanish-American War.[4] This essay makes use of another type of war-related document: personal letters produced by a soldier during the military raid of Puerto Rico. In *Letters of a Volunteer in the Spanish-American War* (published in book form in 1929), George G. King documented Puerto Rico's invasion, officially known as the Puerto Rican Campaign. King's letters are of great importance as tools for a revisionist reading of Puerto Rico's military takeover during the convoluted events surrounding the Spanish-American War.

Indeed, "Spanish-American War Travelogues" written on the battlefields in the Pacific basin and in the Spanish Caribbean islands stand out because of their highly "racialized" content. Ramón Grosfoguel has found that after the Mexican-American War in 1848, conquered Mexicans were treated as racially inferior to the winning Anglo invaders: "The racial/ethnic hierarchy between Anglos and so-called Hispanics was consolidated with the territorial expansion of the United States to the Caribbean. 'Hispanics' were subalternized in the United States as a distinct racialized group" (52–53). In the particular case of Puerto Rico, a Spanish colony that became involved in the Spanish-American War unexpectedly, this subalternization is demonstrated in the American media's biased characterization of the island as meek in the wake of the US invasion: ". . . the relative ease of this triumphal sweep across Puerto Rico, with its plentiful food, more or less welcoming people, and just enough resistance from the Spanish troops to add spice to the tropic air" (Traxel 223).

Letters written by American military men during the Spanish-American War were bountiful; but in the case of Puerto Rico, there are only few surviving examples.[5] Their content reflected the overwhelming fighting spirit that characterized the pro-war propaganda of the US press: "Peace never makes men great. . . . It is war, conflict, terrible war, terrific war, that makes men. Peace decays, repose destroys, ease kills. Better a thousand times your boy or lover should die with a bayonet thrust than that his energies and talent should go into decay for want of exercise. This war may be his opportunity" (qtd. in McCaffrey 24). King presented his personal views, not only voicing his own opinion of the handling of the Puerto Rican Campaign but also, most importantly, communicating the earliest recorded positions of dissent against a war that Americans fought under humanitarian claims.

Given the extensive coverage of the war, which had heretofore been waged in Cuba, beginning on April 20, 1898 with a US Navy blockade of the island, American readers would have been surprised to read that Rear Admiral William T. Sampson bombarded Puerto Rico's capital on May 12.[6] Unlike other reports of American supremacy, this attack was different. San Juan did not surrender, even though there were serious physical damages to public buildings and military installations, and hunger and diseases followed the attack (Hernández Colón 31).[7] This was Puerto Rico's official entrance as a war target.[8]

After the San Juan bombardment, Spanish authorities closed the island to outside communication, making it difficult for Puerto Ricans to find out about developments of the war in Cuba and in the Philippines and for Americans to find out about locals' reactions concerning the war. Historians have often pointed out, however, that high-ranking American military strategists only belatedly came to realize the importance of Puerto Rico in the actual development of the Spanish-American War (Trask, *The War* 336–52). This initial silence explains the notable absence of news coverage of Puerto Rico during most of the period of the Spanish-American War prior to the invasion of the island.

It was a short-lived isolation. Lieutenant General Nelson Appleton Miles (1839–1925), "the old Indian-fighting general" (Evans 64), invaded Puerto Rico on July 25, 1898. The military take-over of the island's Spanish-controlled government was described by Puerto Rican newspapers as a "military picnic" (qtd. in Trías Monge 26). Miles, who had a strong national reputation and "was a striking physical embodiment of the military presence," had anxiously waited in Cuba for the surrender of the city of Santiago de Cuba in order to initiate a military excursion into Puerto Rico (Gould 68). Miles would become "one of the most important figures of the late-nineteenth-century United States" (Wooster, "Introduction" vii).

Miles's Puerto Rican Campaign was short and almost uneventful.[9] Frank Freidel described it "to be almost an anticlimax" of the Spanish-American War because "it proceeded so smoothly and relatively bloodlessly" (261). Miles left from Guantánamo on July 21, supported by ample press coverage. According to a later testimonial account, *Serving the Republic*, Miles's troops numbered "3,415 infantry and artillery, together with two companies of engineers and one company of the Signal Corps, on nine transports, convoyed by Captain Higginson's fleet, consisting of the battleship Massachusetts (flagship) and two smaller vessels" (296). He was going against, by his own estimate, 8,233 Spanish "regulars" and 9,107 "volunteers" serving in Puerto Rico (296). His effective force was about 3,300 on account of 100 men who were sick at the time of the trip to the island (296).

With bloody battles in Santiago de Cuba ended on July 17, victorious American forces headed toward Puerto Rico, expecting to engage in the last battle of what was by now a glorious war (Freidel 261). Public support for the Puerto Rican Campaign was overwhelming. There was a "flurry of telegrams and letters to the War Department in Washington from newspaper editors, influential private citizens, governors, U.S. senators, and congressmen around the country begging that regiments from their respective states be included in Miles's force" (McCaffrey 159). The grand finale of the splendid little war, which faithful newspaper readers had been expecting, did not happen, however.

The media coverage of the expedition documented mainly Miles's actual landing in the southwestern port of Guánica, opposing the counsel of high-ranking military personnel who insisted on a landing on the northeastern coast, nearer the capital, San Juan (Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles* 219–27; Jiménez de Wagenheim 202). That contested decision would be highly criticized by high-ranking military authorities (Trask, *The War* 355). As reported by Lieutenant Henry P. Huse, the military maneuver, on July 25, went smoothly: "We landed, without meeting any opposition, at a little wharf, and the men were at once deployed to cover the beach. The Spanish flag was hauled down and our colors hoisted in their place" (qtd. in Freidel 263). After Miles issued a proclamation, "A los habitantes de Porto Rico" ("To the Inhabitants of Porto Rico"), his military campaign headed north toward San Juan, as his decision to land so far away from the capital had already been challenged as a "military stupidity" by military expert Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan (qtd. in Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles* 229).

The fact that the total number of deaths during the campaign was only five American soldiers and seventeen Spanish Civil guard soldiers did not arouse interest among the American press (Ayala and Bernabe 14–15; Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles* 230). Miles might have been responsible for the light treatment by the press of his much-anticipated Puerto Rican Campaign. His biographer Robert Wooster documented Miles's characterization of the campaign as rather frivolous: "In some respects it has been a romance and not much a tragedy except for the Spaniards. They have been outmaneuvered at every point" (*Nelson A. Miles* 228). In more personal medium, such as his diary, Nelson recorded the campaign at a more sentimental level, as the culmination "the cause of disaffection and hostility, and the reunion of the elements in a stronger, more perfect, purer, grander, nobler bond of union" (*Personal Recollections* 590).[10]

King was deployed to war on April 25, 1898, and he arrived in Cuba on July 23. Two days later, on July 25, under the command of Miles, he landed in Puerto Rico. King's letters covered briefly his enrollment and training processes, including his troops' travel across Southern US states on their way to an undisclosed port and their subsequent departure for yet another undisclosed destination: an island in the Caribbean.

King had begun writing on May 11. In the bulk of his letters he traced his eventual landing in Santiago de Cuba, where he witnessed the cruelest war scenes fought in Cuba. Although he did not reveal whether he had special writing skills, by his own account these letters were published in *The Globe*, presumably a reference to *The Boston Globe*, beginning on September 28. His newly-defined role as a "reporter" writing for a wider audience than his family may have led to a more historical, critical view in the later letters.

King's recruitment was part of a process initiated by Congress on April 22, 1898, to augment the size of the American army as part of a presidential call for 125,000 military volunteers (McCaffrey 23). With President William McKinley's authorization to recruit volunteers into militias and a Congressional allocation of fifty million dollars, a stronger army of 125,000 men was considered to be ready to see action (Kupferberg 17; Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles* 215). Four days later, on April 25, the United States officially declared war against Spain. King volunteered for one of a "few vacancies," as part of the Massachusetts Infantry Sixth Regiment of the Concord Company. His letters, like those of soldiers before him, became "eyewitness accounts that record not only the minute details of war but the personal insight and perspective no photograph or film reel can replicate" (Carroll 36).

After barely passing a physical inspection—"We were an emaciated lot"—King's regiment headed south toward the port of Fernardina (King 7).[11] He had been informed that "Porto Rico is to be our eventual destination" (24).[12] Eventually, he left for Cuba on July 11 from Charleston, South Carolina, on a carrier named Yale. Although King did not explain this change of port of departure, historian Robert Wooster stated that soldiers at the time were "dazed by the incompetence they had witnessed" (*Nelson A. Miles* 223).

King expressed a similar sentiment as he debated whether his platoon would be deployed in Puerto Rico or in Santiago de Cuba. King did not care which would be his final destination. In overzealous patriotism, he considered himself a soldier first and foremost:

> I rather think we will go to Porto Rico eventually. This is of course based on rumors, but on the kind of rumors that have been confirmed so far in substance every time. That would suit me first rate, but as I have said, I haven't any marked preference. The climatic dangers are all big bugaboos, and once on hostile soil we can feel that we are doing our share. (38)

From a historical point of view, soldiers' letters, as a type of "national autobiography" and as "unfiltered drafts of history," provide data often used to support critical analyses produced by socio-political commentators who were not present on the battlefields (Carroll 36). In the case of King, his letters, although overwhelmingly supportive of the military infrastructure deployed in the Puerto Rican Campaign, also documented an under-organized military deployment, including supportive evidence that there was an inadequate distribution of uniforms and insufficient food (Telfer xi; Walker 138).[13] He hardly discussed his own tasks as a soldier, nor did he speak about the type of educational or trade experience that, in his opinion, made him a good candidate to enter a military career, giving up presumably better-paid civil jobs.

King wrote his letters to address family members. He was a civilian and a proud Northerner, who like many had been following through news coverage the hesitant US deployment of military forces to the "Spanish islands." His desire to explain the "behind the scenes" reasons for this delay in the military attack, almost a journalistic desire to fill that void of information, focused his letters from Puerto Rico to deal with the organizational peculiarities of the Puerto Rican Campaign.[14]

King relayed the details of the invasion of Puerto Rico using news coverage-like techniques, particularly evidenced by his own photographs depicting the military personnel deployed in the actual military maneuvers.[15] Like other soldiers, he possessed a camera, which he seemed to have lost soon after his arrival in Puerto Rico. There is only one description of one of his photographs, which was of the main church in a rural town. The photograph was taken after American military forces occupied Utuado, a rural town in the heart of the central mountainous range. Of neoclassical style, the church, dedicated to the Archangel Michael and founded in 1739, with its present structure dated to 1872, the photograph stands out, though not because King was documenting the architectural beauty of a church, a corner stone building as part of the traditional Spanish square design. In his description King dwells on the fact that his regiment had chosen that spot for a group photo. The reasons for this building in particular, ignoring others of military significance within easy range of the public plaza (for example, the city hall), were left undiscussed: "It was of the regiment in line before the cathedral in the plaza at Utuado, and was taken from the top of a nearby pillar. The regiment was in line before the cathedral only once; there was only one available pillar; and I had been the only person on the pillar" (27). The characteristic troops' posing became a popular way of documenting the American presence on the island.[16]

After the ceasefire on August 12, which gave total control of the island to American military forces, US newspaper reporters continued to update Americans on the military events taking place in the newly conquered Puerto Rico.[17] King perhaps willingly sought to make himself part of the active news print coverage. Upon his departure from Puerto Rico, William O. Taylor, reporter for *The Globe*, encouraged King to write: "[He] left me to fill his place." King wrote "about twice a week, until [he was] stopped" (King 113). He did not indicate whether these pieces were the same letters he was mailing to relatives. The publication of King's letters may have responded to a national curiosity about the sudden decision from Washington to extend the war into Puerto Rico.

Puerto Ricans' first exposure to the American way of life began with contact with the military. Historically, as Ayala and Bernabé have suggested, Puerto Ricans viewed the Puerto Rican Campaign "as a positive break with the past" (15). Whether Puerto Ricans expected political liberation at the conclusion of the US military intervention continues to be a matter of discussion; however, the media came to depict Puerto Ricans as the perfect stepping stone for the United States' entrance into the twentieth century as an emerging empire. King did not cover, however, locals' reactions to the American takeover of the island.

Years after the drafting of the letters, in a brief foreword to his book *Letters of a Volunteer in the Spanish-American War* (1929), King highlighted his role as a civilian turned soldier whose main destination had been Puerto Rico, as part of the "Spanish War." That war, as King emphasized, had already lost hold of the American national consciousness. It was up to soldiers, like King, who had witnessed events in the field, to remind readers of the war's importance:

> This book is merely a collection of my letters (with interpolations) written home during the Spanish War,—casually and hastily written, but now appearing—after more than thirty years—to constitute a faithful chronicle of the precarious experience of a volunteer soldier in that forgotten episode. (n. pag.)

King's perspective as a self-appointed historian, in his vague comment of "with interpolations," was the ideological perspective of an eyewitness who, at the time of the events, recorded episodes that would have great impact upon relations between Puerto Rico and the United States.

King's historical perspective had begun to develop early with descriptions of his troops' farewell in a public ceremony "surrounded by a throng of relatives, neighbors and friends" (5). There were speakers: "the distinguished sons" of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Judge Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar (5). The latter, King proudly remembered, "had rendered similar service upon the departure of the Concord Company in 1861" (5). Civilian veterans of the Civil War were often public speakers, exhorting "the nation's youth to embark on the great crusade" (Musicant, *The Banana Wars* 16). President McKinley also often made claims that his service during the Civil War had been "proof of his manly character" (Hoganson 96). He often "spoke nostalgically of his military service" (96): "It is a great thing to have been a soldier in the Civil War" (McKinley, qtd. in Hoganson 96).

By setting his troops' participation within a trend following a historical moment—the US Civil War—King made evident the ideological importance of the Spanish-American War throughout the letters. King appeared to equate his service as a patriotic duty of historical consequence (just as service in the Civil War had done), and this war was also an extension of a process of racial equalization that had started as a result of the Civil War. Thus, he was careful in documenting racial tensions still experienced in Southern states. For example, he documented the presence of segregated platoons: "At Baltimore, notwithstanding the cordiality, we first encountered a hint of Southern attitude. The regiment had a negro company officered by negroes" (13).[18]

There were historical connections between Puerto Rico and events related to the US Civil War. For instance, several of the high-ranking military officers under whose direction King mentioned that he had worked, Colonel Edmund Rice (1842–1906) and Brigadier-general of US Volunteers George A. Garretson (1844–1916), had served during the so-called "War Between the States." King also mentioned in passing that Sherman's son, Thomas Ewing Sherman, a Catholic priest, served as chaplain during the Puerto Rican expedition.[19] Commander Miles had volunteered to fight for the Union army, and he emerged a major general, winning the Congressional Medal of Honor (Kupferberg 38). Theodore Roosevelt, as Secretary of War, commented on the historical significance for the United States of Northerners' and Southerners' service together in iconic battles in The Philippines and in Cuba:

> Not the least of the results of the war attributable to the army is the re-establishment of confidence between the South and the North. The two sections vied with each other in their patriotic devotion, and years of estrangement were obliterated in a few months of service side by side, in the camps of instruction, on the march, or in the trenches of the battle-field. (*A Military* 7)

In spite of Commander Miles's wishes, his Puerto Rican Campaign went mainly unnoticed. To Miles's dismay, his successful Puerto Rican Campaign attracted little press coverage (Gould 112; Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles* 230). It did not help that the official seal of approval by Secretary of War, Russell A. Alger, was a lukewarm recognition. According to Alger, the Puerto Rican Campaign had been successful "in part due to the clever tactics adopted by the individual commanders . . . for which General Miles should receive full credit. The campaign in Puerto Rico had been well conceived and skillfully executed" (316–17).

Miles was not good at facilitating public relations. He was responsible, however, for tainting his own hopefully triumphant return to the United States. On August 23, a few days before his arrival in New York, in a newspaper interview from Puerto Rico, Miles launched a series of accusations against the War Department (Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles*

230). His most damaging statement claimed that Washington press releases had put into danger his Puerto Rican Campaign (Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles* 231). In a seemingly abrupt contradiction, historian Negroni uncovered that *The New York Times* had published news regarding Miles's target in Guánica days before his actual landing on that port (328). Miles also spoke about disagreements between himself, as commander of the Puerto Rican Campaign, and Major General William Rufus Shafter, over leadership issues.

At the end of the Spanish-American War, as American diplomats were going into negotiations leading to the Treaty of Paris, McKinley had strong public support—with forty percent approval (Gould 116). McKinley's electoral victory was interpreted as Americans' political understanding that "There seemed no great sense of contradiction in the public mind between 'keeping' the islands and giving them 'liberty'" (Traxel 266). Thus, the way into an international arena of political significance by means of an imperialist war was supported in McKinley's reelection (Greene v; Cashman 336; O'Toole 383–86). His reelection also marked the political death of American-based anti-imperialist movements, which opposed more aggressive military intervention in the Philippines (Schirmer 241–53).

President McKinley, who had initially expressed strong hesitations about involvement of the US in Spanish-Cuban affairs, eventually came to embrace this type of pro-imperialist discourse, which played a strong role in his ample victory for a second term. Discussions upon the creation of an American empire, as ratified by the Treaty of Paris, were amply ventilated in public forums within McKinley's presidential re-election campaign in 1900 (Beisner x). Known for his ability to read his audience, McKinley in his discourses often indirectly referred to dealings with the Spanish-American War. Historian David Traxel traced McKinley's use of "subtle code" words, such as *blessing* and *burdens*, as indirect references to the "benefits of the war" (255): "Our achievements on land and sea are without parallel in the world's history" (McKinley, qtd. in Traxel 255). Traveling with a stenographer who recorded specific phrases that brought the most vociferous reactions from his audience, as Traxel documented, McKinley's references to "the benefits of expansion," "received thunderous applause" (Traxel 255): "We have good money, we have ample revenues, we have unquestioned national credit, but what we want is new markets, and as trade follows the flag it looks very much as if we are going to have new markets" (McKinley, qtd. in Traxel 255–56). The mighty figure of the soldier became visually present in President McKinley's inaugural parade, which brought together American soldiers who had seen action in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines (Bonasia 38).[20]

After the Puerto Rican Campaign, King rejected an opportunity to continue serving "in a minor staff position" in the Philippines (King 133). His reasoning put an end to "[his] adventures in the Spanish War" and wrongly foresaw the end of military American intervention: "I concluded rather against my desires that a military life in peace times would be aimless and uninteresting" (133). In the end, in his recompilation of letters as a book, King could have been reacting to the strong pro-military image of a triumphant post-war United States. This "militarization" had become a promotional tool during McKinley's campaign for re-election as president in 1900. He was concretely supported by his running mate, Theodore Roosevelt, who had served as a former commander of the Rough Riders, a platoon of soldiers who had an important role in the battles fought in Santiago de Cuba.[21] Roosevelt had become associated with a strong post-war imperialist rhetoric:

> No war was ever entered into with the higher principles of action or graver reasons for resorting to the dire conflict of arms, and no nation ever conducted a war with more unselfish motives. The war was the will of the people, the heart-beat of the nation, a sincere and honest appeal for justice, humanity and freedom. The deeds of the brave men who fought it were worthy of its great purpose. (*A Military* 5)

The post-Spanish-American War discourse was designed to maintain the concrete plans for American political intervention and control of the "Spanish islands," as demonstrated in the Congress's legal handling of a re-baptized "Porto Rico," forced to enter into an equal political association with the United States. Although, at the national level, the political cases of Cuba and the Philippines were often discussed in the US media, the colonial subjugation of Puerto Rico went basically unnoticed by both politicians and opponents to the Spanish-American Treaty, including the press. During his second presidential inauguration in March 1905, Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919) had troops from Puerto Rico and from the Philippines march as part of the festivities (Kramer 322). He was reported to have jokingly said, "[they are] rejoicing in their shackles" (qtd. in Bradley 233). Further public demonstration of the political importance of Puerto Rico in President Roosevelt's expansionist project in Latin America was his travel to Puerto Rico, upon his return from a trip to the Panama Canal in November 1906. This visit was significant at various levels. Historically, it was the first official visit ever to a country outside the United States by an American president while holding office (Bishop 451; Jaycox 249).

In the long run, although King did not aim directly to criticize the overwhelmingly pro-military discourse following the presidential administrations of McKinley and of Roosevelt, with the publication of his edited letters, he may have intended to address the diplomatic conditions established after the war, affecting in particular Puerto Rico and the Philippines.[22] Most importantly, King might also have wanted his historical revision of the "Puerto Rican case" to promote a review of the laws imposed by federal mandate on the island. If nothing else, his revisionist historiography of the Puerto Rican Campaign would eradicate the image of Puerto Ricans as politically opportunistic, which was the image that had been portrayed by the American press.

The Treaty of Paris, ratified by Spain and by the United States on December 10, 1898, put an end to the Splendid Little War. History would remember the Puerto Rican Campaign not because of Miles's effective military maneuvers, which, as the press had suggested, explained the easy rendering of Puerto Ricans to the US military government, but because of a rather insipid scandal. Fighting a cold reaction from Washington, the military strategist and former hero of the Indian campaigns chose to accuse the Department of War of purposely allowing canned beef to reach field battles in the Caribbean knowing that the meat was tainted (Wooster, *Nelson A. Miles* 234–37). The "Embalmed Beef" scandal, as the press covered the hearings, destroyed Commander Miles's public image as a war hero (Berner 8).

There was no hero's parade for Commander Miles, "one of the country's most famous Indian fighters" (Gwynne 276), at his arrival in New York from Puerto Rico on September 1, 1898. He remained a despised war hero, whom the press often labeled "contentious and egotistical" (Wooster, "Introduction" vii), while Puerto Rico became an uncontested first leg of an expansive US empire.

Notes

1. These newsreels were produced using Thomas Edison's new invention, the kinescope. This was the beginning of commercial cinema, which also allowed Americans to follow events related to the war. Researchers have discovered that many scenes had been staged in American studios in what Michael Chanan described, quoting from Albert E. Smith, as "'the forerunner of the elaborate "special effects" techniques of modern picturemaking'" (428).

2. For detailed accounts of Pulitzer's and Hearst's approaches to developing a "yellow press" style see Kupferberg (6, 2) and Traxel (80–85; 111–12).

3. Pulitzer's newspaper, *The New York World*, produced an eyewitness account of the infamous "Maine explosion," which took place in Havana's harbor on February 15, 1898 (Thomas 209). Publication of a page-length drawing of the

Maine "blowing to smithereens, bodies and debris flung in the air," was the beginning of a feeding frenzy by newspapers all over the United States (Walker 59). This edition sold five million copies in a week (Karnow 95). The reaction of the Spanish government to the Maine explosion is reputed to have triggered the decision of the US to enter into the Spanish-American War. Ultimately, the US government would enter into a war against Spain in order to aid pro-independent guerrilla war fought in Cuba (Brown 64; Secunda, Moran 14).

4. The Spanish-American War did not inspire a large body of literature. Although that is outside the scope of this essay, I refer the reader to a late piece of work: George Hartmann, *Tales of Aztlan: The Romance of a Hero of Our Late Spanish-American War* (1908). A notable exception is Stephen Crane's short stories inspired by his own experiences while covering events in Cuba before and after the Spanish-American War: "Flanagan and his Short Filibustering Adventure," inspired by the smuggling of arms from Florida to the Cuban rebels, and "The Open Boat," which details his experiences in a shipwreck while attempting to gain access to Cuba before the official declaration of war (Brown 69–73). He also wrote "Drama in Cuba," an unfinished and undated political play set in Santiago de Cuba at the time of the American invasion of Cuba. As an interesting historical parenthesis, the Anti-imperialist movement produced a bit more interest in literature. Jim Zwick, quoting from Ernest Crosby's *The Absurdities of Militarism* (1901), indicated that there were only two anti-imperialist novels published about the Spanish-American and Philippine-American wars (109).

5. For letters written from Cuba by American soldiers, see Buel, *Behind the Guns with American Heroes* and Pérez 160–62. Charles J. Post's *The Little War of Private Post* has been described as a "poignant memoir of the war" (Berner 8).

6. In contrast to what was reported in newspapers, the Puerto Rican Campaign had been planned since 1891 (Ayala and Bernabé 15). Newspaper reporters had had an important role on an expedition known as "Number 2," which was the military secret code given to the Puerto Rican Campaign (Picó 46). In March 1898, Spanish military authorities suspected a newspaper correspondent for the *New York Herald*, William Halstead, of engaging in spying activities (Cancel and Feliciano Ramos 229).

7. For a description of the San Juan bombardment, including a survey of the US press news reports, refer to Musicant, *Empire* 309–13.

8. For the Spanish press, that was a victory worth bragging about in a satirical drawing entitled "El Tío Sam queda escamado en Puerto Rico"("Uncle Sam Gets Burned in Puerto Rico"). It was part of a collection of commented political cartoons, *Hazañas "Yankees"* (*"Yankee" Deeds*) (96). Spanish readers were, however, no more knowledgeable about Puerto Rico than Americans. Another cartoon, "El Almirante Sampson 'Mil hombres y sus poderes'" ("Admiral Sampson 'A Thousand Men and their Powers'"), showed the aggressive commander of the American forces in the Atlantic, proudly stepping with one foot on the targeted Cuban city, Santiago de Cuba, while his other foot covered the island of Puerto Rico, wrongly labeled as Manila (Sierra de la Call 90). The naval ex-

pedition against Manila Bay was under charge of Commodore George Dewey on May 1, 1898. His victory "was hailed as the greatest naval victory in history, and Dewey as the equal of the transcendent Nelson" (Musicant, *Empire* 233).

9. For a full review of Miles's campaign in Puerto Rico, see Trask, *The War with Spain in 1898* 357–68.

10. This image of docility, of "Porto Ricans" excitedly clamoring for "los americanos" ("the Americans"), would be widely dispersed by the American press and supported by eyewitness accounts of press correspondents such as writer Richard Harding Davis's "The Taking of Coamo" and Stephen Crane's "The Porto Rican 'Straddle'" and "A Soldier's Burial that Made a Native Holiday."

11. Port of Fernardina is an inlet off Fernandina Beach on Amelia Island in Florida.

12. For a more detailed historical documentation of recruiting practices, training, and marching strategies of the troops heading to Southern US port cities, see McCaffrey 20–48.

13. Many soldiers deployed in the Spanish-American War documented in letters their complaints about a badly organized campaign, including serious shortages of food and clothing, bad medical care, and poor military training. See Eugene Arundel Miller's *Soldiers' Letters Home* and George F. Telfer's *Manila Envelopes*.

14. This was drawn from the fact that in the midst of the Spanish-American War, top US military men had argued against including Puerto Rico as part of the takeover. According to Commander Nelson's biographer, historian Robert Wooster, on July 6 (weeks prior to his invasion of Puerto Rico) Miles had received a cable from Andrew Carnegie imploring that he consider the capture of the island because it "would tell heavily [in] Spain and Europe" (qtd. in *Nelson A. Miles* 225, brackets Wooster's). Carnegie became very much involved in national debates following the Spanish-American War. He was publicly associated with the anti-imperialists who "viewed the acquisition of the colonies in far-flung underdeveloped lands as another dangerous threat posed to American traditions by industrialization" (Chambers 36). Carnegie offered to pay twenty million dollars to buy the Philippines' independence.

15. Another source of letters written by soldiers from Puerto Rican battlefields is Chicago's *Record*, which published Henry Barrett Chamberlin's letters (Freidel 264–65; 270–71).

16. Many photographs traced the military campaigns, particularly the surrender of important cities, such as Ponce (see examples in Picó 59, 83, 166, 179, 203 and Freidel 264, 265, 266, 267, 271). The large extent to which "our possessions" were documented, as Puerto Rican scholar Arcadio Díaz Quiñones suggested, would never be known. There were thousands of photos that American civilians and military personnel produced for private albums, governmental use, or limited commercial circulation (211).

17. The coverage of the war was overwhelmingly dominated by male newspaper reporters. Of historical importance are the reports by Anna Benjamin, "correspondent during the Spanish-American War" (Fröhlic 160), and the letters written by American female nurses (Graf).

18. African Americans served in Puerto Rico. The Sixth Regiment, comprising about nine hundred black soldiers recruited in Kentucky and Tennessee, were in Puerto Rico between October 1898 and February 1899. African Americans had been recruited under the assumption that they would be "unaffected by yellow fever and other tropical diseases that destroyed white men" (Craig 221). The historical significance was recognized immediately after the end of the war (See Edward A. Johnson's *History of Negro Soldiers* [1899]). Their impact upon the inhabitants of the islands has also been documented. The Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville, Tennessee has in its permanent public display a photograph of two African-American soldiers playing guitars. A label indicates that these soldiers' liking of the guitar had impact upon regional US music: "African-Americans such as these soldiers of the Spanish-American War helped to popularize the guitar."

19. Frederick Ober, among the earliest travelers to Puerto Rico, in his *Our West Indian Neighbors* (1904), documented the presence of the Reverend Father Ewing Sherman, who served on the island as chaplain for the Fourth Regiment of Missouri Volunteers. According to Ober, Father Sherman started a campaign to eliminate the exhumation of bones from tombs of poor people, leaving their remains accumulated in a huge pile in a designated area of the cemetery: "He found the natives, though nominally Catholics, practically pagans; a large proportion of them illiterate, and resorting to most barbarous practices respecting the inhumation of their dead" (238). The practice was prohibited by "our government," presumably because of the efforts of Father Sherman: "Intramural inhumations will no longer be permitted" (239). The practice came to an end in February 1899. Military governor General Guy Vernon Henry issued an order forbidding "the continuance of the practice of disinterring remains and casting them upon the bone pile" (*Annual Reports of the War Department* 138).

20. Puerto Rico seemed to have become an important acquisition for President McKinley. He had expressed concerns about the diplomatic implications of a military expedition against Puerto Rico within the same ideological framework of American aid in the "liberation" of Cuba (Trask 336–52). Historians documented that during early official discussions leading to the Treaty of Paris, Spain opposed Puerto Rico being part of the negotiations. According to Gould, the president had stated, "I demanded of Spain the cession and consequently the immediate evacuation of the islands of Cuba and Porto Rico" (88).

21. Roosevelt, who became president in 1901 after the assassination of President McKinley, had strong ideological connections with Puerto Rico. Toward the end of the Spanish-American War, and after the surrender of Santiago de Cuba, he wanted to continue with Miles's expedition to Puerto Rico (O'Toole 358). That was in spite of the fact that half the members of his Rough Riders were "dead or disabled by wounds and sickness" (Traxel 219). Roosevelt was hoping to "energize his men, occupy them physically and mentally" (Walker 252).

22. King was not an exception in his opposition to federal agreements after the triumph of the Spanish-American War. On February 6, 1899, amidst public opposition, a divided US Congress ratified the Treaty of Paris by an extremely narrow margin: "with one vote to spare," according to anti-Imperialist spokesperson Moorfield Storey (88). This divided Congressional stance reflected public opinion, dubious but willing to consider possible incorporation of these foreign territories into the American Union (Gould 112–14). Puerto Rican historians have stated, however, that Spain vigorously opposed Puerto Rico's inclusion in the treaty (Cancel and Feliciano Ramos 232).

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Biography as De-Facement: A Response to Evelyn Barish on Paul de Man

Joseph G. Kronick

One would think that enough time has passed since the revelation of Paul de Man's wartime journalism that the polemics would have ended and reassessment have begun. With some exceptions, this does not seem to be the case. As the responses to the publication of Evelyn Barish's biography of de Man reveal, the controversy will not go away, but then again, why should it? Were the controversy merely a matter of personality or academic fashions, it would be of little interest. At issue is a theory of literature that distances itself from the classical principle that our words have meaning insofar as we stand by them (see Godzich 138). This strikes at the heart of Barish's and so many others' objections to de Man. What is at stake is what kind of knowledge literature can offer us: whether literary language has an affinity with the language of religion ("Blocking" 190) and is grounded in epistemological and ontological certainty or whether literary language disarticulates the relation between phenomenality and cognition and leads to a radical materialism without relation, a truth without generality.

De Man's claim that "mere reading" destabilizes the relation between language and the phenomenal world does not turn language, as Barish fears, into a lie but is an attempt to think truth as event. In *The Resistance to Theory*, he states, "Mere reading, it turns out, prior to any theory, is able to transform critical discourse in a manner that would appear deeply subversive to those who think of the teaching of literature as a substitute for the teaching of theology, ethics, psychology, or intellectual history" (24). I am not proposing that readings of de Man's texts should, or can, avoid ethical, psychological, or historical issues; but I do think de Man is saying that those who avoid theory pass over the problem of literariness, and in doing so, avoid the very issues they profess to address: history, politics, ethics. "Mere reading" has the power to trouble the equation of language with phenomenal reality, a confusion that holds Barish in its grips, whether she is reducing de Man's argument to a hermeneutics of suspicion or is transforming her narrative into an etiology of his character (see 437). The lessons of Paul de Man's wartime journalism are not reducible to personality and the ethical failings of an individual—and his journalism was an ethical failing—but must be considered both in relation to his mature thinking and in the context of the appeal various fascist and communist ideologies had for European intellectuals between the wars. The questions before us are whether Barish's biography can account for de Man's collaboration, and, on the other hand, whether de Man's version of deconstruction, above all his notion of materialism, offers a means not only to account for ideological mystification but also to confront it.

Barish is drawn to the purely dramatic elements in de Man's life, of which there were not a few. She asks, "How could de Man, a person of such austere temperament, occupying a position of such respect, seeming to personify the highest professional and even ethical achievement, have had such a past? This book, the result of my attempt to answer those questions, ultimately provided two kinds of perspective, one focused on de Man himself, one more general and historical" (xvii). We learn of de Man's difficult childhood—his brother Rik's rape of their cousin and early death when he was struck by a train when crossing tracks on his bicycle; his mother's suicide after years of illness (de Man was the one who discovered her body), and his father's philandering. According to Barish, Rik was the mother's favorite and Paul's competitive nature can be attributed to his losing struggle to win her love. She writes, "'Plenitude,' nostalgia for it, and the sense of its 'absence' became thematic elements of Paul de Man's early linguistic pursuits" (44). Her psychological analysis, can be summed up as follows: the child is father to de Man. Raised by a distant and disapproving mother and a father whom he blamed for his mother's death (57), he failed to grow into a responsible adult because of repressed feelings of rejection by his parents, hence his secrecy, dishonesty, ambition, narcissism, and irresponsibility.

She proves a diligent researcher, if careless writer. She has read widely in Belgian archives and interviewed family and friends of de Man, including his widow, Patricia, along with many acquaintances and colleagues both in Belgium and America. In addition to chronicling his wartime activities, she offers an account of his conviction for swindling the investors in his publishing house, Hermès, for which he was sentenced *in absentia* in 1951 to five years in prison. We hear about his habitual lies concerning his past, including his having obtained an undergraduate degree, his repeated failure to pay rent, and his abandonment of his first wife and their three children. She tells of his years in the US, including his relations with Mary McCarthy and Dwight Macdonald, his first academic post at Bard College, his second (and bigamous) marriage, and finally his career as a graduate student.

The book stops with his arrival in Ithaca to assume his first professorial post at Cornell.

The book is filled with errors and solecisms. She follows French rather than English usage and refers to the German army as "occupants," as if they were tenants. Students were deceived, she says, into taking the translation of the Norton edition of *Madame Bovary* to be de Man's when the credit belonged to Patricia de Man. At least that is what she meant but she writes instead, "it was her translation, not her husband's, which so many American students read as Flaubert's" (164; the title page states it was translated by Eleanor Marx Aveling and revised by Paul de Man). Then there's this sentence: "He wanted *Cahiers Européens* to be a luxury item, costly and narcissistic, just as his own life was soon to become" (140). She consistently repeats herself: twice we are told in nearly identical language that de Man did the honorable thing in acknowledging the birth of his first son, Hendrik, also known as Rik (103, 107). Patricia de Man is repeatedly quoted as saying "that her husband 'never read a book for which he did not have an immediate use'" (180). Four times she repeats an anecdote told her by his son, Rik, that de Man reproved him for uttering an anti-Semitic slur when he was a child (177, 197; 482n14; 486n8). I lose count of the many times she refers to his charm and good looks.

And she gets facts wrong. It was the news of his wartime writings, not his obituary, that appeared on the first page of *The New York Times*. Maxime Gorky, not Gogol, is the author of *The Lower Depths*. Keats, not Milton, called life a "vale of soul-making" (331). Montaigne lived in the sixteenth, not the seventeenth, century (375). De Man's great-grandfather, Jan Van Beers, was a minor poet, not "the Flemish 'national poet'" (4).[1] She misdates the publications of *Wartime Journalism* and *Responses* (she gives 1992 for both; the correct dates are 1988 and 1989). She exaggerates his importance in academia and for culture at large. "Theory" is not a synonym for "deconstruction" nor even "poststructuralism." And I doubt that the clothing line "Theory was named after de Man's work" (xiv). She confuses *mise en abîme*, a heraldic device showing a shield placed within another shield, with abyss (13, 304) and mistakes *aporia* for "abyss," as well (25, 304, 370; *aporia* means an impasse or a difficulty arising from a contradiction or competing plausible ideas). She writes that de Man was "known by some as the 'father of deconstruction,' although he said the term was coined by Jacques Derrida" (xiii), implying primacy belongs to de Man. Present use of the term unquestionably originated with Derrida. More importantly, de Man's "deconstruction" is quite different from Derrida's.

Her inflation of his place in academia becomes positively bizarre when she states, "There is a profound connection between the man who secretly fled from Belgium, exiled in 1948 and never publicly to return, and the one we knew for generations later as *our intellectual and cultural leader*" (xxv; my emphasis). Who is she speaking for? Is she claiming to be a disciple of someone whose lectures she found incomprehensible? She mangles his theory when she writes that in his forties he made "a turn toward a stance of ironic 'undecidability,' in which reality is an endless hall of mirrors and writing is a necessarily 'perverse' enterprise based on human lies, or the inability of language to express truth" (xxv). If readers believe her account of de Man's theory, then they may believe her historical inaccuracies and embellishments in her story of his life.

Intending to prove that de Man's mature work was an effort to erase his past, Barish seeks to connect his past to "the doctrines and practices" he taught (xxiv). But does she get the "doctrines" right? According to her, de Man thought language "was a mere representation, not a source of power" (437). This is incorrect: mimesis is a trope, which means the linguistic representation of non-verbal entities makes no claim to the "identity between the verbal and non-verbal elements" (*Resistance* 10). Barish thinks this means that all reference is fiction but de Man is clear that he is not denying reference but putting in question "its [the referential function of language] authority as a model for natural or phenomenal cognition" (11). As an autonomous system (for instance, syntactical structures for referring to the world exist independent of the referent), language is a source of power but is not ultimately subject to intentional consciousness. For de Man, language itself has power; for Barish, language is an instrument of power subject to the ethos of its user. Moreover, de Man's concern was not so much with a general theory of language but with literariness and its disruptive power; on this basis we may say he had a "philosophy" of language.

De Man recognized that Saussure's semiotics and its avowal of the autonomy of language (that is, language can be studied as a self-contained system) meant a disjunction between what linguists call the subject of the utterance and the subject of enunciation. The distinction is between the subject of the statement and the subject of the instance of discourse, as in "I am writing this sentence." There are two *I*'s and the authority of the sentence is established not by the referent but by the *I* who speaks. "What this means is that the sovereignty and the authority of the subject are at stake in every discursive act and are affirmed in them. This places a very heavy burden upon the subject" (Godzich 140–41). If the subject must now be the legislator guaranteeing the truth of the utterance, he must implicitly appeal to an unending or stuttering formula wherein "I state *x*" becomes "I state that I state that I state . . . ." This does not mean the subject is contained in language; if that were the case, the subject of enunciation would not only be identical to the subject of the utterance but also would not be repeatable. Instead, the subject of the utterance, the *I*, is constituted through language. What we have here is an *aporia*, not a failure to communicate. The problem of being and presence is instantiated in language. We must be cautious, however, and not take this to mean the subject now legitimizes itself in the self-positing act of enunciation—de Man warned against this in several essays, most notably in "Sign and Symbol in Hegel's *Aesthetics*."[2]

Once we grant that the "*I* refers to the act of individual discourse in which it is pronounced" and that "[t]he reality to which it refers is the reality of the discourse" rather than the feeling of being oneself, the subject as constituted by reflection, then we must allow not only that language has a certain autonomy but also that the subject is established in language (Benveniste 226).[3] However, insofar as language is not self-identical—there is no language *as such*—de Man will speak of the "autonomous *potential* of language" instead of its autonomy (*Resistance* 10; my emphasis). Rather than deny the problem of signification, de Man argues, "Literature is fiction not because it somehow refuses to acknowledge 'reality,' but because it is not *a priori* certain that language functions according to principles which are those, or which are *like* those, of the phenomenal world. It is therefore not *a priori* certain that literature is a reliable source of information about anything but its own language" (11). This does not mean we are imprisoned in language but that language provides knowledge only about itself, which amounts to a negative knowledge, which is still knowledge but not phenomenolizable (that is, it is not an object of cognition for it "cannot be brought to light directly, or *as such*" (Gasché 129).[4] De Man is not a proponent of a purely linguistic or semiotic theory of literature but, as Rodolphe Gasché says, is criticizing such approaches precisely because they cannot escape their own medium. De Man's focus is on what remains untranslatable or escapes this purely linguistic translation of the literary text (128). Hence, in "The Resistance to Theory," he systematically critiques performative theory, reader response theory, semiotics, hermeneutics, and Bakhtin's dialogism for evading the untranslatable that he calls "literariness" either by remaining a formalist linguistics or by positing an "extralinguistic truth value" (*Resistance* 56).

The flaws in Barish's book go well beyond her misrepresentations of de Man and deconstruction. The criticism that de Man evades history and politics is a familiar one. Far more serious is her assertion that the plan for a pro-Nazi journal, *Cahiers Européens*, in partnership with Raymond De Becker, was primarily de Man's idea. The plan was offered as evidence of treason in the post-war trial of De Becker

(135). In a note, she claims that the document's "last two sheets are in the hand of Paul de Man" (474n1) The official handling the case after the war, Roger Vinçotte, wrote that the document was in De Becker's hand (474n1). She showed the document to the Belgian historian José Gotovich, who remarked, "'That is pure Rexism!" but did not comment, it would appear, on the handwriting ("Rexism" refers to Léon Degrelle's Rex party; Degrelle had declared the Walloons a "Germanic" people and sought the incorporation of francophone Belgium into Germany).[5] Her credibility is undermined by her assertion that de Man was to be "secretary of the editorial board—that is, its editor" (137). Susan Rubin Suleiman points out, "In French, neither 'editor in chief' nor 'editor' corresponds to 'secretary of the editorial board'"; his job as secretary would have involved "shepherding articles through the editorial process, not setting policy." We can conclude he was involved in the project, a damaging enough revelation, but was a subordinate figure in it and not its mastermind, as Barish would have us believe. In her notes to this episode, she violates basic scholarly standards when she writes, "I shared this information, and it has since been published in Belgian sources not now available to me" (xxiii, 451n28); "This writer understands that an essay (citation unavailable) was produced by a student in Belgium" (474n5). Only someone who wishes to believe the worst of de Man would accept references to unavailable and unidentified documents as evidence.

Barish does offer more relevant information, including a transcript of his interrogation after the war that cleared him of charges of collaboration. When confronted with the article of March 3, 1941, "Jews in Present Day Literature," de Man explained, "'I am known as being the opposite of an anti-Semite. I have always had Jewish friends, I helped them during the war, and they have kept my friendship.'" He says that he volunteered to write the article when an editor showed him one "'by Eemans violently attacking the influence of Jews in literature. . . . The article that you [his questioner] have before you aims to show that the Jewish influence in literature is benign, and above all it responds to Eemans's article. I know that it appeared on a page devoted to anti-Semitism, but I was never warned about that and was not responsible for it'" (196). What he says here cannot be verified, except for the fact that he had Jewish friends and helped shelter Nahum and Esther Sluszny when they missed the curfew (153). As for his use of the word "benign," it is belied by his dismissive treatment of Jewish writers. Barish's response, however, is typically hyperbolic: "On the contrary, it [his article] proposed deportation of Jews (a 'solution' considered earlier by the Nazis but dismissed)" (198). De Man wrote, "Furthermore, one sees that a solution to the Jewish problem that aims for the creation of a Jewish colony isolated from Europe would not involve, for the literary life of the west, deplorable consequences" (4 March 1941). This is, indeed, vile, but rather than calling for deportation, de Man says there is no need to bother: Jewish writers are mediocrities who have no influence on European letters. Barish need not twist the passage to make it appear worse than it already is.

If she is not magnifying his misdeeds, she is exaggerating his importance as a journalist and intimate of the publishing world of occupied Belgium. The facts are that he contributed to a widely read newspaper but was an unimportant figure without influence. Belgian historian Jean Stengers sums up de Man's journalism: "The whole of that activity, and this cannot be overemphasized, found at the time no echo whatsoever: it was the totally obscure activity of a young man without any kind of reputation" (43). Barish insists upon de Man's prominence and his large readership and goes so far as to claim he sought "control of the high ground of intellectual fascism" (139). If this were true, she fails to add he suffered from delusions of grandeur.

In making this a story of "the great man," she turns it into, if something less than a tragedy, a story of a fall. *Le Soir volé*, as the paper was called by Belgians during the war, had a large circulation, which, according to Els de Bens, a Belgian professor of media and communications studies, may be attributed to its retention of the prewar title, but she also says, "the 'stolen' daily was a fine product, journalistically speaking. Also, it consistently took a belgiscistic point of view" (90). This is an important point to which I will return. In a letter of 28 July 1988, Pierre de Ligne, the wartime Administrative Director of *Le Soir* and a follower of Henri de Man, writes, "'Paul's work for *Le Soir* was absolutely exterior, "free-lance"; he was completely unknown to the editor'" (Colinet 433n3).[6] De Ligne's testimony may well be questioned, but it confirms Stengers's account, which is also supported by the one passing reference to de Man in Martin Conway's *Collaboration in Belgium* (85).[7]

My point has nothing to do with the question of de Man's political and ideological beliefs. The ethical meaning of de Man's life is not determined by the influence he exerted as a collaborator, but by what he did and why he did it. Barish argues his motivations were a combination of greed, unresolved family issues, and opportunism. Her embellishment of his position at *Le Soir* and his role in the plans for *Cahiers Européens* diverts attention from greater issues of ideology, collaboration, and the political compromises of intellectuals in the thirties and forties. Barish's overreaching is evident when she says de Man's article "Jews in Present Day Literature" "helped Nazi policy makers to prepare the populace for its eventual 'Solution' to the 'Jewish problem' they had invented" (124). This is preposterous if she is trying to impute responsibility for the holocaust to de Man personally. Which Nazi policy makers were following his column? Her statement only makes sense if she were speaking in terms of the collective effects of anti-Semitic propaganda, but she is not. Considered as the work of an individual, de Man's article was inconsequential, however offensive it is.

Beyond the now infamous piece on Jewish influence on literature, de Man's journalism contains more than a few compromising articles. One of his more propagandistic pieces, "Flemish Brochures on the Third Reich," begins: "Having suffered long years of brainwashing [*le bourrage de crâne*] by French and English propaganda, the Belgian reader ignores all that has been done in Germany from the social and political point of view." He goes on to praise a pamphlet entitled "Why the German Worker Stands behind Adolf Hitler" for offering "an overall view of the achievement of the regime seeing to the well being of the proletariat and the reduction of unemployment" (*Wartime Journalism* 66). Barish sees his praise of German culture and denigration of French as opportunism rather than nationalism and ideology.[8]

De Man, like his uncle Henri, was a belgicist. They saw in the German occupation a chance for the renewal of their country as part of the "new order" in Europe. Like so many on the left and the right, the elder de Man wished to see the liberal bourgeois state, with its failed economic policies and ineffectual parliament, overthrown. He welcomed the German invasion after it occurred because it meant the end of the old order and a chance to build a socialist state on a corporatist model. He envisioned Belgium as remaining neutral under Nazi occupation and so was caught between those who rejected collaboration and the Nazis who saw him as too belgicist. Barish incorrectly implies Henri de Man ruled Belgium in conjunction with the Nazis when she writes, he "was in the saddle with the occupant" (Barish 101; it must have been a large saddle).[9] Rather than serve as what Barish calls *de facto* prime minister (101; Leopold III's cabinet went into exile following the invasion, so there was no government), de Man "assume[d] a significant role in Belgium . . . not so much in terms of exercising official powers as in guiding his countrymen toward what he considered to be the correct policy toward the occupying power" (Dodge 194). His enthusiasm for the Occupation lasted "until the early fall of 1940" (195), and he fled to Switzerland in November 1941. After the war, he was convicted *in absentia* for treason.

I have focused on Barish's account of de Man's life in Belgium, but half her book is devoted to his life in America until 1960, when he left Harvard for Cornell. She tells of his failure to pay rent, his association with Mary McCarthy (Barish speculates they had an affair and he may have impregnated her; she miscarried), his abandonment of his first wife and their sons, and his appointment as a visiting instructor at Bard, where he met Patricia Kelly, a student whom he married without obtaining a divorce from Anne Ipsen. She also gives an account of his years at Harvard, where he worked under Harry Levin and Renato Poggioli and held an appointment to the prestigious Society of Fellows. Meanwhile, he tutored Henry Kissinger in French, published articles in Georges Bataille's *Critique*, struggled to pass his oral examinations, began a new family, turned his son Rik over to his in-laws, who adopted him, and found a calling as a teacher.

If collaboration is the theme of the first half, denying the past and abandoning his children and first wife are the themes of the second. Arriving in America, de Man worked in the stock room at Doubleday-Doran bookstore, and, according to Barish, insinuated himself into the *Partisan Review* circle. De Man's lies and half-truths are duly pointed out, such as telling people, including administrators at Harvard after he was exposed in an anonymous letter, that Henri de Man was his father. His lies, Barish argues, explain his use of "the word *mystification* in his theories in no creditable way: It was, he thought, what texts and writers and all of his contemporaries must inevitably do. But the blame was not theirs; it rested on the nature of language itself" (360).

Some readers will be persuaded by this, but then I think they come to Barish's biography predisposed to condemn de Man as a scholar and critic and not just for his collaboration. He speaks of the disjunction between meaning and the word in late essays like the one on Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," where he explains how the "materiality of the letter" disrupts "the ostensibly stable meaning of a sentence" ("Conclusions" 89). De Man's notion of materiality is a difficult one to be sure. It helps to compare his late theory of linguistic materialism with his earlier phenomenological phase. Between the late fifties and late sixties, that is, in the work leading up to *Blindness and Insight*, de Man's concern with literature was cast within the language of consciousness and Husserlian intentionality. A certain pathos dominated his work as he saw the poet's desire for an originary relation to language, a relation that would guarantee the correspondence between the idea and the object, could not be fulfilled. The best poets knew this, if negatively. This argument stands behind his reading of Yeats in his dissertation, as well as the Christian Gauss lectures of 1967.

The point is made in one of his most famous essays, "Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image," first published in French in 1960. The title reflects his phenomenological orientation. In a reading of a few lines from Hölderlin's "Brot und Wein," he notes the poet's desire that his words have the ontological stability of the natural object.

Words should originate like flowers. Such a language would not be dependent upon anything but its own being. If one were inclined toward the language of religion, one could then say the poetic image would be incarnated spirit. De Man, not being so inclined, notes, "The existence of the poetic image is itself a sign of divine absence, and the conscious use of poetic imagery an admission of this absence." Poetic language is constitutive and, as such, "unable to give a foundation to what it posits except as an intent of consciousness" (*Rhetoric* 6). The object exists neither in its own being nor purely as an object of intentional consciousness. We are left, on the one hand, with a "nostalgia for the object [that] has become a nostalgia for an entity that could never, by its very nature, become a particularized presence," and on the other, with the "possibility for consciousness to exist entirely by and for itself" (*Rhetoric* 15, 16). This is what he would later call "mystification," but it is the reader here, de Man himself, who is mystified. The problem lies in the phenomenological language of a consciousness that posits meaning but does not fully recognize that such positing is not originary but a repetition dependent upon the materiality of language.

In this early essay, the pathos derives from the consciousness that time and mortality adhere to natural being, our own above all. This notion of mystified desire is tainted by the religious language that lends itself not only to a certain reading of the romantic imagination but to the horrors of messianic nationalism. Against the illusion of incarnation, de Man, or the poets he discusses, reaches a negative knowledge that language cannot name phenomenal reality. This knowledge, however, shelters the self from the disruptive power of language. He overcomes this impasse in his theory of reading.

I have pointed out that de Man defined ideology as the confusion of reference with phenomenalism (*Resistance* 11). The correspondence between word and thing is not phenomenal but conventional: "This gives the language considerable freedom from referential restraint, but it makes it epistemologically highly suspect and volatile, since its use can no longer be said to be determined by considerations of truth and falsehood, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, or pleasure and pain" (*Resistance* 10). De Man here dismisses hermeneutics, aesthetics, and ethics as determinants of the epistemological reliability of language, but not, I believe, *tout court*, which is Barish's interpretation. De Man situates rhetoric between language as a closed system of tropes "that totalizes itself as a series of transformations" (*Aesthetic* 132), hence his strictures against semiotics and structuralism, and phenomenalism, an act of consciousness conceived on the order of sense perception, hence his critique of hermeneutics (*Resistance* 67). The knowledge of the unreliability of verbal utterances is "made available" by literature (*Resistance* 10).

Literariness—de Man is concerned with literariness rather than novels, poems, etc.—is the untranslatable. Before we consider what this untranslatable remainder is, we must note that he is saying that literature cannot provide us knowledge of such nonliterary discourses as ethics, history, religion. De Man has a very stringent notion of knowledge. Traditionally conceived, knowledge "assumes the prior existence of an entity to be known. . . . It does not itself predicate these attributes but receives them, so to speak, from the entity itself by merely allowing it to be what it is" (*Allegories* 121). Predication is an unwarranted substitution of a "metonymic mode of reference for a substantialist, metaphorical one" (Gasché 34). The contiguous is misconceived as substantial. Knowing, however, is a linguistic rather than cognitive act.

I hear my interlocutor chiding me that this confirms Barish's view that de Man says literature tells us nothing about the world and is without meaning. Not so. True, mere reading, insofar as it is aimed at exposing the linguistic "structures and functions" of the text, does not yield extra-linguistic knowledge. And rhetorical readings "do not lead to the knowledge of an entity (such as language) but are an unreliable process of knowledge production that prevents all entities, including linguistic entities, from coming into discourse as such[;] they are indeed universal, consistently defective models of language's impossibility to be a model language" (*Resistance* 19). For de Man, the translation of the text into another mode of discourse, such as religion or ethics, is an unwarranted attempt at thematic totalization. Nevertheless, the referential function is not denied but deferred: "A text is constituted by the repetitive deferral of its translation" (Gasché 34).

What would a model language be? Perhaps it would be incarnate spirit, but his essay "Autobiography as De-Facement" suggests otherwise. His subject is Wordsworth's assertion in his "Essays on Epitaphs" that "'If words be not . . . an incarnation of the thought but only a clothing for it, then surely they will prove an ill gift'" (*Rhetoric* 79). De Man notes that both "incarnate flesh and clothing have at least one property in common, in opposition to the thoughts they both represent, namely their visibility, their accessibility to the sense" (79). If such is the case, there really is no way to distinguish the language of metaphor and the language of cognition (80). What gives us access to the unknown, death, is the specular trope of autobiography, which "is indeed like the body, which is like its garments, the veil of the soul as the garment is the sheltering veil of the body" (80). Autobiography proposes to unite the referent, the author as subject, and the figure, the representation of the subject. This makes autobiography "a figure of reading, or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts" (70). In autobiography "the author declares himself the subject of his own understanding, but this merely makes explicit the wider claim to authorship that takes place whenever a text is stated to be *by* someone and assumed to be understandable to the extent that this is the case" (70). But this specular structure that makes all texts autobiographical means that autobiography as such is impossible: the union of the written subject with the author "is the manifestation, on the level of the referent, of a linguistic structure" (70–71). Here again we find the passage from phenomenon to cognition blocked, but now instead of the *aporia* producing nostalgia for the object, the passage from trope to performative is made possible "by ways of an epistemological critique of trope" (*Aesthetic* 133), the trope in this case being prosopopoeia, the representation of a dead person as speaking. De Man concludes that autobiography "demonstrates in a striking way the impossibility of closure and of totalization (that is the impossibility of coming into being) of all textual systems made up of tropological substitutions" (*Rhetoric* 71). The substitution of the author *of* the text for the author *in* the text is a metonymy. Autobiography describes a "linguistic predicament" wherein language as trope, be it incarnate or mere clothing, is "evil"—prosopopoeia is a deplacement, de-facement, or occlusion of the subject. Every poem, and text, is an epitaph.

De Man's rhetorical reading restores the facticity of language *before* the aesthetic and epistemological impose themselves (Gasché 147–48). His concept of reading allows for no union of the phenomenal and the cognitive, the aesthetic and the poetic, sense and intellect. What possible outcome can we derive from this? The first is the exposure of meaning as ideology. The second is the debunking of origins and identity. The third is the revealing of a singularity that cannot be related to the general.

"Mere reading" resists the pathos of his earlier phenomenological criticism and, more significantly, explains his reputed asceticism and rigor (they are functions of reading and not personal qualities *per se*). Yet there is something more than the negative function of rhetorical reading. In a talk from the last year of his life, "Kant and Schiller," he addresses once more the relation of cognition to phenomenon, but here he speaks of a movement from cognition "to something which is no longer a cognition but which is to some extent an *occurrence*, which has the materiality of something that actually happens, that actually occurs. And there . . . that notion of occurrence is not opposed in any sense to the notion of writing. But it is opposed to some extent to the notion of cognition." At this point de Man quotes Hölderlin: "'*Lang ist die Zeit, es ereignet sich aber das Wahre*,'" which he translates, "Long is time, but—not truth, not *Wahrheit*, but *Wahre*, that which is true, will occur, will take place, will eventually occur. And the characteristic of truth is the fact that it occurs, not the truth, but that which is true" (*Aesthetic* 132). Clearly, he has Heidegger's *Ereignis* in mind here, but what he says is quite different from Heidegger's account of the Event. The model for the event is reading as "the passage from trope, which is a cognitive model, to the performative, for example. Not the performative in itself—because the performative in itself exists independently of tropes" but in the passage, he says, from language as cognitive to language as performative, which occurs by way of "an epistemological critique of tropes" (133). This event is not temporal, not susceptible to representation nor to cognition (the two cannot be separated, in any case), but is material, which is why it is not opposed to the notion of writing. Therefore, the only reliable knowledge literature can give us is of its own literariness, but insofar as literariness is another name for material event and thus for the limit of tropological substitutions, then it has the power to account for the production of ideologies.[10] Ideological discourses, however, can be *read* in terms of their literariness, that is, in terms of the untranslatable substratum that makes these discourses both possible—we do talk about good and evil—and impossible—our talk about good and evil errs to the extent that we take their matter on the order of substance rather than as an occurrence or event.

We will never know de Man's feelings about his collaboration, but we can chart an intellectual response in his published writings. When one now reads de Man's works, one cannot help but find secret references to his past. Perhaps none is more striking than this admission in his foreword to the revised edition of *Blindness and Insight*, written a year before his death: "I am not given to retrospective self-examination and mercifully forget what I have written with the same alacrity I forget bad movies—although, as with bad movies, certain scenes or phrases return at times to embarrass and haunt me like a guilty conscience" (xii). More complex candidates for crypto-confessions are the chapters "Allegory (*Julie*)" and "Excuses (*Confessions*)" in *Allegories of Reading*. Still more evidence of de Man's reworking of his past is contained in his frequent recourse to images of beheading, mutilation, hanging, and defacement.[11]

"Autobiography as De-Facement" offers an opportunity to explore what Neil Hertz, quoting de Man, identifies as "an 'estrangement between subject and utterance'" (102; *Allegories* 289). Hertz's approach is psychoanalytical, but not biographical. Barish refers to this essay not only as a link to "the image of his hanging mother" but also as evidence that he "professed no belief in the soul" and held "that autobiography is impossible: it is indistinguishable from fiction, for without a subject able to speak with authority, there can be no adequate summing up of a life" (440). I have aimed in this essay to demonstrate that Barish's book is not an adequate summing up of de Man's life. Barish, like others, sees this notion of a subject without authority as de Man's abrogation of responsibility. He does not stand by his word. We have seen how de Man deconstructs ontological suppositions that underlie our ideas about literature, above all, a language based on the identity between the world and our statements about it, which, in turn, depends upon the sovereignty of the subject. In place of the sovereign subject, the one who posits the Self in a performative act, de Man put "forward a new mode of subject constitution . . . that emerged in the act of reading itself, an act in which the subject . . . discovers the radical otherness of this text and his or her unredeemable indebtedness to it. The vaunted autonomy of the subject is, for de Man, but the forgetfulness of its foundational heteronomy" (Godzich 143).

The question is, what law are we subject to? Many philosophers and literary theorists might answer the law of the other. *Heteronomy* not only means being subject to an external law (Kant opposed it to autonomy in his moral theory) but also the "Presence of a different law or principle." In the quotation illustrating this definition, the *OED* cites Thomas de Quincey: "He has certainly not vitiated the purity of this principle by the usual heteronomy (if you will allow me a learned word) i.e. by the introduction of the other and opposite law" ("heteronomy," def. 1). Barish might endorse de Quincey's desire to preserve the purity of principles and the law, but for de Man the impurity of the Law is positive. At the end of his essay on Rousseau's *Social Contract*, "Promises," de Man writes of the necessity of misreading: "The error is not within the reader; language itself dissociates the cognition from the act. *Die Sprache verspricht (sich)*; to the extent that is necessarily misleading, language just as necessarily conveys the promise of its own truth. This is also why textual allegories on this level of rhetorical complexity generate history" (*Allegories* 277). De Man transforms Heidegger's *Die Sprache spricht*, "language speaks," into "language promises (itself)." This is why misreading is not an error on the part of the reader; language is "necessarily misleading" *because* it promises itself or the truth of itself (Hamacher 198). But as I have pointed out, there is no language *as such*, so to promise itself is to promise a future, which is why "textual allegories . . . generate history." We might say history is possible because of this error, as is life itself, as de Man indicated in the epigraph to *Blindness and Insight*: "'*Cette perpétuelle erreur, qui est précisément "vie"* . . .' (Proust)."[12] This error that is life is language, which is not to say language is responsible for *our* errors but that the errancy, wandering or foundational finitude, of language means that history, along with our errors, is possible because we are caught in the whirligig of life. This may sound like an excuse, but as we know, de Man made no excuses for himself. It is an explanation, however, one that does not explain his personal errors—we still await the biographer who can do that—but explains the foundations of subjectivity and history and the perils of denying difference in the name of identities.

Notes

1. *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* mentions him parenthetically as a member of the school of "moderate realism" (130).

2. In *Aesthetic Ideology* 91–104. In his conclusion, de Man quotes Hegel on the "'separation or disarticulation of subject from predicate'" in allegory (*Aesthetic Ideology* 104). I am drawing a parallel between allegory and the similar disarticulation of subject of enunciation from the subject of the utterance. As we will see, without such a disarticulation, there would be no history.

3. See Benveniste, *Problems in General Lingusitics* 217–22 ("The Nature of Pronouns") and 224, 226 ("Subjectivity in Language"). The *I* of discourse is not a fixed entity but exists only in the instance of its use: "It is solely a 'reality of discourse,' and this is a very strange thing" (218). Recall Thoreau's apology for speaking so much of himself in *Walden*: "It is, after all, always the first person that is speaking."

4. Gasché explains that language "cannot be the object of an (sensible or eidetic) intuition. It can be known only negatively through the weave of that which it makes possible and which it immediately annihilates as well." Lest readers like Barish think this is another appeal to the abyss or nihilism, the point is that language cannot do anything but refer, but reference "remains with the linguistic" and so its function "is not primarily understandable from the transcendent, and nonlinguistic realm of the world" (127).

5. For Degrelle and the right wing Catholic party Rex, which he headed, see Conway, *Collaboration in Belgium* 173 and passim.

6. Edouard Colinet was responsible for the publication of *Les Cahiers du Libre Examen*, the journal to which de Man contributed on the eve of the war. *Les Cahiers* was a largely liberal publication whose members came from various political camps, all of whom were "antifascist." Colinet vigorously defends de Man against charges of being an anti-Semite and fascist (426–37).

7. Like Stengers, Conway points out that few "readers of *Le Soir* paid much attention to the editorial content of the papers. The newspapers were above all a source of practical information and ponderous articles by lesser figures such as the young Paul De Man (the future guru of American post-structuralism and nephew of the president of the *POB* [*Parti Ouvrier Belge*, the socialist party headed by Henri de Man]) passed entirely unnoticed while even the contribu-

tions by men such as De Becker and [Robert] Poulet [brother of the literary theorist Georges Poulet] preached on the whole to the already converted" (85).

8. Her uncertain knowledge of fascism and pre-war politics is revealed by her dismay that Henri de Man, a socialist, disbanded his party and urged workers and members of his party "to give up the idea of democracy": "This was scandalous: A lifelong socialist leader was telling them that Nazi rule represented the culmination of the socialist revolution" (101). For an analysis of de Man's blend of socialism and fascism, see Sternhell 187–212 and Kossman 613–20, 623–25, 667.

9. Barish exaggerates Henri de Man's place in Belgian politics. As Minister of Labor in 1935 and as Minister of Finance in 1936, he was able to put in place "only a fraction of his plan" for economic and labor reform (Kossmann, 667). Also see Els Witte, Jan Craeybeckx, and Alain Meynen: "As a staunch monarchist and Belgian patriot, he [Henri de Man] became the odd man out in the collaboration movement. Increasingly isolated, he fled to Switzerland" (143). Roger Keyes also says that his role during hostilities with Germany was "relatively insignificant" and that the King refused to see him after his "collaborationist address to the Socialist Party" in June 1940 (311).

10. See Warminski: "Tropes accomplish the phenomenalization of reference that 'we call' ideology, but, of course, because it is indeed *tropes* that do this, such phenomenalized reference cannot help but be 'aberrant,' to use one of de Man's favorite terms for it, and produce 'ideological aberrations'" (14).

11. Mutilation is a theme in such essays as "Excuses" in *Allegories*; "Reading and History" (on Hans Robert Jauss) in *Resistance*, 54–72 (esp. 65–66); and "Shelley Disfigured" and "Aesthetic Formalization: Kleist's *Über das Marionettentheater*" in *Rhetoric*, 93–124 and 263–90. For an astute analysis of this motif in de Man, see Hertz.

12. Lindsay Waters, the editor of *Critical Writings*, writes that the epigraph was "dropped by mistake . . . from the second edition" (xxv).

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Reflections on the Dark Water. By M. P. Jones. Opelika, AL: Solomon and George, 2016. 77 pp. $13.00 (paper).

In his collection *Reflections on the Dark Water*, M. P. Jones writes in an impressive variety of forms—the haiku, the roundel, the renga, and the pantoum, among others—while engaging thoughtfully with numerous works from other poets, including Dante, Hayden Carruth, Charles Wright, John Ashberry, Emily Dickinson, and Richard Siken. The resulting poly-vocal quality of the work is only amplified by the dense network of historical references: we are taken to Edom, to the Rome of Nero, to both WWI and WWII, to the very beginning of creation, to the moment of Jim Morrison's death, and to the poet's memories of the more recent past. This layering of form and reference creates a sense of fragmentation that is recognizably postmodern, and yet this collection exceeds its postmodernity. With all of its multiplicity, the collection is unified by its dominant mode (an admixture of pastoral and elegy) and by its thematic focus on the interplay of silence, absence, and loss. This focus exists in an exciting tension with the referential density of the collection so that, while we usually conceive of these three concepts as mere negations, we see them through these works as having a substance, a *presence*, all their own.

In a poem like "Morning Otology," for instance, Jones writes about how Emperor Titus, in the midst of his crippling tinnitus, misses "the silence most, when it is summer, / when out morning windows / song is in bloom" (44–46). Here, silence is the positive space in which hearing can occur, and it is constant sound that paradoxically becomes the negation. In the facing poem, "A Genealogy of Silence," silence has a more terrible weight, functioning as both the pause before the moment of loss and the irrevocable absence that follows that moment. These bookends of silence are far more substantial than the moment of action itself: in the first stanza, for example, Jones writes, "1917: An American boy and a German boy stare / at one another . . . Each marvels at how close a likeness the other bears to his own visage, like a mirror image. One shoots" (1–5). In "Fish Tale," in which the poet remembers the loss of his brother, the weight of the quiet before and after a defining event is emphasized by both the visual gaps caused by the shifting alignment of individual lines and by the way the poem mirrors itself; after the moment when "everything is finished," the lines given are repeated in reverse, as if nothing new can be said—the past can only be relived in a new configuration. The symmetry of the poem functions as a reenactment of how loss warps the past and the future. It is, like the space within the vessel referenced in "Amphora," the central emptiness that determines the shape of the life containing it.

As the structure of poems like "Fish Tale" shows, Jones excels in marrying form and content to produce meaning. I was struck in particular by his skill with white space, which is not inert but contributes to meaning in fundamental ways, becoming yet another proof of absence having presence. This approach is most evident in poems like "Passenger," wherein the brevity of the haiku form reflects the passenger pigeon's fleeting existence while the space surrounding the poem (alone on the page) makes us feel the enormity and permanence of the pigeon's absence. In a later haiku, "Emily Dickinson Sewed Her Poems Shut," the white space functions similarly as a representation of the literary void that would have existed had Dickinson's wishes regarding her work been heeded. In other poems, including "Fish Tale," "Self-Portrait as Silent Ritual," and "Self-Portrait at the Mouth of Summer," smaller gaps created by varying degrees of indentation make us aware of just how frequently absence, silence, and loss interpose themselves.

Throughout *Reflections on the Dark Water*, I was continually impressed by the richness, lyricism, and urgency of Jones's writing. This is not a collection that one reads and forgets; rather, this volume invites its readers to return and re-immerse themselves in the poems' dense network of meanings. Apart from its formal and conceptual complexity, *Reflections on the Dark Water* is a timely work that foregrounds how we experience not only personal losses but also collective, ecological ones. The world that is preserved in this collection's pages is one that is slipping away from us. Jones is alerting us to just how substantive this loss might be.

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Embezzlement and High Treason in Louis XIV's France. By Vincent J. Pitts. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2015. 224 pp. $44.95 (hardcover).

Nicolas Fouquet served as France's superintendent (*surintendant*) of finance at the beginning of Louis XIV's so-called personal reign (following Cardinal Mazarin's death in 1661 and continuing until the monarch's death in 1715). His coat of arms, fittingly, depicted a squirrel (an industrious creature prone to climbing to high places), accompanied by the motto "Quo non ascendet?" ("What heights will he not scale?"). In point of fact, Fouquet was the incarnation of ambition and ideally suited for one of La Fontaine's fables; the one titled "La grenouille qui voulait se faire aussi grosse que le boeuf" certainly can be read as an allegory of ambition during the reign of the Sun King. Interestingly, Fouquet was La Fontaine's benefactor and, at his magnificent château Vaux-le-Vicomte outside Paris, there is a children's museum dedicated to La Fontaine.

In this splendid book Vincent J. Pitts tells the fascinating story of the rise and fall of Fouquet, one of the most intriguing characters of the French seventeenth century, a man who made a mockery of absolute power by divine right by mounting a formidable defense at his public trial but who ultimately had to pay the price for overreaching and finished his days in prison. This book is not a biography, though. Nor is it a study of the shady financial world in which Fouquet operated or an attempt to establish once and for all the guilt or innocence of Fouquet. Rather, Pitts focuses on the trial itself to show how Fouquet gradually turned the tables on the king and successfully manipulated the system in his favor.

Reportedly, Richelieu himself handpicked the young Fouquet for a position in the *Parlement de Paris*, a law court where he would advance to *maître des requêtes* and then *procureur général*. The Fronde interrupted Fouquet's rise to power, but he chose wisely to remain loyal to the crown and to his boss, Mazarin, and received his just reward at the end of what is sometimes euphemistically referred to as "les troubles" (i.e., the Fronde), which threatened to tear France apart yet again. The Fronde had erupted in large part because of the Paris *parlement*'s longtime dissatisfaction with no longer being in charge of levying taxes, a function that had passed to Fouquet in 1648. In 1653 Fouquet was appointed *surintendant des finances* and used this position to amass a huge fortune, allegedly as great as that of the king and rivaling that of Mazarin, who died the richest man in France.

During the 1650s, France was still at war with Spain and in constant need of money, which Fouquet could provide not only through already existing taxes (such as *la taille* and *la gabelle*), and a bevy of new taxes on commonly used products, but also by peddling *rentes* (a sort of guaranteed annual income) on future tax revenues and by selling royal offices. But the crown's appetite for money proved insatiable and it therefore resorted to borrowing money at exorbitant interest rates from wealthy financiers through complicated financial schemes and shady accounting practices that benefited no one more than Fouquet and Mazarin. As was well known already then, the latter was not ashamed to speculate on provisions for the French army and took hefty commissions on all state revenue-enhancing schemes, in addition to selling royal offices to upwardly mobile bourgeois with their eyes set on promotion to the so-called *noblesse de robe*.

Fouquet's disgrace is the stuff of myth. In 1661 Fouquet organized a feast at his magnificent estate at Vaux-le-Vicomte outside Paris, a palace that heralded the splendor of Versailles. Not a smart move if you are "skimming." He would have been well advised to stay off the king's radar, but Fouquet, like virtually everyone else in the aftermath of Mazarin's death, did not think that Louis would seriously want to be king "full time" and was too arrogant and conceited to see what was happening around him. In the long run, however, as history bears out, everyone who gambled that Louis would govern alone prospered; everyone else perished.

The young Louis XIV was in attendance at Vaux-le-Vicomte and realized that there must be something amiss and that Fouquet must be investigated. In point of fact, the king had already been made aware of Fouquet's wealth and unorthodox financial practices by Colbert, who clearly aspired to succeed Mazarin and saw in Fouquet his main rival. Together they concocted a plot to bring about the downfall of Fouquet, who was soon arrested in a scene immortalized in Rossellini's classic film *La prise de pouvoir par Louis XIV*, in which Fouquet is taken into custody by none other than Charles de Batz-Castelmore d'Artagnan, lieutenant of the king's musketeers, the inspiration for Alexandre Dumas's immortal character. Not only did d'Artagnan exist, but he was in charge of Fouquet's personal safety for the nearly three years the trial lasted and then had the dubious honor of escorting him to imprisonment for life in the remote fortress of Pignerol in the French Alps.

The king wanted a discreet trial, maybe sensing that he would not easily get his way and that Fouquet conceivably could embarrass him in public. But Colbert would have none of that, seeking not only to expose the wrongdoings of his rival but also to bring about some much-needed reform in the murky world of French state finances (61), preferably without exposing his own complicity in the corrupt schemes of both Mazarin and Fouquet. The court was anything but fair, as the next few years would bring out. Colbert arranged to have Fouquet tried before a special court, the *chambre de justice*, rather than before the *parlement*, as Fouquet would request time and again, making this a political showcase trial, stuffed with handpicked magistrates and royal officials who would deliver the desired verdict of guilty of financial misconduct and high treason. Fouquet, sensing that he might one day be exposed, had planned ahead by fortifying his property at Belle Isle, where he might find a safe haven if necessary; however, this plan almost cost him his life since it now looked very much like treason. Pierre Séguier, chancellor of France, was chosen to head up this chamber of twenty-eight judges, all of whom had some kind of relationship, good or bad, with Fouquet, even blood relationship, something that normally would require a judge to recuse himself.

After months of preliminary interrogations of the prisoner, the trial finally got under way. Fouquet mounted a formidable defense. He demanded and eventually was granted access to most of his records in order to prepare his defense. From the beginning, he alleged evidence tampering and rejected the charges against him, arguing that he had always tried his best to support the crown, including in its darkest hours during the Fronde, and that any irregularities in his financial dealings were as much the result of the dire times (which necessitated unorthodox lending and accounting practices) as they were of Mazarin's corruption and Colbert's vindictiveness and jealousy. Moreover, Fouquet demanded to be tried in the *parlement*, which was his right, since, as minister of state, he was answerable only to the king. According to Fouquet, the only criminals were Mazarin and his cronies but, at the same time, as if to protect his back in the event that he was proven wrong, to disculpate himself, as it were, Fouquet claimed that the king had pardoned him of any possible wrongdoing after assuming personal control of the crown in 1661.

The trial attracted enormous attention in Paris. As Madame de Sévigné, one of his staunchest supporters in the literary community (along with Jean de La Fontaine), wrote: "people speak of nothing else" (148). The king tried in vain to suppress this literary Fronde but all he could do was delay la Fontaine's election to the Académie Française. The trial dragged on for almost three years. There is no doubt that Fouquet's strategy paid off. As a careful examination of the documents revealed, there was no evidence linking him to any criminal wrongdoing. Yet, it was evident to the judges that Fouquet was guilty of mismanaging the finances of France if nothing else and that his opulent lifestyle, to say nothing of the extravagant château Fouquet had built for himself at Vaux-le-Vicomte, suggested that neither could possibly be sustained by his salary or personal wealth.

When it came time to vote on a conviction, however, all the badgering in the world by Colbert and his cohorts could not force the judges to convict Fouquet of high treason, which would have carried an automatic death sentence. Still, seven judges voted for death, and twelve for banishment. The king now intervened in the proceedings and changed banishment to life in prison. Fouquet was packed off to the fortress of Pignerol in the French Alps, where for the next ten years he was kept in isolation, a "kind of living death" (160), much like that of Captain Dreyfus on Devil's Island. Fouquet eventually gained the right to correspond with his wife and even to see her and his immediate family. Then he was joined in exile by the *comte* of Lauzun, the unfortunate husband-to-be of the duchess of Montpensier, Louis XIV's cousin (until the king stopped the marriage). Before long the enigmatic "man in the iron mask" was incarcerated at Pignerol, where he allegedly served as Fouquet's valet.

Fouquet died suddenly in 1680 and his reputation has never been rehabilitated. Historians have helped in this regard, though, and the book under review here provides a much more sympathetic picture of an ambitious man but does not go so far as to declare him innocent of all charges. Fouquet was a product of these uncertain times as well as of an institutionalized system of graft instigated by Mazarin, of which he became an integral part and from which no doubt he profited immensely. To be sure, Fouquet was a victim of the jealousy and ambition of Colbert but also of his own arrogance and greed, as Saint-Simon later wrote. As this thoroughly researched and eminently readable book shows, there is no firm evidence that Fouquet was guilty as charged; however, his show trial casts a shadow on the early reign of the Sun King and confirms the commonplace that power corrupts.

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Mapping the Landscape, Remapping the Text: Spanish Poetry From Antonio Machado's Campos de Castilla to the First Avant-Garde (1909–1925). By Renée Silverman. Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures / UNC Department of Romance Languages, 2014. 271 pp. $60.00 (paper).

The recent work *Mapping the Landscape, Remapping the Text* by Renée Silverman dovetails successfully with the rather ample bibliography on the Spanish *vanguardia* and offers a unique contribution to the study of authors such as Antonio Machado, Guillermo de Torre, and Gerardo Diego. While her work is well researched and exemplifies a critical spirit that renews the theoretical implications of their poetry, her analysis would have greatly benefited from referencing relevant research in the field. A consideration of the paths blazed by works such as *Las vanguardias literarias en España* (1999) by Doris Wansch, *Visiones de estereoscopio: Paradigma de hibridación en el arte y la narrativa de la vanguardia española* (2001) by María Soledad Fernández Utrera, *Del tren al aeroplano: Ensayos sobre la vanguardia española* (2004) by José del Pino (ed.) and *Vanguardia española e intermedialidad* (2005) by Mechthild Albert (ed.) would have further supported the distinct perspective Silverman offers in this study and further scored the speculative landscape. Nevertheless, *Mapping the Landscape, Remapping the Text* is an effective analysis that applies an interdisciplinary perspective and a pleasantly diverse set of theoretical tools to understanding the contributions and complex origins of the *vanguardista* literary movement in Spain between 1909 and 1925.

Organized into an introduction, conclusion, and four chapters surrounding a discrete author and/or theme, the work offers abundant textual evidence and deftly handles poetic terms that, regrettably, numerous literary theorists and critics today ignore. Chapter one, "Framing the Landscape: Antonio Machado's *Campos de Castilla*" reflects on the influence of Machado's work on the subsequent generation of vanguardist writers in Spain at a time when the existence of a monolithic Spanish identity was being called into question. In this chapter, Silverman projects Machado's work into the twentieth century in order to explore "the way in which the avant-garde uproots the identity that Machado plants in the land" (17). This proves to be an effective way of constructing a bridge between the existential and political crisis of Spanish identity in 1898 and its manifestation in Spanish poetry. The contextualization and projection of Machado's poetry proves to be a particularly noteworthy decision, as Silverman studies both the discrete Spanish identity that he constructed in his verses and the reaction that the subsequent generation of Spanish poets had to this construction. She correctly identifies "Machado's rooting of Spanish essence in the land" and his use of the landscape to "[explore] national identity" (48). Chapter one looks back in time to the "disaster" of 1898, examines its effect on the poetry of Antonio Machado, and sets the stage for the subsequent generation of Spanish poets.

Chapter two, "Mapping the Spanish Avant-Garde: Guillermo de Torre and *Ultraísmo*," examines "the changing significance of place and space" (89) for poets such as Torre who were influenced by the work of Machado and international events such as World War I and the Russian Revolution of 1917. Torre, in particular, "became a cottage industry of cosmopolitanism" (92) and corresponded with artists throughout Europe such as Jean Epstein, Vicente Huidobro, Tadeusz Peiper, Mario Dessy, and Phillipe Soupault, among others. Consequently, Torre "became well-versed in the avant-garde movements of Europe and the Americas" (93). While the historical background that the chapter provides on the artistic undercurrents at work in post-WWI Europe is particularly appealing, we would also do well to admire the meticulousness of the research in these and subsequent chapters. Silverman's analysis of the poetry of Torre and her effective use of both primary and secondary sources lend an air of relevance to work that, in all frankness, may read today a bit dated. Her textual exegeses in chapter two manage to bring together such disparate elements as Italian Futurism, Walt Whitman, and French cinema and draw attention to the manner in which Torre's work subverts "Machado's contemplative vision" (126) of Spain and "constitutes a major change from Machado's *Campos de Castilla*" (130).

Chapters three and four center, respectively, on the influence that *Simultaneisme* ("the Parisian avant-garde movement in the visual arts and poetry" [131]) had on Spanish authors such as Torre and how the work of Gerardo Diego dovetails with themes of memory and "temporal multiplicity" (178) evident in the avant-garde. Both chapters offer an effective exploration of the continuing struggle of Spanish writers such as Guillermo de Torre and Gerardo Diego to incorporate the most recent artistic movements into their verse and to anticipate a national identity more inclusive of European events. Chapter three effectively explores the impact that the artists Robert Delaunay and his wife Sonia Delaunay-Terk had on Spanish authors such as Torre, examining their relationship through the poetry of Torre and referencing the writings of both Delaunay and Delaunay-Terk. The declaration in the chapter's conclusion that "in Torre, simultaneity consists of the mixing of time, space, and perception in the psyche" (176) summarizes the chapter's focus and projects these themes into the next section, chapter four. This chapter centers on two early works of the poet Gerardo Diego, *Imagen* (1922) and *Manual de espumas* (1924) and continues to explore themes of “recollection and temporal multiplicity” (178) in the work of one of the most distinct Spanish poets of the twentieth century. By effectively evoking the principal characteristics of the European avant-garde and applying them to a study of the two volumes, Silverman successfully reiterates her intention and deviates little from the declared focus at the beginning of *Mapping the Landscape, Remapping the Text*: “I contrast the turn-of-the-century plotting of identity squarely in the Spanish landscape with its cosmopolitan remapping at the hands of the first avant-garde (1909–1925)” (16).

Mapping the Lanscape, Remapping the Text is doubtless a valuable contribution to the study of Spanish avant-garde poetry, particularly the work of Guillermo de Torre and Gerardo Diego. While the ample documentation and reliance on primary and secondary sources may at times make for awkward reading, it is important to note that they also offer abundant supporting evidence for her ideas. Throughout the work, Silverman demonstrates significant expertise with the texts and manages to appreciate the nuances of the Spanish language, connecting themes that at first glance would appear disjointed. The six color plates at the end of the volume also provide an appealing and essential visual complement to the material included in the monograph. There are moments when Silverman’s observations merely touch the tip of the textual iceberg and the reader would have appreciated more analysis of the poems and less summary of the texts, but that would perhaps best be left to a possible future Spanish-language edition of this work. In all, Silverman is to be commended for her diligence and discipline in approaching works that have consistently befuddled generations of critics.

José María Mantero

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Poetics of the Incarnation: Middle English Writing and the Leap of Love. By Cristina Maria Cervone. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. 312 pp. $69.95 (cloth).

Cristina Maria Cervone's smart study of several late fourteenth-century English texts argues that they share an "Incarnational poetic" whereby the theology of the union of God and humankind not only guides these works' content but also pervades their deeper intellectual, aesthetic, and even cognitive structures as their writers continually grapple with enigmatic relations implied by the overarching mystery of the Incarnation: word to Word, Word to flesh, sign to thing, Creator to creature. The ineffability of the Incarnation inspires richly imaginative expression in William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich, the anonymous *Long Charter of Christ*, several other shorter poems, and the iconography of the lily Crucifixion: expression whose explosive inventiveness takes a cue from the Gospel of John's cryptic formulation, "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and generates endless permutations of simile, analogy, and allegory as these literary and visual artists work out their faith through the mode of meaning-making Cervone describes. She frequently and aptly refers to texts and images of this kind as "thought experiments."

Cervone introduces the notion of "supereffability" to describe the claim implicit in the practice of these writers that while some concepts may be inexpressible in literal terms, they can be communicated poetically, and in fact take on meaning only in this way. The only possible approach to the comprehension of such supereffable truths is metaphor-that-is-more-than-metaphor (e.g., Word become flesh), language that is also action (e.g., the "love deed" that is both a document and a doing), "pleyn" speaking that (according to Middle English senses of *pleyn*) is simultaneously 'plain' and 'plenary,' conveying abstractions in terms that are non-literal in resorting to mundane comparisons yet, paradoxically, the only direct route of conceptual access. The Incarnational poetic that Cervone explicates mimics the Incarnation itself, embodying, through imagery of the material world, something otherwise intractable to the human mind while at the same time demanding interpretation according to spiritual rather than fleshly understanding. It is a rigorously intellectual response to an intellectual challenge and, as Cervone points out, represents a major alternative to the affective mode often considered typical of late medieval devotion.

Cervone is exceptionally perceptive of nuance in the works she analyzes, and I appreciate her commitment to attentive close reading in support of her broader theoretical argument. The chapters are subdivided into essay-like sections, sometimes very short and usually treating a single text. This arrangement promotes sharp focus on meaningful details and the context that gives them meaning; it also causes the insights of each chapter to build up gradually, through accumulation of varied examples, rather than with a more argument-driven linearity. Cervone's favored method is to select an instance of any of three widely recurring patterns of imagery—clothing, botanical flourishing or other organic growth, and material textuality—and use it as a point of entry to the larger meditations that drive the work in which it is found, demonstrating the continuity of this figurative language with the underlying structures of thought and theological exploration. Her individual readings are compelling and sometimes brilliantly illuminating: two particular highlights are chapter two's treatment of clothing and crowning imagery in Julian (72–80) and chapter three's analysis of the *Long Charter of Christ*'s interlocking metaphors of clothing and land tenure (86–94).

Beginning with chapter three, the sections become longer and more developed, and I found chapters three and five outstanding. Chapter three discusses "linguistic dilation," the device of semi-personification by which language is momentarily credited with agency. This is a useful way to address the frequently encountered tendency for late medieval literature to stylize abstract qualities as entities without quite taking on the persistence of allegory. Through linguistic dilation's endowment of abstractions with agency, writers like Langland and Julian convey an understanding of the Incarnation as both event and state. Chapter five, building on chapter four's considerations of time and narrative, takes up poetic structure as an instrument and function of Incarnational poetics. Its "layering of understandings" enables "writing and reading [to] instantiate a way of knowing" (160) that imitates the coexistence of God's suprahistorical perspective with the time-bound, teleological one characteristic of human experience. Here Cervone draws the strategies of the writers she has discussed into parallel with those of artists producing the lily Crucifixion and shows that in visual media, too, preoccupation with the embodiment of God gives rise to patterns of recurrent imagery that both call attention to and deflect the corporeality of Christ, creating effects of supereffability that are inseparable from the individual artwork's intellectual constitution.

A few times I wished Cervone would lead readers further down promising paths she had identified. In chapter one, which explores Langland's apparently novel use of the word *figuratyfly* in the context of modern linguists' approaches to the literal/figurative dichotomy, Cervone rightly observes that even more important to medieval interpretation is the dichotomy of bodily versus spiritual understanding. When she writes that "bodily does not necessarily equate to literal nor ghostly to figurative" (40), the statement functions more as a disclaimer than as an elucidation; I hoped this tension would prompt fuller theorizing of the relationship between these two frames of reference, one more natural for fourteenth-century writers and the other for their present-day readers. In chapter two, Cervone suggests that the *MED* is wrong to view *secte* and *sute* as near-synonyms, making the excellent point that all the citations given are from Langland, who uses these words, as she has demonstrated, with creative ambiguity (71), but the matter is left there. In both chapters, the questions raised are probably answerable and relevant to the thesis.

Of course, every trail cannot be followed to its end, and the project must have its boundaries. This intelligent, satisfying book could point future research in several additional directions. While the late fourteenth century is a well-chosen point of focus, Cervone is aware that the mode of thinking and writing she describes neither originates nor ends then. Her brief concluding chapter compares it to the methods of seventeenth-century metaphysical poets, and possible next steps would be to chart the intervening late- and post-medieval history or to investigate pre-fourteenth-century manifestations of the Incarnational poetic. It would be interesting to pursue, too, ways of bringing Cervone's insights on clothing imagery into contact with primary and secondary literature on real-world sartorial signification—an issue of already great social, and growing political, importance in the fourteenth century—with which the words of Julian referenced on pp. 77, 148, and 154 and the passage from the *Long Charter of Christ* quoted on p. 92 resonate strongly. Finally, future work could explore the intersection of Cervone's late medieval heuristics of the Incarnation, an event that she frames primarily in relation to divine love, with the Trinitarian schema of the Father as the power of God, the Son as the wisdom of God, and the Spirit as the love or goodness of God. Likewise derived from Pauline and Augustinian formulations, this ubiquitous conceptualization of the Trinity is present residually and sometimes overtly in texts analyzed by Cervone (such as her first Langland quotation, on p. 2, where the Holy Spirit is the "loue" that "shal lepe out" to incarnate God in Mary's womb, and passages from Julian cited on pp. 74, 143, 153, and 234n54) and interacts complexly with the phenomenon she treats.

Britt Mize

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Of Grave Concern. By Max McCoy. NY: Kensington Publishing Corp., 2013. 298 pp. $7.99 (paper).

I just love a good mystery! I cut my teeth on Nancy Drew and the Dana Girls when I was in elementary school. Worked my way through all of Agatha Christie. Just loved Martha Grimes's Richard Jury and Elizabeth George's Inspector Lynley. The list of mysteries I have read and loved spans multiple countries and is too long to list here. That is why it was so exciting to have the opportunity to review *Of Grave Concern* by Max McCoy.

Of Grave Concern is the first book in a series featuring the Reverend Professor Ophelia Wylde, a young widow who is a Spiritualist and trance medium. Set in 1877, Ophelia's adventure introduces us to Dodge City and, to some degree, pre-Civil War Memphis while recounting her personal history. Although legitimately possessing the ability to speak to the dead as demonstrated in several magically real scenes later in the novel, the reader initially believes that Ophelia is someone with good showmanship who tricks people into believing in her conversations with supposedly other-worldly relatives and historical figures. Self admittedly capable of fraudulently scamming wealthy people of suspect respectability, she also proves herself less than greedy by donating to the establishment of a local hospital and by showing her concern for solving the murder of a young Russian immigrant, whose spirit haunts the town and solicits Ophelia's help by appearing to her as the train enters Dodge City.

Ophelia disembarks the train during the brief rest stop in order to explore the existence of the Russian girl's body on the Hundredth Meridian marker located just outside the town. She is detained by local law enforcement because she is mistakenly identified as Katie Bender, the murderess wanted far and wide for her participation in robberies and serial killings perpetrated in conjunction with her family. Ophelia and her raven, Eddie, must remain in Dodge while awaiting trial, during which time she stages two performances to help pay for her legal fees, wins multiple hands of cards, helps out a local tramp and a vagrant, is buried alive, and befriends numerous local characters including the local doctor/assistant coroner and Jack Calder, a member of the Vigilance Committee with whom she eventually forms a partnership. Romance between Ophelia and Jack is strongly suspected as a possibility in sequels in the series.

Ophelia eventually is acquitted of all charges. Her legal troubles end after a time-traveling journey with Jack to reacquire her aura and to arrest Vanderslice, the man who murdered the Russian girl. During this journey, they also manage to destroy *weremen* (the antithesis of werewolves), Katie Bender, and Malleus, an otherworldly manifestation of extreme evil that substantially predates the modern era.

Many of the events presented here—such as time travel, weremen, auras, etc.—could have caused the storyline to be artificial and totally unbelievable, but McCoy's endearing characters, natural dialogue, vivid descriptions, and well-constructed narrative structure provide a seamless progression of events that maintains the novel's verisimilitude. I'm looking forward to reading the rest of the series.

Michele Shaul
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The Submerged Plot and the Mother's Pleasure from Jane Austen to Arundhati Roy. By Kelly A. Marsh. Columbus: Ohio UP, 2016. 283 pp. $84.99 (hardcover).

Kelly A. Marsh adeptly identifies in the convention of motherless daughter narratives a "submerged" or secondary plot that gives voice to the otherwise absent and silent mother. Marsh argues that this lost narrative of the mother significantly influences the daughter-protagonist's desires and decisions, more so than surface-level circumstances. Relying on feminist narrative theory in conjunction with a rhetorical approach, Marsh locates the development of this submerged plot in texts that range from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, encompassing English, American, Irish, and Indian works. By analyzing such a range, Marsh makes the case for a commonality that "alert[s] us to that which we have felt the effects of all along" (22).

Marsh concentrates specifically on the hidden story of the mother's sexual pleasure, obscured or unnarratable due to historical and cultural restraints. Since a woman's pleasure in sex serves no practical purpose in a patriarchal society, it "fall[s] below the threshold of narratability" (10). Thus, Marsh advocates shedding light on the mother's pleasure sought in sanctioned and unsanctioned unions—as well as the promise of enjoyment and the potential for dissatisfaction—as a necessary endeavor which "mov[es] the focus off the heterosexual couple who dominate the surface plot" (15). Informed by Robyn Warhol's theory of the unnarratable, Susan Stanford Friedman's spatial model of texts (charting plot on a *horizontal* axis and literary, social, and historical conditions along a *vertical* axis), and James Phelan's rhetorical method that emphasizes readers' response, Marsh uncovers a submerged plot where the daughter, unknowingly, seeks knowledge about pleasure by repeating her mother's experience. Ultimately, the daughter, in repeating her mother's experience, finds validation of her own pleasures.

Marsh pairs the following texts throughout five chapters: Austen's *Persuasion* and Bronte's *Jane Eyre*; Dickens's *Bleak House* and Collins's *The Woman in White*; Wharton's *The House of Mirth* and Bowen's *The Last September*; Walker's *The Color Purple*, Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, and Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina*; and, lastly, Dunmore's *Talking to the Dead* and Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Marsh builds on Phelan's definition of narrative completion, or the degree to which the reader experiences resolution of the text's instabilities and tensions, in Marsh's interpretation, tensions created by the submerged plot. For instance, Marsh proposes that both Anne Elliot and Jane Eyre experience a delayed, though successful, conclusion in marriage because they must first find approval for it in their mothers' stories. In *Persuasion*, Anne is drawn to her inept cousin Mr. Elliot, not just because of circumstances, but in order "to feel what her mother had felt before her . . . the false suitor . . . provides an opportunity to understand the mother's choice" (44). Lady Elliot had mistakenly married the selfish, irresponsible Sir Walter for his rank and looks; according to Marsh, only after recognizing the foreclosure of pleasure as a result of her mother's decision can Anne secure her own pleasure. Similarly in *Jane Eyre*, Marsh reconsiders the importance of St. John Rivers, who is "Jane's final opportunity to learn her mother's story by repeating her mother's experiences" (63). By marrying St. John, Jane would have married a poor curate like her father. Jane also anticipates she would not survive the harsh Indian climate, paralleling her mother's early death. Jane does not reject her mother's narrative entirely; Marsh insists that Jane's reunion with Rochester affirms her mother's pleasure, which subversively crossed class lines.

With Dickens and Collins, Marsh addresses dual surface plots—marriage and mystery—which impact the submerged one. In these texts, the mother's illicit past is central, and other characters, or multiple narrations, impede the truth of the mother's story. Departing from convention, however, Esther can learn directly from her mother, literally following her and finding her dead at her lover's (Esther's father) gravesite, a validation of her mother's unsanctioned pleasure that influences her decision to marry Woodcut. In contrast, Marsh believes the submerged plot in Collins's text reaches an ambiguous conclusion as Anne never completes her search, though she does help Laura achieve hers. In both novels, Marsh suggests the mothers' affairs do not undermine the daughters' search for pleasure within traditional means. As Marsh begins her analysis into twentieth-century American texts, she draws an engaging distinction. While the daughters in the older texts connect with their absent mothers through pleasure, these daughters are raped by their mothers' husbands, and the connection through pleasure becomes horrifying and alienating. In Marsh's reading, the daughters' narrations are acts of power, shaping readers' response to their inadequate mothers. Marsh ends on a variation of the submerged plot in late twentieth-century English and Indian novels where the daughters' quest to unearth their mothers' story is fueled by intense guilt, identifying themselves (rightly or wrongly) as obstacles to their mothers' pleasure. Marsh sharply observes the role of time in the submerged plot, whether in the form of repressed memories in Dumore or Roy's use of analepsis; additionally, in Roy's text, Marsh asserts that the subversive pleasures depicted (e.g., the incest between Estha and Rahel, Ammu's affair with an untouchable) are fleeting, actually increasing their value.

In clear and insightful prose, Marsh's account of the submerged plot is an impressive analysis that carefully denotes the parallel experiences of mother and daughter, bringing to the forefront sidelined characters and seemingly minor episodes in the process. With this new perspective, Marsh allows for the importance of absent mothers in the development of the daughter-protagonist as she comes to realize the dynamics of pleasure in her own pursuit for completeness. Marsh's intriguing text spotlights the sexual desires of the motherless daughter, functioning as a valuable inquiry into both narrative and character development.

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Upcoming Special Issue: Judith Ortiz Cofer

Judith Ortiz Cofer. Photograph courtesy of John Cofer.

Judith Ortiz Cofer (1952–2016) was a literary pioneer; in the early eighties, she headed the first generation of Latina writers to attract the attention of university and commercial publishing houses in the United States. Her work spans literary genres: poetry, fiction (both the novel and the short story), the essay and creative non-fiction essay, and children's literature. This special issue will trace Ortiz Cofer's literary legacy. A writer who broke new literary and critical grounds and an acclaimed poet and prose writer solidly rooted in a bi-cultural background, Ortiz Cofer proudly claimed, "I have earned the right to call myself a Southern Latina writer." We seek essays that examine the geographical and cultural convergences within Ortiz Cofer's work and that reflect upon her life, both as a Puerto Rican-born author, who drew from her childhood memories growing in Hormigueros, and as a full-fledged Latina activist and professor of English at the University of Georgia, who was committed to gender and economic issues affecting Latino communities.

Submission deadline: June 1, 2017

Submit your essays or address any questions to co-editors Lorraine M. López, Vanderbilt University, at lorraine.lopez@vanderbilt.edu and Rafael Ocasio, Agnes Scott College, at rocasio@agnesscott.edu.

Additional information regarding submission requirements can be found on our website: http://samla.memberclicks.net/sar.

Upcoming Special Issue: Political Literature

As creators and curators of culture, writers chronicle their reality, envision alternate realities, or offer escapes from reality. They have their fingers on the pulse of every political issue, every movement, every crisis, every alliance, every act of oppression and resistance. Literature, never created in a vacuum, is both shaped by and shapes the political life of its own time and place—and, in the finest of works, other times and places. Whether compelled by moral duty or intellectual interest, authors in every milieu have challenged or celebrated the status quo in their works. As Chinua Achebe writes in “The Novelist as Teacher” (*New Statesman*, 29 Jan. 1965), “The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of reeducation and regeneration that must be done. In fact, he should march right in front.” Novelists, playwrights, poets, essayists, and filmmakers have crafted discourse that explores the meaning of being a social actor—ways of being, thinking, acting, and speaking within structures of power and privilege.

We are seeking essays for a special issue of *South Atlantic Review* that will investigate the ways in which authors, texts, and critics have engaged questions of power, identity, equality, freedom, economy, patriotism, dissidence, violence, and ideology in public life.

This special issue on “Political Literature” explores the literature of politics and the politics of literature. We are seeking a broad array of genres, cultures, political systems, issues, identities, viewpoints, and methodologies. We define the terms “political” and “literature” broadly in order to encompass a rich variety of texts and theories.

For consideration, please send a 250–500 word proposal and an abbreviated (2-page) CV to Diana Eidson (deidson@auburn.edu) by June 1, 2017. Completed essays (using MLA style) will be due on October 15, 2017.

Additional information regarding submission requirements can be found on our website: http://samla.memberclicks.net/sar.