

IDIOM

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VOLUME 10 2016

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IDIOM

ENGLISH
UNDERGRADUATE
ACADEMIC JOURNAL

VOLUME 10 2016



W. W. P.

plain white

dark crimson

oak

oak

oak

oak

oak

oak floor cloths

reflections
of wood in
mahogany

oil cloth

Turkey patterned Carpet

30.7. August 1859
30.11. August 1859

IDIOM

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ACADEMIC JOURNAL

An annual publication of exemplary
literary criticism written by undergraduates
at the University of Toronto

VOLUME 10 2016

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

While sitting down to compose this Editor's Note, I found myself engaged in the complex (yet familiar) ritual of writing, attempting to strike the appropriate balance between the reader and the textual object that is this very journal. Since its founding in 2006, *IDIOM* has sought to publish essays that succeed in establishing such a balance, the very essays that utilize artistry to draw the reader in whilst simultaneously presenting illuminating and captivating analyses, evaluations, and interpretations of a wide array of texts. Ten years later, *IDIOM* continues to operate as one of the few available avenues through which the literary criticism of undergraduate students from all three campuses at the University of Toronto is showcased, as well as celebrated for its polished and enchanting qualities. In aiming to provide the undergraduate community with models of exemplary academic research and writing, *IDIOM* also seeks to inspire dialogue amongst students, faculty, and community members alike.

In this year's volume, readers will discover a truly versatile collection of essays that speak to the analytical, rhetorical, and stylistic talents possessed by undergraduate students of English literature at the University of Toronto. On such a note, it is with sheer delight that I, on behalf of the 2015–2016 Editorial Board, present you with the tenth volume of *IDIOM*. It is my hope that in reading the essays contained therein, readers will find themselves amidst intricate, captivating, and stimulating labyrinths, surfacing from these literary tangles with more profound questions, insightful answers, and lingering fascinations than before.

With each piece of this volume now in its rightful place, expressions of tremendous gratitude are duly in order. The publication of *IDIOM*, Volume 10 would not have been possible without the ever-present effort put forward by the Editorial Board over the course of the 2015–2016 academic year. I am grateful to the editors for their dedication and patience, as well as their eagerness and scrupulousness. Likewise, this volume is indebted to the invaluable guidance of Dr. Vikki Visvis and Professor Thomas Keymer, both of whom gave their

time to support the Editorial Board as it navigated the processes of selecting, editing, and preparing the essays featured in this volume. An extension of sincerest thanks to Becky Caunce is due, as Becky's creative and complex design work enlivens the visual and textual content of *IDIOM*'s 10th volume. Additionally, I would like to thank our sponsors for their immense and continued generosity, which actively supports the creation of opportunities for undergraduate critical work to be recognized and engaged with beyond private writing spaces and academic milieus. Finally, to the many students who submitted compelling samples of original work for the Editorial Board's consideration, I thank you. To the authors whose analyses fill the pages of this volume, I commend you, both for your commitment throughout the revisionary stages and for your overall willingness to share your work.

In an essay entitled "How to be a Good Reader," Vladimir Nabokov suggests, "in reading, one should always notice and fondle the details." Although Nabokov's instructions are by nature intended for the reader of fiction, I nonetheless invite the reader—whether they unexpectedly stumble upon a copy of *IDIOM* or seek one out with intention—to bear Nabokov's advice in mind when reading through this volume, as the rewards will prove "various and abundant." Take note of how the pages feel between your fingers. Indulge in the processes of perceiving, understanding, and responding to the literary interests, thoughts, and analyses of your peers. Observe how your own critical voice emerges as a result. Examine each author's ideas as if they are new worlds, as well as active ones, as the opportunities for critical discussion presented within each essay are enduring (they manifest themselves, again and again, as a direct result of the reader's engagement). Note how each essay links to other worlds, to other branches of knowledge. Read. Reread. Finally, observe and caress the very words that comprise this volume, as they were selected and arranged with purpose: to serve as entryways into the critical ideas of our respective authors.

GRACE GESUALDO, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

March 2016

THE UPPER HAND: GLOVES AND MORAL GOOD IN *BLEAK HOUSE*

Carling Fraser

Carling wrote this essay for EN4423: Material Culture in Victorian and Modernist Fiction while on exchange at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. Taught by fellow Canadian Dr. Christina Alt, the course combined the study of material culture with literary analysis, exploring the influence of objects on the writings of Victorian and modernist authors. Focusing on the use of gloves in Charles Dickens' *Bleak House*, this essay argues that gloves are used ironically to critique the notion that the pristine and protected hands of the upper classes are more morally capable than the rough, exposed hands of the working class. In the text, the idea of "clean" and "unclean" hands is used metaphorically to suggest that physical purity does not necessitate moral purity, and the sullied but hardworking hands of the lower classes are greater purveyors of morality than the idle hands of the rich. In effect, a seemingly insignificant part of the text—the interspersed mention of gloves—provides implicit commentary on the issues of social status and societal stagnation that *Bleak House* seeks to address.

Charles Dickens's novel *Bleak House* is a cornucopia of Victorian conspicuous consumption, where emphasis is placed upon one commodity in particular—gloves. In the Victorian era, gloves were an important fashion accessory, incorporated into the everyday dress of Victorian men and women. As a commodity, gloves carry class connotations in *Bleak House* as markers of socio-economic status, as they inhibit the ability of the wearer to conduct manual labour. Only the socially affluent can afford the luxury of gloves, and, as a result, maintain clean hands by being exempt from the performance of labour, while those who do not wear gloves—the poor—have their hands subjected to the strain and dirtiness of manual work. However, in *Bleak House*, gloves also carry moral connotations, as the contrast between "clean" and "unclean" hands divides the working class from the upper classes, and adopts metaphoric significance by signaling to the reader that the physical purity of the hands does not always equate to the moral purity of the

individual. Ultimately, gloves are used ironically in *Bleak House* to critique the notion that the hands of the idle rich are as morally pure as their spotless gloves, instead positioning the rich as morally depraved, while the dirtied hands of the gloveless, hardworking poor are presented as more capable of goodness.

In the Victorian period, the modest coverage that clothing provided extended to the hands, in the form of gloves. Before *Bleak House* was serialized between 1852 and 1853, gloves were advertised by etiquette manuals as the proper uniform of the upper class, as seen in *The Handbook of the man of fashion*, published anonymously in 1846: “Among trivial matters, nothing, perhaps, more often distinguishes a gentleman from a plebian, than the wearing of gloves” (*The Handbook* 17). In *Bleak House*, Mr. Turveydrop, a master of deportment and owner of a derelict dance school, exemplifies this attitude towards glove-wearing outlined in *The Handbook of the man of fashion*. Not only is he a “model of Deportment” (Dickens 226), he is also an imitator of the upper class, and the attention he draws towards his gloved hands reveals his desire to represent the perfect gentleman. When we are first introduced to Turveydrop, there is “in his hand a pair of white gloves, with which he flapped it, as he stood poised on one leg, in a high shouldered round-elbowed state of elegance not to be surpassed” (Dickens 225). Turveydrop waves his gloves in the air like a flag that marks his desired class to the reader. When we are introduced to Turveydrop, attention is drawn to his hands and gloves, as he is described “waving his gloves condescendingly” (Dickens 225), but also “kissing his right glove” and “[drawing] on his tight gloves” (Dickens 227). Turveydrop’s reliance on gloves to convey his deportment, or elegance, is evidence of the power gloves have in communicating social status. While Turveydrop is not truly a member of the upper class, as his dance classes take place in a “sufficiently dingy house” (Dickens 222), he is aware of the way gloves are integral to the appearance of a high-standing gentleman. Instead, Turveydrop depends on gloves as part of an upper-class costume, to create a performance of nobility that conceals his true status.

During the Victorian era, the superiority associated with glove wearing was fueled by production methods. Gloves were considered a possession of the upper class because, as tailor-made commodities, gloves were expensive to buy and therefore exclusive to the upper and middle classes (Beaujot 46). In *Bleak House*, the Victorian era cost dynamic inherent to the production and sale of gloves is reflected in Caddy Jellyby’s character. Caddy, the daughter of the philanthropic Mrs. Jellyby and eventual wife of Prince Turveydrop, is described as owning multiple pairs of gloves, “put[ting] on an entirely new pair of gloves” following “another turn or two round the garden” (Dickens 375). According to Ariel Beaujot, in the Victorian period “women were advised to change their gloves numerous times a day in order to avoid worn or loose gloves” (Beaujot 46). Caddy can conform to this rule of etiquette, due to her ability to purchase more than one pair of gloves. Miss Flite on the other hand, an eccentric elderly woman whose family wealth has been liquidated in a Chancery legal case, is described as wearing “a much worn-out and often-mended pair of gloves” (Dickens 565). Miss Flite cannot afford to buy another pair of gloves, and is forced to re-wear and repair them each time they wear out, as her funds are unable to sustain her legal case (Dickens 47-48). As a result, the social status of both women is revealed by the state of the fabric worn on their hands.

Gloves signify class through their representation as a material commodity, and in their protection of the body. When Lady Dedlock disguises herself, her exposed pristine hands reveal her true identity: “She draws off her glove, to get some money from her purse. Jo silently notices how white and small her hand is and what a jolly servant she must be to wear such sparkling rings” (Dickens 264). Ironically, as Jo observes, the rings, hands and gloves are not those of a servant, but of a person of wealth. Lady Dedlock is able to maintain her fair, delicate hands because she is married to a baronet and does not have to work (Dickens 286). Baroness Staffe, writing on the “lily white hands of fine ladies,” in her nineteenth-century guidebook *The Lady’s Dressing Room*, proposes “that one must have descended from a stock that has enjoyed five centuries of leisure to possess a perfectly elegant and aristocratic hand.” (Staffe 184). The whiteness of Lady Dedlock’s hands is a result of the leisure Staffe describes, as Lady Dedlock is normally shown sitting in a chair or carriage (Dickens 296-97; 299), sheltered for most of the day, and unexposed to physical or outdoor work. The whiteness of her hand may also be attributed to the act of glove wearing, which preserves Lady Dedlock’s skin from sun, dirt, and weathering.

The whiteness of Lady Dedlock’s hands is ironic, as her morals in *Bleak House* are not as immaculate as her skin or gloves. Although whiteness can be associated with purity—moral purity in particular—it is those who have darker, dirtier, and worn hands in *Bleak House* that are shown to have purer morals. In “The Bleak Houses of *Bleak House*” Alice van Buren Kelley argues that *Bleak House* represents Victorian England’s need for housekeeping, and places like the Chancery and Chesney Wold can be read as embodiments of the stagnant and ultimately bleak state of society (van Buren Kelly 254). If, as van Buren Kelley argues, Dickens identifies the need for a housekeeper, Lady Dedlock falls short of this task and fails at being the moral core of the home. In the nineteenth century, lower-class women who worked hard to maintain their household became the moral centre of the family, and the process of undertaking this housework without servants caused the roughness of their work to show on their hands (Beaujot 33). Lady Dedlock not only designates her housework to servants, but she also fails in *Bleak House* as a caretaker, because she does not care for her child Esther and instead leaves her as a burden on her sister (Dickens 579). The delegation of her chores to servants means that Lady Dedlock’s hands are not involved in work, and therefore her idleness contributes to the stagnation and moral decay of the Chesney Wold estate, and ultimately reflects the sluggish moral deficiency that plagues all of the noble and judiciary levels of society.

Conversely, the caretaking capabilities of the working class are positively highlighted in *Bleak House*, specifically in regard to Mr. George, who, “prefer[ing] to serve in Sir Leicester Dedlock’s household brigade” (Dickens 957), becomes the caretaker at Chesney Wold at the end of the novel. While Mr. George has a moral purpose at Chesney Wold, the appearance of his hands—weathered and rough—aligns closely with van Buren Kelly’s societal housekeeper, who works away to create a morally perfect dwelling. Contrasted with Lady Dedlock’s small white hands, Mr. George’s “sinewy and powerful hands, as sunburnt as his face, have evidently been used to a pretty rough life” (Dickens 341). The texture and pigment of his “broad brown hand” (Dickens 341) are a result of the manual work he undertakes, placing him amongst the gloveless working class. The same can also be said for the working class Mrs. Bagnet, who, although not a caretaker

of Chesney Wold, is described while unpacking a basket of food as having “bare brown hands” (Dickens 799), indicating that they are gloveless and not white like Lady Dedlock’s hands. Despite this, Mrs. Bagnet’s hands are earlier described as “honest hands” (Dickens 543), implying that the honest physical work of the lower classes is closely associated with moral goodness, while the inactivity of Lady Dedlock and the upper class gloved hands do nothing to encourage moral behaviour and progress in society.

Since housekeepers and caretakers—those who get their hands dirty—are upheld in *Bleak House*, Charley can also be seen as an example of morality through her role as a housekeeper. While her childish hands lack the fine breeding of a Dedlock, they are busy taking care of her siblings. When Charley is introduced, her hands are at work with housekeeping: “a little girl in a rough apron and a large bonnet with her hands covered with soap and water, and a scrubbing brush in one of them, appears, and curtsseys” (Dickens 336). In contrast with other working class characters, such as Jo, who “smears his dirty forehead with his dirty palm” (Dickens 419), or Phil Squod, who hides “his blackened hands” (Dickens 419) when eating, Charley’s hands are clean. When at the wash bin, her hands are examined in detail:

Her fingers were white and wrinkled with washing, and the soap-suds were yet smoking which she wiped off her arms. But for this, she might have been a child, playing at washing, imitating a poor working woman with a quick observation of the truth. (Dickens 245)

While irony is used throughout the novel in regards to the cleanliness or uncleanness of a character’s hands, Charley’s clean hands can be read with sincerity, as she exemplifies morality in her role as a caretaker of her siblings and housekeeper of their dwelling. Her hands are continually cleansed, to the extent that they are “wrinkled” or pruned, the more she works at housekeeping, which can be read as a metaphor for the cleanliness of moral spirit that comes with housekeeping. In her chores, the poor working class woman she resembles is comparable to the moral centre of the house, and the truth she observes can be likened to that of moral truth, or the honesty and elevating principles of good work. Interestingly, her hands are described as white—the ultimate colour of purity—suggesting that “dirty” work is the greatest source of moral cleanliness.

Charley’s clean and sincere morality is a stark contrast to the morality of Mr. Vholes, whose immorality and dishonesty are symbolized by his black-gloved hands. The lawyer is frequently described as wearing gloves, and when his gloves are eventually removed, Vholes “takes off his close black gloves as if he were skinning his hands” (Dickens 623). In his essay “Law Suits: Clothing as the Image of Law,” Gary Watt comments on Vholes’ skinning of his hands, arguing that he is “one of flesh with his clothing,” as the establishment of such closeness between his hand and gloves creates an “identity between the wearer and the thing worn like hardly any other relation between the body and cloth” (Watt 31). Vholes’ identity as a lawyer is linked to his uniform, specifically his gloves, and when he takes them off, it is clear that they are not just part of his hand, but part of his self. The blackness of Vholes’ gloves, referred to as “funeral gloves” (Dickens 697), relates to the death of Richard’s funds, as Vholes swindles Richard’s money away. In other words, the demise of Richard’s resources rests at the hands of Vholes. As such, the

corrupt behaviour of the lawyer can be characterized by the moral dirtiness of his hands. When Richard speaks to Vholes of the progress of the suit, Vholes states, “I wish to leave my good name unstilled [...] You, sir, thought it fit to withdraw your interests from that keeping nevertheless, and to offer them to me. You brought them with clean hands, sir, and I accepted them with “clean hands” (Dickens 628). While Vholes claims he accepted Richard’s business with “clean hands,” the irony is that his gloves and his hands can be seen as one, and while they are not blackened with dirt, they are blackened with moral corruption. This corruption, so intertwined with his character, cannot be cleaned or washed off, as it has become one with the skin—his hands are inked with the blackness of moral decay. Therefore, Vholes’ moral impurity is manifested on his hands, even though, literally, his glove-clad hands give off the appearance of being clean.

Bleak House offers a critique of Victorian society through its ironic use of gloves, as these small, material items indicate not only social, but also moral, disparity between social classes. The gloved hands of the rich are morally blemished, while the sullied and strained hands of the poor are morally pristine. Gloves, as fashion items purchased for both conspicuous consumption and compliance to Victorian social protocol, become indicators of high social standing, while bare hands exposed to the elements and harshness of manual labour indicate the impoverishment of the working class. Although the upper classes were seen as moral pillars of Victorian society due to their upbringing and refinement, Dickens’ depiction of the upper classes’ idleness in *Bleak House* seems to suggest that the manual labour of the lower classes is the preferred path to moral purity. Ungloved activities, such as housekeeping and manual work are more morally pure because of their aim for improvement, while the wearing of gloves is criticized for its binding effect on the hands, which suffocates the progress of society by leaving the upper classes idle. Ultimately, *Bleak House* stands as an example of how the study of material culture in texts, even small or seemingly insignificant objects, is tied to the greater purpose of the social novel. Gloves in particular, an important aspect of Victorian society, also become important indicators of the progress and moral state of a class-based society.

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ELUCIDATING THE DEATH DRIVE: A PSYCHOANALYTIC INTERPRETATION OF SAMUEL BECKETT'S *ENDGAME*

Samuel Cullen

The critics of Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* are often perplexed by the circular and repetitious nature of the play's dialogue and action. In his essay, Samuel argues that Sigmund Freud's theorization of the death drive reveals essential aspects of Beckett's play. This paper begins by describing the death drive and explaining the psychical forces that push an organism to endeavour towards the inorganic state of death. Samuel then turns to the play, paralleling the visual arrangement of the stage with the human psyche and asserting that Hamm and Clov function allegorically as psychical energies, or cathexes. Their compulsion to repeat is manifested in nonsensical language and routines without logical end. Like any work of literature, the words are essential; however, Samuel argues that the semantic meanings of words in *Endgame* are undercut and replaced by their organization within schemes of repetition like epanalepsis, polyptoton, and polysyndeton. Samuel thus proceeds to analyze the tension produced by the material and immaterial routines performed by Hamm and Clov, focusing on the ambivalent relationship they share with one another. This essay demonstrates that Beckett's play is therefore held together not by any traditional forms of plot organization, but simply the repetition of sounds and actions. By analyzing repetition in *Endgame* according to literary and psychoanalytic lenses, it may be asserted that the meaningless repetition characteristic of the death drive reflects the play's argument and, on a larger scale, the human condition.

Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* opens and closes with the stage directions "brief tableau" (Beckett 1, 84, emphasis in original), foreshadowing the circular and repetitious nature of the play's action. Beckett was heavily influenced by psychoanalytic thought throughout the course of his literary career, and his works provided him with a space where he could investigate and explore psychoanalytic theory. One of the prevalent concepts Beckett explores in *Endgame* is Freud's conceptualization of the human psyche's compulsion to repeat painful or unpleasurable experiences. Freud hypothesized that this unconscious compulsion is a fundamental aspect of the death drive, a concept he theorized in his 1920 essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Repetition permeates the play. By examining moments of repetition in respect to the play's schematization, verbal soundscape, and action, I aim to elucidate how Freud's death drive reveals essential aspects of Beckett's work.

I want to initially turn to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where Freud begins to develop his idea of the death drive. In this essay, Freud defines the pleasure principle as "an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure" (Freud 7) that governs the human psyche's operations. However, Freud notices an anomaly within this principle, because individuals have a compulsion to repeat unpleasurable experiences. In theorizing the motivation behind this compulsion, Freud comes to the conclusion that "repetition, [or] the re-experiencing of something identical, is clearly in itself a source of pleasure," and does not in fact "[contradict] the pleasure principle" (Freud 36). This observation leads Freud to theorize another, more primordial force operating within the human psyche that accounts for the compulsion to repeat, which he calls the death instincts (or death drive). He insists "that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces" (Freud 36, emphasis in original). Therefore, the mental apparatus, before engaging with the pleasure principle, is tasked to binding instinctual excitations; however, when the force of the mental apparatus fails, an intense instinctual cathexis emerges as a compulsion to repeat (Freud 35). Thus, Freud successfully constructs an intimate relationship, linking the death drive and the compulsion to repeat. In *Endgame*, Beckett explores this theory in depth and invites his audience to witness the play's action as an allegorical depiction of psychical forces operating within the human psyche.

The action of *Endgame* takes place on a meticulously constructed, minimalist stage. Beckett requires "[left and right back, high up, two small windows, curtains drawn [...] [front right, a door [and] a picture [...] [front left [...] two ashbins" and finally at the "[center [...] Hamm" (Beckett 1, emphasis in original). The visual arrangement of the stage resembles a human skull: the windows are eyes, Hamm is the nasal cavity, and the ashbins, door, picture, and the downstage edge roughly form a grin. The outside that is revealed once Clov draws back the left and right curtains (Beckett 1) creates an interior and exterior distinction, suggesting the psychical and somatic dichotomy fundamental to psychoanalysis. The play is concerned with the psychical element because all the action occurs on the stage—or inside the skull—where ideas are formed. Furthermore, Beckett suggests the state of the psyche is near the end of its life, as indicated by both the play's title and the stage's function as a *memento mori*. The endgame is "the

final phase of a game, when there are few chessmen left on the board” (Standage 175). There is a parallel between the final point in a chess game and the final phase of a mind in Freud’s work, for if “*the aim of all life is death*” (Freud 38, emphasis in original), then an organism’s instinct to return to an inorganic state is close to being realized. The physical degeneration of the body characteristic of aging parallels an equally inevitable psychical degeneration. Therefore, the death drive is manifested through the repetitious dimensions of the play because the failing mental apparatus cannot efficiently bind the intense instinctual cathexis of the death drive.

The death drive is prevalent throughout the entirety of *Endgame* in the form of repetition, and I want to first examine the repetition in Hamm’s lines. Near the play’s conclusion, when the endgame of the psyche is almost achieved, Hamm cryptically says, “[o]ld endgame lost of old, play and lose and have done with losing” (Beckett 82). The sentence is extremely rich, as it contains three schemes of repetition: epanalepsis, polyptoton, and polysyndeton. The epanalepsis draws our attention to the repeated word *old*, suggesting that the impending death instincts, present since the opening of the play, are close to being realized. The polyptoton further intensifies the idea of life’s futility, because the common root of lost, lose, and losing—when paired with the intensity provided by the epanalepsis—could suggest the inescapable finality of death. Individuals cannot escape this fate, for their psyche will always be overcome by the death drive. However, a noteworthy feature of the polyptoton is its variety: all three words share a common root but are distinguished by the varying inflection. This scheme of repetition incorporates the compulsion to repeat while simultaneously stressing the degenerating status of the psyche by denying absolute uniformity. Finally, the polysyndeton again intensifies this futility by adding a dimension of solemnity to the sentence. Hamm is supposed to speak these words “[w]earily” (Beckett 82, emphasis in original); thus, his weariness is paired with the added conjunctions that acoustically draw out the sentence and produce a degenerating effect characteristic of the death drive. In this moment, the death drive possesses a high level of control, as the instinctual compulsion to repeat is performed without logical precedence. The sentence’s meaning does not rely primarily on words, but on the schemes arranging the words. Without a doubt, the analyzed sentence is nonsensical; however, the sentence possesses significance because the schemes of repetition structure the words not in respect to their semantic import, but instead in respect to their acoustic quality. The linguistic degeneration present in this sentence of *Endgame* undercuts but does not eliminate the semantic significance of words, allowing Beckett to lay stress on the importance of his play’s soundscape.

Beckett primarily values a sentence’s acoustic texture and not its semantic meaning, a theme that carries great significance within the play. As such, I want to turn to the moments where the action is punctuated by noise. In the play, whenever Hamm needs Clov, the stage directions repeatedly state, “[Hamm] whistles. Enter Clov” (Beckett 3, 9, 23, 54, 70, emphasis in original). If Hamm and Clov are viewed as psychical forces, Hamm can be seen as the mental apparatus that attempts to bind, metabolize, and discharge psychical energy. In contrast, Clov’s unique ability to move about the stage suggests his role as an unbound cathexis originating from the death drive. Freud explores this process in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where he asserts, “impulses arising

from the instincts [...] [are] *freely mobile* [and] press towards discharge” (Freud 34). The tension between Hamm and Clov personifies this process. Hamm and Clov’s names roughly translate from French to English as hammer and nail, thereby stressing that one’s existence necessarily depends upon the presence of the other, much like the nail depends upon the hammer. Hamm and Clov often repeat a similar conversation in *Endgame*. One example is when Clov says, “I’ll leave you,” and Hamm replies, “you can’t leave *us*” (Beckett 37, emphasis added). Blending the singular and plural pronouns allows Beckett to simultaneously suggest that Hamm and Clov are distinct and unified—just like the psychological forces that constitute the human psyche.

Returning to Hamm’s repeated use of the whistle: this noise can be understood as a futile attempt by the mental apparatus to bind and discharge the instinctual cathexis Clov represents. Instinctual cathexis can never be discharged according to Freud’s theory because it plays a fundamental role in the human psyche. Therefore, the mental apparatus is required to repress this cathexis by binding it, and rebinding it whenever it becomes freely mobile. The status of the psyche comes into question near the play’s conclusion, when “[Hamm] whistles. Pause. Louder. Pause” (Beckett 84, emphasis in original), but Clov fails to appear. Hamm’s inability to control Clov stresses the play’s degenerating status since repetition, the major scheme holding the play together, is failing. However, the repetition is deteriorating, not broken. When Hamm whistles and Clov fails to respond, Clov is nonetheless present: the stage directions have previously indicated that Clov is required to “[halt] by the door and [stand] there, impassive and motionless,” as well as “dressed for the road” (Beckett 82, emphasis in original). The degenerating activity of Clov on the stage suggests that the cathexis necessary for mental life is beginning to diminish, and that the death drive’s goal of returning the body to inorganic matter is close to being realized. The psychological forces of the mind are present, but cannot operate in concert with one another. When Hamm finally “throws the whistle towards auditorium” (Beckett 84, emphasis in original), the link that connects him and Clov is lost in a place where it cannot be retrieved. Repetition holds the play together, and when it becomes evident that the repeated whistle present throughout the course of the play will *never* be repeated again, there is a sense of finality. However, this finality foreshadows the end of the play for Beckett’s audience, as shortly after this moment, the play fades into a “*brief tableau*” (Beckett 84, emphasis in original) and ends.

The death drive perpetually aims to return a living organism back to its original inorganic state, where psychological excitation cannot be processed; however, returning to an inorganic state is only possible through death, which would contradict the pleasure principle. Freud introduces a caveat that simultaneously satisfies the pleasure principle and the death drive, which he also includes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Freud incorporates Barbara Low’s concept of the nirvana principle, which he defines as “the effort to reduce, to keep constant, or to remove internal tension due to stimuli” (Freud 55–56). The internal stimuli of the play would equate to the interaction between the characters, which is repeatedly being minimized via various means throughout the duration of the play. When Hamm is woken by Clov’s initial movements on stage, his first response is to separate himself from the action, by demanding that Clov “[g]et [him] ready, [for] bed” (Beckett 3). Hamm, representing a psychological force within

the mind, manifests the ever-present death drive within the play by attempting to reduce the tension produced by excitation. However, when natural sedation fails, Beckett defaults to a more self-destructive method of sedation: drug use. The play is punctuated by Hamm's unabating desire for "[his] pain-killer" (Beckett 7, 12, 24, 35, 48, 71), unequivocally implying a desire for the psyche to enter a state where psychical excitation is virtually eliminated. However, like the whistle's cycle of repetition, the painkiller routine ends when Clov reveals to Hamm, "[t]here's no more pain-killer" (Beckett 71). The difference between the two acoustic scenarios, however, is that the whistle scenario depends on the whistle's material existence, while the painkiller routine is theoretical. The latter routine exists independent of an object, and the transition from a material to immaterial routine stresses not only a degeneration of logic that is characteristic of the death drive, but also a withdrawal from the exterior world and the stimuli it provides to the increasingly isolated human psyche. Logic and instinctual drives, like the death drive, have an inverse relationship. When the mental apparatus fails to bind the instinctual cathexis of the death drive, actions are performed without logical ends, thereby stressing the degenerating status of the mental apparatus. This explains the death drive's increasingly pervasive nature, for its destructive presence within the human psyche slowly drive Hamm and Clov towards an inorganic state of being. Beckett's play is heavily motivated by Freud's conceptualization of the death drive, as Beckett portrays characters that refuse to leave one another, although they continually flirt with this notion of separation on multiple levels of the psyche.

Repetition is essential to understanding Beckett's *Endgame*. While literary tools greatly elucidate the many functions of repetition, Freud's psychoanalytic theories invite the audience to approach Beckett's material from a different perspective. Freudian notions allow the audience to speculate that the death drive motivates and drives the play's action, for the play's repetition invites psychoanalytic interpretation. The brief tableau that opens and closes the play encapsulates the essential function of repetition in Beckett's play. When an individual picks up any text, not only Beckett's *Endgame*, its inorganic features are easily recognizable: there are simply words on a page. However, once the reader begins to read, life is breathed into the text as long as the act of reading is sustained. When the book is put aside, the experience ends. Beckett is drawing a parallel between the human psyche and literature, for both begin as inorganic matter that comes to life through some ineffable process. Ultimately, though, this process cannot last, as the organism is eventually doomed to die and to return to inorganic matter; all that either entity can do is bind the death drive as long as possible.

Samuel Cullen

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REFRAMING HISTORY THROUGH THE GOTHIC IN CHESTER BROWN'S *LOUIS RIEL: A COMIC-STRIP BIOGRAPHY*

Emily Deibert

This paper (originally written for ENG357: New Writing in Canada) explores the entwined roles of the literary Gothic and what postmodern theorist Linda Hutcheon terms “historiographic metafiction” in representations of the Riel Rebellions in Chester Brown’s *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography*. Juxtaposing historical records and primary sources with self-reflexive author’s notes and appendices, the comic-strip examines the complex interplay between fact and fiction in Canadian history and historicization. Brown’s dark, deeply contrasting illustrations echo both the traditional atmosphere of the literary Gothic, as well as the rigid, “black and white” historical discourse which the graphic novel seeks to undermine. Through his use of the Gothic motifs of haunting and ghosts, Brown sheds light on an alternate perspective of the Riel Rebellions, effectively “re-ghosting” Thomas Scott (and by extension, the Canadian government and the Hudson’s Bay Company) and “haunting back” against reductive stereotypes of the Métis which have persisted in customary depictions of this marginalized group and their culture. The author would like to thank Dr. Vikki Visvis for her encouragement and extremely helpful feedback prior to the publication of this essay, as well as Mitch Cram and Dina Ginzburg for their support and valuable insight throughout the editing process.

In the foreword to Julia Round's *Gothic in Comic Books and Graphic Novels*, literary Gothic theorist David Punter argues that "[t]here are stories [...] which can never fully be told, which cannot conveniently be sealed off, stories which continue to haunt" (Round 1), and that these are the stories with which both comic books and the literary Gothic are fundamentally concerned. To Punter, "both [comics and the Gothic] are forms of social critique" (Punter 2) that "[tell] tales which continually challenge and threaten societal assumptions" (Punter 1). Although Round's work focuses primarily on the Gothic in comics of British or American origins, the idea that the Gothic can be used in comics to "threaten societal assumptions" (Punter 1) holds equally true from a Canadian perspective, especially when one considers the important role that the Gothic has played—and continues to play—in the evolving Canadian literary tradition. Indeed, in her seminal work on the Canadian Gothic, literary critic Cynthia Sugars uses Punter's idea that "the Gothic signals a 'refusal to be written out of history'" (Punter, qtd. in Sugars 6) to explore how "the 'idea' of Canada [has always] integrally [been] caught up with discourses of the Gothic" (Sugars 6). Sugars details the evolution of the Gothic in Canadian literature, considering how the Gothic was originally "invoked by [Canadian] authors as a way of getting at anxieties about historicity [...] and historicization" (Sugars 52), and has more recently been used to "explore anxieties associated with [Canada's] period of colonial conquest and settlement as a way of asserting a postcolonial retake on Canadian history" (Sugars 164)—a tradition that echoes both Punter and Round's view of the Gothic as "a subversive and critical way of addressing problems in [history and] society" (Round 55).

Canadian cartoonist Chester Brown's 2003 work *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* addresses anxieties about Canadian historicity by examining a definitive and controversial moment in Canadian history through the lens of the literary Gothic as applied to the comic art form. In particular, Canadian *historiography*—which Sugars defines as "how one writes history into a new culture [and] how one is obsessively aware of living in history" (Sugars 119)—is examined throughout the text. Through traditional Gothic motifs underscored by the medium of the comic-strip and detailed appendices that render a work deeply self-reflexive, Brown explores the idea of history as a construct rather than an objective truth, and addresses the "subjectivity of interpretation" (Murphy 469) inherent in historical accounts. By taking on Louis Riel, a figure so "contradictory" and "radically overdetermined [...] as to provoke seemingly inexhaustible interpretation" (Hathorn and Holland i), Brown challenges the master narratives of Canadian history. He uses the overarching themes of subversion and socio-historical critique inherent to both the Gothic and comics to position *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* as what Canadian postmodern theorist Linda Hutcheon terms "historiographic metafiction" (Hutcheon, "Historiographic Metafiction" 3): a narrative that paradoxically "works to situate itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction" (Hutcheon, "Historiographic Metafiction" 4). This self-reflexive exposition of Canadian history ultimately complicates the authenticity of traditional historical discourses, as well as demonstrates that, as is typical of the literary Gothic, the greatest danger comes from within the home; in effect, the colonizing force of the Canadian government is less innocent than history books would have us believe.

Detailing the events prior to, during, and following the Riel Rebellions, *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* is replete with motifs of the Gothic tradition. Brown makes use of a stark, simplistic illustration style to visually create a Gothic atmosphere that parallels the mood of the narrative. A typical panel in the comic-strip features blank, black backgrounds, long, exaggerated shadows, and dark, crosshatched visuals reminiscent of the uncanny ambience typical of the Gothic. From the outset, then, the Gothic nature of the text is clear. Even the map of Canada presented at the very beginning of the narrative (Brown 3) paints Canada in starkly contrasting tones of black and white, visually hinting at the Gothic locale that is to be the setting of the rest of the story. Aside from just alluding to the Gothic, however, the monochromatic nature of Brown's visuals serves a dual purpose, simultaneously illustrating the deep-rooted rigidity of historicity that Brown's work seeks to complicate. History, Brown's illustrations seem to imply, does not allow for shades of grey in its interpretation. Indeed, the black-and-white map of Canada—the first illustration readers are exposed to in the text—visually hints at the customary and problematic historical discourse that will be challenged throughout the rest of the text. Drawn not from the perspective of the Métis, but instead illustrating conventional, rigid borders defined by the colonialist Hudson's Bay Company, the shadowed, Gothic nature of the map supports the traditional historicity that permeates the atmosphere of the story. However, Brown also cleverly uses this map to allude to the complication of normative historical discourse that will follow: territories are labelled as “[I]and that Britain [and the Hudson's Bay Company] claim [...] to own” (Brown 3, emphasis added), hinting at the fact that there will be more than one interpretation of territory and history present throughout the text.

This strict inflexibility of traditional historical discourse echoes in the very architecture of Brown's pages, which are composed of identical, evenly spaced grids of six panels with clear borders. The borders visually confine the events of the story to a stringent narrative, leaving no room for exploration or exegesis. Brown sets the narrative up as one that ostensibly has only one “true” interpretation—the strict borders of the panels mirror the borders defined and imposed by the Hudson's Bay Company. In both the narrative and the very structure of the comic itself, Brown suggests that Louis Riel's story has previously been confined to “borders” over which Riel himself had no control. It is this singular and normative view of history that Brown undermines throughout the rest of the text.

While the Gothic motifs of Brown's illustrations may superficially seem to conform to a rigid, “black and white” historical discourse, Brown's adherence to the Gothic tradition is in fact a means of “threaten[ing] societal assumptions” (Round 1) about historicity and historiography. In particular, Brown relies on the aesthetics of the Gothic—which combines horror, death, and the literary sublime—and sensationalism—which focuses on shocking, perhaps exaggerated subject matter—in order to subvert traditional representations of Canadian history and open up the past to interpretation.

Nowhere are Gothic and sensationalist motifs more apparent in the comic-strip than in the graphic, unforgiving death scenes illustrated throughout the narrative. While the style of the majority of Brown's panels is simplistic and omits any unnecessary details, Brown makes a point of using explicit, often exaggerated visuals when

portraying death. Taking such artistic liberties with a supposedly non-fictional work complicates normative historicization. There are many examples of gruesome, over-the-top deaths typical of Gothic and sensationalist literature in the comic-strip (Brown 52, 72-73, 158, 161), but perhaps the most prominent is Thomas Scott's unceremonious murder of Norbert Parisien with an axe (Brown 54-55). Brown spares no expense with the graphic details of this death. He draws a trail of blood flying through the air following Scott's axe (Brown 54), splatters of blood dotting Scott's pants (Brown 54-55), and for four panels past Parisien's death, includes the "THK" sound effect of Scott's axe excessively hacking into Parisien's corpse (Brown 55). Indeed, the excessive, Gothic nature of this murder is made apparent when Dr. Shultz wonders why Scott is "so vehement about being allowed to chop up" Parisien (Brown 55) and goes on to tell Scott that he "can stop [his excessive brutalization of Parisien's body, because he has] killed him" (Brown 55).

The veracity of Brown's depiction of historical events—and, by extension, the veracity of any work that purports to be "nonfiction"—is undercut in the endnotes to the comic-strip, where Brown makes apparent the exaggerated nature of his work. In the notes to panels 54:5-55:5, Brown mentions how his "depiction [of Parisien's murder] probably exaggerate[d] Scott's viciousness" (Brown 248). While the source Brown referenced in creating this scene mentions only that Scott "struck Parisien on the head with an axe" (Siggins, qtd. in Brown 248), Brown admits that his own depiction "virtually implies that Scott alone killed Parisien" (Brown 248). In explicitly stating that he has exaggerated historical events, Brown's work takes on the characteristics of Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction by claiming to relay historical events while simultaneously admitting to the fabrication of events as they are portrayed. The Gothic excess in this scene thus complicates the notion of truth in depictions of history by relating the fictive element of exaggeration to the supposedly authentic nature of historicity.

Brown continues to invert conventional representations of Canadian history by deploying two prominent motifs of the Gothic: haunting, and the figurative ghost. On a most basic level, the style of illustration Brown uses throughout the comic-strip—a style which, Brown admits, he borrowed from comic artist Harold Gray's "work on *Little Orphan Annie*" (Brown i)—lends a spectral air to all characters in the text. In particular, "the blank eyeballs for which [*Little Orphan Annie*] is celebrated" (Harvey 101), and which Brown borrows in his own visuals, are reminiscent of the blank, ovate eyes seen in traditional representations of ghosts. In this way, Brown perhaps characterizes the Riel Rebellions as a Gothic ghost in Canada's history—a story that "continue[s] to haunt" (Round 1) Canada's cultural zeitgeist.

With Thomas Scott, however, Brown takes the figure of the ghost one step further. While Brown frequently exaggerates characters' features in his work, Brown distorts Scott's qualities to the extreme. The only reference to Scott's appearance in the textual endnotes describes the man as "young, tall, [... and having] side-whiskers" (Brown 250), and yet the man Brown depicts in the narrative is scrawny and skeletal, with an abnormally long, gaunt face and dead, haunting eyes that are rendered even more expressionless by Scott's lack of eyebrows (in comparison with all other characters in the comic-strip, who are depicted as having eyebrows). The effect of this haggard,

vacant portrayal is that Scott is linked to the Gothic figure of the ghost. Perhaps the best example of the Gothic nature of Scott's depiction is the first panel on page 63, which exaggerates Scott's long face and dead expression to a much greater extent than any of Brown's other illustrations. Brown overemphasizes the shadows and darkness in this panel, linking Scott to the sombre atmosphere typical of the Gothic tradition. Further, Brown enhances Scott's connection to the Gothic figure of the ghost by largely portraying him as a disembodied voice shouting profanities from the prison (Brown 62-68). Like the traditional ghost figure, the Scott of these panels is not a corporeal entity but an impalpable presence haunting the Métis.

Brown clearly employs Gothic tropes and hyperbole in his depictions of Scott, but to what end? In *Canadian Gothic*, Sugars describes how "[n]ational metanarratives founded on notions of inclusion and representation [are typically] haunted by the encrypted ghosts of unnameable others" (Sugars 178)—these ghosts being, in traditional Canadian Gothic narratives, Indigenous communities like the Métis. Given this tradition of representing and reinforcing stereotypes of Indigenous communities through the figure of the ghost, then, it is tempting to conclude that Brown's portrayal of the white, colonialist Scott as the narrative's primary ghost is an attempt to, as Sugars puts it, "re-ghost [...] the Canadian cultural-historical tradition" (Sugars 179) by "haunt[ing] back" against customary reductive stereotypes (Goddu, qtd. in Sugars 179). And in keeping with Hutcheon's definition of historiographic metafiction, Brown's work once again complicates firm attempts at historicization by undermining historical records in order to do just that—haunt back against the customary depictions of the Métis in Canada's historicization. Following with his pre-established theme of sensationalism, Brown exaggerates Scott's imprisonment in the Métis camp in a way that empowers, rather than victimizes, the Métis in the narrative. In the endnotes to his work, Brown quotes a source he consulted while creating this particular scene: "Scott [...] forced the door of [his] cell and jumped two guards, shouting that the other prisoners should do the same" (Siggins, qtd. in Brown 250). Here, Brown makes it explicitly clear that Scott did attempt to escape from his cell. In the comic-strip, however, Brown doesn't make this fact quite so apparent. Rather than clearly depicting Scott's escape, Brown illustrates only the aftermath: a large group of Métis attacking a defenceless Scott outside his cell (Brown 65). The significance of Brown's liberties with historical sources in this scene is twofold: by explicitly stating in the endnotes that Scott escaped, but not illustrating this fact in the comic-strip, Brown complicates an either/or interpretation of history by instead suggesting what Hutcheon terms a "postmodern *both/and*" mode of thinking (Hutcheon, "Glories" 44, emphasis in original) defined by a multiple and pluralistic construction of the past. Brown presents two conflicting views of the story but offers the reader no insight as to which is "true," suggesting instead that there is no "true" narrative where history is concerned.

At the same time, however, Brown's elision of Scott's agency in this scene allows the Métis a chance to "haunt back" against Scott—and, by extension, against all of their oppressors. Where the historical records Brown consulted presented Scott as strong and able to overtake the Métis guards holding him prisoner, Brown empowers the Métis by allowing them the choice to enact revenge against someone who, as the

narrative depicts, brutally murdered one of their own. While the physical violence of this scene certainly lends power and agency to the traditionally disempowered Métis, as well as represents a haunting back against the reductive stereotypes to which they are typically reduced, the linguistic violence enacted against Scott strongly reinforces his position as the “unnameable other” (Sugars 178) who has been “re-ghosted” in order to redefine Canadian history. Rather than depicting Scott’s escape (as asserted by the historical records), Brown chooses to leave a gap in the story, offering the reader only Riel’s perspective as he arrives on the scene after the brutalization of Scott has occurred. Indeed, while the historical records attest to Scott’s ability to overpower the Métis, Brown refuses to lend the ghosted Scott a voice in this particular narrative. It is the Métis, and not Scott, who define what has just occurred—and indeed, in the one instance where Scott attempts to speak, Brown replaces all of his words with Xs (Brown 65), thus offering the Métis a linguistic retribution in addition to the physical vengeance that has just occurred. Where the languages of the Métis were previously “bracketed off”—French and Cree being represented by single or double brackets respectively throughout the story—in this scene, Brown rejects Scott’s “racist comments and profanity” (Brown 61) by robbing him of linguistic agency in the same manner in which the Métis were robbed of their own. Brown thus draws a discursive relationship between the physical and linguistic violences in this scene, portraying Scott as a powerless, inarticulate ghost and haunting back against the reductive Canadian historical discourse.

In addition to the ghost, Brown uses the trope of the villain throughout the narrative to further examine the subjectivity of historical discourse. In particular, Brown portrays Sir John A. Macdonald as a deeply corrupt character reminiscent of the villains present in traditional Gothic literature. In the very first panel of the comic-strip, Macdonald is drawn against a pure black background, equating him with dark, evil forces (Brown 7). Brown continues this technique throughout the narrative, placing Macdonald against a black background in numerous panels (Brown 90–91), and also illustrating a larger-than-life, sinister shadow trailing Macdonald (and, notably, not trailing other characters in the panels) on several occasions (Brown 136–137, 241). Calling attention to Macdonald’s more sinful traits—namely, his scheming and nefarious nature, and his involvement in the unjust distribution of Canadian land that favoured the British and the Hudson’s Bay Company over the Métis—enhances Macdonald’s role as the Gothic villain. Throughout the text, Macdonald bribes officials (Brown 91), is openly racist when speaking about the Métis (Brown 138, 140), goes so far as to plan to incite a rebellion (Brown 141), and can hardly contain his excitement when the rebellion does occur (Brown 162)—all in the name of furthering his own causes. In effect, Brown exaggerates Macdonald’s sinister qualities in order to position him as the quintessential Gothic villain. By portraying Macdonald in this way, Brown is able to represent a version of history that Brown himself admits is a “conspiracy theory” (Brown 258) made up of “little in the way of hard evidence” (Brown 258), which he himself finds only questionably valid (Brown 259). In light of Macdonald’s portrayal as a Gothic villain, however, the “conspiracy theory” that Macdonald orchestrated the Rebellions in order to gain support for the Canadian Pacific Railway (Brown 136–138) is not a conspiracy at all, but a logical continuation of the narrative. The Gothic is replete with treacherous

schemes and villainous ploys, and in the context of the story as Brown has depicted it, the villainous Macdonald would certainly be willing to abuse his power to such an extent. Brown makes his omissions apparent by referencing the lack of factual evidence for this version of history in the endnotes (Brown 258). Once again, he complicates the idea of the master narrative of history by representing a version of history that he himself is not convinced is true (Brown 259).

While it could perhaps be argued that this depiction of history is given prominence in order to privilege a Métis point of view over that of the Canadian Government, Brown does not allow for just this one conclusion to be drawn. Interestingly, Brown notes in the appendix that he “[does not] think that [Macdonald] actually was a villain” (Brown 259). Why, then, does he go to such great lengths to render Macdonald in this fashion? Brown does this to show that history is not a clear-cut, definitive narrative, and should remain open to interpretation—that it must be viewed in terms of a “both/and” rather than “either/or” interpretation. Brown extends this complication of rigid historical discourse by refusing to stake a definitive claim about Macdonald’s true moral identity. While there is strong textual evidence that links Macdonald to the Gothic villain—including the sinister shadows and egregious scheming, as mentioned above—Brown’s opinion of Macdonald as asserted in the endnotes shows that he does not definitively consider Macdonald to be villainous. Further, Brown spends a great deal of time drawing attention to Macdonald’s alcoholism and addiction (Brown 133–134, 136) in order to lend vulnerability to his character. He not only spends nine panels showing Macdonald drinking (Brown 133–134), but also highlights the excessive nature of Macdonald’s consumption by depicting empty bottles littered around his chair, and repeating in three separate panels a very similar illustration of Macdonald drinking heavily with a “GLP GLP GLP” sound effect that foregrounds the alcohol present (Brown 133–134). Macdonald is thus simultaneously rendered as a Gothic villain and a flawed, troubled individual. Rather than forcing readers to choose one version of Macdonald over the other, Brown presents a narrative in which both interpretations are equally valid.

This overall theme of subverting traditional representations of history manifests itself even in the medium the narrative employs: the comic-strip. Comics, Round argues, are defined by an “*aesthetic of excess* where conflicting information or imperatives structure the text [...] creat[ing] and validat[ing] a multiplicity of perspectives [...] where multiple worlds or interpretations can co-exist” (Round 57, emphasis in original). It is for this reason, perhaps, that the medium of the comic-strip is so well-suited to the task of critiquing deep-seated assumptions about historicity. In presenting one interpretation of history visually (through the narratorial illustrations) and another interpretation verbally (through the notes at the end of the work), Brown allows for the coexistence of conflicting historical accounts while refusing to accept either as unequivocally true. In fact, while discussing the historical accuracy of various aspects of his work, Brown admits that he “honestly [does not] have a strong opinion on the matter one way or the other” (Brown 259)—that he is not concerned with which interpretation of history is “true,” but rather with the idea that there can be multiple interpretations of history without one necessarily taking precedence over the others. Brown thus

positions history as a place where, as in the comic-strip, “multiple [...] interpretations can co-exist” (Round 57). This view of history is further encoded in Brown’s decision to subtitle *Louis Riel* not as a graphic novel—which, arguably, the work is—but as a “comic-strip biography.” Round notes that while the medium of the comic-strip has traditionally been “viewed reductively as throwaway entertainment” (Round 7), the reinvention of comic-strips as “graphic novels” has allowed for “a burst of critical attention and literary awards” within the genre (Round 8). Why, then, would Brown brand his work as a piece of “throwaway entertainment” rather than a piece worthy of critical attention? The choice, I argue, is very deliberate, and best summed up by literary critic Amanda Murphy in her review of the comic: “[b]y employing the marginal medium of a comic-strip to tell this story,” Murphy says, “Brown cleverly invites readers to reflect on Riel’s marginality in his trial and in the story of his life” (Murphy 470). The medium of the comic-strip thus allows Brown to challenge the view of history as the overarching account of truth and critique the precedence of historical discourses that have been foregrounded in our cultural narrative over marginalized others.

By juxtaposing various renditions of history, and indeed, by making these contrasting accounts apparent in the endnotes to his work, Brown challenges the convention of history as a master narrative and examines the complex interplay between fact and interpretation in historical discourses. Through the use of traditional Gothic motifs and characteristics of sensationalism, Brown depicts alternate interpretations of historical events that complicate the authenticity of traditional depictions of history. Further, the extensive use of endnotes in the work make apparent the contradictions in Brown’s portrayal of history, positioning the work as a historiographic metafiction that simultaneously lays claim to historical accuracy while calling attention to the inaccuracies in the historical events portrayed within. Brown underscores this subversion of traditional historical discourses through the use of the marginalized medium of a comic-strip both to allow for the coexistence of multiple interpretations of history and to reflect on the marginality present in both Riel’s life and Canadian history as a whole. In effect, Brown’s work exposes the dark undersides of history and the Canadian government’s role in disenfranchising the Métis during the Riel Rebellions, forcing readers to acknowledge a version of history that has typically been suppressed in our country’s historicization. Through the subversive nature of both the Gothic and the comic-strip as genres, *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* encourages a re-examination of the histories which persist in haunting the Canadian cultural landscape.

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FROM CREATOR TO RE-CREATOR: REDEFINING THE KÜNSTLERROMAN THROUGH HARRIET THE SPY AND KING OF SHADOWS

Rebecca Dyck

After meeting Susan Cooper and examining her early manuscripts in Professor Deirdre Baker's seminar *American and Transnational Children's Literature*, Rebecca Jane was struck by the realization an intimate creative journey exists within every finished work of art. As she began to examine the specific genre of the *Künstlerroman* within the context of children's literature, she noticed that the journeys of young artists are often taken less seriously than those of career artists, perhaps due to the lack of a genre classification more specific than "children's literature."

The *Künstlerroman* is a novel that follows the development, from immaturity to maturity, of an artist-protagonist. Through an examination of theory on the genre, this paper finds that there are three stages in the trajectory of the modern *Künstlerroman*, which see the artist-protagonist as transitioning through the stages of *Creator*, *Creation* and *Re-Creator*. As Harriet Welsch, the artist-protagonist in Louise Fitzhugh's novel *Harriet the Spy* (1964), channels her writing into interactions with her community, she experiences each stage in a social context. Nat Field, in Susan Cooper's novel *King of Shadows* (1999), does so in a temporal context, as he travels back in time to Elizabethan England to understand his own past through the refinement of his acting. These artist-protagonists are thus revealed to experience the three stages of the *Künstlerroman* in relation to their respective environments. However, as neither artist-protagonist transitions from childhood to adulthood, the novels cannot be classified as "true" *Künstlerromane*. Thus, this paper concludes that a redefinition of the *Künstlerroman*—which might focus on an artist-protagonist's summative creation rather than on his or her journey into adulthood—may be necessary for the inclusion of children's literature in this genre.

Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* (1964) and Susan Cooper's *King of Shadows* (1999) follow their protagonists, Harriet and Nat, as they use the media of writing and acting to discover their roles in the world as artists. The trajectory observed by both texts mirrors that of the *Künstlerroman* ('artist-novel'), a sub-type of the Bildungsroman. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (1999), M.H. Abrams defines the *Künstlerroman* as a novel that tracks "the growth of a novelist or other artist from childhood into the stage of maturity" in parallel with "recognition of the protagonist's artistic destiny and mastery of an artistic craft" (Abrams 193). In *Harriet the Spy* and *King of Shadows*, Harriet's and Nat's developments as artists may be traced through the three stages of *Creator, Creation, and Re-Creator*. While Harriet encounters each stage in a social context, Nat does so in a temporal context. Nonetheless, the artistic developments of both Harriet and Nat reflect "the way in which society affects artistic response" (Pender 1), as Harriet's writing and Nat's acting are shaped by their social and temporal environments. However, as both Harriet and Nat remain children throughout their respective novels, *Harriet the Spy* and *King of Shadows* do not fully adhere to the conventional progression of the *Künstlerroman*, which sees a young artist develop from a *Creator* into a *Re-Creator* whilst simultaneously growing from a child into an adult. Therefore, in order for children's novels such as those by Fitzhugh and Cooper to be read as *Künstlerroman*, a redefinition of the *Künstlerroman* genre may be necessary.

As previously noted, the *Künstlerroman* follows the artist-protagonist through three stages, which, for the purpose of this essay, may be termed *Creator, Creation, and Re-Creator*. Roberta Seret and Malcom Pender describe the commencement of the artist-protagonist's artistic development as being motivated by a selfish desire to create one's own environment (Seret 109; Pender 9). In *Voyage Into Creativity: The Modern Künstlerroman* (1992), Seret writes that the artist-protagonist first attempts to satisfy his or her need to create by "escaping more into [his or her] own fabricated world" (Seret 109), the artist-protagonist's creation of a new, crafted world "push[ing] [him or her] toward the outer limits of reality" (Seret 3). The artist-protagonist thus does not interact with his or her reality so much as he or she invents an alternative one. Pender expands on this idea in *The Creative Imagination and Society: Aspects of the German-Swiss "Künstlerroman" in the Twentieth Century* (1985), writing that "from the outset of the action," the artist-protagonist moves "towards the realisation, in his [or her] great canvas, of that which he [or she] cannot realise" (Pender 9)—that which may represent the artist-protagonist's discovery of a world beyond his or her control. In allowing for the discovery of what exists outside of the artist-protagonist's control, an artistic medium (like Pender's "canvas") provides the opportunity for the artist-protagonist to realize, to create a new world. Therefore, the first stage of the *Künstlerroman* can be titled the stage of the *Creator*, wherein an artist-protagonist combats a lack of artistic control in reality by creating a new reality.

In Louise Fitzhugh's novel *Harriet the Spy*, Harriet M. Welsch, a young girl who begins her course of artistic development as a creator within a social context, is positioned as the text's artist-protagonist. Harriet spies on friends, classmates, and general members of society in order to gain knowledge about them, penning her observations in her notebook. However, in translating characters such as Sport, Janie,

and Ole Golly into words through the creative act of writing, the people Harriet writes about become subject to Harriet's artistic control. When Sport asks her why she writes about people, she answers, "because I've *seen* them and I want to *remember* them" (Fitzhugh 11, emphasis in original). Harriet's reply uses italicized verbs and the subject "I," as many of her early notes do (Fitzhugh 12, 22, 58), to emphasize Harriet's artistic authority over the people she observes. In creatively writing about those who surround her, Harriet breathes life into the people she seeks to remember, as well as moulds them into characters that exist solely in her own fictional world (Trites 66-67). For example, Harriet crafts a particular version of her teacher when she writes, "I think Miss Elson is one of those people you don't bother to think about twice" (Fitzhugh 33), asserting that Miss Elson's identity is insignificant. Later, in "slam[ming] [her] notebook shut as though she had put Miss Elson in a box and slammed the lid" (Fitzhugh 33), Harriet utilizes an artistic medium to imagine the unlikely scenario of exercising control over Miss Elson. In this moment, the act of writing pushes Harriet towards the fringes of her reality, a figurative location in which Harriet can use her writing to escape the authority of adults like Miss Elson. Thus, Harriet's artistic development begins in the Creator stage, with Harriet's position as a writer demonstrating the text's initial correlation to the *Künstlerroman*.

In Susan Cooper's novel *King of Shadows*, readers follow Nat Field, a young boy who begins to develop as an artist in the *Creator* stage, grounded specifically in a temporal context. Unlike Harriet, whose artistry consists of writing, Nat practices the artistic medium of acting. At the start of the novel, Nat enters the *Creator* stage in the late 1990s as a member of a playing company, adopting the role of Puck from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in an attempt to escape the trauma he experiences over his parents' deaths. When he formally introduces himself to both the actors and the reader, Nat presents his character's identity before his own, stating: "I'm Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* [...] Nat Field, from Greenville, South Carolina" (Cooper 7). Although Nat is instructed to introduce himself in this style, he does so without hesitation, whereas the student after him struggles with this style of introduction (Cooper 7). The contrast established between Nat and the student who succeeds him suggests that Nat is eager to adopt and perform the identity of Puck, as well as to thereby leave his real identity behind (Cooper 7). As Nat integrates himself into the community of acting students, he continues to favour the creation and performance of Puck's identity over that of his own. For example, when questioned about his past, Nat says, "And I was off, escaping [...] If you have to answer questions every time, how are you ever going to learn to forget? It would be better in London, it would be better in the company; I wouldn't be Nat there, I would be Puck" (Cooper 13). Here, Nat identifies the artistic medium of acting as one which provides him the opportunity to not only forge a new identity for himself, thus leaving his past behind, but also to exert creative control over an alternative world: the world of his character, Puck. Like Harriet in *Harriet the Spy*, Nat begins his own artistic development as a creator, utilizing performance to enter into a fictional world. As Nat too begins the course of his artistic development in the *Creator* phase, the creation of and engagement with alternative worlds by both Harriet and Nat demonstrate initial interactions with the *Künstlerroman* genre in both *Harriet the Spy* and *King of Shadows*.

Once an artist-protagonist acknowledges the reality that exists outside of his or her created environment, he or she is forced to exist by the standards of that reality, marking a shift to the second stage of the *Künstlerroman*: the *Creation* stage. This stage sees the artist-protagonist figuratively become a *creation*, a product of another's creative control and vision. Seret writes, "as life confronts [the artist-protagonist], with all its problems and complications, [he or she] [is] forced out of [his or her] world of fantasy and obliged to partake of reality" (Seret 109), suggesting that reality serves to influence the artist-protagonist's development and practice of his or her craft. However, Pender describes this interaction with reality in connection with the artist's choice to identify himself or herself as an artist, asserting that the artist-protagonist's "own designation of his [or her] status is assimilated to the pressures exerted on him [or her], and affords society the opportunity for coercion" (Pender 49). Although the *Künstlerroman* positions the artist-protagonist as submitting to his or her environment, Pender contends that this compliance results in combination with the artist's perpetual desire to be an artist. For instance, Harriet establishes herself as an aspiring writer in *Harriet the Spy* (Fitzhugh 4), maintaining her desire for a profession in writing despite the standards imposed upon her by her social reality (Fitzhugh 230). Similarly, Nat is introduced to readers as possessing a passion for acting that he preserves throughout *King of Shadows* (Cooper 5), regardless of the time travel to which Nat is subjected (Cooper 48). Thus, while the *Creation* stage positions the artist-protagonists as passively yielding to the conditions of their respective social and temporal contexts, the fact that Harriet and Nat actively assert and maintain their self-identifications as artists may be the cause of their submission to society's "coercion" (Pender 49).

Harriet transitions from the *Creator* stage to the *Creation* stage as she is brought down to reality by the people around her; once Harriet begins to acknowledge herself as a part of society, she moves away from self-centredness in her writing. After her classmates discover her notebook, Harriet becomes an object of her classmates' creative control in a reversal that forces Harriet to conceive of herself as a character that she has not invented. When Harriet reads a note that says, "*Harriet M. Welsh smells,*" Harriet "smell[s] herself" and then, although she detects nothing, washes her hands, feet, and face (Fitzhugh 190-191). Seeing her name in someone else's handwriting causes Harriet to evaluate herself by the standards of another creator's vision, rather than by the standards of her own "fabricated world" (Seret 109). Similarly, when her classmates spill ink on her as punishment for her writing (Fitzhugh 217), Harriet is subjected to what Roberta Seelinger Trites calls a "ritual baptism," in which Harriet is "washed in the metaphorical waters of her chosen profession" (Trites 67). While Harriet once used ink as a medium for artistic control, this medium now controls her. Harriet becomes even more aware of herself as someone else's object when she discovers that her classmates are conspiring against her; she muses, "how odd [...] to think of yourself as *her*" (Fitzhugh 224, emphasis in original). Ultimately, Harriet reflects her newly developed social perspective in her writing, which she continues to practice despite having her artistic authority challenged. Instead of using the pronoun "I" to exert artistic control over those around her, Harriet begins to apply the pronoun "me" to herself, acknowledging her position as an object of her surrounding society's standards and expectations (Fitzhugh 194, 224, 241; Trites 67). As Harriet transitions

from a subject to an object, she is forced from her crafted world and must adapt her writing style accordingly. As such, Harriet effectively experiences the second stage of *Creation*, in turn illustrating how *Harriet the Spy* continues to follow the course of the *Künstlerroman*.

Conversely, in *King of Shadows*, Nat arrives upon the *Creation* stage via a shift in temporal context. As Nat discovers that he participates in realities larger than the fictional world he enters during the *Creator* stage (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Nat's acting becomes less self-centred. The chapters that describe Nat's experiences of travelling back in time to Elizabethan England are italicized (Cooper 31)—a primary indication of the multiple ways in which Nat shifts from the *Creator* stage to the *Creation* stage. In these italicized chapters, the narrative point of view switches from Nat's first-person perspective to that of an anonymous third-person narrator, signalling to the reader that, in Elizabethan England, Nat is subjected to another's creative vision rather than his own (Cooper 31). Moreover, in Elizabethan England, Nat is thought to be (and in fact transcends centuries to swap places with) 16th-century actor "Nathan Field" (Cooper 31), as exemplified when Harry tells Nat, "Th'art Nathan Field" (Cooper 34), introducing Nat as "Nathan" in the same way that Nat first introduces himself as Puck (Cooper 7). Here, Nat becomes an object of the temporal context of 16th-century London, much like Harriet is rendered an object of her surrounding social environs in *Harriet the Spy*. Nat reconfigures his identity according to the standards of another time period and, by extension, the force of a creator distinct from Nat, reinforcing this notion in claiming: "*their London swept over me, caught me up, in a nightmare mix of sight and sound and smell*" (Cooper 38, emphasis added). This change from subject to object, observable in Nat's character, effectively translates into Nat's acting, which he continues to practise despite having to perform the identity of "Nathan" as opposed to the role of Puck. Although Nat claims that the temporal reality of Elizabethan England is "not in real life at all" (Cooper 36), his performance of "Nathan" takes place not on a stage, but in an actual historical context, forcing Nat to recognize his onstage role as fictional. As Nat transitions from a subject to an object, he is forced from his fictional world and must perform an alternative role, in turn demonstrating the text's fulfillment of the *Creation* stage of the *Künstlerroman*.

As the artist-protagonist featured in the *Künstlerroman* novel channels the experiences of a new reality into his or her art, he or she begins to create for the benefit of his or her surrounding environment. Thus, the final stage of the *Künstlerroman* takes the artist from the *Creation* stage to the *Re-Creator* stage, when the artist-protagonist once again assumes control of his or her artistry. Seret writes that the artist-protagonist "enters society in order to experience and learn; when [he or she] has fulfilled [his or her] needs[,] [he or she] [...] [creates] art from [his or her] past experiences" (Seret 10). Here, Seret argues that the development of the artist-protagonist culminates in the artist-protagonist's re-creation of former events and learning experiences, informed by his or her growth as an artist. Pender adds: "authorial intention is also influenced by society. So much the victim of society's attempts to coerce him [or her], the writer is tempted to speculate on his [or her] power to influence" (Pender 51), in turn suggesting that in the *Re-Creator* stage, the artist-protagonist's interaction with

his or her reality is characterized by an exchange between the artist-protagonist and said reality. Unlike in the *Creation* stage, which sees the artist-protagonist as passively heeding to the standards and constraints imposed upon him or her by his or her surrounding reality, the artist-protagonist instead actively engages in a creative dialogue with his or her surroundings in the third and final phase of the *Künstlerroman*.

At the end of *Harriet the Spy*, Harriet translates the experience of having her identity shaped by society into her own art, thus demonstrating her entry into the *Re-Creator* stage. When Ole Golly writes, “Remember that writing is to put love in the world, not to use against your friends” (Fitzhugh 278, emphasis in original), Ole Golly suggests to Harriet that Harriet’s artistic goal should not be to use her art against her friends, but, rather, to positively impact her surrounding society. Harriet applies Ole Golly’s advice to her ultimate creative project, in which Harriet neither subjects her friends, her classmates, or general members of society to her personal artistic vision, nor is Harriet subjected to the creative control imposed upon her by her social reality. In becoming the editor of the Sixth Grade Page in the school newspaper, Harriet, writing that “this page wishes to retract certain statements printed in a certain notebook by the editor of the Sixth Grade Page which were unfair statements and besides were lies” (Fitzhugh 296), *re-tracts* and *re-writes* the characterizations of people that she wrote during the *Creator* stage. Harriet transitions into a more socially aware artist who re-creates her past experiences in an effort to atone for her past writings. In editing the Sixth Grade Page, Harriet uses her writing to interact more positively with her community. While Harriet’s earlier works were private (Fitzhugh 198)—and thus not meant to be read by anyone but Harriet—her new work for the Sixth Grade Page, being publicly read, allows for Harriet to engage in a dialogue with her readership. Thus, by creating art informed by her past experiences and utilizing her writing as a method of communication between herself and her surrounding society, Harriet arrives at the final *Re-Creator* stage of the *Künstlerroman*, in turn demonstrating that *Harriet the Spy* adheres to the three stages of artistic development inherent to the *Künstlerroman* genre.

Like Harriet, Nat also arrives at the final *Re-Creator* stage of his artistic development by channelling his experiences in the 1990s and in Elizabethan England into his acting. However, because Nat’s artistic development occurs in a temporal context, he reaches the *Re-Creator* stage via two sub-stages, one occurring in Elizabethan England and the other in the text’s present time: the 1990s. While in 16th-century London, Nat reveals the details of his parents’ deaths to Shakespeare. As the conversation between Nat and Shakespeare takes place on a stage and ends with the characters exchanging lines from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Cooper 73-77), Nat’s and Shakespeare’s use of the medium of acting allows Nat to acknowledge and *re-present* his past, this time using the character Puck not as an escape from reality, but as a cathartic outlet for reflecting on past events. When he returns to the 1990s, Nat seeks to further face his past experiences, as demonstrated when he tells his Aunt, “I remember [my father] reading to me, at night when I was in bed. Aunt Jen – I’d like to read his poems” (Cooper 180). This conversation, which sees Nat engaging with memories of his father, reflects how, as a result of his experience travelling back in time, Nat “achiev[es] an appropriate orientation to the present in terms of the past” (Krips 52; qtd. in Cosslett 244).

Nat's awareness of his varied experiences over the course of four centuries ultimately informs his acting: instead of using acting as a mode through which to escape his own grief, Nat begins to use acting to positively impact others, as well as to engage with an audience. For example, Nat realizes that "if [he] hadn't gone back in time" and switched places with Nathan (who had the bubonic plague), "William Shakespeare would have died" (Cooper 173). Consequently, Nat recognizes the greater significance of his time spent performing Nathan's identity. *King of Shadows* concludes, "the long clear note of a single trumpet rang out, signalling the audience, telling the actors, calling *the world* to the theater. In one hour from now, [the] play would begin" (Cooper 186, emphasis added). Here, in suggesting that "the world" is called to the theatre, Nat identifies the play in which he is set to act as existing for an audience as opposed to for his own emotional needs, thereby envisioning his creative act—his performance—as an avenue for exchange with others. Altogether, by approaching his acting according to his past experiences and utilizing his acting as a mode through which to communicate with and affect others (in both the 1990s and Elizabethan England), Nat enters the final *Re-Creator* stage, illustrating how the trajectory of artistic development central to the *Künstlerroman* genre may be traced throughout *King of Shadows*.

Although Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* and Cooper's *King of Shadows* follow the course of artistic development outlined by the *Künstlerroman* genre, both novels depict *solely* their respective artist-protagonists' artistic developments, thus failing to simultaneously portray human development—Harriet's and Nat's transitions "from childhood into the stage of maturity" (Abrams 193). In *Harriet the Spy*, Harriet remains eleven for the extent of the entire novel (Fitzhugh 10, 277). Likewise, in *King of Shadows*, Nat's age remains unchanged, as his experience of travelling through time occurs over the course of just a few weeks in his present temporal context, the 1990s (Cooper 7, 155). As neither Harriet nor Nat physically mature, both novels thus deviate from the two-part focus of the *Künstlerroman* genre. Further, Fitzhugh and Cooper's novels do not depict "the rise of the market-place as the source of the artist's livelihood," which Pender identifies as a component of "the modern 'Künstlerroman'" (Pender 1). Here, Pender draws attention to the economic component of the artist-protagonist's craft, which is arguably realized in adulthood, when an artist-protagonist would need to make a living. In *Harriet the Spy*, Harriet does not receive financial compensation for her personal writing nor for the writing she does for the Sixth Grade Page. Similarly, although Nat is paid once in Elizabethan England, Shakespeare indicates that Nat is not supposed to earn money (Cooper 146). Moreover, Nat is not paid for the acting work he does with the playing company in the temporal context of the 1990s. As such, in following Harriet and Nat—child artist-protagonists who do not develop into adults or receive any financial compensation for their art—neither *Harriet the Spy* nor *King of Shadows* can be said to fully realize all aspects of the *Künstlerroman* genre.

From this analysis of Harriet's and Nat's progressions through the stages of *Creator*, *Creation*, and *Re-Creator*, it can thus be argued that while Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* and Susan Cooper's *King of Shadows* adhere to the *Künstlerroman* genre via the texts' representations of an artist-protagonist's artistic development, neither

novel can be classified as a “true” *Künstlerroman*, as neither Harriet nor Nat is depicted as maturing from childhood into adulthood. Although Harriet encounters each stage of the *Künstlerroman* in a social context and Nat does so in a temporal context, each artist-protagonist’s course of artistic development nonetheless succeeds in reflecting the *Künstlerroman*’s focus on the exchange between an artist-protagonist and his or her surrounding—whether social or temporal—realities. In order to incorporate works of children’s literature like *Harriet the Spy* and *King of Shadows*—which both depict perpetually young artist-protagonists—the *Künstlerroman* genre could perhaps be redefined. Such a redefinition could emerge from novels like those by Fitzhugh and Cooper, which feature artist-protagonists whose developments adhere to the three stages of *Creator*, *Creation*, and *Re-Creator*, only excluding depictions of the artist-protagonists’ transitions from childhood into adulthood. A refashioning of the *Künstlerroman* might evaluate the success of a novel based on an artist-protagonist’s mastery of an artistic craft, with such a process culminating in the artist-protagonist’s completion of an artistic project. By shifting away from an artist-protagonist’s attainment of adulthood and financial compensation, the *Künstlerroman* would be rendered more applicable to works of children’s literature like *Harriet the Spy* and *King of Shadows*. Ultimately, a reconfiguration of the themes central to the *Künstlerroman* would arguably benefit the genre, as the significance and applicability of the *Künstlerroman* could be expanded.

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IRVING LAYTON'S "THE COLD GREEN ELEMENT," "THE FERTILE MUCK," AND "EX-NAZI": FROM POET-PROPHECIES TO THE POETICS OF ENCOUNTER

Jesse Eckerlin

This essay was inspired by a Phil Hall poem called "The Small Sacrifice." In the poem, Hall suggests that the aesthetic of prolific and influential twentieth-century Canadian poet Irving Layton (1912-2006) relies upon a self-aggrandizing "emotional - sexual - poetic - & political / superiority" that at first brush appears to have the character of truth but is instead a kind of "theatre." I elaborate Hall's claims via close readings of canonical Layton poems "The Cold Green Element" and "The Fertile Muck" to suggest that Layton's not-inconsiderable poetic skills are tied to a politics of artist- veneration that disingenuously stage the persecution of the poet figure against the straw man of a philistine society. I discuss how this politics of artist veneration can be seen to accord with Layton's own public persona and to metaphorically ratify his own pronouncements about the puritanical Victorianism of mid-century Canada, as well as his notion that the function of the poet is to be a prophet. I then move on to a discussion of an early, oft-neglected Layton poem called "Ex-Nazi" (1952), in which Layton describes a chance encounter in the street with a senile former Nazi. The poem is notable in that it moves beyond the "Laytonese" thematic preoccupations typified by "The Cold Green Element" and "The Fertile Muck" and explores instead the ineffable horrors of the Holocaust. "Ex-Nazi" deploys images of profound uncertainty and even empathetic engagement, and I argue that the poem's mode of representation anticipates Theodore Adorno's dictum that there can be "no poetry after Auschwitz," while its ambivalent exploration of the Ex-Nazi's culpability suggests Hannah Arendt's notion of "the banality of evil." Given that future scholars of Layton will likely be participating in an increasingly post-colonial, feminist, queer, and more generally inclusive academic milieu, it seems vital to unearth and discuss such lesser-known works as "Ex-Nazi" that allow us to reassess divisive canonical figures like Layton and to recalibrate the import of their legacy for future audiences. My thanks to Dr. Vikki Visvis for bringing the poem to my attention in ENG354 and for suggesting the initial link to Adorno.

Conspicuous among the poets taken to task in Phil Hall's *Killdeer*, a hybrid collection of manifesto, memoir, and "essay poems" that won the Governor General's Award for poetry in 2011, is Canadian literary icon Irving Layton. In particular, Hall objects to the way the "emotional – sexual – poetic – & political / superiority" evinced in Layton's sensibility has the effect of venerating "his own larger – freer – feeling" (Hall 72). Hall categorizes the last line of Layton's famous poem, "The Bull Calf," *I turned away and wept*, as "theatre – not truth" (Hall 73). "It is just not so simple – or as noble," argues Hall, "as crying when the calf dies – never has been – never will be" (Hall 83).

As an indictment of the trappings of Layton's poetic persona, Hall's criticism is not new. A prominent mid-century public intellectual, Layton was a frequent contributor to national newspapers and CBC programs such as *Fighting Words*, where his fulminations against the perceived bourgeois Victorianism of '50s and '60s Canadian culture won him no shortage of enemies, a fact he professed rather to enjoy¹. Ever the provocateur, Layton never failed to remind the public of what he thought poetry was for: "I began by attacking the puritanism and the anti-sexuality that was in this country then and the philistinism and the materialism," says an aging Layton in a 1981 video interview, "and I still go on attacking those things which I find are defects in our body politic. I see the poet as a prophet" ("RetroBites: Irving Layton: Prophet"). In recent years, which have been distinguished by an increased cultural sensitivity to the interventions of feminist/gender-critical and post-colonial theory, it has also become harder to ignore the elitism and exclusivity inherent in Layton's exalting of the role of the poet, as well as the misogynistic and caricaturist elements that often inform his portrayal of women and sexual conquest. But what distinguishes Hall's criticism from these grievances against Layton is the dialectic tension Hall implies between Layton's representation of poetic truth—what Hall pejoratively labels "theatre"—and the "larger – freer – feeling" of the poet-speaker-ego it points to. In other words, Hall suggests that while Layton's "The Bull Calf" seems to disclose a cathartic and timeless truth, it does so by ratifying the poet-speaker-ego and the implied superiority of his exalted feeling.

The aesthetic strategy Hall criticizes in "The Bull Calf" is kindred to the one Layton serves in both "The Cold Green Element" and "The Fertile Muck." Both poems open with the evocation of the poet as a godlike creator-figure or *übermensch* with the power to galvanize the previously inanimate and insentient natural order into motion and meaning. "[T]he wind and its satellite wait for *me*," insists the speaker of "The Cold Green Element," "their meaning I will not know / until I go there" ("The Cold Green Element" 2-4, emphasis added). Layton's opening gambit suggests the importance of the individual poetic quest and the contingency of meaning in the natural world, but it also places "[t]he wind and its satellite" in clear subordination to the speaker's capacity to perceive them, and hence to make their meaning known to them. The same point is made more forcefully in "The Fertile Muck," where the speaker boasts that "[t]here are brightest apples on those trees / but until I, fabulist, have spoken, they do not know their significance" ("The Fertile Muck" 1-3). In other words, the

¹ Bennett and Brown note that "[Layton] was often at the center of bitter feuds and [...] discussed his sexual adventures and offered opinions in language sufficiently frank and bawdy for the time to offend readers" (Bennett and Brown 504). They also quote Layton as confessing that these controversies accorded him "some of the most delicious moments of my life" (Bennett and Brown 504).

speaker suggests that without his allusion to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the apples are just apples, brightly gleaming but signifying nothing. It is notable that Layton's speaker self-identifies as a "fabulist"—a figure of the storyteller and the moralist combined; a prophet that instructs through allegory—who gives voice to "legends [...] twisting like a rumour," and charges "the wind's [empty] noise" with meaningful music ("The Fertile Muck" 4–6). Both speakers perceive a world ripe with omens and signs, privileging their ability to distil and relay the otherwise inarticulate news of the world. But if Layton's fabulists are distinguished by their ability to transmit this news, the general population they seek to address also greets them with indifference.

In "The Cold Green Element," images of the persecuted poet abound. The speaker walks alongside a "black-hatted undertaker" who ominously spies the former's "heart beating in the grass," but does not expound upon its larger significance ("The Cold Green Element" 5). Heading toward the same destination, speaker and undertaker, these antithetical agents of creation and death, come across an anonymous city's gates, upon which a dead poet is hung in spectacle:

Crowds depart daily to see it, and return
with grimaces and incomprehension;
if its limbs twitched in the air
they would sit at its feet
peeling their oranges. ("The Cold Green Element" 10–15)

The dead poet's clear precursor is the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel, who, driven into exile, prophesied the Siege of Jerusalem and was ignored; but the description of the apish incredulity of the crowd and the evocation of poet as spectacle also bear rhetorical traces of Kafka's "The Hunger Artist," a story about an enigmatic figure whose archaic artistic practice, a mixture of self-imposed starvation and performance art, is met with increasing bewilderment and indifference by an increasingly marginal public². The combination of these two antecedents—Ezekiel as biblical archetype of the prophet who spoke truthfully and was spurned, and Kafka's hunger artist as allegory for the twentieth-century public's profound ignorance toward the rigours of creative expression—provides Layton with a frame with which to present the marginalization of the poet as both timely and timeless, and with which to treat the "grimaces and incomprehension" of the crowd as contemptibly myopic. What is the difference between a prophet unheeded and a fabulist ignored? There is no difference, implies the speaker. But whereas the crowds fail to register the significance of the poet, the natural order does not; the residue of the speaker's "heart beating in the grass" ("The Cold Green Element" 5–6) is linked through parataxis to the "bloods-mear on broad catalpa leaves" whose "ancient twigs" bear in turn "murdered selves / spark[ing] the air like the muted collisions // of fruit" ("The Cold Green Element" 27–31). In this hallucinatory gesture toward a kind of ecological transmigration, the speaker's fellow poet-prophets, such as the "dead poet" discussed above, are evoked both as predecessors ("ancient twigs") but also alter-egos ("murdered selves") who move about in a fluid interplay of influence and exchange, preserved in posterity

² In Donald Winkler's 1983 documentary *Poet: Irving Layton Observed*, Layton ventures that "we of the 20th century [...] walked into the nightmares of Kafka [...] [who] was talking about the fears, the phobias, the alienation of modern man, the sense that he is the plaything not of the gods but of vast, cruel impersonal forces: this is what makes Kafka the prophet for our century."

through “the muted collisions // of fruit.” Their cumulative martyrdom is suggested through the synecdoche of the “brilliant hunchback” of a tree replete “with a crown of leaves” that the speaker “embrace[s] like a lover” (“The Cold Green Element” 16–20). The speaker’s privileged connection with the world of immortal poets and myth is consummated by the poem’s penultimate image, in which “the Furies clear a path for me to the worm / who sang for an hour in the throat of a robin” (“The Cold Green Element” 36–37). If the poem likens the fabulist to a worm, it is as earthly intimate to the cycles of death and rebirth, as transient but timeless singer caught in machinations beyond his control, simultaneously spurned and prosecuted by society’s ignorance but dignified by the will of the Furies. The speaker’s mortality, the “grimaces and incomprehension” with which his chosen art form is greeted by the public, in other words, all that which would seem to suggest his creaturely and artistic flaws, are in Layton’s representation paradoxically what serve to elevate and dignify him. Layton’s mythopoeic achievement in “The Cold Green Element” is impressive, but it should not serve to divert us from how brazenly he is stacking the deck. To echo Hall’s criticism of “The Bull Calf,” the “truth” disclosed here is a kind of “theatre,” one that venerates the poet-speaker at the expense of the straw man of the ignorant masses.

This staging of the exalted poet-speaker against the *bas relief* of the anonymous public’s philistinism is also present in “The Fertile Muck.” Whereas “The Cold Green Element” castigates the crudity of the imagined public’s cultural acumen in the abstract, “The Fertile Muck” does so within the parameters of the shallowness of twentieth-century materialism. In this poem Layton’s fabulist is a kind of surrealist-cum-shaman who ventures not only to endow “the winged insects” with his own “crafty eyes,” but to transform himself into a pest with the powers of a prophet, “deposit[ed] / [...] on the leaves of elms” or folded “in the orient dust of summer” (“The Fertile Muck” 7–12). Layton describes “joiners and bricklayers // [...] [who build] expensive bungalows for those / who do not need them,” and warns that unless the latter “release / me roaring from their moth-proofed cupboards / their buyers will have no joy, no ease” (“The Fertile Muck” 16–18). This provocative metaphor dramatizes the diminished role of poets in modern society, but also their tenacious power: the fabulist is likened to an infestation of moths, a stain, who curses the superfluity of the materialist edifice from within. And though the fabulist’s “irregular footprint horrifies them”—Layton does not deign to dignify his materialist ghouls with a name—though they spend the leisure of their “evenings and Sunday afternoons [...] / [...] spray[ing] for hours to erase its shadow” (“The Fertile Muck” 22–24), the mere fact of the poet’s presence, the persistent reverberations of his critique, even when denied, are like the whirr of a bothersome insect—sufficient to unsettle the delicate trappings of the materialist lifestyle. Nor do the joiners and bricklayers emerge unscathed; our fabulist is no populist, and though they are likened to insects, the workers do not sport the speaker’s “crafty eyes” but are pejoratively described as “thick as flies” (“The Fertile Muck” 13), complicit with the construction of the materialist edifice the poet curses. Besides these, the poem also describes a romantic interest, alternately referred to as “my love” or “sweet,” who is putatively evoked in the tradition of the love poem but is described purely through a series of hackneyed commands from the speaker: “Stay here, my love; you will see”

("The Fertile Muck" 9-10); "Sit here / beside me, sweet; take my hand in yours," ("The Fertile Muck" 26-27); "We'll mark the butterflies" ("The Fertile Muck" 28). It is as if her inclusion is intended to mediate the egoism of the poem's conclusion, to provide a thematic counterpoint and visual symmetry to the concluding image:

We'll mark the butterflies disappearing over the hedge
with tiny wristwatches on their wings;
our fingers touching the earth, like two Buddhas ("The
Fertile Muck" 28-30).

However, the speaker's "sweet" is too ethereal to shift the weight of emphasis, and she remains a lifeless trope without dimension, an accessory to the fabulist's grand pronouncements, a mannerist appendage. The "sweet" as complimentary function dissolves, and as in "The Cold Green Element," what remains is Layton deifying his poet-prophet, this time with a rather superficial allusion to eastern religion. We are meant to picture two lovers, playfully meditating side by side in the manner of ascetics while the world passes by, but in light of the aesthetic staging noted above, in which the poet-speaker is exalted against the materialism of the anonymous public, it is difficult not to picture instead a vaguely-orientalist *The Creation of Adam* with the fabulist's finger extended toward Layton himself.

In short, both "The Cold Green Element" and "The Fertile Muck" venerate the poet while expressing contempt for the philistinism of society. Layton deliberately omits local detail, blends pastoral and phantasmagorical settings, and places allusions to the Furies and the Garden of Eden alongside images of medicine bottles and bungalows to suggest a liminal realm outside historical time, one to which access is granted exclusively through the guidance of the poet. It is, as Hall suggests, a kind of theatre. "How to dominate reality?" ("The Fertile Muck" 25) asks the speaker of "The Fertile Muck." He proposes that "[l]ove is one way; imagination another" ("The Fertile Muck" 25-26), but Layton's preference is clearly for the latter, particularly as a means to dignify the poet-prophet's social function and his own "larger - freer - feeling" (Hall 72). Thus, by Layton's own criteria, a poem that fails to "dominate reality" in order to venerate the poet would constitute a kind of failure. What then are we to make of a poem like "Ex-Nazi" that decidedly does neither?

Published in 1952, prior to the composition of the poems discussed above, "Ex-Nazi" describes an encounter on the street between an anonymous speaker and his neighbour, an aged and infirm former Nazi who ostensibly has no memory of his crimes. The poem begins with a description of the speaker playing blind man's buff, a version of tag in which the 'it' is blindfolded. Whereas the speakers in "The Cold Green Element" and "The Fertile Muck" are distinguished for their prodigious vision, here the prize conferred by being singled out as 'it' is blindness. Metaphorically blindfolded from the outset, the speaker embarks on a garden walk inverted into a sinister children's game in which the "scarred bushes" ("Ex-Nazi" 2) pursue him, driving him headlong into an unavoidable confrontation with his neighbour. The speaker "come[s] sharp at this unguessed-at pole" ("Ex-Nazi" 3), the pun suggesting both the derogatory Pole, that is, his neighbour the Ex-Nazi, a Polish émigré, as well as the nature of the

unpleasant and unexpected encounter, which is akin to walking into a telephone pole or lamppost. Also unlike the poems previously discussed, here the speaker is unable to galvanize the natural order to help him elude the encounter: “[t]he morning” is simply unappeasable, “a sick anti-semite [...] / struggl[ing] to reveal itself” (“Ex-Nazi” 5-6). There can be no question of “dominating reality” here: “[t]here’s my neighbour coming toward us” (“Ex-Nazi” 7), says the speaker with resignation.

The speaker then attempts to explore the roots of the Ex-Nazi’s illness and to locate his culpability through a series of hallucinatory images. The “neighbour’s veins are full of pus” (“Ex-Nazi” 8), revealing the extent of the speaker’s contempt for the Ex-Nazi’s ailment physical and spiritual, but it is precisely “[w]here nations have decayed” (“Ex-Nazi” 9) that the veins have become infected, suggesting a cartographic metaphor for the machinations of warring nations, the advances and entanglements that violently realign geographical boundaries, leaving individual agency to decay alongside the ruins of sacked cities. The speaker also imagines that the “[b]rainsick” Ex-Nazi believes “one day he’ll turn a snowman / And stream into a March landscape / That’s ravaged like the face of Dostoevski” (“Ex-Nazi” 10-13). Here the senile Ex-Nazi is infantilized, likened to a child’s token that merely evaporates when the seasons change, but this sentimental absolution is more complex; for if the melting of the snowman reveals the ravaged face of the March landscape in general, it does not trace a provenance of scars leading to the Ex-Nazi’s transgressions, and hence his ultimate culpability remains in question. We are told that “at night the whitened streets / Lean into his dreams like a child’s coffin” (“Ex-Nazi” 14-5), but this image is the speaker’s imaginative projection, and an ambiguous one at that. “[T]he whitened streets” suggest a blanket of ash and an allusion to the crematoriums, but also to the snowman who has “stream[ed] into a March landscape” and the tension between absolution and erasure. Likewise, while the child’s coffin “[l]ean[s] into his dreams” and seems to insist upon recognition, the nature of its silent demands and its ultimate relation to the Ex-Nazi remain unclear; whether emblem for the accusations of an anonymous victim, or symbol of the Ex-Nazi’s own lost childhood, we are not told. Nor does the encounter itself provide an answer to the question of culpability. Our expectation of a violent or transformative confrontation is undercut when the speaker informs us that the Ex-Nazi “meets [only] himself / In the summer craze of the sun” (“Ex-Nazi” 16-17), his senility enacting the logic of grief and denial so thoroughly that the moment of recognition is forever deferred, “his bounding mastiff / [...] flick[ing] from conscience / The yammering guilt.” (“Ex-Nazi” 19-21). The abyss between the enormity of the Ex-Nazi’s past crimes and the banality of his morning stroll is unbridgeable, and the speaker can obtain no catharsis through an admission of guilt, no restitution from an acknowledgement of atrocities committed. Unlike the materialist bungalow-dwellers in “The Fertile Muck” or the gawking philistines in “The Cold Green Element,” the Ex-Nazi is vividly rendered, particulate, a morally complex figure who cannot be reduced to an easy cipher equal to the sum of his transgressions. The speaker simultaneously reviles and pities him, and the poem’s conclusion neither condemns the Ex-Nazi nor exalts the speaker by comparison, but bears witness and gestures toward the otherwise

unspeakable friction of the encounter: “Between us the pale dust hangs / Like particles / Of sacrificial smoke” (“Ex-Nazi” 23-25).

The poetics of encounter and witness developed in “Ex-Nazi” contrast sharply with the theatrical poetics of artist-veneration and social criticism Layton services in “The Cold Green Element” and “The Fertile Muck” (and upon which he staked the larger part of his public persona). If Layton believed that the role of the poet was to be a prophet who warned the public against the dangers of philistinism and materialism, then “Ex-Nazi” proposes a different social function for poetry, one which explores the complex interplay between individual moral culpability and historical trauma and confronts the unspeakable through the act of witness. In this way, “Ex-Nazi” (1952) dramatizes the question of the ethics of Holocaust representation and is suggestive of two touchstones of modern theory on the subject: Hannah Arendt’s concept of “the banality of evil” in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963) and Theodor W. Adorno’s notion that “poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric,” from “Cultural Criticism and Society” (1955). The treatment of the Ex-Nazi in Layton’s poem can be read as a kind of intuitive, incipient sketch toward Arendt’s notorious assessment of SS-Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Eichmann: that he was a myopic and dull bureaucrat rather than an evil mastermind, that he believed he was acting out of loyalty to the flag and thus perpetrated evils with the unthinking subservience of an agent of the state, and that although blame can be assigned, little consolation or catharsis can be gained from the punishment of such a person. Beyond the question of guilt remain the enormity, unconscionability, and incomprehensibility of the crime that cannot be forgotten. Writing about the state of post-holocaust *kulturkritik* in 1951, Adorno argues that

“[t]he cultural critic [...] speaks as if he represented either unadulterated nature or a higher historical stage. Yet he is necessarily of the same essence as that to which he fancies himself superior [...] Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric [...] Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation.” (Adorno 19, 34)

If Layton, the public figure and author of “The Fertile Muck” and “The Cold Green Element,” fails to move beyond the reification of his barbaric imperative to “dominate reality” and the “self-satisfied contemplation” of his poet-prophet-ego, then the Layton of “Ex-Nazi” is equal to Adorno’s challenge toward the ethics of representation. The “larger – freer – feeling” of this lesser-known Layton points not toward self-veneration, but an empathic imaginative attempt to engage with the unappeasable horrors of the past.

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TOWARDS IÑUPIAQ LITERARY NATIONALISM: A TRIBAL-CENTERED READING OF *NEVER ALONE*

Peter Angelinos

The purpose of this paper is to develop a methodology for reading Iñupiaq sources through the lens of tribal-centered criticism, a theoretical approach which privileges the voices of the Native community. In particular, this paper reads *Never Alone*, an Iñupiaq video game, by using Iñupiaq sources, wherever possible. Because *Never Alone* was developed in partnership with the Iñupiaq community, *Never Alone* draws upon the various literary and cultural traditions of the Iñupiaq. This paper analyzes the ways in which *Never Alone* positions itself within the broader tradition by comparing the form and content of *Never Alone* to the form and content of the Iñupiaq literary traditions of Kunuksaayuka and the Qayaq cycle. Furthermore, this paper discusses how Iñupiaq storytelling conventions such as audience teasing and participation are embodied by the narrator and the ludic nature of *Never Alone*, respectively. Ultimately, the paper hopes to bridge the gap between Iñupiaq-centered criticism and Canadian Indigenous Literary Nationalism by drawing upon the techniques and principles of the theory and applying it to an Iñupiaq text, despite the challenges that Inuit literature in general poses to the movement.

Never Alone is a 2.5D side-scrolling platformer and an Iñupiaq storytelling event. While *Never Alone* is ripe for post-colonial discussions, this paper will instead take a tribal-centered approach and privilege Native voices. Tribal-centered criticism is “Indigenous-centered literary scholarship” developed in response to “mainstream critical approaches [...] [that] proved somewhat incapable of relating to grassroots Indigenous struggles” (Fagan 20). However, the dearth of Iñupiaq scholarly resources poses a difficulty in the tribal-centered attempt to privilege traditions, as it results in a forced reliance on non-Iñupiaq secondary sources about the Iñupiaq, as well as on scholarly sources about the Inuit¹ more broadly. Despite this shortcoming, this paper aims to present tribal-centered criticism as a valid analytic methodology for Iñupiaq literature by analyzing the form and content of *Never Alone* with respect to Iñupiaq storytelling conventions and Iñupiaq literary traditions.

This paper seeks to reconcile Inuit literature and Indigenous Literary Nationalism. The main difficulty is that Indigenous Literary Nationalism is ambivalent regarding its stance on Inuit literature. Notably, Fagan et al.’s article on this subject features no Inuit voice, focusing mostly on carving out a space for First Nations in the face of post-colonialism and American Indian Literary Nationalism, as well as admitting that “the study of Inuit literature [is] somewhat peripheral to both Canadian and American Indigenous criticisms” (Fagan 23). This is not surprising, as “Inuit political and cultural history is distinct from other Indigenous histories in Canada” (Fagan 23), which raises the questions of how and why Indigenous Literary Nationalism fails to apply to the Inuit. A possible explanation is that to define the Inuit as a singular cultural group is to ignore the vast diversity of the Inuit. Indeed, Martin writes that “literary nationalist approaches [...] seem to require the pre-existence of an Inuit nation and an Inuit literary tradition— notions which are problematic in their singularity” (Fagan 23), and that “literary nationalism examines [literature] as processes deeply invested in the continuance of a People” (Fagan 20). However, given that “the Inuit homeland reaches from Greenland across the Canadian Arctic to Alaska and Siberia, and its many regions are naturally distinct in their language, culture, history and politics” (Fagan 23), the viability of a catch-all approach to Inuit literature becomes problematic. Instead of striving for Inuit Literary Nationalism, this paper will attempt Iñupiaq Literary Nationalism.

Iñupiaq Literary Nationalism provides a more productive critical lens for *Never Alone* than post-colonialism does as *Never Alone* eschews colonial discourse and instead draws upon the traditions of the Iñupiaq. The legacy of colonialism has certainly been felt by the Inuit people, but “the Arctic homeland [...] never attracted large numbers of European settlers, and the Indian Act does not apply to Inuit” (Fagan 23). Furthermore, *Never Alone* does not explicitly deal with colonialism, and Upper One² Games identifies “sharing the rich traditions of Alaska Native culture and values with the world” (“FAQ”) as its *raison d’être*. The hybridity of Iñupiaq traditions and Western media is not a concern; this paper considers it self-evident that “Indigenous peoples have always adapted

¹ The Iñupiaq are an Inuit people, so there is some validity in this approach, but there is also a weakness in that “the Inuit homeland reaches from Greenland across the Canadian Arctic, Alaska and Siberia, and its many regions are naturally distinct in their language, culture, history and politics” (Fagan 23). Sources on the Iñupiaq are used wherever possible, and wherever such sources are lacking, sources on the Inuit are employed instead.

² Upper One Games (the developer of *Never Alone*) was “launched” by Cook Inlet Tribal Council (“a tribal nonprofit [sic] organization serving indigenous peoples of southcentral [sic] Alaska”) and has the stated mission of “[creating] profitable, fun, engaging games while supporting the core value of self-determination for Alaska Native people through increased financial independence” (Upper One Games, “FAQ”).

useful concepts and technologies without fear that their cultural purity might be compromised” (Martin, *Stories* 6). Instead, this paper will focus on the aesthetics of *Never Alone* and discuss the intellectual traditions that it is drawing upon. Firstly, the formal aspects of *Never Alone* will be explored, particularly narrative interjections, audience participation, acknowledgment of story ownership, differences in storytelling style, long narrative structure, and genre. This will be followed by a discussion of the content of *Never Alone* as a part of the broader Inupiaq literary tradition.

Narrative interjections such as narrator teasing and audience participation are prominent features of Inupiaq storytelling, and they are manifest in *Never Alone*. Anderson classifies narrative interjections as a “narrative shift out of the narrative time and narrative text into asides and commentaries of various types” (Anderson 11). Teasing and lighthearted remarks are staples of an Inupiaq storytelling event, where storytellers will often single out a specific member of the audience with a jibe (Anderson 10). *Never Alone*, although not singling out or teasing specific players of the game, uses narrative interjections to poke fun at the form of the video game. As Nuna and Fox return to the village after being attacked, the narrator jokes about his own knowledge of the story. “Gee,” he says, “I don’t know how they did it, but together they found their way back home” (*Never Alone*). In the meantime, the player is controlling Nuna/Fox as they traverse the Arctic landscape, solving platforming puzzles as mechanics and settings are revealing themselves to be explored. Whether or not the narrator knows how Nuna and Fox get back home is irrelevant; what is relevant is that the narrator is skillfully allowing the audience to fill in the gaps in the story with its own participation—in this case, by playing the video game—and that the narrator is indicating this interjection clearly by changing to first-person and beginning with the nonsense expression “gee.”

Another narrative interjection occurs when Nuna and Fox are swallowed up by the whale. They are somehow able to breathe underwater during the underwater whale sequence. “Gee,” the narrator says, “I wonder why they didn’t drown?” (*Never Alone*). The audience is not meant to understand this interjection as an admission of ignorance. Rather, it is meant to be a jibe at tropes in fiction, one that the audience can identify with and laugh at. The audience is already prepared to suspend its disbelief at the ability of characters to breathe underwater in some stories and virtually every video game. The narrator breaks the fourth wall by pointing out that this suspension of disbelief only occurs because of the dependency of the audience on literary convention. This interjection serves the same lighthearted metanarrative purpose as the previous interjection. Both interjections in *Never Alone* follow the same formulaic pattern of a nonsense exclamation followed by a first-person comment on the state of the narrative. This type of interjection translates well to the virtual realm, unlike the narrative interjection of teasing.

The potency of teasing is reduced in *Never Alone* due to its lack of awareness of specific audience members. An Inupiaq storyteller is able to tease specific members of the audience (Anderson 11), whereas *Never Alone*’s narrator must be content with teasing more general groups. When Nuna and Fox are threatened by the Northern Lights, the narrator explains that “the aurora itself came swooping down from the sky in search

of those not adhering to the elders' wisdom" (*Never Alone*). This explanation is clearly directed towards children to enforce obedience in a lighthearted way. The teasing of children as a general group approximates the person-specific tease, likely because of an awareness of the predominant demographic of *Never Alone*'s consumers. Because the game cannot detect specific users, it must make generalizations about potential users to determine an appropriate tease. The audience is imperative to Iñupiaq storytelling for the sake of the narrative interjection, but it is also imperative for the sake of audience participation.

Audience participation is essential to the performance of an Iñupiaq storytelling event and the completion of *Never Alone*. Anderson identifies the audience's indications of listening in the form of the audience "occasionally voicing the same phrase concurrently with the storyteller" or by interjecting "'aa', meaning 'yes'" as "responses [which] aim to encourage the narrative flow" (Anderson 12). These responses are fundamental to the storytelling event, as they "signal to the storyteller that the audience is totally engaged" (Anderson 12), that the storyteller has been understood, and the story should proceed. Neither *Never Alone* nor an Iñupiaq storytelling event can proceed without audience participation; it is impossible to experience *Never Alone* without playing it. Simply put, the narrator will not narrate until the player has reached a certain point in the game, which may require solving a jumping puzzle or simply moving enough to the right. Furthermore, there are optional collectibles in the game that reveal short videos called "Cultural Insights." These videos describe the Iñupiaq way of life and are akin to prompting the Iñupiaq storyteller for more information. Thus, the function of audience participation has been reproduced in *Never Alone*.

Another Iñupiaq storytelling tradition replicated in *Never Alone* is the attribution of story ownership, which is characteristic of an Iñupiaq storytelling event and functions prominently as the bookends to the story in *Never Alone*. Anderson records the convention of attributing story ownership, noting that "some storytellers [...] identified, either at the beginning or the end of [the story they told], the persons from whom they heard the [story], phrased either as having heard the story from a certain person or that the story is a certain person's story," since "whenever story ownership [is] known, it [is] respected and publicly acknowledged" (Anderson 13). The parent guide to *Never Alone* acknowledges Nasruk's "telling of the Kunuuksaayuka story" as inspiration for *Never Alone* (James 6). Furthermore, when the narrator begins the story, he explains that "[he] heard [the story] from Nasruk when [the narrator] was very young," and when he ends the story, he explains that "[he has] heard Nasruk tell the story [this] way" (*Never Alone*). Thus, *Never Alone* fully respects Iñupiaq story ownership conventions, which is notable because Iñupiaq story ownership has clashed with the Western concept of fair use (Anderson 13).

Never Alone also preserves certain gendered distinctions in storytelling style, emulating the difference in storytelling style between storytellers of opposing genders in Iñupiaq tradition. "Male storytellers [...] [follow] the story line in a straightforward motif-by-motif narrative," whereas female storytellers "[dwell] more on the feelings [...] of their characters" (Anderson 14). Not only is the narrator of *Never Alone* male, but it is also clear that *Never Alone* is written in the style practiced by male Iñupiaq storytellers. The game progresses linearly, almost exclusively from left to right, as well as focuses on the

exploits of the player character, concerned more with actions than with emotions. Thus, *Never Alone* emulates traditional gendered modes of storytelling by having a male narrator present a male-style story. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to pass moral judgment on this tradition, the game's use of a male narrator whose narration mirrors that of Iñupiaq male storytellers highlights one of the challenges of the broader Indigenous Literary Nationalism movement: "the dominance of male perspectives in Indigenous literary nationalism" (Fagan 26). Whether one argues that the video game industry as a whole is male-dominated, or that the side-scroller is inherently linear, it is important to note the extent to which the Iñupiaq female perspective is missing from *Never Alone*. Furthermore, the linear nature of the male perspective is made even more evident by the linear nature of the Iñupiaq long narrative.

The long narrative structure characteristic of Iñupiaq literary traditions is closely followed throughout *Never Alone*. Anderson analyzes the structure of the long narrative in Iñupiaq storytelling as having three components, or time frames:

A long narrative [...] covers a sequence of three time frames, each with its own series of episodes building up to the climactic event. The first time frame sets up the prologue: all the characters are introduced [and] the core problem is spelled out [...] The second time frame [...] goes through [...] the new core problem. The final time frame is the denouement [...] [where] the core problem is solved. Structurally, each of the three time frames is self-contained, with its own climactic event and its own ending. (Anderson 18)

The narrative of *Never Alone* follows this structure explicitly. The opening sequence to *Never Alone* is the first timeframe of the narrative. The narrator begins with a quick prologue, introducing the protagonist Nuna, establishing the setting of the narrative, and presenting the core problem of the narrative: "find[ing] the source of the blizzard" that threatens Nuna's village (*Never Alone*). Then, the climactic event is introduced, as Nuna must escape from the dangerous polar bear and is saved by Fox. Finally, the ending consists of Nuna and Fox walking away together from the site of the attack. The second time frame covers most of the remainder of the game, starting with Nuna and Fox's return to the village, which they find decimated by an attack by the manslayer, introducing the new core problem of the story. The game then builds up to the climactic event, the battle with the manslayer, and ends roughly with the death of the manslayer. The third time frame covers Nuna and Fox's confrontation of the giant man of ice, where the source of the blizzard (the original central problem) is discovered. Nuna resolves this problem, and the narrator completes the story with a denouement. Each of these three sections coincide with the function of their respective time frames as identified by Anderson, and each of these three sections are self-contained, possessing their own beginning, climax, and ending. As such, *Never Alone* uses the long narrative structure of Iñupiaq literary tradition and therefore can be considered an Iñupiaq long narrative.

Another genre that *Never Alone* may be classified as is the *unipkaa*q (James 2), which is, essentially, a legend (Anderson 21). *Unipkaa*q are "characterized by a narrative device

marking the time frame in the past, but not as far back into [...] mythic time” (Anderson 21). In *Never Alone*, the narrator identifies the plot as being “a very old story” (*Never Alone*). When he officially starts the story, he begins with the formulaic introduction “it is said that” (*Never Alone*), which Anderson identifies as “parallel to the opening formula [...] ‘once upon a time’” (Anderson 31). *Never Alone* commences with the formal conventions of the *unipkaa*q, indicating to the player that he or she should consequently expect to encounter certain *unipkaa*q narrative modes that are comparable to the conventions of a story that begins with “once upon a time.” Thus, *Never Alone* places itself within the literary tradition of the *unipkaa*q via its formal features.

Just as *Never Alone* exhibits the formal characteristics of the *unipkaa*q, it draws from the content of the *unipkaa*q tradition by retelling Nasruk’s “Kunuksaayuka.” The narrative of “Kunuksaayuka” features a young boy who sets out from his village to find the source of a blizzard that threatens his family. He finds a man who is shoveling snow into the wind, and he takes the man’s adze and breaks it, which causes the man to leave and the blizzard to stop. This is essentially the third frame of *Never Alone*, wherein Nuna discovers a giant man breaking ice and shovelling it into the wind, an action she stops in the same way that Kunuksaayuka stops the blizzard by stealing and breaking the adze. In fact, the song the ice man sings to Nuna (*Never Alone*) is the same song that the man sings to Kunuksaayuka (Cleveland 104):

Kunuksaayuka haa ŋia ia
Who chipped the blade of my adze ŋia ia
So that tomorrow when you go outside
You will see caribou feet. (*Never Alone*)

The influence of Nasruk’s tale is clearly tangible not only in these similarities, but also in the loading screens, which feature a quotation from Nasruk’s tale. As such, *Never Alone* explicitly presents itself as a continuation or retelling of “Kunuksaayuka.”

However, *Never Alone* is more than just a retelling of “Kunuksaayuka;” it is also a retelling of the Iñupiaq Qayaq cycle, which “tells about a legendary hero” (Anderson 21). Anderson analyzes the Qayaq cycle as being part of a specific tradition, suggesting: “[The Qayaq cycle] as a legend belongs to the hero-tale tradition in which the principal character embarks on his adventures, told in a series of episodes, each one highlighting a different heroic feat and featuring a different cast of characters” (Anderson 22). Anderson emphasizes that although there is no single or standard version of the Qayaq cycle, there are formal similarities between various retellings of the Qayaq cycle (Anderson 25). While *Never Alone* does not feature the Qayaq hero *per se*, it does draw upon the formal characteristics of the cycle. Firstly, *Never Alone* is in itself episodic, allowing the player to replay any of the sections from the main menu. Furthermore, the sections of *Never Alone* mirror the episodic form of the Qayaq cycle: Nuna and Fox escape from a bear, are swallowed by a whale, outwit the Northern Lights, kill the manslayer, and end a blizzard. Since *Never Alone* uses the content of the “Kunuksaayuka” story and re-fashions it in the style of the long Qayaq hero-tale cycle, *Never Alone* can be located within both narrative traditions.

Never Alone also draws upon the Iñupiaq tradition of the manslayer, a character who is a malicious antagonist in both *Never Alone* and in the Iñupiaq literary tradition in general. The manslayer represents a risk to “the livelihood of individuals and the whole community,” and will often be defeated by “one person [who] stand[s] up” (“Manslayer”). Likewise, Anderson identifies the manslayer as having a “murderous intent [...] [that] [is] obviously a breach of Iñupiaq social order” (Anderson 39). Therefore, the manslayer is a worthy choice for the game’s antagonist, who provides the most direct threat to the player’s character. Additionally, the manslayer connects to a tradition of stories whose function appears to be “underscor[ing] the Iñupiaq ideal of group cohesion” (Anderson 39). In this way, *Never Alone* belongs to the literary tradition of the manslayer story, exhibiting its main characteristics—that one character’s “disruptive, antisocial behaviour” (Anderson 29) threatens the members of the community, and that the hero must defeat this character. In the case of *Never Alone*, Fox is crucial to defeating the manslayer, illustrating how help from animals and animal spirits are the tropes of Iñupiaq animal stories.

Although *Never Alone* does not follow the lighthearted tradition of Iñupiaq animal stories, which are often told to children (Anderson 29), the game does use some of the tropes of Iñupiaq animal stories. “Animals in the animal world, in the mythic time of Iñupiaq narratives, were endowed with magic powers” (Anderson 27), suggests Anderson. In *Never Alone*, Fox is “not ordinary”; Fox is able to “[reveal] to [Nuna] just how beautiful” (*Never Alone*) the helping spirits in *Never Alone* are. Fox is not the primary focus of the narrative, but he is central to completing the game, as he can interact with the spirits, helping Nuna continue her adventure. However, as animal stories typically focus primarily on the animal rather than position the animal as a secondary character, *Never Alone* cannot be considered an animal story. Nonetheless, the trope of the magical, helpful animal is a staple feature in the Iñupiaq animal story tradition, so in representing Fox, *Never Alone* effectively draws upon said tradition.

The depth and spread of the similarities between Iñupiaq cultural traditions and *Never Alone* serves to vindicate the approach of tribal-centered criticism to an Iñupiaq work. In particular, such an approach provides the framework to discuss how *Never Alone* possesses the formal characteristics of Iñupiaq storytelling, and continues in the tradition of “Kunuksaayuka” and the Qayaq hero-cycle. Although there are still challenges to the development of an Inuit Literary Nationalism or the successful integration of Inuit-centered approaches to the theory of the broader Indigenous Literary Nationalism movement, such challenges can be dealt with by focusing on a particular Inuit people. By dealing specifically with the Iñupiaq people, this paper is able to privilege Iñupiaq voices in particular over Inuit voices in general, and is therefore able to more accurately read *Never Alone* as an Iñupiaq text. However, some of the challenges are still highly relevant to such a reading of *Never Alone*. Most pressing is the lack of scholarly sources on the Iñupiaq, especially sources written by Iñupiaq scholars, as well as a disproportionate number of male critical voices. However, in spite of these limitations, tribal-centered criticism still provides a useful lens through which to look at Iñupiaq literature from within the framework of the Iñupiaq literary tradition.

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TERRITORIES OF VOICE: SPEECH AND LANGUAGE IN ROBERT FROST AND WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

Lauren Peat

While Lauren has long been drawn to the work of both Robert Frost and William Carlos Williams, a course on twentieth-century American literature provided the occasion to (attempt to) fathom their poetics in tandem, and particularly their respective treatments of the relationship between speech and written language. Both poets—Frost primarily working in New England, Williams in New Jersey—pivot their renderings of this relationship around their speakers' interactions with the natural world. Encountering a seeming indifference or unresponsiveness within their various landscapes, Frost's speakers self-consciously and irresolutely struggle to reproduce, circuitously, any speech they do perceive by means of the written word. The inevitable difference between the "common language" (Williams "Falls" 1) of the natural world and the abstract, metaphorical language of poetry incites Frost's speakers near-debilitating anxiety; Williams, by contrast, perceives no discrepancy between the undeniable vocalism of his landscapes and his own poetic craft. He rather decidedly and unabashedly capitalizes upon the indeterminacy of the external world, and there engenders an even grander creative scope or license. Lauren would like to thank Victoria Evangelista and Mitch Cram for their support and good humour throughout the editing of this paper.

Amongst other literary developments, American modernist poetry pioneered a new vocal consciousness, endeavoring to appropriate the rhythms and cadences of natural speech, or “common language” (“Paterson: The Falls” 1). As two of the movement’s most illustrious voices, Robert Frost and William Carlos Williams fashioned distinct interpretations of this dialogue, exploring the correspondence between speech and written language. Largely staging this discussion upon their respective evocations of the natural world—upon the time-honoured assumption of the creativity derived from its landscapes—these poets unearth seemingly paradoxical means of representing this correspondence. Frost’s series of supremely self-conscious orators strive to faithfully represent the vocalism of the natural world in written form; his speakers, however, unsuccessfully confront the necessarily transformative nature of writing and its requisite distancing from speech. Such is the platform upon which Williams erects his brazenly self-assertive poetics: it is the very act of transmuting speech into written language, Williams’ poetry suggests, that enables vocal creativity. The radically different methods adopted by these poets, however, ultimately converge, as they prefigure a bracingly *modern* understanding of the possible breadth and depth of the contemporary poetic project.

For many of Frost’s speakers, the assumption of nature’s plenitude results only in an equivocation that rather undermines vocal delivery. In Frost’s “The Wood-Pile,” the speaker’s entrance into the natural world initially appears to invite an occasion for dialogic address, though this entrance will prove to frustrate any attempt to speak:

Out walking in the frozen swamp one gray day,
I paused and said, ‘I will turn back from here.
No, I will go on farther—and we shall see.’
The hard snow held me, save where now and then
One foot went through. (“The Wood-Pile” 1-5)

The speaker’s dialogue accomplishes little within his monochromatic and unyielding environment. His seemingly ‘plainspoken’ intention to “turn back” is immediately met by his own deliberation and self-correction, and his tentative decision to “go on farther” is not only qualified by his ambiguous deference to impersonal opinion (“and we shall see”), but thwarted by the snow’s authoritative influence, its “h[olding]” and even paralyzing the speaker’s purpose. His attempts to both dialogically *and* spatially situate himself within the landscape merely confront this landscape’s evasiveness, the speaker referring to the landscape’s “tall slim trees” that are “too much alike to mark or name a place by / So as to say for certain I was here / Or somewhere else: I was just far from home” (“The Wood-Pile” 6-9). The “trees,” then—coupled with the landscape’s pervasive and arresting “gray[-ness]”—provide no point of reference by which this speaker might determine his location. This landscape’s unfixed conditions refuse any external reassurance of the speaker’s own agency, divesting the speaker of his own vocal effect, his ability to “*name* a place,” or “*say*” any given thing “for certain.”

It is rather *against* the reticence of the landscape that the speaker endeavours to assert his generativity, as with his perception of the landscape’s “small bird” (“The Wood-Pile” 10):

[...] He was careful
To put a tree between us when he lighted,
And say no word to tell me who he was
Who was so foolish as to think what *he* thought. (“The Wood-
Pile” 10-13, emphasis in original)

The bird’s silence elicits the speaker’s dual speculation, his supposing the bird’s “careful,” even intentional detachment, and also its condemnation of the speaker’s own allegedly “foolish” conjecture, his imagined identification with the bird’s landscape. This imaginative assertion—the speaker’s extension beyond both his limited perception and the unyielding wordlessness of the natural scene—lapses only into a painful self-awareness of the bird’s alleged silent judgment: “He thought that I was after him for a feather— / The white one in his tail; like one who takes / Everything *said* as personal to himself” (“The Wood-Pile” 14-16, emphasis added). In the context of their wordless interaction, this allusion to speech is a curious analogy. If this landscape essentially denies the speaker all opportunity for vocal certainty, he here attempts to create its possibility. In projecting and therefore betraying his self-perceived inadequacy, the speaker engages in a feeble, near-desperate assertion of vocal agency.

These intimations of anxiety gesture more broadly toward Frost’s attention to even the slightest of articulations, as within “Mowing.” As with the persona of “The Wood-Pile,” the speaker of “Mowing” is confronted with a taciturn and uncommunicative geography: “There was never a sound beside the wood but one, / And that was my long scythe whispering to the ground” (“Mowing” 1-2). Even Frost’s speaker, then, is excluded from such minute vocalism; it is his inanimate tool that wields any vocal effect. Though diminutive, the “whispering” of the scythe nonetheless equates to a kind of capable industry that determinately affects its external landscape: not merely a “gift of idle hours” (“Mowing” 7), the scythe is the “earnest love that laid the swale in rows” (“Mowing” 10). It allegedly cultivates simple, unadorned statement, “anything more than the truth [...] seem[ing] too weak” (“Mowing” 9) to its sincere productivity. By contrast, Frost’s speaker is unable to successfully articulate the simple “fact” of the scythe’s “whispering.” He claims to “kn[ow] not well” what the scythe murmured, and instead relies only upon its vague abstraction, rendering it but “the sweetest dream that labor knows” (“Mowing” 13). Notice the misalignment between the scythe’s understated speech and the speaker’s more abstract, metaphorical language. The absence of dialogue throughout “Mowing” underscores a central Frostian motif: his speakers’ attempts to ‘write around’ the facility for common speech from which they appear to be excepted. Even when the Frostian landscape does speak, however subtly, its speaker is found comparably impotent, “too weak” (“Mowing” 9) for vocal effect, and here even for an interpretation of the scythe’s own vocal productivity.

These grounds for comparison also surface in Frost’s “The Oven Bird,” through the titular creature’s prolific fluency in its address to the natural world: “There is a singer everyone has heard, / Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird, / Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again” (“The Oven Bird” 1-3). This bird is not only distinctly understood and self-assured—being described as unabashedly “[l]oud”—but also lends its voice,

or the resonances of its song, to the objects of its environment. The poem is peppered with the bird's utterances, its effortless and profuse testaments to the natural world: it tells of "the leaves [...] [as] old [...] / [...] the early petal fall [a]s past" ("The Oven Bird" 4-6) and of "the highway dust [a]s over all" ("The Oven Bird" 10). In contrast to the speakers of "The Wood-Pile" and "Mowing," the bird offers its observations categorically and unapologetically. While the bird resides in a "fall[en]" landscape, its success—its fruitful situation within its unaccommodating environment—lies in its vocal capability:

The bird would cease and be as other birds
 But that he knows in singing not to sing.
 The question that he frames in all but words
 Is what to make of a diminished thing. ("The Oven Bird"
 11-14)

This birdsong appears to consist entirely of plainspoken depiction of the natural world, the oven bird appearing to know "not to sing" but to *speak*, to lend a vocal reverberation—to "make [...] sound" ("The Oven Bird" 3) "in all but words" ("The Oven Bird" 13, emphasis added)—the conditions of its "diminished" ("The Oven Bird" 14) state of being. While this appears to be the dream of Frost's poetic orators—a vocalism that "everyone has heard" ("The Oven Bird" 1) and to which all "thing[s]" ("The Oven Bird" 14) resonate—Frost recognizes it as necessarily inaccessible; this kind of dynamic speech eludes his re-creation, and cannot be faithfully represented in the inevitably "wordy" craft of the poet.

In its striving to articulate "what to make of a diminished thing" ("The Oven Bird" 14, emphasis added), the Frostian speakers' project is one of interpretation, the attempt to reconcile the distance between themselves and the environments that appear to exist independently of their creative influence. If, as "The Oven Bird" suggests, writing must necessarily transfigure speech, these objects elude Frost's speakers' vocal effect because their attempt to "earnest[ly]" ("Mowing" 10) "frame[]" ("The Oven Bird" 10) vocal questions in words—and particularly, the self-consciously oblique and lyrical language of poetry—is ultimately a futile endeavor. The work of William Carlos Williams, by contrast, inverts this movement; for Williams, it is the words themselves—their assemblage in written form—that redirect the generative speech of external 'things.' Williams' project is thus a transfiguration of the external world that stages the question of "what to *make* [...] a diminished thing" ("The Oven Bird" 14, emphasis added).

Williams' landscape is prolifically vocal, presenting the poet with an unbounded terrain upon which to enact his own generative effect. In Williams' "Paterson: The Falls," the cataract is a "common language" ("Paterson: The Falls" 1) ripe for the poet's "unravelling" ("Paterson: The Falls" 10), his decided ordering by which "the confused streams [are] aligned, side / by side, speaking!" ("Paterson: The Falls" 11-12). Unlike the equivocality characteristic of Frost's speakers, the language of Williams' environment is here "common[ly]" intelligible, its natural objects engaging in dialogue with one another. The poet's "comb[ing]" ("Paterson: The Falls" 2) of natural speech here enables, if not definitive, then authoritative topographical meaning: "An eternity of bird and bush, / resolved" ("Paterson: The Falls" 9-10). Drawing from the 'long-windedness' of these environments, Williams' craft thus marries the vocal capabilities of both poet and landscape:

The Falls, combed into straight lines
 [...] Strike in! the middle of
 [...] some trenchant phrase, some
 well packed clause. (“Paterson: The Falls” 2-6)

The “streams” of the cataract are rendered as dialogically “aligned” (“Paterson: The Falls” 11) and “combed into straight lines” (“Paterson: The Falls” 2), the cataract becoming a natural conflation of the spoken and written words. The subject of the imperative interjection—“Strike in!” (“Paterson: The Falls” 4)—is thus ambiguous, serving as either an address to the waterfall, desiring its integration into Williams’ poetic form, or as the poet’s reflexive command to disturb the external dialogic landscape itself. Williams’ poetic craft is here a total reclamation of the external world; unlike Frost, Williams chooses not to distinguish between these dialogic and written forms, and thus dissembles Frost’s perceptions of vocal disassociation. Such is the brazen affirmation of Williams’ “A Sort of a Song,” his poetic call to arms: “Compose. (No ideas / but in things) Invent!” (“A Sort of a Song” 9-10). Though Williams recognizes that his project is principally a rendering of external “things,” he apprehends that these same “things” are not his only creative resources. Supremely confident in his own capabilities, Williams audaciously extends beyond immediate perception, without fear of the reprimand of the Frostian “small bird” (“The Wood-Pile” 10). For Williams, words are merely part and parcel of the sphere of objects before his attention, a medium through which he is able to “[c]ompose” complementary and even substitute externalities: “Saxifrage is *my* flower that splits / the rocks” (“A Sort of Song” 11-12, emphasis added). From the Latin—literally “rock-break”—Williams’ naming of this flower embodies its existence, his extended metaphor reaching and “break[ing]” from its object as an appropriation and possession of externality. The parodic “split[ting]” (“A Sort of Song” 11) of the line break not only exemplifies the flower’s potency, but also that of this poet’s occupation of the external world, his seizing the rights to its representation. Williams collapses any Frostian notions of distance through the executive immediacy of his poetic craft.

While Williams’ landscape is decidedly vocal, like Frost, he does perceive a certain unresponsiveness within the landscape, and therefore an incapacity for effectual dialogue. As its “water,” which “even when and though frozen / still whispers and moans” (“Paterson: The Falls” 30-32), the cataract’s “roaring” (“Paterson: The Falls” 40) arises from its senselessness, its rendering as an “empty / ear struck from within” (“Paterson: The Falls” 39-40). If Williams, however, thus perceives his project as falling on deaf “ear[s]” (“Paterson: The Falls” 40), he also perceives that this landscape is incapable of silent judgment, is deficient in the ‘sense’ of its being unable to elicit the Frostian speakers’ anxiety. For Williams, incommunicability is rather a liberation from the confines of sincere representation. Williams revisits this conclusion in the satirical vocal addresses of “A Unison”:

The grass is very green, my friend,
 and tousled, like the head of—
 your grandson, yes? And the mountain,
 the mountain we climbed
 twenty years since for the last

time (I write this thinking
of you) [...]. (“A Unison” 1-7)

These explicit and seemingly spontaneous interjections and alterations of the landscape’s representation—the colloquial “your grandson, yes?” as well as the final parenthetical aside—betray a consciousness of gnarled / maples centering the bare pasture” (“A Unison” 26-27) defies the poet’s definitive explanation, he nonetheless claims them as “sacred, surely—for what reason? / I cannot say. Idyllic!” (“A Unison” 28-29). Confronted with one such natural enigma, Williams renders the pasture as “a shrine cinctured [...] by / the trees” (“A Unison” 30-31), and affirms its “certainty of music!” (“A Unison” 31). Conferring an expectation of vocal certainty onto the landscape, the poet engages in a willful mythologization of this topography, even in the face of its elusory significance. Williams’ poet-figure is thus endowed with the words capable of *producing* this significance, of writing out the landscape’s uncertainties. Williams’ supreme confidence in the written word thus appears to hinge upon his audacious creative license, his willfully abandoning Frost’s self-conscious attachment to “earnest” (“Mowing” 10) representation.

It is the resilience of the written word found within this landscape that speaks to the promise of a “unison” (“A Unison” 51), an eventual natural communion:

[...] a white stone,
you have seen it: Mathilda Maria
Fox—and near the ground’s lip,
all but undecipherable, Aet Suae,
Anno 9—still there. (“A Unison” 35-39)

“[S]till” extant after so many centuries, this lettering has lastingly influenced its landscape and entered into the dialogic epic of its external world: “Stones, stones of a difference / joining the others at pace. Hear! / Hear the unison of their voices” (“A Unison” 49-51). Perceiving the “stones” as having been made enigmatically “differen[t]” by their harboring the written word, Williams appears to recognize the possibility of these landscapes being made exceptional and even enduringly transformed by his unwavering commitment to the written word. Williams claims that “metaphor [is] to reconcile / the people and the stones” (“A Sort of Song” 7-8); this “reconcil[iation]” lies in his “metaphor[ical]” rendering of these external objects, his similarly impressing them with rhetorical flourish. It is within this creatively generative space that Williams arrives at the opportunity for reunion with the external world.

Writing, Williams thus appears to argue, can approximate natural speech, but it cannot—and should not even attempt to—garner a faithful representation of the external world. If this is also the ultimate conclusion of Frost’s poetics, his own project is anything but unsuccessful, his speakers serving as vocal personae within Frost’s staging of such unfruitful grounds for natural, unaffected representation. Frost’s poetics is thus an exquisite rendering of vocal failure, Williams’ of vocal success; if American modernism’s endeavouring to “join” (“A Unison” 50) the rhythms of everyday language with the language of poetry was largely

without precedent, these radically different means of responding to this tendency speak to the tractability and undeniable ‘freshness’ of this uncharted territory. Each lending their individual vision of an engagement in poetic craft—a most visceral, near-primal means of understanding our world—the work of both poets therefore “frames” a most fundamental “question” (“The Oven Bird” 13), the question of how to essentially *be* within the world, of how to fashion an imaginative space from which to “make [...] sound” (3) the contentious strength of our own voices.

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