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Editor's Note

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I am both proud and delighted to present you with the 2012 edition of *Idiom*.

When asked about *Idiom*, the Editorial staff describes this journal as one dedicated to showcasing exemplary literary criticism written by undergraduate students at the University of Toronto. Indeed, that is the fundamental purpose of this publication, but what is the significance? What does it mean to publish essays, all of which are characterized by eloquence, originality and precision? It means that *Idiom* is an opportunity, one for English students to simultaneously create and engage in a stimulating literary dialogue outside of the classroom. It is an opportunity for students to teach each other, to raise one another's creative and academic standards; and through your readership, it is an opportunity to construct and partake in a community comprised of keen and curious individuals. With *Idiom*, it is not only our intention to publish excellent work written by bright and talented students, it is also our goal to form a space for those who share a common desire to expand their intellectual scopes.

At this time, we would like to congratulate the authors on their contributions and thank them for their accommodating nature during the editing process. Further, we would like to thank our sponsors for their generous donations and for believing in the power and in the broader implications of *Idiom*.

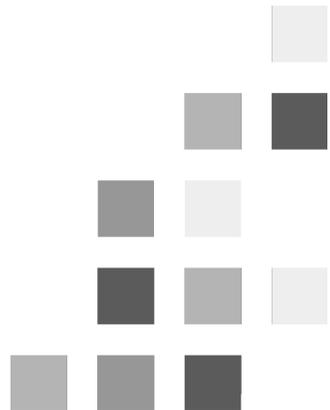
I would also like to personally thank the members of the Editorial Board. Without them, I would have been lost. I am truly lucky to have had the privilege of working alongside such passionate, committed and hardworking people. Finally, I would like to thank our staff advisor,

Professor Thomas Keymer, who took the time to thoroughly proof and re-edit each and every paper. Without his guidance, this issue would not have been so polished and professional. We are deeply grateful to him and his critical eye.

I have been on this Editorial Board for the entirety of my undergraduate career and with every year, I have become more and more impressed with the quality of the essays submitted. The selection process has never been easy and that difficulty is a testament to the sheer caliber of U of T's undergraduate population. I encourage all who have submitted in the past to submit again and hope that new readers of *Idiom* will grace our inbox with their work for the 2013 edition.

Thank you for reading.

Zalika Reid-Benta, Editor-in-Chief
March 2012



“By Each of Them He Was Enriched”: Ethics, Literature, and the Problem of Sex in J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*

Wendy Byrnes

WENDY BYRNES was first drawn to J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*, paradoxically, by the repulsion she felt for its protagonist. She wondered: how did this novel excite so much emotion in her, as a reader, without generating pathos for its central character? Why did she (almost compulsively) read it in one sitting, while maintaining a constant disgust toward David Lurie? In an attempt to answer these perplexing questions, she turned to Marianne DeKoven’s “Going to the Dogs in Disgrace”. DeKoven reads *Disgrace* as a “coherent narrative of personal salvation [that] clarifies into an argument for the necessary co-presence of middle-aged women and non-human animals [as] figures of positive change” (DeKoven 847). This sentiment is articulated in the first sentence of the essay, and it instantly conditioned Byrnes to read the article skeptically. Byrnes, unlike DeKoven, saw nothing of personal salvation, redemption, or even positive character development in Lurie’s narrative; especially in his relationship to women. Rather, what she read was a narrative of stubbornness. It is Lurie’s relationships with women that ultimately prevent his improvement. At the crux of these relationships is a problem that Lurie identifies from the outset of the novel as the “problem of sex” (Coetzee 1). Where he views the problem of sex as a physical problem, it is in reality an ethical one. The implications of this ethical “problem” became her primary focus, and led to the analysis outlined in “By Each of Them He Was Enriched”.

Disgrace by J. M. Coetzee opens with a declaration by the narrator that David Lurie “has, to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well” (Coetzee 1). The problem of sex in this context is twofold: the problem of satisfying one’s sexual impulses, and the problem of relating to the sexualized other.

As a Doctor of Literature, Professor David Lurie attempts to identify and treat his singular problem by prescribing himself narrative. His ‘solution’ is essentially to substitute a search for genuine understanding with an attempt to force life experience into the framework of existing plot and character archetypes. Like a Jamesian *ficelle*, Lurie’s experience and perception frame the reader’s experience despite the text being communicated through third-person narration; therefore, the reader has access only to events observed directly by Lurie, in the context in which Lurie perceives them. A study of these observations reveals very quickly that Lurie experiences the world through lenses of literary precedent. He reads people as though they were familiar texts. He understands the actions and reactions of others by searching his catalogue of literary allusions and selecting one that fits (or, more commonly, does not fit) the circumstance. This paper will investigate Lurie’s various misguided attempts to solve the problem of sex. Framing my analysis with ideas about creative reading from Derek Attridge’s “Innovation, Literature, and Ethics: Relating to the Other”, I will explore Lurie’s propensities to read women as existing archetypes, to cast women as minor characters in his own delusional *Künstlerroman*, and to fail to adequately respond to the call of the feminine other when he finally hears it. Although the text tempts readers to search for “a coherent narrative of personal salvation” (DeKoven 847) in David Lurie’s story of disgrace, it finally delivers an account of a man destroyed by his utter unwillingness to accept responsibility for the other.

The first problem of sex David Lurie grapples with in the text – his sexual desire – is, in essence, an ethical problem. Since Lurie is evidently not satisfied with masturbation, and is certainly unwilling to “deny his nature” by abstaining from sex (Coetzee 90), the fulfillment of his sexual appetite unavoidably involves a relationship with a woman: an intimate encounter with an other. Rather than acknowledging that the women he sleeps with are singular individuals wholly new to him, he chooses to comprehend them in the context of descriptive schemata already existing in his mind. As a man who has devoted his life to the study of literature, he has literary references most conveniently at his disposal. Lurie quickly demonstrates

that as a reader of women, he is not innovative. He adheres to “the familiar model of the literary work as friend and companion, sharing with the reader its secrets” (Attridge 26) rather than as an unfathomed stranger, as Attridge recommends. He reads the women he sleeps with as though they were characters in a plot he has read before; it is only a matter of deciding which plot.

In the short account of his liaison with Soraya, Lurie describes her in classic language of patriarchal construction. Most obviously, he alludes to Giuseppe Verdi’s melodramatic opera *Rigoletto*, which is based on Victor Hugo’s *Le Roi s’amuse*, when discussing Soraya’s sexual temperament. He explains that they are compatible sexual partners, but acknowledges that “no doubt with other men she becomes another woman: *la donna e mobile*” (Coetzee 3), which is a reference to Verdi’s famous tenor solo of this name. The parallel he draws between Soraya and Verdi’s Gilda has no validity beyond the surface translation of this one line, meaning *the woman is changeable*. As a prostitute, Soraya must be professionally adaptable to her clients; however, she is no more like Gilda of the Romantic Italian opera *Rigoletto* than Lurie is like the Duke of Mantua who loves Gilda in Verdi’s play (Parker). The association does more to falsely glorify Lurie’s relationship to his escort than to accurately describe her. Once Lurie has seen Soraya in public with her children, the image haunts him because it demolishes the careful fiction he has woven around their Thursday afternoons. When the relationship inevitably grows awkward and Soraya extricates herself from it, she displeases him by demanding that he cease contacting her. So doing, she becomes a “vixen” (Coetzee 10) by Lurie’s estimation: another clichéd metaphor for female characters.

Likewise, Lurie portrays the first scene between Melanie and himself in his apartment as “the stuff of bourgeois comedy” (14). He laughs at himself for playing the reversed role of housewife, cooking dinner for a young spouse dressed in Melanie’s extravagant clothing. He is not even satisfied with Melanie’s name because it does not correspond with the identity he has designed for her to slip into. He renames her “Meláni”, and calls her “dark

one” (18) because it better suits the exotic feminine characterization he seeks. While ruminating on reactions to his scandalous affair with his young student, Lurie asserts that the trial was intended to punish “the marriage of Cronus and Harmony” (190). This allusion to Greek mythology casts him as the youngest son of the god of Heaven and the goddess of Earth, and Melanie as his great-great-granddaughter (“Cronus”). Lurie thus claims that his exploitation of Melanie is an act as old as civilization itself. He declares that “half of literature is about it: young women struggling to escape from under the weight of old men, for the sake of the species” (Coetzee 190). Even in hindsight, having witnessed the violent rape of his own daughter, Lurie is unable to recognize the violence he did to Melanie as a singular woman. His obsession with framing life in a conventional narrative plot prevents him from grasping the weight of his wrongs, and allows him to preserve his self-image as one who is guided by the forces of the gods (or who is a god himself).

He outlines his technique of “throw[ing] a veil over the gaze, so as to keep her [love object] alive in her archetypal, goddesslike form” (22) in a lecture to his Romantics class. He is discussing the sixth book of Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, which is about a mountain and (as Lurie himself admits) is hardly about love or goddesses. What is revealed by this reading of Wordsworth is Lurie’s opinion, not the poet’s. When he reads women, Lurie is unable to “respond to the singularity of the text ... [and] thus to affirm its singularity in [his] singular response” (Attridge 25). He is not open to direct engagement with Soraya or Melanie’s unique identities because his ‘veil’ of self-deceiving and self-gratifying illusions creates a barrier between *self* and *other*. This barrier prevents him from experiencing “the remolding of the self that brings the other into being as, necessarily, no longer entirely other” (21). His frequent claims that his temperament is stubbornly set, and that he is too old to learn lessons, arise from this very issue. He is unable to change or mature because his refusal to truly encounter the other has made his development stagnant.

Lurie is also unable to properly learn from Bev Shaw because

of this same inability to see her as anything except a character in a pre-existing narrative. His attempts to understand Bev's frank nature lead him to conclude she must be either a "plain little creature" who thinks him incapable of shocking her or a "nun who lies down to be violated so that the quota of violation in the world will be reduced" (Coetzee 148). After sleeping with Bev, Lurie imagines her returning home like Emma Bovary, strutting about her bedroom and singing gleefully, "*I have a lover! I have a lover!*" (150). The reader is forced to wonder: what does Flaubert's novel from the mid-nineteenth century have to do with a woman in South Africa at the turn of the twenty-first century? Why does Lurie try to understand the women in his life by referencing works of classic French and Italian literature when he has declared: "He speaks Italian, He speaks French, but Italian and French will not save him here in darkest Africa" (95)?

These questions can only be addressed by discussing the problem inherent in Lurie's tendency to read people as texts in the first place. In his attempts to cure himself of the problem of sexual desire, he assimilates his sexual companions into his established understanding of the world: a literary understanding. He conceives of women as characters, as authored texts, instead of singular others; he, therefore, does not even begin to understand them or to be responsible for them. Essentially, he glorifies his own existence by casting the women in his life as peripheral characters in his own *Künstlerroman*. His misguided claim to ethical growth occurs when he declares: "by Melanie, by the girl in Touws River; by Rosalind, Bev Shaw, Soraya: by each of them he was enriched ... like a flower blooming in his breast" (192). He expounds on this statement briefly in two instances. In a discussion with his daughter, Lucy, he claims the first benefit he has received from the women he has known is that they have taught him about himself and, in this way, made him a better person (70). Alternatively, the narrator relates Lurie's hypothesis that this "is what Soraya and the others were for: to suck the complex proteins out of his blood like snake-venom, leaving him clear-headed and dry" (185). Hence, the role of women, according to David Lurie, is to guide men to self-realization and to relieve them of their semen

in order that they may think clearly. Women exist as muses, as creatures who facilitate the artistic endeavours of the men they encounter. Lurie sheds all pretence to poetics when he blatantly indulges this belief with a very young, and very obviously drugged, prostitute. She “does her work on him” and he exclaims with relief, “*So this is all it takes! ... How could I have ever forgotten it?*” (194). Ironically, the Professor of Romanticism asserts that the problem of sex can be solved by simple, detached physical stimulation.

Lurie’s relationship with Lucy is also defined by his penchant for perceiving himself as the protagonist of a narrative about artistic self-discovery. Although he does not view Lucy the same way he does his sexual companions, he constantly attempts to interpret her behaviour with the same analytical framework. He considers her move to the countryside a sign of her “coming out of his shadow” (89), as though his opinion was crucial to her decision-making process. Moreover, he assumes Lucy’s refusal to report her rape to the authorities is an attempt to teach him a lesson about “what women undergo at the hands of men” (111). Lucy responds patiently by informing David he is “misreading” her (112), until she finally cannot handle his stubborn self-centeredness any longer. After informing him that she is pregnant with the child of one of her rapists, Lucy finally tries to fully explain to her father the error of his ways, telling him:

“You behave as if everything I do is a part of the story of your life. You are the main character, I am a minor character who doesn’t make an appearance until halfway through. Well, contrary to what you think, people are not divided into major and minor. I am not minor. I have a life of my own, just as important to me as yours is to you” (198).

Lurie’s response to this criticism is anger. He ignores the message and is affronted by the intensity of Lucy’s statement. He calls it an *eruption*; this diction is interesting because it is homophonous with Attridge’s term *irruption*, used to describe the invasion of the habitual mind by a singular

novelty. Essentially, the irruption of the other is a call to “refashion the norms whereby we understand persons as a category and in that refashioning – necessarily inaugural and singular – to find a way of responding to his or her singularity” (Attridge 24). Lucy is attempting to force Lurie into opening himself to the experience of otherness. She immediately realizes she has failed when her father does not even bother to address the concerns she has raised. Instead, he reaches out patronizingly for her hand and treats her decision to complete the pregnancy with condescending acceptance. He goes on to condemn himself as “a father without the sense to have a son” and to lament “how his line is going to run out, like water dribbling into the earth” (Coetzee 199). He remains unwilling to take the risk Attridge conceives to be at the crux of ethical responsibility: to trust the other, to allow it access to the innermost workings of his mind, without knowing whether what it introduces will be benign or malignant. The fervour with which he rushed to Lucy’s rescue, when he dreamt he heard her cry out for his protection, is entirely absent in a situation which demands a revision of his sense of his masculine self. David Lurie proves he is not responsible for his daughter.

The cry of the other is extended to Lurie once more in the novel, and once more he fails to respond adequately. Teresa Guiccioli’s voice calls out to Lurie from the distant past. She asks: “Can he find it in his heart to love this plain, ordinary woman? Can he love her enough to write music for her?” (182). Essentially, Teresa’s voice beckons Lurie to create something. She calls him to *invent*: to deconstruct his presumptions about himself and allow for his own redefinition by the other, namely the female other. Once again, Lurie fails to assume this responsibility. He abandons the whole enterprise, determining that:

he has not the musical resources, the resources of energy to raise Byron in Italy off the monotonous track on which it has been running ...Poor Teresa! Poor aching girl! He has brought her back from the grave, promised her another life, and now he is failing her (214).

He is correct that he has failed her, but he is incorrect about why he has failed her. He believes he does not have the talent, and that he is too old and tired to finish the opera. In truth, he does not have the courage “to affirm, cherish, sustain the other, not in spite of but because of its otherness” (Attridge 27). He is defeated by the realization that he is, after all, not “to be returned triumphant to society as the author of an eccentric little chamber opera” (Coetzee 214). Again, he is only able to think in terms of his own exteriority, his own legacy.

David Lurie, the doctor of literature, fails from the first in diagnosing his problem of sex; it is not that he is unattractive, cannot be satisfied, or has immoral urges. His problem of sex is primarily his failure to pursue genuine experience of the female sex’s otherness. This is a problem which he does not solve in the course of the novel; therefore, to read *Disgrace* as a story of personal salvation is to fall into Lurie’s own narrative snare.

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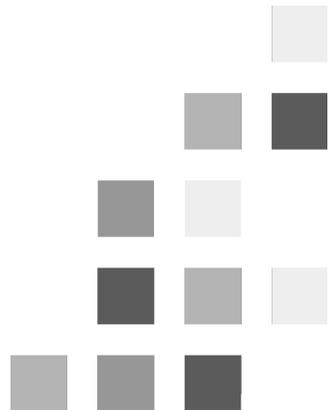
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“If I really cared so much about facts”: Briony’s Mitigation of Guilt in Ian McEwan’s *Atonement*

Inna Rasitsan

Woven into McEwan’s masterful text is the hint of a psychological impulse that alters history and memory for the purposes of adaptation. INNA RASITSAN was intrigued by the ways in which Briony might attempt to do so and considered her unique narrative style to be part of the process. The depersonalization of her own experience in favour of a multitude of voices was, for Inna, a strong indicator that driving the text may be something other than the sentiment of its title. The path toward forgiveness via distribution of guilt was dark but very much present. It is clear that, according to McEwan, *facts* would have resulted in a different kind of novel. On that note, Inna would like to thank Farzaneh Ashrafi, without whose patience, encouragement, scrutiny and insight, she would have written a very different kind of paper.

Ian McEwan’s novel *Atonement* documents a confession of guilt within a network of multiple perspectives. The protagonist’s self-conscious manuscript, of which the bulk of the novel is comprised, features alternating chapters and, later, entire sections, which oscillate between the viewpoints of different characters. I will argue that by employing a halting third-person narrator whose scope includes the inner workings of others instead of a more intimate and (within the scope of this novel) reliable first person, Briony enters a world of speculation through which she attempts to diffuse her guilt.

The choice to employ an omniscient narrator has two functions. First, it allows Briony to challenge her own sense of personal responsibility by depersonalizing the text. Second, it leaves ample room for her to describe

a series of misunderstandings that involved others, producing the effect of a ‘shared burden’ by moderating the singularity of her own mistake. While it appears as if Briony mitigates her personal *sense* of guilt, this action should not be confused with the *actuality* of the guilt itself. Briony generates some level of sympathy on her own behalf as she reveals the grounds of her offence, but she remains fully aware of its devastating legacy at all times and is “not so self-serving” (McEwan 371) as to imagine any form of forgiveness. And yet, the shape her narrative takes is not conducive to the deeply private nature of her remorse.

Briony begins her manuscript by informing the reader that when she wrote her first story she “felt foolish, appearing to know about the emotions of an imaginary being” (6). While this sentiment does not prevent her from making use of the same strategy as an adult novelist, it still affects her approach to storytelling. In fact, the voice with which she chooses to communicate her memoir “appear[s] to know” about the “imaginary” emotions of several characters since her text is partitioned into focalized narratives, which include those of Emily and Cecilia Tallis, Robbie Turner, and Paul Marshall. Moreover, however inclusive this approach may be, it remains less than decisive given that Briony’s speaker is also extremely uncertain.

Relating the commotion that follows Lola’s assault, Briony has her narrator posit several questions: “how had her mother materialised so quickly from Lola’s bedside?” (174); “if she was there being consoled by her mother on the Chesterfield, how did she come to remember the arrival of Dr McLaren?” (174). Such ambivalence effectively relays a sense of “unstructured time” (174) caused by the constraints of memory as well as the chaos of familial and psychological disarray, but it is not limited to Briony’s recollection of her own experience. One startling example occurs in a chapter centered on her sister Cecilia. During an encounter with her brother Leon and his friend Paul Marshall, the narrator states that Cecilia, stooping to enter the house, “felt [Marshall] touch her lightly on the forearm” (54). This seemingly trivial observation is immediately qualified with the following: “[o]r it may have

been a leaf” (54). The figurative double-take is accentuated by virtue of being both the last line of the chapter and a paragraph unto itself. This eye-catching and purposely ambiguous interjection ensures that the reader is aware of an endless catalogue of possibilities; of the refusal, even on the part of a God-like author who “[sets] the limits and the terms” (371) of her novel, to convey everyone’s experience in its entirety. The message is repeated during Briony’s fictional meeting with Cecilia, whose eyes are described as “dark and enlarged, by fatigue perhaps” (332). The already tentative “perhaps” is followed by a further disclaimer— “[o]r sorrow” (332)—once again drawing attention to a web of unexamined potential.

It can be argued that writing on behalf of others demands a degree of uncertainty for the sake of realism, or that writing with conviction of an event that took place fifty-nine years ago is inevitably artificial. Yet Briony’s stylistic choices, being so deliberate, rather complicate the issue. If her purpose is to reconcile with the past, why would she select a route that suggests the possibility of alternative readings? That is, why speculate about other people or other narratives at all? Even if Briony were to reconcile explicitly with her (imperfect) *memory* of the past, would not an intimate, first-person narrative have been more fitting? Atonement, after all, is grounded in confession. And rather than reporting an open, honest declaration of guilt, Briony occupies her readers with the thoughts of multiple characters and a thread of alternate prospects. Indeed, compared to the intensely personal, diary-like tone of the final section titled “London, 1999,” the manuscript that preceded it seems distracted and lacking in conviction. The outcome is a de-personalization that somewhat relieves Briony of her burden and allows her to introduce the crucial concept of misunderstanding.

During her interrogation, Briony is confronted with “the burden of consistency” (169). She stands by her story—a fabrication—which is itself the result of a series of critical misunderstandings on her part. These include the “air of ugly threat” (113) that coloured the intense but harmless exchange between Cecilia and Robbie by the fountain, their love scene in the library misconstrued as “a hand-to-hand fight” (123), and the erroneous

draft of Robbie's letter, which encourages both Lola and Briony to brand him a "maniac" (119). Combined, these delusions allow Briony to form a thoroughly mistaken opinion that ends in disaster. However, she ensures that her readers are also aware of the (equally devastating) misconceptions of others.

By integrating multiple points of view, Briony is able to render a more complete portrait of the circumstances surrounding Robbie's false imprisonment than would have been possible otherwise. At the same time, this allows her to expose the misinterpretations of others and the ways in which those errors contributed to the tragedy around which the novel is centered. Indeed, one of the first such episodes concerns her mother Emily's mistaken impression of the muffled exchange she overhears between Lola and Marshall. Not being present in the nursery herself, she first assumes that Marshall is "talking to the twins [...] rather than Lola" (67). Soon afterwards she concedes that she was wrong and still later follows with the remark that "[t]his wealthy young entrepreneur might not be such a bad sort, if he was prepared to pass the time of day entertaining children" (69). Naturally, she has no idea that the "children" (ie. the attractive, teenage Lola) are, in fact, "entertaining" *him*. Nor is she aware of the fact that Marshall watches Lola's tongue as he "crosse[s] and uncrosse[s] his legs" (62). Emily's lack of suspicion, at this point, is perfectly understandable. Yet, her misguided opinion of Marshall, combined with a healthy dose of classism directed at Robbie, is responsible for the fact that she does not question the scratch on the face of the former and is easily persuaded of the latter's 'guilt'. Nobody, we are told, questions Marshall's version of events. Even Robbie, who notices the "two-inch scratch [...] from the corner of Marshall's eye, running parallel to his nose" (127), is later convinced that Danny Hardman is the perpetrator. It is more than likely that Robbie's flawed opinion is informed by Cecilia, who believes that Danny, being a lustful adolescent, is "interested in Lola" (48). In an intriguing parallel, the narrator also notes that, acting on this conjecture, Robbie and Cecilia actually send an accusatory letter to Danny's father—a letter that does not cause any damage but is gravely reminiscent

of one that did.

For Briony, of course this is all speculation (or, at most, informed guesswork). However, her choice to relay the story in this fashion rather than through the restricted voice of a first-person narrator is indicative of an attempt that exceeds mere exposition. By deliberately inventing ways in which others were at least partly complicit in Robbie’s incarceration, she seems to slightly dilute her own sense of responsibility. That is, the narrative style of her choosing somewhat challenges her avowal to hold herself accountable to the utmost degree.

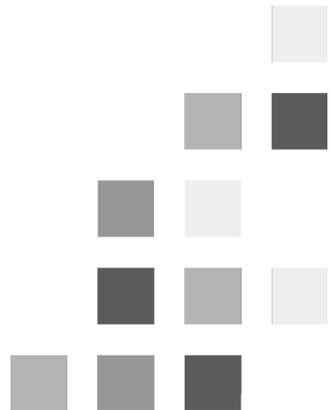
Moreover, Briony insists on the prevalence of misunderstanding *in general* as a means of softening the unfortunate consequences of her own. The “schoolgirl crush” (232) that Briony confesses to in her childhood is totally unrelated to Robbie’s imprisonment, although he is under the false assumption that it is; Cecilia wrongly assumes that Robbie “tiptoe[s] with comic exaggeration across the wet floor” (27), while he actually feels an “idiot [...], padding behind her across the hall and entering the library barefoot” (84); Briony mistakes Luc Cornet’s delirious dying words for truth (306). These are just a few instances among many others in which a simple lack of communication leads to errors in judgment. None of them is a cause for calamity. However, given Briony’s insistence on the possibility of alternative narratives, one can assume that a tragedy would have been feasible given the right circumstances. The fact is, she says, that no one is immune. And this, perhaps, is what she clings to in order to make her guilt bearable.

With the unsuccessful attempt at staging her play, *The Trials of Arabella*, “the self-contained world [Briony] had drawn with clear and perfect lines had been defaced with the scribble of other minds, other needs” (36). It is ironic that, upon writing her “fifty-nine-year assignment” (369), she does just that. The “clear and perfect lines” of a definitive narrative are blurred and “defaced” with numerous possibilities, perspectives and ambiguity. This is a self-conscious rhetorical decision on the part of a character who in no way doubts the significance of her role in Robbie’s confinement; and yet she does what she can to de-personalize her narrative. Furthermore, she

moderates the vital role of her own misunderstanding with the overwhelming presence of surrounding confusion. While Briony does not appear to overtly intend such an effect, it is, nonetheless, present. Perhaps, with the subtle communication of this message, McEwan refers to the subconscious human capacity to paint unpleasant actions in a more tolerable light. Indeed, as Briony so astutely observes towards the end of the novel: “If I really cared so much about facts, I should have written a different kind of book” (360).

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The Forcefulness of Language in Donne's "The Apparition"

Michael Chernoff

MICHAEL CHERNOFF is a third-year English and Philosophy major at the University of Toronto. When he isn't analyzing poetry, he's writing his own. His paper explores the nuances of John Donne's 1633 poem, "The Apparition". Drawing upon Stanley Fish's conception of poetic "bulimia," the sexual frustration that Donne's speaker suggests comes to be displaced by an even greater anxiety: the infinite nature of language.

One man's vomit is another man's essay. Literary critic Stanley Fish writes that "[John] Donne is bulimic, someone who gorges himself to a point beyond satiety, and then sticks his finger down his throat and throws up. The object of his desire and of his abhorrence is not food, but words, and more specifically, the power words can exert" (Fish 223). A perverse obsession with language is easily discerned as the driving force of Donne's poetry. In "The Apparition," the speaker descends into the perplexing realm of words as he attempts to scare a woman into having relations with him. A metaphysical conceit is evident, insofar as the poem itself is an apparition in multiple senses of the word.

The piece is a seduction poem in which the male speaker lusts over an unnamed woman and attempts to sway her into reciprocating his feelings. The first five lines of the poem introduce the man as blatantly desperate; he has a history of rejection with the woman of interest: "When by thy scorn, O murderess, I am dead, / And that thou thinkst thee free / From all solicitation from me" (Donne 1-3). Each time he asks for the murderess' love,

he is promptly faced with the “scorn” of dismissal. The speaker’s hopes have been shattered; he no longer feels alive, yet the use of the word “dead” is a pun. It was a widely held Renaissance belief that each time a man ejaculates, his life is shortened (Dollimore 76). Rejection by this woman implies a lack of sex; he is “dead,” as her scorn necessitates that he masturbate to the mere thought of her, thereby wasting his ejaculates. In short, these lines communicate the following message: ‘when you say ‘no’ to me, again, and think you’re free of my incessant inquiries, think again.’ A new method of seduction is then provided.

The poem makes clear the deviant nature of the speaker’s desperation by detailing an imagined scenario. The implied past rejection gives way to a radical strategy: masculine persuasive force. He asserts a new tactic, claiming that after he is “dead,” he will come back as a ghost to haunt this woman and stand by her bedside, scaring her into loving him (4-5). He refers to her as a “feigned vestal,” which signifies that he has passed through desperation and is now experiencing resentment; his yearning for her is so immense that he grows impatient and furious. The aforementioned phrase is an insult; Greek mythology dictates that vestal virgins, priestesses of the goddess Vestal, are representative of chastity. To say that she feigns such characteristics insinuates that she is promiscuous (OED). Moreover, she is licentious only when “in worse arms” – in other words, arms that do not belong to the speaker (5). With the crux of his frightening seduction technique established, he goes on to provide a detailed course of action.

The voice of the poem becomes lost in his own egomaniacal imagination as his plan materializes. He posits that “then thy sick taper will begin to wink” (6). Here, his words actually transmute him into a ghost; he takes on the qualities of a supernatural entity, who dims and flickers bedside candles. The narrator then cultivates a superiority complex: “And he whose thou art then, being tired before, / Will, if thou stir, or pinch to wake him, think / Thou call’st for more” (7-9). Any man she chooses over the speaker will be too oblivious and tired, specifically from sex, to save her from this resentful spirit. The ghost’s presence puts the woman into a frightened

state and she is then labelled by him a helpless “aspen wretch” (11). “Aspen” alludes to a tree whose leaves tremble easily (OED). The speaker implies that if she does not settle for him, she will likely get syphilis and require treatment: “Bathed in a cold quicksilver sweat” (12). Quicksilver, or mercury, was used as a means of alleviating the symptoms of syphilis during the Renaissance (OED). After explaining his fear-instilling tactics, he admits his true intent, which is to render this woman “a verier ghost” than he; the speaker wants to bring her down to the same level of misery that she has thrust upon him through perpetual rejection (13). However, he soon acknowledges a dire hole in his logic.

A pivotal turn occurs when the narrator realizes that the expression of his seductive method is self-defeating. He hesitates: “What I will say, I will not tell thee now” (14). Hitherto, the speaker imagined himself “as a center of stability and control”; however, this jurisdiction “can be sustained only if the speaker is himself untouched by the force he exerts on others” (Fish 228). This is no longer the case, for the speaker sees that this elaborate plan is not his own – the more detail he gives of an idealized haunting, the less control he has over the situation. The seduction plan itself, as an idea, belongs to the speaker insofar as it is a conception within his mind. In the act of communicating his scheme in writing, he is deprived of authority. To communicate is to bask in the arbitrary and infinite nature of language, an entity which can only be controlled to a certain extent. Specifically, its rearrangement is all that man can fathom (Barthes 129). Consequently, it is not the speaker who possesses the masculine persuasive force, but the language itself (14-15). The speaker unwittingly subjects himself to the same scorn he attempts to thrust upon others, necessitating that he opt for silence. He can no longer compensate for a lack of power with excessive sexual jokes. If he continues to divulge details in writing, he will further recede into the abyss of language and face prolonged emasculation: “[...] my love is spent” (15). His love is “spent” in the sense that it is consumed by language. His love for a woman incites the creation of this poem; it is through this act of writing that his love is stripped of any personal inclinations and he

inevitably becomes the “verier ghost” of the poem.

The authority language asserts over the speaker allows for a metaphysical conceit – an elaborate, unstable metaphor – to be discerned. The title of the poem implies that an apparition is likely to appear somewhere in the text. The word apparition, however, has multiple definitions; it can mean both the appearance of something visible and the supernatural appearance of something invisible (OED). Within the poem, an apparition occurs in both senses, simultaneously. The appearance of the invisible occurs not just through the speaker’s twisted seduction fantasy, but through the concept of the speaker itself. The words of the poem initiate a process of emasculation and the speaker becomes a mere spectre of the man he claims to be. Concurrently, the appearance of the visible occurs through the emergence of language as a forceful, masculine entity. The poem is paradoxical, for these are two distinct readings that oppose each other, and at the same time, rely upon each other to exist. “The Apparition” thus demonstrates Donne’s poetic bulimia; his obsession with language forces a seemingly lucid seduction piece to transcend all expectations. The vomiting ensues as a hyper-contradictory playfulness, demanding ceaseless reinterpretation.

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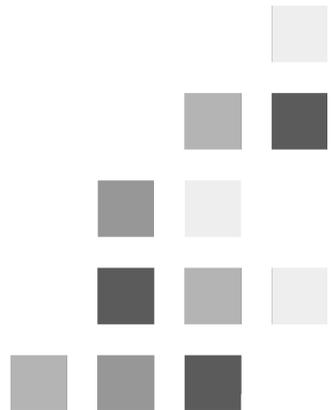
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Comedy as Critique: Humor and Ideology in *Green Grass, Running Water* and “The Marine Excursion...”

Jordan Mulder

Although JORDAN MULDER recommends that nobody attempt to prove it in a university essay, he believes ideological critique is the most valuable function art can play in society. For Jordan, writing an essay about a work of literature is a way of determining whether or not the writer of the text in question can find a way to circumvent his or her own ideological complicity in the attempt to point towards an alternative way of thinking. Comedy is ideally suited to this difficult and sometimes very self-serious task, Jordan suggests, precisely because its value is directly derived from how surprising and subversive it can be. His essay grew out of an attempt to quantify this element in two texts where he thought it was quite clearly reflected, and was fed by his simple curiosity about what makes people laugh. And Stephen Leacock makes him laugh quite a bit.

Jean-François Lyotard defines postmodernism as “an incredulity toward metanarratives.” In Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water* and Stephen Leacock’s “The Marine Excursion of the Knights of Pythias”, this “incredulity” is embodied through the use of comedy; these writers achieve a critical distance from the imposed narratives of colonialism and nationalism by satirizing and mocking the impulses imperative in their perpetuation, using simple human folly to point out broader political hypocrisies and societal prejudices. By staging their narratives on the level of individuals originating from overlooked, marginal segments of Canadian society, and by lampooning these characters’ attempts to achieve broader political recognition and agency, King and Leacock are circumventing their

own complicity in the formation and perpetuation of a Canadian national identity and bypassing social assumptions that would otherwise hamper their attempts at ideological critique. This kind of ironic distancing from overarching narratives is essential to the postmodern approach and, it will be argued, to comedy, which both King and Leacock incorporate into their respective texts. They turn comedy to a constructive, community-building purpose, one that seeks to establish, through cultural persuasion, a national identity that can gain an awareness of its own pretensions and that can rectify disparities of representation amongst social groups, thus becoming a community formed with the imaginative participation of all its members rather than one mandated by ideological perpetuation.

It is integral to this end that King's and Leacock's texts situate themselves in opposition to the pervading cultural narratives of their respective time periods. For Leacock, the principal concern lies in reorienting Canada back towards the idyllic, country-based lifestyle which has been overlooked in the scramble for industrialization. He struggles with the emerging dichotomy between the parochial and the national, attempting to assert that the Canadian identity is something deriving from the uniqueness of location, the specificity of experience, and the perspective of the individual. For this reason, Leacock is sure to immediately assert Canada's status as a geographic entity of physical distinctiveness, one that inspires a comically vehement rejection of what has been socially established, in preconceived narratives, as the peak of scenic beauty. In "The Marine Excursion of the Knights of Pythias" his narrator says, "Lake Wissanotti in the morning sunlight! Don't talk to me of the Italian lakes, on the Tyrol or the Swiss Alps. Take them away. Move them somewhere else. I don't want them" (Leacock 294). More explicitly bringing in the issue of national pride, he goes on to reject prior celebrations of patriotism that have achieved international recognition for their grandeur: "Don't tell me about the Carnival of Venice and the Delhi Durbar. Don't! I wouldn't look at them. I'd shut my eyes" (Leacock 295). His references here are both quite telling; the Carnival of Venice, of course, demands the wearing of masks while the Delhi Durbar calls to mind the

British colonial possession of India. By reminding the reader of one event where the obfuscation of identity is a requirement for participation in “festivities,” and alluding to another situation in which political, and thus ideological, perpetuity was enforced from above by Canada’s own colonizers, Leacock is subtly reinforcing the notion of Canada as dispossessed from its essential identity by the restrictive force of metanarratives. He goes on to explain how a Mariposian’s identity can change depending on the cultural holiday of the moment (Leacock 296), and while there is much comic cultural disorientation in this tendency, it is evident that such a willingness to circumvent cultural borders and defy notions of exclusivity is reflective of both the inadequacy of the existing Canadian identity and the lack of need for a specific one. Effectively, the flexibility with which one can self-identify, although played for laughs, implies that the imposition of individuation is an illusion, the collective is never concrete, and a state of fluidity is preferable to one where identity is mandated by ideology. As Leacock suggests, “practically everybody belongs to the Knights of Pythias just as they do to everything else. That’s the great thing about the town and that’s what makes it so different from the city. Everybody is in everything” (Leacock 295).

Comedy, for Leacock, is the primary vehicle for this metanarrative subversion and is the key instrument in the process of critical distancing discussed above. Just as Freud conceived of humour as resulting when unconscious thoughts, usually suppressed by the ego, are allowed to receive expression (Freud 49), both King and Leacock use humour to bypass colonial and nationalist metanarratives, both of which have, through historical perpetuation, achieved the weight of ideology and placed limitations on marginal segments of society in a way almost analogous to how the ego governs the id. In “The Marine Excursion” the comedy most prominently takes the form of exactly such an undermining of normative social expectations. When the *Belle*’s rescuers are “saved! By heaven, saved by one of the smartest pieces of rescue work ever seen on the lake” (Leacock 306), by a ship that has itself sunk, a reversal of fortune takes place in which

even the reticent narrator is unwilling to admit the situation's absurdity. Because Mariposa's citizens are similarly incapable of acknowledging their limitations, their misplaced heroism is rendered laughable. "Can [Smith] take her in? Well, now! Ask a man who has had steamers sink on him in half the lakes from Temiscaming to the Bay if he can take her in?" Leacock writes, positioning the boat's pilot as fighting against our expectations – that is, against his prescribed social role. Continuously, Mariposa's position on the periphery is deliberately ignored by the Mariposians and comically circumvented by the town's refusal to be placed under any such limitations: "What? Hadn't I explained about the depth of Lake Wissanotti? I had taken it for granted that you knew!" (Leacock 304). It is through ironizing Mariposa that Leacock can express the determination for recognition that it possesses: the town's small size and relative insignificance make the valiant courage and heroism of its "knights" amusing. It is only through defeating these diminished expectations and surpassing them that Mariposa can achieve greater agency. The humour, then, is where Leacock situates his ideological subversion. By imbuing the Mariposians with qualities that seem comically disproportionate to their position in society, Leacock calls attention to how our metanarrative-derived assumptions come pre-packaged with an innate tendency to overlook and marginalize certain social groups, who respond by overstepping their boundaries in a way that is inherently comical due to the subversion of social rules that such an act entails. Before the Mariposians launch into a rendition of "O Canada" at the moment of the *Belle's* impact with the dock, the narrator exclaims "If only the federal census taker could count us now!" (Leacock 307), thus more directly showing Mariposa as fighting against its own liminality with, of course, a comic level of commitment.

King, as a generational postmodernist, is preoccupied with opposing not only the imposition of an exclusivist Canadian national identity, but also in tearing down Western notions of narrative storytelling, religious affiliation, and cultural superiority, all of which have been used to perpetuate and reinforce colonial power hierarchies more generally. The Four Indians, for example, act as a sort of buffer against those devices of

narrative storytelling that seek to establish an overarching point of view that supersedes individual perspectives. This is exemplified in the following exchange, when Hawkeye warily asks, “are you being omniscient again?’...‘I think so,’ [says] Lone Ranger. ‘I was afraid of that,’ [says] Robinson Crusoe” (King 49). Further on, Ahdamn’s attempts at naming his surroundings, at classifying the world into definite forms of knowledge, are revealed for their inherent arbitrariness as he applies comically absurd, incongruous names to his environment (King 41). This is further reinforced by Hovaugh’s baffled reaction when asked to diverge from his “files” (and thus abandon his dependence on classification) in order to explain his personal feelings on the Four Indians (King 95). Even God himself, the ultimate omniscience, is undermined as his creations find his assertions of divinity humorous: “Your garden, says First Woman. You must be dreaming ... Yes, says that GOD ... All this stuff is mine. I made it. News to me, says First Woman” (King 68). Here, the metanarrative of Christian creation stories is displaced, its implications of proprietary ownership made to appear incapable of sustaining its own pretensions. Western literary culture is even lampooned and an unflattering light is shone on the civilization that upholds it when Coyote incorporates Melville’s Ahab into his story: “I read the book. It’s Moby-Dick, the great white whale who destroys the *Pequod*.’ ‘You haven’t been reading your history,’ I tell Coyote. ‘It’s English colonists who destroy the Pequots” (King 196). In this juxtaposition of canonical literature with the extermination of Native American populations, King remonstrates against the hypocrisies of colonial metanarratives and points out how the cultural achievements of the West often overshadow its moral failures, a process that perpetuates ideology and prevents the honest acknowledgment of historical truths. Even the seemingly comical, bumbling tendency of his narrators to “take turns” (King 103) authoring the story, often starting over and misremembering certain details, is a proclamation of the potentially communal nature of identity-building, which stands in direct contrast to the Western storyteller’s claims of independent authorship. By situating his text as a subversion of the external imposition of ideology, which has been mandated by the

colonial process and used narrative as its vehicle, King aligns himself with liminal figures whose voices have been ignored and whose agency has been smothered, opening a potential avenue through which this process can be reversed.

King also uses irony prominently as a humorous device to express the need for ideological reorientation. As his characters are comically mistreated by overarching social assumptions that are predetermined to marginalize them, humour derives from the inability of metanarrative to respond to the demands of reality due to the prejudices it has been built to operate with. The series of events – the “comedy of errors” – that results in Lionel’s incarceration and criminal record begins with a case of mistaken identity (King 59), just as his earlier tonsil surgery was inflated into a potential heart operation that “somehow work[s] its way into a file” (King 36), plaguing him later in life. Both events are situations where the failures of metanarratives are evident, as the “files” (i.e., the urge to classify that is held over from colonialism) that contain Lionel’s life history end up perpetuating and magnifying the failures of the past, while the tendency of the judicial system – that is, the arbiters of ideology – to maintain power hierarchies through institutionalized prejudices is also emblematic of the colonial legacy:

It took eleven stitches to close the wound. Lionel spent a day in the hospital, four days in jail until the police could verify his identity, and despite his pleas, another five days in jail for disturbing the peace. He called Duncan to tell him what had happened, how the whole thing was one very funny mistake (King 60).

Here, King uses comedy to emphasize the absurdity of the accusations levelled at Lionel and thus highlights the arbitrariness with which ideological judgments are dispensed. By doing so, he squarely situates our sympathies with the novel’s marginalized figures and characterizes their struggle as an attempt to overcome dominant metanarratives.

That colonial and nationalist ideologies require a response of comedy is an indication of the marginalizing tendencies inherent in both processes: unable to pursue traditional avenues of achieving agency for their characters, both King and Leacock recognize that critique can only be achieved at the critical distance afforded them to them by the subversive aspects of humour. Consequently, both writers utilize comedy as an essential tool in their attempts at cultural persuasion wherein they seek to combat a cultural environment dictated by the moderating force of an ideology derived from antiquated metanarratives. As Leacock humorously idealizes a parochial vision of Canadian society and as King uses comedy to displace its pretensions and garner sympathy for its liminal figures, a new incarnation of the Canadian identity is hinted at – one that recognizes the multiplicity of perspectives present in overlooked segments of society; accepts their value as potential contributors; and might be willing to throw away the generalizations of metanarrative that suppress them. Ultimately, both authors are able to speak to the margins and assure them of one thing, “until it [becomes] a chant, a mantra: ‘You are a Canadian. You are a Canadian. You are a Canadian.’” (King 159).

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Above the Bright Sky-Neighbouring Peaks: Language and the Environment in Confederate Canadian Poetry

Shakaira John

When reading the work of the Confederation Poets, one is struck by magnificence as if witnessing the sublime itself. These poets have managed to take prospect landscape and distil it into words, displaying the ruggedness of the land and the curve of rivers using the cadences of poetry. It causes one to wonder, what is it about this poetry that makes it so unique from the familiar Romantic nature poetry of Wordsworth or Coleridge? How is it able to portray such a vast land so succinctly? There is something about nature that renders it capable of pulling on the heartstrings of those who take the time to bask in its splendour – this is also true of the Confederation Poets. Their descriptions of Canadian nature, and the ways in which they are bound up with the cycles and contours of human life, are resonant and profound. They cause one to mull over the relationship between the natural world and human life – how humanity itself is a part of nature and the many ways in which the two ‘worlds’ intersect and reflect each other. Moreover, what significance can the Canadian poet attribute to a landscape that is characteristically and distinctly Canadian itself? What is the purpose of poetry that focuses on a land so new; how can poetry affect the development of a national identity for such a country? The sublime quality of the works of the Confederation Poets spurs on this investigation, leading readers on a search for answers and for a national voice.

“A Mari usque ad Mare”[†]

In “The Poetry of Nature,” Charles G. D. Roberts explains that “Nature poetry is not mere description of landscape in metrical form,

[†] “From Sea to Sea”; Canada’s motto, derived from Psalm 72:8 (“A Mari usque ad Mari”)

but the expression of one or another of many vital relationships between external nature and ‘the deep heart of man’” (363). Roberts’ essay sketches a general philosophy of man’s relation to nature which is manifest in the poetry of Bliss Carman, Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott, and Roberts himself. These visionaries constitute the Confederation Poets, the “self-conscious prophets of the new Canadian nationalism” (Ross ix). While Roberts delves into the relationships between nature and human emotions, which render nature as a powerful therapeutic agent for a weary humankind, the works of the Confederation Poets intimate an engagement with Canadian nature that *transcends* emotion. Their poetry considers the Canadian landscape as not only affecting and soothing emotion, but as *shaping* those who encounter it, thereby dictating the contours of Canada’s culture and art. Furthermore, nature is depicted by the Confederation Poets as a mediator between mankind and the divine. G. D. Roberts provides a template for the Confederation Poets’ understanding of nature as it relates to human emotion, but he does not describe the formative and supernatural aspects of their nature poetry and therefore limits their engagement with Canadian terrain.

Roberts sets the foundation for the Confederation Poets’ view of nature as therapeutic with his description of the relationship between the natural environment and human emotion. In his eyes, nature has the ability to act as a balm for over-strung emotions, or as a reviver of emotions long subdued by city life. “That power in nature which moves us by suggestion, which excites in us emotion, imagination, or poignant association, which plays upon the tense-strings of our sympathies” (Roberts 361) is not found in the city, as it is suppressed by day-to-day monotony and isolation from nature. The portrayal of everyday urban life as a drain on the vivacity of men is one inherited from works of British romanticism and evident in the plight of Londoners in William Wordsworth’s sonnet “The World Is Too Much With Us.” British and North American urban populations, due to stress, tedium, and overwork, suffer from strained nerves and gradually become less hardy, finding themselves in a “sadly morbid condition” (Bentley 177).

The Confederation Poets view the vigorous Canadian landscape as the proper medicinal cure, one which “works through sheer beauty or sheer sublimity” (Roberts 361) to re-charge emotions and restore vitality. When ‘the deep heart of man’ is troubled, it can experience relief and release in the spontaneity and intricacy of the Canadian outdoors – the strained heart finds solace in the ‘deep heart of nature’. Roberts explains that “nature becomes significant to man when she is passed through the alembic of his heart. Irrelevant and confusing details have been purged away, what remains is single and vital” (Roberts 362). This vitality or singularity associated with the pure experience of Canadian nature encourages a similar purging of the city cares which veneer human hearts, allowing for the expression of emotions long buried beneath the urban haze. Thus, a specifically Canadian landscape is able to lift one above routine, freeing the inner “sensibility to [the] poetic inspiration” (Bentley 177) which resides in each individual.

Nature’s therapeutic value is also contemplated in Lampman’s “Among the Timothy.” The poem’s irregular meter, alternating between pentameter and trimeter, is immediately indicative of a lack of sameness, evoking Canada’s curative spontaneity. The speaker expresses the fatigue accompanying city life, explaining how “I was weary of the drifting hours, / The echoing city towers, / The blind gray streets, the jingle of the throng ...” (15-17). In this “aching mood” (14), the speaker finds that poetry and the propensity for emotion have gone out of him, and his “high moods ... [are] all gone lifeless now” (21, 27). Yet, there is an irony in composing poetry *about* one’s inability to compose poetry, which indicates that the landscape has already begun to heal the speaker in a manner unbeknownst to him – his mere presence among the timothy is enough to restore inspiration. The speaker has come not to “think but only dream” (10), and therefore nature is a relief from *thought itself*, a rest for the “overtaskèd brain” (31) which much constantly labour in the city. The turning point occurs with the digression of “but let it go” (34); after this point, the landscape unfolds its healing powers and the speaker’s thoughts leave the city behind to focus on his surroundings. Elements of nature now merge with the human world

through inventive similes: daisies are personified as “children in a crowd” (50), human faces are replaced by the faces of Canadian flora, and poplar leaves are “like innumerable small hands” (54) which do not toil like the human hands of the city. The use of classical allusion with the invocation of maenads (57) elevates the landscape to a heroic status; more than a method of psychological relief, nature is now an entity of mythological power. Its unique abilities are further revealed through the use of assonance (“blithe as they are blind” (42)) and alliteration (“crickets creak” (61)) in the following stanzas, as the speaker is so immersed in his surroundings that his musings have begun to mimic the very sounds he hears. The use of such euphony throughout emphasises the complete sensuality of nature’s therapy. His senses thus overwhelmed, the “aching dim discomfort of [the speaker’s] brain / Fades off unseen ...” (3-4) and he no longer stressfully frets, but rather productively broods (80). There is a complete fusion of self and place by the last stanza of the poem, as the sunshine which soaks the landscape simultaneously soaks the speaker (90) who is now wholly healed and unified with the natural world that has healed him.

Though Roberts does not delve into the formative aspect of Canadian landscape in his description of nature’s “many relations with humanity” (Roberts 362), the Confederation Poets, however, express the belief that the self is a product of the climate and soil in which it takes shape (Bentley 145). This view, labelled as environmental, meteorological, or geographic determinism, holds that the natural environment shapes one’s mentality. There can be a purely distinct Canadian identity because “the physical environment, rather than social conditions, determines cultures” (Hong 142); therefore the distinct and robust Canadian terrain dictates a similarly robust culture that is patently Canadian. Further, “the geographic environment [is] the primary control of human life ... environment rigidly controls human action” (Hong 143). Mentality, culture, and even *action* are dictated by the environment; consequently, the environment also shapes the art that one creates. The grandiosity of the Canadian landscape thus produces grand art as a *direct result*. In “Protection for Canadian Literature,” Thomas D’Arcy

McGee asserts that Canadian writing “must assume the gorgeous colouring and gloomy grandeur of the forest...Its lyrics must possess the ringing cadence of the waterfall, and its epics be as solemn and beautiful as our great rivers” (Bentley 146). A perfect example of this landscape-reflecting poetry is found in Roberts’ *Orion*:

“All the morning’s majesty
 And mystery of loveliness lay bare
 Before him; all the limitless blue sea
 Brightening with laughter many a league around,
 Wind-wrinkled, keel-uncloven, far below;
 And far above the bright sky-neighbouring peaks;
 And all around the broken precipices,
 Cleft-rooted pines swung over falling foam,
 And silver vapours flushed with the wide flood
 Of crimson slanted from the opening east ...” (405-416)

Working again with Romantic conventions, Roberts invokes a landscape that is particularly sublime. The use of words like “limitless”, “league”, and “sky-neighbouring” conjures images of grandeur and scope which are characteristic of Canada’s ‘sea to sea’ landscape.

The Confederation Poets do not stop at simply representing the Canadian landscape in their poetry; rather, they also write as if their works are literally *shaped* by the land, as in Carman’s “Low Tide on Grand Pré.” This poem’s steady iambic tetrameter renders a lilting character indicative of a constant flow, a *fluidity* of words. This meter is consistent throughout the poem, much like the inevitable rise and fall of the tides, and the frequent use of caesurae mimics the breaking of the waves. Further, the *ababb* rhyme scheme depicts a return to the b sound in the same way that the tide is ever-returning. The last word of the second line of each stanza is also repeated as the last word of the stanza. This epistrophe illustrates a return to the beginning; the poem’s structure is shaped by the cyclical motion of the tide

and seasons and reflects the circularity of time itself. As water imagery is frequently established with the “tide” (2), “stream” (9), and “drift” (27), the use of enjambment throughout causes the lines to similarly *flow* into each other in a continuous stream. Looking more broadly, Carman’s poem also moves between memory and the present just as the tide moves in and out. As with Lampman, natural elements are personified in a manner resembling the people they influence: the barrens are “aching” (48), and the tide is “a grievous stream” (11) like tears “wandering” (13) down a face. Furthermore, entities are described in terms of natural phenomena: “time [is] ripe” (39) as if it were a fruit in a Canadian tree.

To the Confederation Poets, nature does more than just shape mankind and art; the natural world is also a mediator between man and the divine. Roberts suggests that nature poetry “is apt to make the drop of dew on a grass blade as significant as the starred sphere of the sky” (Roberts 361), but he does not divulge why this is so. The Confederation Poets actively recognize “the kinship of beauty of holiness” (Bentley 205) and see the drop of dew as infused with spirit of a divine sort. Their poetry reveals God as a force within nature, and embedded in the fibres of the beautiful. Of the group, D. C. Scott is the only member with no connection to Anglicanism, but since his father was a Methodist minister (Bentley 204) his work similarly stems from Christian tradition. The poets (and Scott especially) were exposed to the Aboriginal belief system of Pantheism, which holds that the spirit of the divine is nature and there is “no difference between the creator and creatures” (“Pantheism”). The combination of the Christian with the Aboriginal belief system produces *Panentheism*: the divine infused in elements of the natural world, but is not reducible to it. As defined by the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “Panentheism understands God and the world to be inter-related, with the world being in God and God being in the world ... it stresses God’s active presence in the world” (“Panentheism”). Contrary to Pantheism, Panentheism maintains the identity and significance of the non-divine (“Panentheism”), and thus avoids being labelled as heretical. The divine is not wholly subsumed into the physical world, but remains always (partly)

apart. Scott alludes to the combination of these seemingly disparate belief systems in his “Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon,” describing how “tones that were fashioned when the faith brooded in darkness / Joined with sonorous vowels in the noble Latin, / Now are married with the long-drawn Ojibwa” (21-23). The notion of nature infused with the spirit of the divine is also present, as “all wild nature stirs with the infinite, tender / Plaint of a bygone age whose soul is eternal” (35-36). Thus, humans retreating from the city life can find repair in the environment that shaped them because it is only here that they can commune with the divine.

Carman’s “Low Tide on Grand Pré” also contains a ‘divine’ quality:

“And that we took into our hands
 Spirit of life or subtler thing -
 Breathed on us there, and loosed the bands
 Of death, and taught us, whispering,
 The secret of some wonder-thing” (31-35)

The environment possesses the “spirit of life or subtler thing” (32) that can conquer the “bands of death” (33-34) and teach “the secret of some wonder-thing” (35), depicting a glance into eternity through the medium of nature. Though death is inevitable, just as the tide, nature provides a moment where death does not threaten “nor sunder soul and soul adrift” (30) - a moment of the briefest glimpse of the eternal, where time passes before the tide rushes in again. This moment is a “secret” (35) because it is ineffable; it defies expression and belongs solely to the particular experience of this exact moment of unity with nature. Carman continues along this thread, declaring “morrow and yesterday were naught,” as though the environment has the supernatural ability to defy time itself. Lingering in the fleeting moment before the tides turn, the past and the future no longer exist. There is only this moment which, paradoxically, is both ephemeral and everlasting. It can only last for an instant, yet it is a moment of communion with the eternal spirit of the divine, embedded in the beauty of nature. The tide returns, as it

always does, and one is left with the impression that something extremely profound has transpired “down along the elms at dusk” (6).

G. D. Roberts describes the Confederation Poets’ engagement with nature in terms of human emotion, which sets a template for their poetic works. Yet his framework is a limiting one in that it does not deal with human-nature relationships as seminal or supernatural. Roberts’ depiction of the relations between nature and “the deep heart of man” (Roberts 363) indicates the possibility of nature as a therapeutic entity for humanity. However, Roberts does not go as far as to describe the Confederation Poet’s experience of Canada’s landscape as an entity which shapes the culture and art produced on its soil. Further, Roberts neglects to mention the qualities of the natural world which allow it to act as a link between mankind and the divine. The Confederation Poets present a literary voice that is distinctly Canadian: one whose reverberations are heard throughout Canadian history to the present day and echo from sea to sea. It is the voice of a people who both find solace under vast canopies of green, and know that it is this green that shapes and inspires them. The voice of Canada is one lifted above mountain peaks by the experience of the mountains themselves.

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Suffering Confinement in *Fugitive Pieces* and *As for Me and My House*

Grace Pak

GRACE PAK was drawn to her essay topic as it afforded her an opportunity to research the effects of trauma - a topic she had been interested in studying for a while. She believes that life is full of little traumas, the kind not always defined in medical journals. In her opinion, we can be devastated in any number of degrees and ways, the effects of which can be debilitating. Grace wrote her essay on *Fugitive Pieces* and *As for Me and My House* because each novel depicts, through very different circumstances, everyday people who are struggling to cope with a suffocating sense of confinement. Grace felt the concept of internal confinement was a universal one and, therefore, wished to pursue it further in her essay. Who hasn't felt emotionally and psychologically confined? Who hasn't felt haunted by guilt, disappointment, and any number of reasons? Wanting to examine the relationship between internal lives and physical spaces inspired Grace's essay.

In Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces* and in Sinclair Ross' *As for Me and My House*, the internal conflict experienced by their respective characters is represented through varying manifestations of spatial and social confinement. Both novels employ confined spaces in the physical world to emulate the chaotic interior lives of their key characters. In *Fugitive Pieces*, representations of spatial confinement mimic the "psychological constriction" (Herman 87) and overwhelming sense of "helplessness and isolation" (Herman 197) that Jakob Beer experiences in the wake of losing his family during the Holocaust. To demonstrate how victims of traumatic events feel psychologically and emotionally constrained, Michaels hides Jakob inside a wall while his family is being murdered by SS officers.

Jakob's confinement inside the wall foreshadows his struggle to overcome the symptoms of trauma, such as emotional numbness and "dissociation" (Herman 1). Conversely, in *As for Me and My House*, representations of spatial confinement reflect the conflict within the Bentleys' unhappy marriage. External spaces, such as Philip Bentley's study and the Bentleys' small house within the "small community" (Stouck 13) of Horizon, all reflect and compound the Bentleys' strained marriage. While the agents of confinement in *Fugitive Pieces* and *As for Me and My House* may differ, both Michaels and Ross resist dwelling wholly on depictions of confined spaces as overarching demonstrations of psychological and emotional paralysis. Instead, both authors show that physical spaces can also serve as sites of renewal.

By placing Jakob Beer inside a wall while he can only listen to his parents being murdered, Michaels replicates the experience of trauma as a "notion of 'missed' or 'unclaimed experience'" (Whitehead 53). Indeed, even though the wall saves his own life, it also bars Jakob from witnessing his parents' murder. Although the mere thought of witnessing "the unspeakable" (Herman 4) being inflicted on a loved one could prove unbearable, the most common way towards freeing oneself from an emotional and psychological trauma is by reconciling with "what one has seen" (Herman 2). Being physically confined and therefore unable to "witness the most important event [...] of [his] life" (Michaels 17), Jakob must wrestle with the unknown, which only exacerbates his inability to free himself from the traumatic event. Moreover, Jakob's inability within the wall to "bear [...] witness" (Herman 7) suggests the way in which trauma is usually experienced as an overwhelming "presence of absence" (Criglington 93). Jakob's confinement prevents him from being fully present during the SS officers' onslaught on his home and family. In effect, Jakob's experience of trauma is likened to a large internal void which leaves him feeling emotionally numb and psychologically unavailable to confront everyday life.

Aside from the wall, Jakob's internal trauma also manifests itself through his confinement in the bog. Following his emergence from one confined space, Jakob quickly buries himself in another, an act that informs

a pattern characteristic of victims of trauma: “avoidance and repetition” (Visvis 26 July 2010). Jakob’s instinct to hide in the bog, a site of decay, reflects his “inner desolation” (Criglington 93) in the wake of crippling loss. Such devastating loss leaves Jakob feeling dead inside, much like the decomposing bog. This form of spatial confinement also illustrates how a traumatic event renders victims into mere ghosts of themselves, too emotionally destitute to fully engage with the world and with other people. Despite the morbidity of burying himself in the ground, this act underscores Jakob’s desperate wish to disappear in order to avoid the ugliness of his reality. Moreover, Jakob’s confinement in the bog evokes the horrors of the Holocaust, such as the burial of live victims until they suffocated to death. Jakob’s trauma leaves him feeling as though life has been wrenched from him, which speaks to how victims of trauma are often likened to “the living dead” (Herman 85). As a result of undergoing such a horrific event, he feels perpetually “haunted by images of the [people he] could not rescue” (Herman 54). Jakob is repeatedly haunted by thoughts of his beloved sister Bella, especially because her fate on the night of the Nazi raid remains an agonizing mystery. Like the sterile ground he hides in, Jakob feels stagnated by haunting images of the past.

The constant haunting Jakob experiences keeps him in the past, deeply nestled inside him like “Russian dolls” (Michaels 14). Michaels uses the metaphor of the Russian dolls to convey Jakob’s inability to release the haunting memory of his sister Bella. In effect, Jakob is “possessed by [...] image[s]” (Whitehead 5) of Bella; she lives inside him like a Russian nesting doll. Indeed, haunting images of Bella keep Jakob psychologically confined to the past and unable to move forward with his life. Moreover, the repetitive quality of haunting addresses Jakob’s paralyzing “fear [...] that the moment of horror will recur” (Herman 86). For Jakob, haunting is the voice of fear and terror circulating relentlessly within his mind. Although the Russian dolls reflect Jakob’s inner anguish brought on by being haunted, they also reflect the way he internalizes and attempts to suppress the effects of trauma. Living through a traumatic event turns Jakob inside himself, too emotionally and psychologically frozen to connect with others. Instead, he

isolates himself and hides from the world. Attempting to avoid the effects of trauma, however, prove futile because like the Russian dolls, the symptoms of trauma live inside Jakob. Through the image of the Russian dolls, Michaels reveals the insidious nature of trauma and its power to infiltrate victims' psyches, leaving them hollow.

Despite the devastating effects of the Holocaust on him, Jakob's journey is ultimately about his path towards rebirth through physical spaces, such as Athos' family home on Idhra and the city of Toronto. In order to break through the metaphorical wall or barrier that restricts him from living an "engage[d]" existence (Herman 212), Jakob slowly emerges from his inner confinement by making "a conscious choice to face danger" (Herman 197). In Athos's house on Idhra, for example, instead of attempting to nullify "the pang of smells" and "the prickly sting of memory" (Michaels 157) that continue to haunt him, Jakob confronts "the cries" and "move[s] closer inside [himself]" (Michaels 157). Despite the pain of memory, Jakob descends into the gloom so that he may rise anew. For Jakob, the island of Idhra, with its natural, picturesque beauty, reconnects him to the external world. It is also on Idhra that Jakob realizes that "[his] brokenness has kept [Bella] broken" (Michaels 169). While he may have felt incapable of moving forward with his life because of her haunting hold on him, Jakob finally realizes that he was in fact the one haunting Bella. By admitting this truth, Jakob is able to look towards the future rather than look back on the past.

Additionally, the weekly walks through the city of Toronto help to release Jakob from his shell. Following the loss of his family in Poland during the Holocaust, Toronto becomes the space that Jakob learns to call home. Being a "newcomer" to Toronto affords Jakob the opportunity to start anew and create a space of belonging (Michaels 103). The weekly excursions through abandoned spaces such as ravines and retired estates arouse within him a feeling of home. He "develops an affinity with those locations that echo [...] his own sense of loss" (Criglington 93). Essentially, Jakob finds empathy in such sites because they emulate the empathy he has come to enact within himself. Through physical spaces, Jakob confronts his

traumatic past “in order to reclaim the present and the future” (Herman 2). In confronting the source of his fears, Jakob realizes that although “there is no way to compensate for an atrocity, there is a way to transcend it” (Herman 207), which he achieves by paying tribute to his family’s memory in his books, such as the one appropriately titled *Groundwork*.

In contrast to *Fugitive Pieces*, Sinclair Ross’s novel *As for Me and My House* is less about coping with a traumatic event and more about coping with conflict within a strained marriage. The two novels are similar, however, in that interior strain is manifested through exterior spaces of confinement. Ross focuses in particular on Philip’s study, the Bentleys’ house, and the town of Horizon to illustrate Philip’s and Mrs. Bentley’s emotional strife. Moreover, as in *Fugitive Pieces*, Ross incorporates exterior spaces not only as sites that constrict, but also as sites that facilitate change.

Ross reveals the lack of emotional and physical intimacy within the Bentleys’ marriage through the constant retreats Philip makes to his study. More often than not, Philip spends time in his study rather than with Mrs. Bentley. Indeed, Philip’s withdrawals to his study are a manifestation of his “emotional withdrawal” from Mrs. Bentley (Stouck 55). Physically and emotionally locked out, Mrs. Bentley feels like “an outsider” in her own marriage (Ross 9). Philip’s study represents his inability and unwillingness to be a participant in his own marriage. Instead of seeking companionship and comfort with his wife, Philip seeks refuge within the confines of his study. Even when “[h]is study is cold [...], [Philip] refuses to [go] where it [is] warm with [Mrs. Bentley]” (Ross 201). Furthermore, the closed door to Philip’s study offers evidence of the chasm between the Bentleys. The closed door demonstrates the emotional rift between the Bentleys and their failure to overcome the fear of confiding in each other emotionally. Because neither party possesses self-awareness, they lack the emotional wherewithal to relate to one another as husband and wife. As a result, they are strangers to themselves and to each other.

Mrs. Bentley’s frustration with Philip’s constant retreats to his study reveals just how unaware she is of her own husband’s introverted nature.

Besides confining himself in his study due to the tension in his marriage, Philip also withdraws into his study because he is a naturally introverted person. The fact that Mrs. Bentley seems unaware of Philip's "reticent" nature reveals a flaw in her character (Stouck 13). Even though she is aware that Philip uses the privacy of his study to work on his sketches, Mrs. Bentley feels affronted and unable to respect her husband's wishes for privacy. Instead of communicating her thoughts and feelings about his habitual withdrawals to his study, Mrs. Bentley often barges in on Philip or represses her frustration. Although she feels alienated from her husband, Mrs. Bentley's inability to articulate her true feelings proves that she is also alienated from herself.

The Bentleys' small, decrepit house exemplifies the emotional wounds they each bear due to personal and marital disappointment. Both Philip and Mrs. Bentley are casualties of unrealized "artistic ambitions" (Stouck 15). As a result, they feel shortchanged, as reflected by their crude house in Horizon with its "bare walls" (Ross 4), "dents and scratches" (Ross 7), and overall state of disrepair. In Mrs. Bentley's mind, their house, in comparison to the other houses in town, is "dead and dry" (211). For Philip, his failure to become an artist and his choice to become a minister continually haunt his conscience like the drip-drip of the leaky ceiling. Not surprisingly, the strain of suppressing their individual disappointments seeps into the Bentleys' marriage. Their sense of failure is so great that the small house seems unfit to restrain their unhappiness. Moreover, the "suffocating atmosphere of the house" (Stouck 55) informs the inability of Philip and Mrs. Bentley to talk openly to one another about their emotional wounds. To be sure, the Bentleys' impaired home mirrors the "repression and decay" (Ross 15) that is wearing away at their marriage.

The collapse of the town's false fronts during a severe windstorm precipitates the Bentleys' exit from Horizon in the hopes of "[lead[ing]] a life which, though uncertain, is authentic" (Stouck 48). Through the town of Horizon—a "name [...] at once nowhere and everywhere" (Stouck 37)—Ross demonstrates how physical spaces restrict as well as release. Although the Bentleys feel impeded by the small town of Horizon, they also find in its

restrictions a sense of “purpose” that pushes them towards changing their circumstances (Ross 215). Despite the physical markers of confinement that echo the Bentleys’ feelings of “entrapment,” within those same confined spaces live markers of hope (Stouck 29). Along with Horizon’s intimations of a world beyond its horizon, the constant presence of the railway also offers the Bentleys a “lifeline to the outer world” (Stouck 39).

In both *Fugitive Pieces* and *As for Me and My House*, the key characters suffer from a “condition of stasis” (Ross 236) manifested through confined spaces. For Jakob, the source of his inner paralysis involves the traumatic murder of his family during the Holocaust. Jakob’s journey is plagued by haunting images of the traumatic event, and especially the loss of his sister Bella. In contrast, the source of emotional paralysis for the Bentleys involves a combination of their disappointments as individuals and their inability to relate with one another on an intimate and meaningful level. The struggles they experience are within themselves and within the dynamics of their marriage. Although the agents of confinement in Anne Michaels’ and Sinclair Ross’ novels differ, they both agree that spaces can ultimately provide the motivation for renewal.

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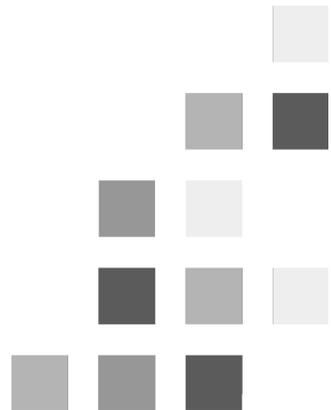
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Bridging the Gap: An Analysis of Windows in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*

Halyna Chumak

HALYNA CHUMAK is a first-year student at St. Michael's College, planning on pursuing majors in English and Criminology, and a minor in History. Greatly inspired by the visual arts, she is fascinated by elaborate metaphors and images in literature. Her paper explores the symbolic and thematic uses of windows in Virginia Woolf's 1927 novel *To the Lighthouse*. Beyond her academic work, she enjoys tutoring high school students and spending time with friends and family.

The formation of relationships amongst individuals is paramount for the understanding of oneself, as well as the world around him. However, if unable to relate to others, an individual may instead find truth and solace by means of the artistic. This process is prevalent in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, which recounts the thoughts and actions of the emotionally conflicted Ramsay family and their guests, as they vacation in the Hebrides. The characters' multifaceted perceptions of beauty, and the ways in which each tries to find truth, comfort, and ultimately familial unity through the artistic, thematically conveys the necessity of art as a form of expression when one experiences the "inadequacy of human relationships" (Woolf 62). The architectural feature of windows on the Ramsay home dually represent the division amongst the house's inhabitants and the importance of art as a means of hope through turbulent times. Through her manipulation of windows in *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf metaphorically depicts the characters' desire to reconcile their internalized sufferings and, furthermore, highlights the inextricable connection between human experience and art.

Woolf's technique of embedding the image of a window in the opening pages of the work reflects the extent to which the symbol represents tension, as well as the reader's continuously growing sight and clarity into the relationships between the characters. A window initially appears when James is "sitting on the floor cutting out pictures from the illustrated catalogue" (9), and his father refutes the possibility of travelling to the lighthouse due to poor weather. Mr. Ramsay, "stopping in front of the drawing-room window, [says] 'it won't be fine'" (10). It is after this that James encounters the "extreme of emotion" (10), when he feels that had there been a "weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him...[he] would have seized it" (10). This image later becomes a "symbol" (273) for James' desire to destroy "tyranny" (243) and epitomizes the internal conflict between him and his father. Additionally, the scene foreshadows the lasting tone of Woolf's story, particularly in the underlying, violent tension between father and son. Not witnessed by James alone, Mr. Ramsay's "crass blindness and tyranny" (253) are also identified by Cam, as she comments on how they "poisoned her childhood and raised bitter storms" (253). The window, like the pictures that James is carefully cutting out, is indicative of optimism and anticipation, which are ultimately 'blocked out' by the characters' antagonists. The symbol is emblemized within the first part of the novel through the title, "The Window". Perhaps the most insightful part of the work, it provides the reader with a privileged "window" into the lives of the Ramsays. Only the reader is granted the awareness and ability to see a full portrait of the family, and is therefore the only one able to judge their actions. Furthermore, the multiplicity of perspectives offered by Woolf through her stream-of-consciousness narrative displays the extent to which the characters are isolated from one another, constantly questioning the purpose of "human life" (135) and searching for "stability" (96).

Often associated with Mrs. Ramsay, the windows of the Ramsay home are metaphorically utilized as means of communication, portraying the fragmentary dynamic of the family, as well as their guests. When confronted by her husband in the drawing-room over his need for sympathy in the

first part of the novel, Mrs. Ramsay “[glanced] round about her, out of the window” (60). Similarly, instead of verbally communicating her love, she “looked out of the window” (186), admitting that he was correct in saying that they would not be able to complete the trip to the lighthouse. Although “she had not said [that she loved him], he knew” (186). In these circumstances, the window is utilized as a means of a disjointed communication between husband and wife. The window represents Mrs. Ramsay’s inability to express herself, and illustrates how the marriage defies the common conceptions of a relationship between a husband and wife. Instead of being able to explicitly communicate their emotions, the characters often rely on artistic gestures and phrases. Just as Mrs. Ramsay utilizes the window in attempting to formulate her thoughts amidst tension, Mr. Ramsay uses fragments of poetry to convey his personal struggles and induce emotion and sympathy from his children. Additionally, during the extravagant dinner hosted by the Ramsays, their guest Charles Tansley, feeling “condescended to by [the] silly women” (129), “turned deliberately in his chair and looked out of the window [saying] all in a jerk, very rudely, it would be too rough for [Lily, another guest,] tomorrow” (131). Feeling insulted, Tansley also refers to the window before communicating the same message that Mrs. Ramsay had given to her husband. The lighthouse, symbolic of hope and adventure, is taken from Lily as Tansley comments that the weather will be harsh, while reaffirming the Ramsays’ relationship as Mrs. Ramsay succumbs to her husband’s desire for praise and bestows her faith on him. Whereas Mrs. Ramsay uses the message as a means of communicating affection, Tansley uses it as a way of spiting Lily, demonstrating the window’s doubled purpose to console, as well as to hurt.

Mrs. Ramsay’s repetitive action—shutting all the doors and opening the windows—is reflective of her longing to impose order upon the household, and to unite the family. According to Lily, the “tune of Mrs. Ramsay” (77) was the way in which she “opened bedroom windows [and] she shut doors” (77). While the windows represent the idealistic hopes and aspirations of those in the house, the doors are symbolic of chaos and disorder. For instance,

when looking at the state of the house, Mrs. Ramsay noticed how things became “shabbier and shabbier summer after summer” (44), and wishes that her children “could be taught to wipe their feet and not bring the beach in with them” (44); “that windows should be open, and doors shut—simple as it was, could none of them remember it?” (44). The children’s actions, as they are the future of the family, foreshadow the deterioration that will be thrust upon both the house and the family upon the death of Mrs. Ramsay. The need to literally clean could metaphorically represent the individuals’ need to come to terms with one another, to rid themselves of the internalized disputes and sufferings before their problems escalate over things “left unsaid” (263). Mrs. Ramsay seems aware of, and even fears for, her children’s potential troubles as she frequently states, “they were happier now than they would ever be again” (90). Similarly, she aims to protect her children’s dreams by always ‘opening windows’, and instilling a sense of reassurance within them.

The house is threatened with complete decay upon her death, wherein “some of the locks had gone so the doors banged” (206)—a detail that further symbolizes the ‘unhinging’ of the family as they abruptly lose Mrs. Ramsay, Prue and Andrew. Only when Mrs. McNab, the housekeeper, restores the house to its original order are “dusters ... flicked from the windows” (212) and “keys ... turned all over the house” (212), and the family begins to reassemble itself.

In the third part of the novel Lily becomes alert as “a noise drew her attention to the drawing-room window—the squeak of a hinge. The light breeze was toying with the window.” (290). For the first time, the windows are opening by means of nature, and the house practically becomes able to sustain its own ‘cleanliness’ as a result of the reconciliation between Mr. Ramsay and his children, paralleling the completion of Lily’s painting; “it was done; it was finished” (310). Mr. Ramsay’s poetic remark, “We perished ... each alone” (247, echoing Cowper’s “The Castaway”), figuratively refers to the way in which all members of the family, having died through their own inertia and stasis, correct their course and consequently become part of the

family rather than being “alone.”

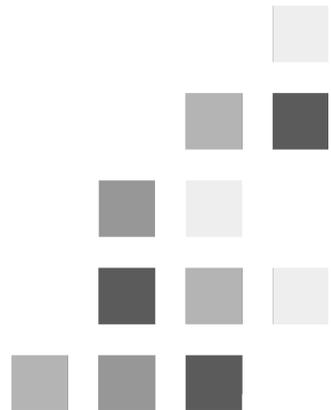
Although there are many interpretations of the significance of the windows, they are united by their emphasis on windows as a medium that artistically captures life, enabling characters to metaphorically experience their own epiphanies and revelations. For instance, Mrs. Ramsay observes how Marie, the Swiss maid, “had said that last night looking out of the window with tears in her eyes. ‘The mountains are so beautiful.’ Her father was dying there, Mrs. Ramsay knew. He was leaving them fatherless.” (44) By looking at the view beyond the window, which is *naturally* art, Marie becomes able to access the sorrow and pain, as well as consolation, connected to losing her father. Her connection of the view with her homeland illustrates the way in which individuals are able to access different memories, thoughts and ideas by exploring the artistic; greatly speaking to the emotional power of art itself. [I can’t figure out this last sentence – ask author to reword?] Similarly, when Mr. Ramsay sees “his wife and son, together, in the window” (53) it “fortified him and satisfied him and consecrated his effort to arrive at a perfectly clear understanding of the problem which now engaged the energies of his splendid mind” (53). He consequently perceives this image as a “doom” (53). In this case, the window literally serves as a frame for Lily’s painting; however, it also emblemizes Mr. Ramsay’s fear, possibly, of the Oedipal complex – a phenomenon associated by Freud with the Greek tragedy, *Oedipus Rex*, yet another form of art. The sight of his wife and son in the window arouses anxieties in him, Woolf implies, and once again he feels inferior, as James comments, “for there he stood, commanding them to attend to him” (58). The windows, therefore, figuratively allow the characters to attain a sense of internal clarity and awareness of themselves; however, this clarity is only obtained through their confrontation of art itself.

Virginia Woolf’s use of windows in *To the Lighthouse* expresses key themes including emotional escape, clarity, the resolution of problems, and the importance of art in society. Her work combines fragments of literature and the visual arts in order to ask and provide solutions to fundamental questions and problems, such as “What does [life] mean?”,

(217) societal modernization, and individual as well as collective, public duress. The powerful thoughts she subtly introduces speak to the role of art through both the perspective of the artist and the average, inartistic citizen. Macrocosmically, she seems to insinuate that art should not be compartmentalized, and categorized, but taken as a part of life itself. *To the Lighthouse* also calls upon its readers to reconcile their anguish, doubts, and feuds, and to embark on their own equally important journey towards the perceivably unattainable answers and common truths.

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The Vocoder Treatment: Subjectivity and Language in Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*

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It has often been said of *A Clockwork Orange* that its peculiar lexicon desensitizes the reader. *Nadsat*, it has been argued, seduces us to make Alex's crimes appear less repulsive and appalling. Anthony Burgess once said that he chose to blend Russian words, Cockney slang, and Shakespearian English to "distance the violence, to cushion the reader from the violence, because the violence would not be represented directly" (Tilton 25). Instead of the cushion metaphor, I suggest the vocoder or vocal distortion device: terms are chosen for their polysemic qualities and are aligned to disorient and defamiliarize the reader. In other words, the language is not just reporting, but performing, saturating us with Alex's psychology. Far from having a relationship to objective reality, almost every outlandish comparison and metonymic device in the work can be traced to a sociopathic narrative voice. This consciousness perceives its world as a private spectacle, a peep show of visual, aural, and sensual delight. I believe that language becomes a tool for an aesthetic solipsism in which almost every instance of wordplay highlights the subjectivity of our "Humble Narrator" (Leach 106).

First, one should determine what it means to "defamiliarize".

While Brecht's *Verfremdung* has no exact English translation, possibly "distanciation", "defamiliarization" (106), his concept is pertinent to Burgess' style. Brecht argued that a "representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it unfamiliar" (103). While *A Clockwork Orange* is not a work of drama, it reproduces clichés in unfamiliar forms and combinations. Alex, for example, coalesces the expressions "beyond the shadow of a doubt" and "doubting Thomas" into "beyond the shadow of a doubting thomas" (Burgess 4). If Alex is an affront to civil society, then he is also an affront to linguistic convention. He plays by his own rules, *ergo* his own figures of speech. We are forced to do a double take. A phrase whose meaning was once familiar is now altered, or tipped on its head. I do not suggest that "beyond the shadow of a doubting thomas" reveals the hackneyed use of truisms on a level comparable to the Brecht's task of bringing social tension to light through drama. However, the phrase is an early indicator that the narrator is being deliberately idiosyncratic.

On a more fundamental level, the novella raises semantic associations by aligning words for aural effect rather than for rational coherence. Memorably, Alex describes a violin concerto as "gorgeousness and gorgeosity made flesh" (Burgess 27). By repeating "gorgeous" with a different suffix Alex actually changes the sound from a soft /u/ sound (as in *could*) to a soft /a/ sound (as in *hot*), leaving the gorge root unchanged and thus phonetically pronounced. This syllable could mean *gorge* or *gore*, which in turn insinuates a web of ties between violence, consumption, and music. Saussure called these "associative links", that in which "any given term acts as the centre of a constellation" (174). *Gorgeous* is such a term. The theme of violence as music can be found throughout the work: F. Alexander's wife is "creeching away in very horrorshow four in a bar" (19); when Alex fights Billyboy he finds it "a real satisfaction to waltz - left two three, right two three - and carve left cheeky and right cheeky" (15). The narrative also connects sex to consumption: P.R. Deltoid spots a photo of a topless woman and "eats her up in two swallows" (29); upon hearing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony Alex "felt the old tigers leap in [him] and [he] leapt on these two young ptitsas" (36).

Deltoid takes in the pornography like a sip of pop, and Alex hunts the young girls as a jungle cat would pounce on its prey. Granted, the highlighted *gore/ gorge* sound may not amount to much on its own, but it is a clue to the themes that Alex brings up again and again in his particular use of language. A lot can be said of the novella's criticism of art as a moralizer. For the purposes of this essay, I will focus on how language becomes a polyphonic revelation of the narrator's worldview.

Perhaps worldview is not the correct word. Alex does not acknowledge a complex environment, but instead seeks to subordinate others through generalizations. When he feels he has been wronged he fantasizes (accompanied, of course, by the Ninth) of "carving the whole litso of the creeching world with my cut-throat britva" (132). The metonymy of *litso* (face) for world is part of a rhetorical pattern the narrator uses, splitting the cosmos into binary oppositions that pit Alex, his "brothers", and the reader against the State, or the "starry bourgeois" (33), and all who would oppose him. He even calls the government and education system the "not-self" (31) because they attempt to obstruct his free will. Anyone who looks like an academic or intellectual, including F. Alexander, is labelled as the "intelligent type bookman type" (18). The gratuitous repetition of *type* in this example highlights the narrator's obsession with categories. Instead of an objective physical description we are given recurring terms in a system of nomenclature. When it is the other side doing the labelling, Alex mocks the high-handedness of the self-appointed moral guardians in the newspaper columns by capitalizing "Modern Youth" and "Great Poetry" (32). At the same time, however, he enjoys the tags he is assigned, disclosing to us that "Modern Youth" "mean[s him], so [he] gave the old bow" (32). Ever the ironic teenager, Alex acts out the roles he is given: he is the "loving only son" (37) putting his worried parents at ease, and the "special favoured" (61) of the prison chaplain. As much as the novella destabilizes meaning, it also tries to simplify it, leaving most adult characters unnamed. Instead there is the "Discharge Officer" (82), and the "Governor" (59). This simplification reveals how Alex's antagonism towards community and individuation is embedded

in his verbal gimmicks. Language separates Alex from the other and isolates the other as a predetermined type.

Alex approaches moments of religious bliss precisely when he feels removed from his surroundings, or, as he puts it, when he is adrift in outer space. Like Fowler, smoking opium in *The Quiet American*, Alex takes drugs to escape reality and even his own identity. A man on some sort of hallucinogenic at the Korova Milkbar “was in the land all right, well away, in orbit” (5). Space imagery also crops up in Alex’s metaphors for the concerto. The violin solo is described as, “a bird of like rarest spun heavenmetal, or like silvery wine flowing in a spaceship, gravity all nonsense now” (26). There is a lot to unpack in this simile – or is it a metaphor? Placing *like* after *bird* makes the image more immediate. Starting the comparison with *like* would be an obvious signal that the proceeding phrase will be a simile. The transitional cushion into the device is removed and we are exposed to Alex’s subjective and fantastic state of mind. Gravity is the metaphor for reality, and yet the narrator is yearning for the “nonsense” of a spaceship, floating heavenward. To describe the bodiless sensation of listening to music or “drinking milk with knives in it” (3), Alex delivers a breathless sequence of subject-verb-object: “You lost your name and your body and your self and you just didn’t care” (5). Unhooked by commas, the sentence can be said to float out of the constraints of punctuation. The grammar is thus performative, and illustrates the narrator’s desire to escape corporeality.

Even though Alex is detached, he is still dominated by his feelings. Indeed, the narrative is dominated by emotions that are underscored by syntax. The novella’s grammar often places prepositions out of order, to make us pause and rethink. Alex “felt [himself] all of a fever and like drowning in redhot blood” (22) after Dim blew a raspberry at an opera singer. Note that he does not *have* or *possess* a fever, but he is *of* a fever, he has become a force of rage. Sensations dominate his reactions to the world, and, as result, his sentence structure. At a glance, this playfulness can be confusing. One “teacher-type” (7) stumbles away from a beating “not knowing where or what was what really” (8). Could Alex not have simply said: *not knowing what was*

where? The interrogative *where* is placed in front of the repeated interrogative *what* to muddle the meaning of a sentence that is about muddled space. As if to garnish the nonsense Alex adds the adverb *really* after the subject, as one would in French. In effect, Burgess distorts the narrator's surroundings through linguistic distortion. The excited if confused flow of the sentence mirrors Alex's elation at inflicting pain and chaos. Once again, the external is in the background and the speaker's internal fluctuations are in the foreground. Once again, I cannot accept Burgess' self-analysis that *Nadsat* is a "mist half-hiding the mayhem" (*You've Had Your Time*, 38) because *Nadsat* itself propagates structural mayhem. In her essay "Lost in Babel", Carla Sassi argues that the idiom "does not mirror the desolating background of urban and social degradation" where Alex lives. The lexicon of the novella becomes a "boisterous challenge to its sordid modernity" (Sassi 256). I disagree that *Nadsat* represents a search for the lost universal language, though Sassi is right to point out the vagueness of the settings. Alex favours comparisons that reflect his interests over concrete imagery. We are at the whim of a wordsmith who feeds us his interpretations.

We can see then that language, and slang in particular, reveals the narrator as a self-involved spectator. It is astounding that Burgess was able to create so many constellations of meaning. Many of the words that he appropriates from Russian have startling connotations in English. For instance, the term *viddy* comes from the Russian *vidyet*, to see. Yet *viddy* also has a phonetic affiliation with video and, is consequently linked to nouns like television, media, and film. Because of the polysemy of *viddy* the act of seeing is not so transparent in *A Clockwork Orange*; Alex wants to be entertained, and to deconstruct according to his tastes. In his introduction to the Penguin edition, Blake Morrison observes that *horrorshow* came from the Slavic *kharashó*, the neutered form of good (Burgess ix). The word *show* only widens the web of associative links between video and spectacle. *Horror* and *sinny* (for cinema) are thrown in as well, another part of the violence-as-art or horror-as-show bond.

The comparison of sensory perception to the consumption of spectacle

offers a sociopathic detachment. I do not mean that Alex always isolates himself. He certainly interacts with his world, and he derides the “bourgeois lurk[ing] indoors drinking in the gloopy worldcasts” (15). However, the interaction is between the self and the object, not the self and the other self.

Nadsat is perhaps at its most effective when humans become things and things become human. Just as the work destabilizes clichés, it also defamiliarizes us from the subject, forcing a lexical code upon us. Evidently, the Russian terms ask us to consult a dictionary or pay closer attention to their context. Similarities in phonology among words often demonstrate the narrative objectification of the other. While *veck* means man in Russian and is the equivalent of *chap* or *guy* in Nadsat it also sounds strikingly similar to *veshch*, which means thing. Positioning both terms in the same sentence erodes the differentiation between them or, at least, poses some confusion as to which is referring to the person, and which is referring to the thing. When Dr. Branons utters something inane Alex concludes, “it was a silly sort of *veshch* to say, but it didn’t sound so silly, this *veck* being so like nice” (Burgess 73). Notice the repetition of *silly* preceding both *veshch* and *veck* as if Burgess wants us to read closely and carefully in order to make the distinction. The words sound interchangeable because Alex holds little if any distinction between human and thing.

Burgess also deploys figurative devices in order to blur the line between body and object. F. Alexander, for example, bleeds “red vino on tap and the same in all places, like it’s put out by the same firm” (19). Blood becomes a delight; like the same wine pouring out of different barrels, it is the same colour in all bodies. Meanwhile, the writer’s reaction is reduced to the onomatopoeic “boo hoo hoo” (19), which could not be a more unrealistic estimation of what a grown man’s cries of agony might sound like. Alex expresses his glee by lampooning his victim’s pain, and turning his screams into cartoon captions. As readers we are defamiliarized from thinking about the body as a living entity. As a result, we see the body as the narrator wants us to see it: a source of aural and visual delight. Later Alex thinks of the

“paper [he’d] radrezzed [ripped] that night” and concludes that if given another chance to visit Alexander and his wife he would have, “ripped them to ribbons on their own floor” (27). The manuscript and the man coalesce in his mind in yet another moment of semantic association.

The cumulative effect is a solipsistic one: we only get Alex’s inner life, and we get a lot of it. He categorizes people and treats them like objects physically, and linguistically; the symptoms of an observer who views the world as if it were the screen of a television. The ingenuity of *A Clockwork Orange* is in how its language reflects Alex’s lack of empathy by drawing upon layers of meaning in the sounds and structures of words and sentences. Critics who find the notorious twenty-first chapter to be discontinuously moralistic may be consoled to find that our narrator has not really changed. He imagines his domesticated future as a series of clichéd vignettes, “cartoons from the gazetta” (140). He imagines there is “still this veshch of finding some dvotchka or other who would be a mother to this son” (141). If he continues to refer to women as tools and sees his life as a television program, then Alex cannot have much hope of becoming a moral person. The speaker is in the manner of the telling, not the content of what’s being told. In that light, Alex’s catchphrase might well have been: “How’s it going to be then, eh?”

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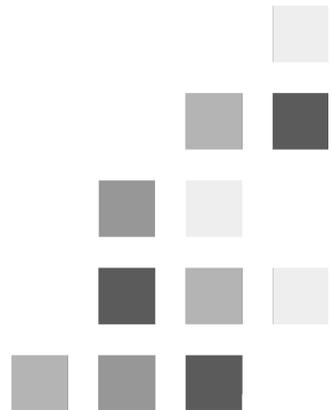
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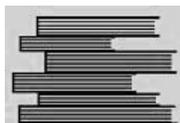
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