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EDITOR'S NOTE

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I am delighted to present you with the 2014 volume of *Idiom*.

As the only undergraduate academic English journal at the university, *Idiom* serves to fill the disproportionate gap between the amount of academic work that students produce and their opportunities for publication. By exposing the brilliant ideas of our peers to a wider readership, we hope that the journal will allow a venue for students to teach, to engage, and to inspire each other. This academic year has been a period of exciting changes as we have worked to expand upon these goals. In particular, we have opened submissions to the Mississauga and Scarborough campuses and we have once again become an official ESU publication. We hope that these decisions will allow more students to take part in a stimulating literary dialogue outside of the classroom.

Idiom exists to serve the above goals, but its existence has really only been made possible thanks to the collective effort of a dedicated team of individuals. For the printing of this publication we are indebted to the generous donations of our sponsors. We enthusiastically congratulate the authors on their excellent contributions and thank them for their patience during the editing process. I would also personally like to thank all members of the Editorial Board who have continually surprised me with their passion, motivation, and hard work. I am truly lucky to have had the opportunity to be part of such a fantastic team. Finally, this volume would not be the same without the stylistic advice of Dr. Vikki Visvis and the guidance and keen eye of Professor Thomas Keymer. As our staff advisor, Professor Keymer took the time to re-edit and proof each and every essay, and for that, the Editorial Board is very grateful.

Over the years, the journal has continued to define itself and to find its niche in the U of T community. A helpful sign-post has been the journal's title. Going back to the first volume of *Idiom*, Christine Yao, in her Editor's Note, states that although we are told to avoid idiomatic

phrases in our academic writing, the journal's title acknowledges that academic writing is an idiom unto itself. More recently, Editors have expanded upon, interpreted, and clarified her point by bringing up the etymological history of the word *idiom*. Namely, *idiom* comes from the Greek *idioma*, which means, "to make one's own." Every person who has contributed to the journal's publication has been involved in layers of making literary discourses their own—the authors have made the texts their own, the editors have made the essays their own, and we now welcome you, the reader, to make the journal your own.

Camille Viva, Editor-in-Chief

March 2014

ELEGIAC INDIVIDUALISM: UNIVERSALITY AND PARTICULARITY IN MILTON'S LYCIDAS AND SECTION XXXVII OF TENNYSON'S IN MEMORIAM

Devyn Noonan

The topic of mourning became important for Devyn after the recent death of her close relative. The conventional narrative of mourning suggests it is a teleological journey, as the bereaved gradually moves from grief to recovery. It is precisely this narrative that John Milton embraces in his pastoral elegy, *Lycidas*. The speaker grieves for his friend through an intellectual exploration of death. Mediating his thoughts through the landscape, he eventually finds consolation in the cyclical processes of the natural world.

For Devyn, however, Milton's narrative rings hollow. It does not seem that the complex and profound feeling of grief can be as easily assuaged as *Lycidas* would suggest. In his extended elegy *In Memoriam*, Lord Alfred Tennyson challenges the teleological model of mourning. In the world of *In Memoriam*, the mourning process brings no consolation to the bereaved. Whereas Milton's speaker engages in a healing process, Tennyson's elegist is haunted by unrelenting grief for his friend. Milton's speaker achieves recovery through learning to conceive of death as a natural phenomenon in a benevolent and logical universal order. Conversely, Tennyson's speaker can only see the universe as fundamentally anarchic; the good suffer and perish alongside the evil. Nature—"red in tooth and claw" (Tennyson LVI.15)—is illogical, hostile, and merciless. Unable to make sense of his friend's death, Tennyson's speaker achieves no recovery.

Milton minimizes the importance of the mourner's grief, whereas Tennyson seeks to offer a new salience to the voice of the individual in pain. Through *In Memoriam*, Tennyson redefines the elegiac framework. In his hands, it is no longer a tool for recovery, but rather a medium through which the mourner can give voice to his or her pain. He forges an elegiac framework in which each individual can understand the complexity and profundity of grief. Devyn would like to thank Professor Hao Li for her support in writing this paper.

In John Milton's *Lycidas*, an archetypal pastoral elegy, mourning is cast as a teleological process. Reflecting on the cyclical processes of the natural world, the speaker gradually moves from grief to acceptance of death. This narrative posits the mourning process as an intellectual experience that culminates in a struggle to grasp the finite nature of the human life. In *Lycidas*, the speaker grieves the concept of death itself rather than the deceased. In his elegy *In Memoriam*, Lord Alfred Tennyson offers an alternative narrative. His speaker does not experience Milton's abstract, conceptual mourning process. Rather, after the passing of his friend, Tennyson's speaker grieves for his tangible, personal loss. A comparison between *Lycidas* and the thirty-seventh section of *In Memoriam* reveals that whereas Milton's speaker is an indefinite, universal everyman, Tennyson's elegist is a particularized individual. Through his indefinite speaker, Milton is able to offer the hope of recovery through contemplation of death. By contrast, Tennyson's highly individual elegist gives voice to a pain for which there can be no consolation. Employing an everyman speaker, Milton is ultimately unable to capture the poignancy of the individual's grief in the face of loss. By casting a particularized speaker as the protagonist in the mourning process, Tennyson crafts an elegiac framework in which each individual can situate his or her pain.

In Milton's *Lycidas*, the individual elegist is the agent of the divine universal order. The speaker begs, "Begin, then, Sisters of the

sacred well / That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring, / Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string" (15-17). Through the word "begin," Milton grants the Muses authority over the poem. The speaker's ability to compose poetry is contingent on the goddesses' participation. It is the Muses who "sweep the string," infusing the poem with its musicality. The speaker's voice is indistinguishable from the Muses' voices. Employing this voice, Milton constructs a narrative of mourning that neglects the voice of the individual. Through their connection to Jove, the ultimate patriarch, the Muses provide a voice tied to a divine, universal order. In the hybrid voice of speaker and Muse, Milton implies that the grief of the individual mourner belongs to the universe at large.

Conversely, *In Memoriam* locates the true site of mourning in the individual. Tennyson's elegy is individualistic because it articulates questions and doubts that challenge the established socioreligious paradigm. As if in protest, the goddess of heavenly poetry, Urania, breaks uninvited into the poem's thirty-seventh section. Addressing the speaker, she declares, "This faith has many a purer priest, / And many an abler voice than thou" (3-4). Comparing the speaker to a "priest," Urania suggests that Tennyson's elegist is akin to a religious preacher who publicly sermonizes on matters divine. Urania's use of the prescriptive words "purer" and "abler" suggests that only some poets are fit to speak in the public sphere. The syntactic structure of her language exposes her belief that the speaker is unfit for such a role. Parallel structure bridges the line division between "Many a purer priest, / And many an abler voice," blurring the lines together as though they were enjambed. The third line is too expansive to be contained by tetrameter, and so it spills into the fourth. Just as the use of parallelism creates a feeling of excess, Urania argues that an abundance of poets are more qualified than the speaker to mourn publicly. The personal pronoun "thou" shatters the parallel structure, setting the individual speaker in opposition to the collective group of "purer and abler" poets. Separate from the religious community, Urania argues that the speaker is unfit to publicly articulate his loss. Whereas Milton subjugates the individual mourner to larger forces, Tennyson's speaker is isolated in his grief.

Lycidas and *In Memoriam* present opposed speakers. Milton's

elegist is an indefinite, universalized figure. He declares, “Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime, / Young Lycidas” (8-9). The caesura following the speaker’s initial statement, “Lycidas is dead,” creates a moment of silence in the line, mirroring the inherent silence surrounding death itself. The elegist asserts that Lycidas is “dead ere his prime / Young Lycidas.” The speaker’s repeated emphasis on Lycidas’ youth suggests it is not death itself that troubles him, but rather early death. The speaker asks, “Who would not sing for Lycidas?” (10). Implying that anyone might “sing for Lycidas,” the speaker detracts from his own individuality as an elegist. He mourns for a concept rather than for the deceased.

Tennyson’s focus on the personal allows him to capture the individual’s experience of grief. He offers an answer to Urania’s complaints against *In Memoriam*. Significantly, it is Melpomene, the Muse of tragedy, who responds to Urania. The speaker narrates, “And my Melpomene replies, / A touch of shame upon her cheek” (9-10). The Muses control the voice of Milton’s elegist. In contrast, Tennyson’s elegist lays claim to Melpomene through the possessive determiner, “my.” Tennyson reverses the normative Miltonian order: the Muse becomes a vehicle for the human voice. Melpomene is a divine being, but she is tied to the human sphere. The “touch of shame” on her cheek represents an undivine, decidedly human emotion. She metonymically stands for elegy itself. Representing her as a *humanized* goddess, Tennyson situates elegy in the human sphere. In response to Urania, Melpomene declares, “I am not worthy even to speak / Of thy prevailing mysteries / For I am but an earthly Muse” (11-13). Through the word “but,” Tennyson renders Melpomene’s tone humble. Tennyson brands elegy itself as “but” a humble, “earthly” mode of expression, “unworthy” of the lofty, “prevailing mysteries” of heaven. Yet Melpomene’s humility is buffered by an assured self-awareness. Identifying herself as an “earthly Muse,” she asserts her right to deal in an individualized form of elegy tied to the human realm. The ultimate essence of elegy is grounded in the “earthly” realm, because grief is an earthly experience. She seeks to articulate as perfectly as possible the reality of that experience. Whereas Milton’s unindividuated speaker engages with death as an abstraction, Tennyson’s elegist seeks to capture “earthly” human grief.

Lycidas and *In Memoriam* present fundamentally different visions of grief. Addressing the late Lycidas, the speaker asserts, “Thee Shepherd, thee the Woods, and desert Caves / With wilde Thyme and the gadding Vine ore’grown, / And all their echoes mourn” (39-41). Whereas Tennyson’s elegy seeks only to capture the voice of the individual, Milton’s projects grief outwards from the “Shepherd” (representing the human community), to the “Woods” (representing nonhuman organic life), to the “desert Caves” (representing the inanimate earth). Following the universalizing project of the poem, the line expands the mourning community to encompass all phenomena, both sentient and inanimate. As the mourning community includes the “Caves” equally alongside the “Shepherd,” individual human grief is rendered insignificant. The speaker asserts that even “echoes” mourn Lycidas. The echo is an aural collapse of linguistic mimesis. The original cry of the “Shepherd,” “Woods,” and “Caves” encapsulates the pain of mourning. The echo imitates the sound of the cry, but cannot capture its original meaning. The “mourning” of the empty echo is an inappropriate analogy for human grief. Next to *In Memoriam*, which focuses so poignantly on the individual mourner, Milton’s portrayal of universalized grief seems hollow.

By contrast, Tennyson’s elegy captures the grief of the individual. Through the vehicle of Melpomene, the speaker narrates, “But brooding on the dear one dead / And all he said of things divine” (17-18). The internal rhyme between the words “dead” and “said” creates a pause that slows the second line of the stanza. All the speaker retains of his late friend lies in memory. Recalling the deceased, the elegist progresses slowly and deliberately, savouring each word that connects him to that memory. The speaker declares, “And dear to me as sacred wine / To dying lips is all he said” (19-20). The deceased’s words are likened to “sacred wine.” Delivered to “dying lips,” the “sacred wine” offers salvation. In his love for his late friend, the speaker finds redemption through memory, as the dying sinner finds the promise of deliverance through “sacred wine.” The “sacred wine,” though, is a multilayered image. While linked to the Christian tradition, wine is also highly sensual. The enjambment that spills the third line of the stanza into the fourth creates a sense of overflow and excess. Aurally,

the lines mirror the speaker's longing to consume his friend's words as though they were liquor. In Tennyson's narrative, there is no Miltonian elevation of mourning. He simply presents the individual speaker's profound, almost obsessive love for a single, particular being.

In the final stanza of *In Memoriam's* thirty-seventh section, the speaker asserts, "I murmured, as I came along, / Of comfort clasped in truth revealed" (21-22). Whereas Milton's speaker is universal rather than particular, Tennyson's elegist conceives of himself as a singular whole, an individual "I." Milton's universalized speaker can only engage in an intellectual struggle to grasp the nature of mortality. He cannot grasp the poignancy of loss. In such a framework, the voice of the bereaved individual becomes secondary. By shifting the lens of the elegy from the universal to the particular, from the conceptual to the material, Tennyson gives a new salience to the pain of the mourner. Through individualizing the elegy, he offers each individual a discourse with which to articulate his or her own individual pain.

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THE VISION OF COMPROMISE: NATURE, IDENTIFICATION AND THE WORDSWORTHIAN IDEAL IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S SURFACING

Adam Underwood

This paper was written for ENG353Y1, a third year Canadian Fiction survey course taught by Professor Vikki Visvis. It argues that Margaret Atwood, in her seminal novel *Surfacing*, seeks to reframe a Wordsworthian conception of nature into a postmodern context. This context includes an exploited natural world under a patriarchal structure, an identification that extends to that of the unnamed protagonist herself. The argument was inspired by Atwood's exploration and demystification of "the Wordsworthian experience" in her critical survey of Canadian Literature, *Survival*. Since Atwood argues that earlier Canadian writers attempted and then failed to transpose a Wordsworthian figuration of nature onto a Canadian wilderness, the paper concludes that she seeks to redress this transposition on her own terms. Her revision, therefore, undermines Romantic conceptions of nature such as *pathetic fallacy*, *epiphany*, and *pantheism*, with a deep-rooted sense of Canadian ambivalence. Special thanks are extended to Prof. Vikki Visvis and Grace Gesualdo for their editorial contributions.

In Margaret Atwood's *Survival*, the author traces how Canadian literary representations of nature deviate from the Eurocentric, at some points even pantheistic, visions of Romantic-period figures like Edmund Burke and William Wordsworth. She ironically notes that "[i]f Wordsworth was right, Canada ought to have been the great Good place" (46). Romantic figurations of nature, she suggests, do not exactly flourish on the Canadian literary landscape. Rather, a marked bewilderment begins to emerge as authors like Susanna Moodie, writing in the nineteenth century, attempt to transpose a Wordsworthian ideal onto a Canadian landscape (47). As Atwood puts it, "the tension between what you were officially supposed to feel and what you actually encountered when you got here [...] is much in evidence" (47). Ambivalence, a decidedly Canadian attribute, begins to undermine European notions of the sublime in nature. By the early twentieth century, the feeling becomes compounded into outright terror. A case in point would be Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House*, which represents Nature as a highly malevolent force.

Through her critical survey, Atwood navigates a fundamentally new direction for representative modes of nature. Published in the same year as *Survival*, her seminal novel, *Surfacing*, offers a vision of nature that is neither omnibenevolent, nor ominously malevolent. Rather, it charts an embattled, compromised vision of nature that is not idealized. By focusing on the harsher aspects of the natural world Atwood reframes the Wordsworthian discourse, which is reliant upon notions like pantheism, pathetic fallacy, and epiphany, into a revised vision with similar attributes. The purpose of this revision is delineated in *Survival* when Atwood states, "it is increasingly obvious to some writers that man is now more destructive towards Nature than Nature towards man" (59). In literary terms, this reversal shifts a reader's sympathy from a protagonist to an exploited natural world (58). Throughout the course of the novel, Atwood attempts to redistribute these sympathies through a gendered approach that restructures the Wordsworthian ideal. Thus, the protagonist, an unnamed woman, destabilizes a Romantic consideration of Man and Nature for an allegiance between Woman and Nature *against* Man. In doing so, she reframes the Wordsworthian discourse towards a compromised vision of nature under a post-industrial context.

One aspect of this alliance is a tacit redefinition of the pathetic fallacy, which, in Romanticism, often tends to envision Nature in virginal terms. Rather, the protagonist redefines it to mirror her own unease within a patriarchal system that exploits both Woman and environment. The landscape, in this sense, illustrates a world that has long been subdued under man's exploitations: "The lake jiggles against the shore, the waves subside, nothing remains but a faint iridescent film of gasoline, purple and pink and green" (30). The image is suitably passive yet sickly, a compromised vision of nature that reflects the protagonist's own spiritual paralysis. Similarly, the banal book titles on her father's bookshelf—"Edible Plants and Shoots, Tying the Dry Fly, The Common Mushrooms, Log Cabin Construction, A Field Guide to the Birds" (38), denoting a series of instruction manuals, guides, and informative texts—serve to reduce the natural world to the confines of an understanding solely based on the merits of the natural world's usefulness to man. This reduction is on par with that of the women whom the protagonist models in her earliest illustrations: "Little girls in grey jumpers and white blouses, braids clipped to their heads with pink plastic barrettes" (43). Arguably, the similarities in descriptive language employed between the titles on the narrator's father's bookshelf and the description given to "the little girls in grey jumpers" serve to highlight the notion that both Nature and Woman become susceptible to the social-materialist constructions of a patriarchal system.

Eventually, as the protagonist learns, such reductive value judgments lead to a process of destruction. In essence, whatever aspects of nature cannot be reduced must be destroyed, particularly if said aspects fail to sustain or positively contribute towards an economy driven by patriarchy. Thus, we learn that hunters kill a heron only because "it was valueless: beautiful from a distance but it couldn't be tamed or cooked or trained to talk, the only relation they could have to a thing like that was to destroy it" (116). In other words, the patriarchal-capitalist framework has removed any chance of a communion between man and the natural world. The commodification of nature strangulates man's capacity for beauty; he only understands it within the narrow paradigm of supply and demand. "It looked at me with its mashed

eye” (115), the protagonist observes of the dead bird. The process of killing the heron, therefore, is one of blinding. The hunters, unable to understand a vision of nature as anything but a process of entitlement, display their contempt through destruction. The killing of the heron also bears metaphorical implications towards the protagonist’s own abortion, which she suppresses until Chapter Seventeen. She finds the bird “hanging upside down by a thin blue nylon rope tied round its feet and looped over a tree branch, its wings fallen open” (115). Her observations unconsciously decode her own trauma; through her identification she is eventually able to diagnose the source of her malaise since the bird bears a haunting resemblance to that of her own unborn fetus, which she remembers as “[I]n a bottle curled up, staring out at me [...] it was dead already, it had drowned in air. It was there when I woke up, suspended in the air above me like a chalice” (143). In this identification, Nature and protagonist remain intractably entwined as both suffer mutilations at the hands of men.

Hence, the protagonist’s relationship with nature evolves into an outright alliance. “Pleasure is redundant,” she states while making love to her boyfriend Joe, “the animals don’t have pleasure” (161), paralleling her position during sex to that of an animal (a component of the natural world). Her amalgamation with the natural world, therefore, is predicated upon a renunciation of the ego, as further illustrated via her attempt at impregnation, a process relegated to the “right season” (161) and devoid of human considerations like love and, as previously stated, pleasure. In this regard, the novel further reframes the Wordsworthian ideal, renouncing pantheism for the tactility of the natural world. The protagonist’s quest becomes not that of transcendence, but assimilation. As Joe attempts to categorize sex into “the ritual word” (162) the protagonist immerses herself within nature: “The wind moves, rustling of tree lungs, water lapping all around us” (162). Joe becomes no more than a part of this process, indistinct from the landscape that surrounds him. “It’s bloody freezing” (162), he states, offering a less primordial and thus contrasting response to that of the protagonist.

In order to further align herself with nature, the narrator dissipates the linguistic constructions into which she was born. Her language becomes decidedly impressionistic; it negotiates an occupancy,

or space, that is devoid of patriarchal conditions. “I am not an animal or a tree,” she states, “I am the thing in which the trees and animals move and grow, I am a place” (181). Qualifying herself as a “thing” and a “place,” the protagonist begins a process of erasure in order to merge her identity with nature, which is then expedited by a breakdown in language. For the protagonist, true identification with nature means the abandonment of language, or, as she succinctly puts it: “[t]he animals have no need for speech, why talk when you are a word” (180). An example of this in *Surfacing* is sustenance, which, no longer perceived through the constructs of language, becomes negotiated through a dizzying array of colours that assert the narrator’s abandonment of socially enforced constructs of language: “Red foods, heart colour, they are the best kind, they are sacred; then yellow, then blue; green foods are mixed from blue and yellow” (178). In a sense, the protagonist’s colour associations illustrate another thematic concern of *Survival*: that of the paralyzed artist. Nature revitalizes the protagonist’s subjectivity, which allows for her to freely interpret colour without the normative associations of society. The process awakens the lost artistic vision that the protagonist once compromised. She states that in her childhood, “we would sit at the table and draw in our scrapbooks with crayons or coloured pencils, anything we liked” (53). Nature, therefore, is instrumental in revitalizing an uncompromised realm of subjective interplay between protagonist and artistic expression through colour. In this regard, a Wordsworthian notion of artistic revitalization through nature becomes further emphasized and revalued.

The protagonist also reframes a Wordsworthian figuration of nature via its relation to identity. Pantheism, among other things, promotes a revitalization of the self through a prolonged experience with the natural world. Romanticism, in a sense, is a rather cozy notion; it always promises a return to the developed world with a fresh conception of identity that has been replenished by nature. The protagonist in *Surfacing*, thus, refutes pantheism for a holistic immersion into an unrelenting environment devoid of identity. For Atwood, Romanticism is a vacation, a day’s excursion into the sublime, whereas in *Surfacing*, communion with nature becomes fully consuming, an everyday reality. The protagonist sleeps “in relays like a cat” (178), gnaws at unripe

beets, and absorbs mosquito bites as a form of inoculation (178). Her communion with nature, therefore, is an unconditional surrender to its harsh demands. As the narrator buries the constructs of civilization, she in turn devises a moral code that is more keeping with the natural world. Outhouses, tin cans, and jars are all “forbidden” (178). The reader is given only glimpses into the narrator/protagonist’s vision, thus creating a sense of arbitrariness within the new primordial legislations.

In the end, however, it seems as though the protagonist may be more inclined toward the pantheistic ideal after all, albeit a revised one. Embedded in her self-immolation remains a tacit possibility of a return to civilization. Her return, therefore, would be a return of her identity, an identity that has been revitalized by her experiences with nature. Thus, this truly Wordsworthian ideal reasserts itself late in the story. The novel, however, true to form, undermines this notion with a deep-rooted ambivalence. If the protagonist returns to a patriarchal civilization where nature is wholly compromised, then what is the extent of the importance of her spiritual rebirth? One dangerous implication to consider is that the protagonist’s identity will be destroyed all over again. If this is the case, the Wordsworthian ideal becomes perversely distorted; what was once a radical nineteenth century notion becomes diluted under a process of societal assimilation. In considering a more positive regard, Atwood can propose that a return to civilization might embody the obtainment of comprehensive self-knowledge. In negotiating the constructs of a patriarchal society, the protagonist states:

This above all, to refuse to be a victim. Unless I can do that
I can do nothing. I have to recant, give up the old belief that
I am powerless and because of it nothing I can do will ever hurt
anyone. (191)

The statement seems to indicate a reconstruction of identity on the protagonist’s own terms. Implicit in the process of self-discovery is a suggestion that the protagonist will indeed return to civilization with a refurbished sense of empowerment. Otherwise, such a declamation becomes meaningless since it serves no purpose in a natural world devoid of human considerations like victimhood. Thus, the illumination

underscores a pantheistic notion of *epiphany*, which is only awakened through nature. In this reading, we may view *Surfacing* as a modern reworking of Romantic considerations.

Even as the protagonist contemplates a love for Joe in the novel’s remaining moments, she foresees a future of active struggle. The struggle, or suggestion of return to her and Joe’s relationship, is embodied in linguistic concerns. “If I go with him we will have to talk” (192), she states, with the foreordained awareness of the limits of language. “For us it’s necessary, the intercession of words; and we will probably fail, sooner or later, more or less painfully” (192). At the end of the novel, the protagonist stands at the threshold of this consideration. Should she choose a life with Joe, a life encoded with linguistic struggle, her decision entails isolation from the natural world in its most primordial condition. Arguably, language signifies assimilation within the patriarchal order that devalues nature, regarding nature as something to be exploited and expropriated. The danger for the protagonist, therefore, becomes a return to the paralytic conditional response she once felt for the heron:

I felt a sickening complicity, sticky as glue, blood on my
hands, as though I had been there and watched without saying
No or doing anything to stop it: one of the silent guarded faces
in the crowd. The trouble some people have being German, I
thought, I have being human. (130)

The protagonist becomes caught in a tight dilemma. Her identification with the natural world enables her to be an active force rather than a passive one. Her central issue focuses on the question of whether or not she can transition her sense of agency from the natural world into the patriarchal one. To do this, she will need to revitalize her identity and sense of purpose *through* language, and not via the abandonment of it. Removing herself from the primordial condition of nature, she may nonetheless speak on its behalf within the societal context.

Atwood, in her analysis of Douglas LePan’s poem “A Country Without a Mythology,” connotes the central conundrum in transposing the Wordsworthian experience into a Canadian context. Relating the

poem's central image of an unidentified man traversing a wilderness he is not accustomed to, she writes:

The landscape itself is harsh, “violent,” sharp and jagged, bitter cold in winter and burning hot in summer. But the traveller retains his desire for a Wordsworthian experience of Nature as divine and kindly [...] But somehow this never happens; he continues his journey, but the landscape does not grant him the vision he requires. (*Survival* 50)

Atwood, throughout the course of *Surfacing*, redresses this concern under a post-modern framework. She does so by transposing a revised “Wordsworthian experience” on to a landscape that has been severely compromised by Man. Vision, in this regard, is bestowed to a protagonist who is aligned with Nature and not in awe of it. The process, or restructuring of the Wordsworthian model, allows Atwood to chart a new direction for representative modes of nature in Canadian fiction. In a sense, she rehabilitates the Wordsworthian experience to offer a sense of hope. Naturally, this sense of optimism is deeply ambivalent, an ambivalence that contains deep Canadian literary roots in authors like Ross, LePan, and Moodie. In *Surfacing*, Atwood reevaluates the Wordsworthian ideal that these earlier authors displaced, and perhaps assumed they had abandoned. In this regard, she reasserts the lost vision, or ideal, of her predecessors, while distinctly remodeling said vision for the compromised world of the post-industrial landscape.

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SHARP SUBTLETY: IRONIC PRECISION IN THE EXCHANGE BETWEEN METER AND CONTENT IN P.K. PAGE'S “THE STENOGRAPHERS”

Elif Karakucuk

Elif's paper explores the undercurrent of irony as expressed in the poem, “The Stenographers” by Canadian poet P.K. Page, written in 1946. Uncovering the subtle metrical design of Page's poem, the paper casts further insight into how the prosodic framework both enhances and contrasts the textual content. Within a prosodic analysis, the paper meticulously analyzes the minute details of each word, the rhythmic construct, meanings behind metrical variations, and the implications of other literary devices. Confined to a world of futile labour, the stenographers click away on their machines in despair, while Page builds a refined prosodic edifice, gently guiding the reader's attention to what lies beneath the surface of the text.

T.S. Eliot once proposed that “the ghost of some simple meter should lurk behind the arras in even the ‘freest’ verse; to advance menacingly as we doze, and withdraw as we rouse.” (187). It appears that P.K. Page had some awareness of what Eliot meant, as demonstrated by the truly ghostly yet effective metrical control she exercised in her

free verse poems. Lauded by her contemporaries such as Northrop Frye and Margaret Atwood, the late P.K. Page (b.1916 - 2010) made her creative impact on the Canadian modern literary tradition as one of the most influential, yet seldom popularized, modern poets. Page's notable literary achievements as a Canadian poet, painter and author earned her numerous honorary degrees and awards, including the Governor General's Award in 1954 and the first Lieutenant Governor's Award for Literary Excellence in 2004. Page excels at employing a clever subtlety and creative suggestiveness in her aesthetic vision, without overcrowding the senses with too many rhetorical tricks. Her style is powerful yet soft-spoken; her artistic vision concerns the everyday struggles of common people. In "The Stenographers," we encounter the mindlessness and tedium of routine, the psychology of which is heightened by the metrical music of the poem. The effects of prosody in this poem are so slight that when they occur, the eye of the analyst is likely to miss them. Nevertheless, their presence is of utmost significance to the underlying machinery of the poem. In "The Stenographers," there are paradoxical elements, a doubling of the reader's perspective, and themes like self-preservation. The prosodic agility of the poem contributes to the dominating twofold movement. The undercurrent of irony and paradox in "The Stenographers" is primarily achieved by the disparities between the subtle elements of form, meter and rhyme, and the contrasting language of confinement and freedom.

In order to yield the full meaning of Page's poem, one must first establish an assessment of how the meter of the poem weighs upon its content. "The Stenographers" is composed of nine quatrain stanzas with an imperfect rhyme scheme that follows the 'aabb' model in the first two stanzas, but becomes increasingly erratic as the poem unfolds its vision. The variableness of the rhyme scheme hints towards a partial (though never complete) release from structure in the poem, which diverges from the feelings of entrapment throughout and at the close of the poem, when "the pin men of madness in marathon trim / race round the track of the stadium pupil" (35-36). These lines are packed with interloping and suggestive images; the reference to the "pin men of madness" explores the borderline insanity that the stenographers experience, caused by an overload of routine, boredom and structure

in their jobs. Their existences are circulatory and repetitive; each day arrives at the same point as on a loop; "the track of the stadium pupil." The words "marathon" and "race" imply both discipline and the struggle to survive. While the rhyme scheme progressively loses its initial discipline, thereby implying liberation from structure, the sense of freedom has a backward movement in comparison: the "remember[ing]" of carefree childhood ("spools of grey toffee, or wasps' nests on water" (11)) is placed earlier on in the poem. The two contrasting movements create ironic tension between structure and content, which heightens the feeling of anxiety in the poem. The feeling of anxiety is in turn understood as an indication of the stenographers' psychological struggle, and spurs the reader along the same strenuous, futile racetrack in the marathon of madness and routine. Page crafts a nightmarish world where the reader is unknowingly plunged into the struggle between the meter and the content, where the "pin men" haunt the stenographers at work, and simultaneously generate and break up the metrical structure underlying the poem.

While all aspects of the language point towards restriction and confinement (e.g. "vault" (33)), the countless metrical substitutions not only suggest otherwise, but make it difficult to tell the basic pattern of the meter. Because the number of feet alternate between five and six in each stanza, and because there are almost an equal amount of iambs and trochees in the lines, it is difficult to discern the primary meter of the poem (whether it is iambic pentameter or trochaic hexameter). While the scansion of this free verse poem is subject to analytical opinion, it is true that the poem alludes, especially in the first four stanzas, to the most commonly used verse meter in English, the iambic pentameter. In a language so enmeshed with the rhythm of iambic pentameter, it is difficult for the modernist poet to write anything without alluding in some part to the tradition. The fact that the rhythmic module is so interchangeable in "The Stenographers" exerts a kind of freedom of style, which ironically contrasts the stenographers' "forced march of Monday to Saturday," and the language employed to convey their entrapped psyches. Here, a sense of irony is revealed by the contrasts experienced at both the textual and formal levels.

Precisely because there is a lack of a unifying metrical paradigm, the anapestic, spondaic and dactylic substitutions are much more controlled, deliberate and routine. Consequently, two possible readings of metrical substitutions arise in the poem. The rhythmic variety is, as explained above, a symbolic representation of the freedom associated with childhood and words like “flutter” (3), “kites”(18), and “flight (18),” but also of the structure and routine associated with the stenographers’ daily jobs. For example, the spondaic accentuation of “forced march (2)” and “snow-storm (3)” produce a slow, emphatic, and heavy rhythm, suggesting the emotive weight of the stenographers’ mental strain as a result of their tedious laboring. The language of struggle (“hoist” (3), “haul” (4), “draws their pencil / like a sled across snow” (13-4), “the voice then is pulling no burden (15)”) intensifies the mood of strenuous, tug-and-pull tension in the poem, a mood which remains intact even in the last stanza, where “[the stenographers] are taut as new curtains / stretched upon frames.” The typists gather all of their energy and “haul it down” to work, only to find themselves defeated (“white flag” (3)) in the face of deadly routine. The consecutive accentuations along with the elongation of the “ou” sound in “smooth hours” indicates a shift into meditative mode as the pace slows down, but this is short-lived. The spondaic accentuation on “bells ring” quickly snaps the stenographers back into reality as though shocked by small jolts of electricity. For the hardworking stenographers, there really is no time or place for the soothing comforts of imagination, although not by choice.

A certain quality of oscillation pervades “The Stenographers,” chiefly experienced through the destabilizing contrasts between the poem’s prosody and its content. For instance, the crowding of heavy accentuation in the line “the ride in the ice-cart, the ice-man’s name” (7) may be interpreted as the joyous beats of childhood, but the irony lies in the simultaneous effect of a slowed-down rhythm and somber mood. This principal effect is suggestive of the short life of the stenographers’ imaginative power: they only momentarily “glimpse the hours when they were children” (6) before they succumb to the “pin men of madness” (35). The word “temper” in the first stanza may be taken to mean both calm and anger, drawing parallels with the line “the terrible

calm of the noon is their anguish,” by which we understand that the stenographers are caught between two polarities of emotion. It should also be noted that the synecdoche of the body part image in “like icicles breaking their tongues” (24), where “tongues” stands in for the voice and the expression of individuality, is ironic due to the contrast between the accentual loudness of the word “tongues” and the suggestion of silence in the line. Page’s varying, subtle techniques of irony—expansion and contraction, crescendo and decrescendo, release and recapture, quickening and slowing, and so on—are indicative not only of the profound skill and control she exercises in her poetry, but also her deep understanding of the nuances between form and content.

While the poem offers many instances where its language is met with a sense of irony that functions in opposition to its metrical paradigm, “The Stenographers” is also a poem of balance where the union of content and form is experienced as stability. As such, instances can be observed where the language of confinement is aligned with an undercurrent of its prosodic scansion, thus creating equilibrium. Curiously, one can argue that this equilibrium is in itself a technique, or an illusion, to produce the effect of safety for the stenographers, whose minds are already primed to receive all offerings of the imagination in order to escape their monotonous labor. The union of content and form thus serves to communicate to the reader that the stenographers’ entrenchment in their despair runs a deeper course than previously anticipated, bringing into effect a subtle perspectival diversion. The prosodic machinery of the poem mimics the stenographers’ confinement to their “vault”: they are only granted only a “glimpse” of freedom where there is “no wind for the kites of their hearts—no wind for a flight” (17-18). The repetition of “no wind” is heard almost as a muttering or chant repeated by the speaker to intensify the theme of circulatory movement and descent into “madness.” The word “flutter” has a wavering and unfixed quality, a way of hovering among possibilities, yet Page, keeping true to a realist aesthetic, quickly diverts from such ventures into the imaginary. In effect, the reader is also temporarily swayed by the brief possibility of liberation, though the quick retraction of this possibility is indicative of the continuation of a somber mood. The anaphora of “remember” (9,12) pursues nostalgic responses to the

speaker's psychological discomfort, only to find that it is too great to be reconciled, even at the end of the poem. The assonance of "own mirror-worn" (29) reinforce the sharp precision of language in the poem while keeping the rhythmic fluidity intact, thus retaining metrical and rational control.

In pitting the form against the content, P.K. Page unlocks the primary energies of both perspectival play and irony in "The Stenographers" in a way that reflects Eliot's paradoxical statement about subtle versification: "to advance menacingly as we doze, and withdraw as we rouse" (Eliot 187). In "The Stenographers," Page provides us with a vision that liberates as it confines, expands as it retracts, and controls as it gently releases. The metrical variety of the poem is exercised as a domineering measure in itself; it is not felt as a lack, but as a unifying principle. Page's stylistic knife is of a broad and imaginative substance—the prosodic agility she exercises in her poem contributes powerfully to the deliberation of diction and specialization of imagery, mood and tone. All things considered, "The Stenographers" harbours that imaginative edge which coils at the "nests" (11) of the ironic precision, which is embedded in all of the sharp subtleties of the English language.

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THE STATUS OF TRUTH IN SONNET FIVE OF "ASTROPHIL AND STELLA"

Angjelin Hila

The essay is interested in interrogating the various guises that the word 'true' takes in Astrophil and Stella's sonnet # 5. What kind of rhetorical significance does the explicit ascription of truth carry? The essay argues that sonnet # 5 exploits the various meanings of adjective "true" by employing it in competing forms that tease out this significance. There are two competing voices in the sonnet: the passive, rational voice of the three quatrains, and the personal, explosive voice of the couplet. The first voice articulates an argument whose premises are framed as antecedent clauses of a conditional. If the antecedent clauses are true, as the speaker proclaims, then the consequent, namely that intellectual virtue is subordinate to passionate love, must be true. But the syllogistic architecture of the poem is problematized both by the metaphoric articulation of the premises and the first person voice in the couplet. The former calls attention to the analogical nature of language: it can only describe by comparing. Love is signified by 'cupid's dart.' The latter relegates the predicate "is true" to a performative utterance, whereby the power of argumentation is displaced to (style of expression) the emotional evocations of language. The logical structure of the poem is thus constantly subverted at the rhetorical level.

In sonnet five of “Astrophil and Stella” Sidney sets up an opposition between intellectual virtue and physical beauty. Sidney employs several forms of repetition that articulate this distinction, while implicitly undermining it. The use of the word “true” throughout the poem is both anaphoric and pleonastic; that is, in certain instances it functions for emphasis, and in others it is merely redundant. By using “true” in ways that suggest disparate meanings, Sidney calls attention to the truth status of the poem. The architecture of the sonnet initially takes the form of a syllogism, whereby each quatrain puts forth a set of premises that support each other as corollaries and draw the overarching conclusion that physical beauty is subordinate to intellectual virtue. Sidney collapses the logical architecture of the sonnet in the final couplet by inserting the voice of the speaker into the otherwise passive constructions and asserting his desire for Stella without argumentative justification. The disharmony between truth ascription as a means of supporting logical argument and as a means of proclaiming desire calls into question the status of truth claims, and, consequently, the poem’s own status as a constructed object.

The first two quatrains begin with the phrase “it is most true” (1,4), whereas the third quatrain begins with the word “true.” In each quatrain, the initial phrases usher in two antithetical conceits: inward light for intellect and cupid’s dart for love. In the first quatrain, “eyes” become a metaphor for reason, described as, “the inward light” that “ought to be king” (2-3). The argument put forth is that reason ought to be the ruling part of the soul. The speaker aligns this view with that of nature and claims that rebels to it, “strive for their own smart” (4). In the second quatrain “cupid’s dart” (5) is implicitly presented as an image for love, “which for ourselves we carve” (6), and which “fools adore in temple of our heart” (7). This image is set in direct contrast with the “heavenly part” (2), and hence as antithetical to nature. In the third quatrain, this opposition crystallizes into one between “true beauty” (9) and “this beauty” (10), the latter referring to physical beauty, which Sidney describes as, “elements with mortal mixture breed” (11). Since we, as humans, are but passing “pilgrims made,” the speaker concludes: “we should in soul up to our country move” (13); here, “country” refers to our intellect or “heavenly part” (13). This argument is undermined in the last line, which,

through a series of rhetorical devices, affirms the speaker’s commitment to mortal love.

The word “true” functions on several levels in the poem. In the most obvious sense, it functions as anaphora, establishing a metrical rhythm, or expectation of what will follow in each quatrain. However, contrary to expectation, what follows the colloquial phrase “most true” (1,5) is a series of sophisticated metaphors instead of direct, literal language. A dissonance, therefore, is created between the sophisticated conceits that swaddle each argument and the casual, almost perfunctory phrase “most true.” This lack of harmony between casual language and highly elaborated metaphor compromises the seeming transparency of the argument. What is “true,” then, is no longer obvious, but entangled in the speaker’s self-conscious language. The first quatrain presents an example of this. When the speaker says, “It is most true that eyes are formed to serve the inward light” (1-2), the meaning of the word “eyes” is equivocated. We expect “eyes” to function literally as objects of physical beauty, but instead they function figuratively, here, paralleling intellectual discernment with seeing. In the second quatrain, “cupid’s dart” (5) is a metonymic substitution for “romantic love.” It is likened to an image “which for ourselves we carve” (6). The line points out the agency of the lover in carving his/her image of beauty. However, it simultaneously calls attention to “cupid’s dart” as a figure of speech that is constructed, much like the poem itself. By pointing out that love requires a creative agency, the poem calls attention to itself as a made object. What is most “true,” therefore, is conveyed by means of an elaborate lie.

Another way that the ascription of truth is compromised is through equivocation of the word “true.” The word “true” is used in a variety of different ways to mean different things. For example, it occurs twice in the first line of the third quatrain: “True, that true beauty virtue is indeed” (9). In the first instance, the ascription “true” refers to the entire line, whereas in the second, it functions as an attribute of “beauty.” In the first instance, we take “true” intuitively to mean “in accordance with reality.” In the second instance, however, no such unpacking is possible. The word “true” becomes a qualitative ascription, effectively a substitution for “genuine” or “actual.” Such disparate uses of the word muddle its clarity and hence undermine the status of the affirmation. This effect

is further carried by the pleonastic quality of the line. The presence of “indeed” is redundant as it carries the same semantic meaning as “true.” The line would thus convey the same meaning in the absence of either the word “true” or “indeed.” Moreover, the clause “true beauty virtue is” in itself expresses a tautology, that is, something true by definition. The equivocation on “true” is more pronounced, however, in the second line of the couplet: “true, and yet true that I must Stella love” (14). If until this point the poem has presented a logically consistent argument, the last line presents a rebuttal or a contradiction. The first thing to point out is that “true” shifts from sanctioning a description to sanctioning a normative claim. This is evident in the third quatrain, where “true” goes from being accompanied by the verbs “is” and “are” respectively to, “should” and “must” in the couplet. On the one hand, this shift further destabilizes the meaning of “true.” On the other hand, it phrases the argument of the poem in the form of a conditional. That is, if it is “true” that “eyes are formed to serve the inward light” (1-2) and that “on earth we are but pilgrims made” (12), then, “we should in soul up to our country move” (13). The affirmation of this conditional is contradicted by the affirmation that the speaker “must Stella love” (14). In each case the word “true” carries a separate function: if in the former it sanctions reasoned argument, in the latter it asserts the will of the speaker.

The introduction of the pronoun “I” in the last line signals a break from the passive voice of the poem. The break parallels the breakdown of the argument developed in the first three quatrains. In the first three quatrains it is the subject, namely “eyes” or “cupid’s dart,” that undergo the action, modified by the predicates “are formed” or “an image is.” The expletive “it” substitutes an absent active subject. Moreover, all reference to human agency is cast in general terms, as is evident in the clauses: “we carve” and “we are but pilgrims.” Such syntactic choices establish a passive voice, which functions as a vehicle for reasoned argument. By contrast, the insertion of the voice of the speaker disrupts the authority of the passive voice. The pronoun “I” signals the individual voice of the speaker as standing apart from the general “we.” Further, the emphatic “must” contrasts with the reason-backed “should” in the previous line. The clause “should in soul up to our country move” is supported by the claim that earthly beauty is “but a shade” of “true

beauty.” Up until this point in the sonnet, the speaker provides supporting logic, or reasoning for each of his assertions. However, in the final clause, “yet I must Stella love,” his claim is merely supported by the connective “yet.” In other words, the adverb “yet” signals a shift in argumentation; the speaker now simply announces his love for Stella in a personal manner, which is outside of the bounds of reasoned argument. The relationship between the speaker and his love is framed as one of necessity. Here we have a breakdown of reason and argumentation whereby a single voice outwardly flouts or calls into question the premises of the argument. The first-person voice does this by asserting its own agency and imagining its relationship in active terms; the “must” is not inferred from premises but springs from desire. The active voice thus presents a challenge to the characterization of physical beauty as subordinate to inner virtue.

At every step of the way, the poem calls attention to its own construction. It does this by setting casual language in opposition to figurative construction. The straightforward phrase “it is most true” contrasts with adorned phrases of metaphor, such as “inward light,” “heavenly part,” and “cupid’s dart.” As a result of the choice to disclose truth through metaphor, the status of these clauses as figures of speech becomes apparent. More prominently, it achieves this effect by equivocating on the word “true,” wherein, “true” is simultaneously ascribed to the speaker’s argument that physical beauty is subordinate to inner beauty, and that “he must Stella love.” This contradictory use of the word “true” makes its status uncertain. The insertion of the voice of the speaker, with the pronoun “I,” in the last line presents a break from the logic established in previous the three quatrains. This break of logic takes place as an assertion of romantic love that parallels the poet’s creative act of constructing the poem. By destabilizing the unity of the message through contradiction, the poem calls attention to itself as a made object.

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“SOCIAL MACHINERY” AND THE MODERN AGE: IMPOSITIONS ON NATURE IN *TESS OF THE D’URBERVILLES*

Chelsea Humphries

When Chelsea first read *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* for ENG324Y: Fiction from 1832-1900, it was a novel that she loved to hate. Tess’ passivity was confusing, and Alec and Angel were equally awful; they were villains that she couldn’t stop thinking about. She felt, however, that there was something more complex at work driving these characters’ interactions, and returned to the novel in an attempt to eke out Hardy’s motives. Noticing extensive pastoral passages, she realized that Tess and her two suitors were being paralleled with the landscape. Much like Tess’ relations with Alec and Angel, the natural world was being contrasted with and contaminated by impositions of the Modern Age. Like Tess, the landscape was being at once physically and morally controlled and abused; it was being subjected to the changing social, or moral values of modernity, and the mechanical, or physical influences of its developing industry. To borrow a phrase from the novel, they were both being severely acted upon by the “social machinery” (49) of the Modern Age. Chelsea saw their consequent destruction as a warning against the ruthless industrialism and senseless consumerism of Hardy’s time, proving that such modern developments were ultimately unsustainable. In its power to shape the individual and the natural environment, the modernization of the Victorian Era is a topic that fascinates Chelsea, insofar as it lays the foundations for our twenty-first century society. Hardy’s literary and social sensitivity is

something that Chelsea considers relevant and important when approaching contemporary issues related to industrial development and its impact on our socioecological existence.

In the destruction of its tragic heroine, Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* describes the damaging, dangerous parameters of the impending modern age. Like the pastoral landscape she represents, Tess is ravaged by modern times; the influences of Alec and Angel work upon her as they do upon the land, taking the best of and seeking to improve upon her ‘natural’ assets, both physically and mentally. In this process, however, Tess and the landscape are rendered *unnatural*; she becomes a mechanical and idealized figure imposed upon by modern values and social conventions—by the “social machinery” (Hardy 49) at work in an increasingly industrialized and artificial landscape. The untouched ‘naturalness’ that Tess embodies is thus rendered incompatible with the influence of modernity. Like the land with which she is paralleled, she is constantly imbued with purposes and ideologies external to her being, and it is this imposition that ultimately destroys her. *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* thus expresses the danger of modern progress and the “social machinery” that it entails. Such progress, as Hardy’s heroine demonstrates, is unsustainable—causing the destruction of the ‘natural’ self, alongside the untouched, natural world.

As John B. Humma argues, Hardy shapes his heroine as “not only having associations with Nature [...] but as being indistinguishable from Nature” (69). From the outset of the novel, Tess quite literally embodies the natural world; she is constantly described in language that is reflective of nature. With her “peony mouth,” she is rendered a flower, fascinating strangers with her “freshness” as if she were indeed a part of the country’s natural flora (Hardy 20, 21). She seems to convey an innocence or purity that is particular to nature. Tess is rendered more ambiguous in her naturalness, however, in that she also walks “as stealthily as a cat,” and is later seen with “the look of a wary animal,” becoming both predatory and more basely animal-like (138, 212). She consequently encompasses both nature’s purity and nature’s more primal

vitality, as described when Angel sees her one morning:

She was yawning, and he saw the red interior of her mouth *as if it had been a snake’s*. She had stretched one arm so high above her *coiled-up* cable of hair that he could see its satin delicacy above the sunburn; her face was flushed with sleep, and her eyelids hung heavy over their pupils. The *brim-fulness of her nature* breathed from her. (187, emphasis added)

Here, Tess is very much a part of the natural world; every aspect of her, from her snake-like mouth to her similarly serpentine “coiled-up” hair, is full of natural life. While beautiful, this naturalness is latently threatening. Tess is like a snake in repose, and is very much a part of nature in its wild, untamed form.

Tess so fully embodies this nature that often she is described as disappearing within it. During the May Day celebration, she is a “white shape [standing] apart by the hedge” (24). She is rendered indistinct—a “shape,” not a person—as she moves away from the other girls, approaching nature both physically and figuratively. She thus becomes a part of nature, without human identity, echoing the white flowers that she carries. This notion is reinforced repeatedly: Tess becomes “invisible,” as she sits upon the leaves where Alec places her, and later she is described as being “of a piece with the element she moved in” (81, 97). She is literally made “indistinguishable from Nature” as the novel unfolds, and, as will be seen, it is this affinity to the natural world that causes her to be so affected by the “social machinery” of the modern age.

Hardy’s use of the term “social machinery” first appears after Alec meets Tess. Lamenting that fate could bring together two people so poorly suited to each other, Hardy writes:

We may wonder whether, at the acme and summit of the human progress, these anachronisms will be corrected by a finer intuition, a closer interaction of the social machinery than that which now jolts us round and along; but such completeness is not to be prophesied, or even conceived as possible. (48-49)

Progress is decried as insufficient means to righting the wrongs of the world. Paralleled with fate, the “machinery” of the modern age that “jolts us round and along” can never offer a satisfying solution to social problems; it can only irritate them and drive them to further extremes. It is this “social machinery” in action that inevitably leads to Tess’ destruction, and, in her parallel with the landscape, echoes the exploitative machinery seen in the industrialized pastoral countryside. Such described “machinery,” taken alongside Victorian social mores, renders nature in its various incarnations a mechanical and artificial construction—a resource to be taken and manipulated. This exploitation of nature is realized most strongly in the actions of Alec and Angel, as each tries to control Tess and make her his own; Alec does so physically, and Angel does so morally. Physical and moral impositions upon Tess and the landscape are thus jumbled together inasmuch as they equally exploit nature; the two go hand in hand to compositely describe the “social machinery” that Hardy criticizes in his novel, literally being of *social*, or moral value, and *mechanical*, or physical influence.

Modernity seeks to take advantage of the natural world in *Tess*, desiring to control it for the sake of pleasure and prosperity, as suggested in the character of Alec D’Urberville. His treatment of the landscape foreshadows his treatment of Tess, evidenced by the grounds of his mansion in Trantridge, where everything that should be natural is artificially controlled and cultivated. The property is “snug” and “well-kept,” and the excessive fecundity of its gardens is encased within “glass houses” (44). The natural is thus exploited and confined, rendered a component of the social, industrialized world to which Alec belongs. He controls the natural world, and manipulates it for his own pleasure; he “fit[s]” it to suit his whims and fancies, and works nature into an “ornamental,” inherently human construction upon his property (44).

This controlled treatment of nature is repeated upon Tess. Alec “conduct[s] her about the lawns, and flower-beds, and conservatories; and thence to the fruit-garden and green-houses [...] [tucking] a bud or two into her hat, and heap[ing] her basket with others in the prodigality of his bounty” (47). He “conducts” her, acting as a guide, and adds to

her appearance, cultivating her as he would the roses with which he adorns her. Such cultivation is reiterated as she comes to work for his mother:

A familiarity with Alec d’Urberville’s presence—which that young man carefully *cultivated* in her by playful dialogue, and by jestingly calling her his cousin when they were alone—removed much of her original shyness of him, without, however *implanting* any feeling which could engender shyness of a new and tenderer kind. (68, emphasis added)

Alec tries to “cultivate” a familiarity between Tess and himself, treating her as if she is a garden, and emphasizing her relationship to the landscape. His attempts at cultivation, however, being artificial and controlling, prevent the growth of feeling within her. Like the gardens on his property, she is not natural in his presence, and hence is not “implant[ed]” with such natural feelings as might develop between a young man and woman. She is cultivated by him like the grounds upon his property, and eventually becomes his mistress—a “well-kept” woman.

Ultimately, Alec attempts to physically place Tess under his control, as he does the rest of the natural world. Very much like his horse, who “whether of her own will or of his (the latter being the more likely) knew so well the reckless performance expected of her that she hardly required a hint from behind” (60), Tess is coerced into compliance. Driving with her in his cart to Trantridge, Alec places upon her “the kiss of mastery,” and henceforth dominates her physical being as she submits with “eyes staring at him like those of a wild animal” (61). She gives in to him, and fully becomes a part of nature, as it exists to Alec—subject to his modern, cultivating, and industrial will. He imposes himself upon her as he imposes his will upon his gardens and his horse, and Tess, like the landscape, is not allowed to be what she is, but is cultivated into serving a purpose and an ideology, bending passively to his whims and inclinations. Her naturalness is rendered a commodity, and she is exploited as such by Alec to serve his own pleasure.

Tess thus becomes mechanized and contrived—a part of the industrialized modern world. After her encounter with Alec in The Chase, she leaves Trantridge, “occasionally [stopping] to rest in a *mechanical* way by some gate or post; and then, giving the baggage another hitch upon her full round arm, [going] *steadily* on again” (87, emphasis added). This “mechanical” way of being expresses the imposition of modernity upon her. Tess is forced to “mechanical[ly]” and “steadily” continue on, never stopping, in a manner that anticipates both her endless wandering through the many landscapes of the novel, and the work upon the farm machinery that she is later driven to perform. She is acted upon by the “social machinery” which Hardy condemns; she is rendered unnatural and mechanical by the values and desires of the industrialized modern age as they are embodied by Alec, insofar as he is the novel’s representative of “the social world, the world of man” (Hamma 66). Alec imparts in her this automaton-like behaviour, reflecting it in his own actions as he approaches her while leaving Trantridge: “D’Urberville *mechanically* [lights] a cigar,” continuing the journey from Trantridge with “*broken, unemotional* conversation on the *commonplace* subjects by the wayside” while Tess sits “*like a puppet*,” replying to his remarks in *monosyllables*” (Hardy 88, emphasis added). Tess’ naturalness is effectively destroyed by Alec’s mechanical behaviour, and she becomes a “puppet” for him—an empty machine, devoid of self and emotion. Nature, as present in Tess’ ‘natural’ self, thus ceases to exist under the mechanizing influence of Alec D’Urberville.

With the onset of modernity, and as such the presence of a *modern man* like Alec, true naturalness as is initially present within Tess becomes scarce, and is soon regarded with nostalgia. This nostalgia for a lost naturalness characterizes the manner in which Angel Clare approaches Tess. He regards her as pure and untouched, blind to her naturalness as it exists in its original wild, primal ambivalence, and blind to the mechanical *unnaturalness* imposed upon her after her encounters with Alec. Angel represents the unrealistic mode of social analysis by which late-Victorian society romanticized and idealized its fading pastoral existence. Thus, like Alec, Angel’s treatment of Tess denies her an individual identity that is distinct from that in keeping

with the "social machinery" of his time. Where Alec impresses his physical self upon Tess, giving her a new mechanical quality that is associated with the rise of modern industry, Angel impresses his idealistic morality on her—imposing social conventions upon Tess' naturalness. Together, Alec and Angel represent and enforce the "social machinery" to which Hardy appeals in "Phase the First" of *Tess*.

In his essay "'The Ache of Modernism' in Hardy's Later Novels," David J. de Laura states that Angel's "intense and authentic moral idealism, as well as his own romantic unrealistic temperament" is "clearly fixed in the contemporary intellectual situation, where freethinking idealistic late-Victorians retained outdated and destructive moral scruples" (394). Angel seeks to present himself as a modern figure, free of the constraints of society, but is ultimately encased within its "outdated" moral conventions. This is evident when he notes that, upon returning home, "he did not so much as formerly feel himself one of the family gathered there" (Hardy 176). He feels that he is drifting from the society that he has known, yet later, he still echoes the family's values. Like his mother, Angel holds onto the ideal that "there are few purer things in nature than an unsullied country maid" (283), and it is this outdated, sentimental ideal that he imposes upon Tess. He relates nature to virginity, existing in an untouched, idealized state that is impossible to maintain; he sees Tess as "a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature" (136). He abstracts her from her individual existence and blinds himself to her naturalness in its full form, viewing her instead as only pure by Victorian standards, when she is of a natural, primal vitality as well.

That such idealization is untenable may be noted in how Angel perceives Tess. Upon first getting to know her, Tess is abstracted by Angel; she is nothing more than "the merest stray phenomenon" to him, a "rosy, warming apparition" without a real, tangible existence (144). As an ideal, she is denied her natural self, rendered only a "visionary essence" (146) of what she truly is. Angel's idealizing language is self-propheying: it presents the impossibility of such an ideal existing and works to negate its existence in the very words that are chosen to describe it, prefiguring Tess' destruction.

Consequently, untouched nature does not exist in *Tess*, let alone within the unnatural parameters of Victorian morality. Acting

upon her unnaturally, Angel imposes impossibilities upon Tess that necessarily lead to her destruction, as Alec's wilful mastery does in the "Phases" prior. Like Alec, Angel's "influence over her had been so marked that she had caught his manner and habits, his speech and phrases, his likings and his aversions" (222). Just as she reflects Alec's modern ways, Tess adopts Angel's habits too. Angel's impact is perhaps even more pronounced than Alec's, as is particularly evident while Tess works at Flintcomb-Ash, where her growth remains in "utter stagnation" (292), made frozen and unnatural by Angel's ideals. That Angel has "disappeared like a shape in a vision" (292) evokes the same ephemerality that was previously attributed to Tess, rendering not only her person, but now also her desires as an impossibility. Angel consequently makes it impossible for her to exist as a human being. Furthermore, because this stasis is accompanied by a "mechanical occupation" (292), the relationship between Angel's and Alec's influences are highlighted—they come together to utterly destroy her natural self, both through moral and physical impositions upon her person. Where Alec renders her mechanical, Angel renders her an ideal; they do not take her as she is, and both seek to use her natural assets for their own purposes, destroying her very nature in the process.

In that Tess is representative of, and intertwined with nature, such a link between moral and physical influences is necessarily mirrored within the landscape. The impositions of Scripture and farm machinery upon the countryside reflect Angel's moral and Alec's physical impositions upon Tess, and render nature, too, unnatural. Tess' first encounter with the damning scriptures of the wandering painter is framed against "the peaceful landscape, the pale decaying tints of the copses, the blue air of the horizon, and the lichened stile-boards, [from which] these staring vermilion words shone forth" (91). These "staring vermilion words" are active and vocal, seeming "to shout" (91) as they impose themselves upon the "peaceful landscape," defacing its naturalness while imbuing it with moral value. Moreover, they anticipate the farm machinery that is mentioned in the next chapter, of which "the paint with which they were smeared, intensified in hue by the sunlight, imparted to them a look of having been dipped in liquid fire" (99). Thus, the machinery similarly defaces the landscape; it is

painted red, like the Scripture, and works to alter nature according to man’s will.

This parallel between the painted Scripture and the machinery is affirmed by its repetition later in the novel, notably as Tess and Alec are walking together near Flintcomb-Ash: “Frequently when they came to a gate or stile, they found painted thereon in red or blue letters some text of Scripture, and she asked him if he knew who had been at the pains to blazon these announcements” (330). Again, the brightly painted scripture imposes itself upon the countryside. It is now also, however, linked to Alec in his revealing that he has hired the painter; he imposes himself upon Tess like the Scripture upon the landscape, and is consequently paralleled with it, albeit in a physical rather than moral manner. This repeated incident of painted Scripture prefigures a later description of farm machinery, “whose bright blue hue of new paint seemed almost vocal in the otherwise subdued scene” (334). Like the first painted tract of scripture that Tess witnesses, it is “almost vocal,” seeming “to shout” like the vermilion words she had seen before. It imposes itself upon nature, uniting its physical presence with the moral influence of the Scripture.

The machinery and the scriptures are thus inextricable—their moral and physical impositions are equally damaging to the landscape. They are also paralleled with Alec and Angel, who personify such influences of “social machinery.” Alec, while physically mastering and mechanizing Tess, morally seeks to control the landscape by hiring the scripture painter; Angel, while morally impressing an ideal upon Tess, seeks to physically control the landscape as a farmer. Modern industry and imposed social values come together to dominate and destroy nature in its purest state, as embodied by both Tess and her surroundings.

Hardy thus expresses that pure naturalness cannot exist in the face of modernity—not while the world is driven by the “social machinery” that is “blazon[ed]” across the countryside, and perpetuated by such figures as Alec and Angel. Even by the narrator, Tess is not represented to us as a natural whole: she is dissected, compartmentalized, and inventoried for the modern reader, described in bits and pieces that are linked to the natural world, but abstracted

from her whole being. Her aforementioned “peony mouth,” like her later “rainy face and hair,” attribute to her an affinity with nature; she is one with her environment, and is not simply peony-like, or *wet*, but has a “peony mouth” and is “rainy” (205). These descriptions, although profoundly natural, also serve to cut Tess into pieces: they represent her by her mouth, face, and hair, rather than by her whole person. The narrator thus negates naturalness by the literary form in which Tess is presented. As much as she is a part of nature, she is altered, rendered unnatural, and denied an identity by the artificial construct of the novel within which she appears.

While Hardy hopes that “a closer interaction of the social machinery” may be possible, allowing such nature to exist, he recognizes that “such a completeness is not to be prophesied, or even conceived as possible” (49). The values and industry of the Modern Age, inasmuch as they are present within a natural environment, are diametrically opposed to this environment’s continuing naturalness. As Charlotte Bonica says, “however nostalgic Hardy feels about the death of country life, he does not suggest that its central [...] attitudes toward nature [...] can realistically provide a balm for ‘the ache of modernism’” (861). In Tess’ destruction, Hardy demonstrates the danger of modernity; its imposition masters nature, and renders it a tenuous component of an increasingly industrial and artificial world. Naturalness, as found in Tess, is incompatible with the powerful “social machinery” of the modern age. Consequently, the nature that she embodies is destroyed—in the disintegration both of herself, and of the landscape.

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TAKE ME AT MY WORD: ENVIRONMENTS OF (MIS)TRUST IN JEANETTE WINTERSON'S THE PASSION

Robert Powell

"Take Me At My Word: Environments of (Mis)trust in Jeanette Winterson's *The Passion*" was written for ENG 210Y: The Novel, during Woodsworth College's Summer Abroad program in Siena, Italy. The essay argues that in Winterson's novel, for trust and commitment to emerge as viable and nourishing categories of investment they need to materialize from uncertain—even mutable and transitory—settings. As the locations and sceneries of the book are revealed, it becomes apparent that it is only by eschewing those sites which engender an immutable status quo that its characters find themselves free to devote themselves to greater ideals, and ultimately to one another. In a story devoted to storytelling, and the means by which we might empower that act of telling, the foundations of a good fiction are revealed to be those that are comfortably ambiguous when concerning what is exactly at stake; how shifting boundaries and possibilities free up the energies required to make a leap of faith; and how one might actually, really believe something to be true, despite uncertainty. It is an issue that surrounds our own investment in agency—how free will almost demands that acts of devotion inaugurated by the uncertain or the unstable are apprehended as truly valuable. Faith and love must be fragile to be precious, and this is something we might have to reconcile in our own lives. Robert would like to thank Professor William Robbins for providing and nurturing the seed out of which this essay sprung.

The injunction comes multiple times: “Trust me,” says Henri (Winterson 5); “Trust me,” says Villanelle (75); and it is trust that becomes one of the central themes of Jeanette Winterson’s novel, *The Passion*. It is perhaps only fitting that we are asked to invest ourselves in the narrative as the characters are called upon to invest in their icons, each other, and in passion itself; but it is a suspicious circumstance to be petitioned to trust when the narrators also admit that they are “telling you stories” (174). The act of telling stories generates a condition that opens up space for doubt, for uncertainty. What teller of tales has ever been known to be wholly reliable? What story ever bears out as unequivocally true? The uneasy relationships that spring up around Winterson’s characters’ capacity to trust—and the health and viability of the trust that they do commit—are intimately related to the spaces that they inhabit, to the settings that surround them. The details which set the stage for action in the novel help to inform us of the quality, the tenor, and the tone of the different kinds of trust bestowed in various landscapes, along with those of its concomitant emotions: faith and love. The pattern that gradually emerges throughout the work is surprising. Uncertainty takes on a privileged valence. Winterson disrupts the casual assumption that stability and predictability are the natural and most positive basis for a healthy trust to thrive—it is the mutable, and the changeable, which are shown to be the most vibrant and vital settings for living beings to grow and develop that emotionally nuanced investment. The staid, the fixed, and the lifeless take on more sinister connotations, and we are left with a moral that enshrines possibility rather than repression, one where “what you risk reveals what you value” (47); any trust worth having is the product of a game that emerges from places which are fundamentally unstable.

Before his near religious call to action in Bonaparte’s army, Henri’s formative space—the setting that defines the borders of his early existence—is the farm on which he was raised. It is here that he returns, both physically after his first “six months” away (33), and, many years

later, mentally from his cell in a Venetian madhouse, to express trust and devotion for his parents and for his homeland. It is, however, not the permanence of the site that inspires Henri, but rather its regular cycles of change: “That’s what I miss about the fields,” says Henri, “the sense of the future as well as the present. That one day what you plant will spring up unexpectedly [...] just when you were looking the other way” (170). Things are neither stationary nor eternal in the countryside. Life continues to vary, to mutate, as it moves along; the progression of time is evident; the fields follow recognisable patterns but they are ruled by a higher order of the unexpected, the surprising. When he first spies his parents upon his return home from Boulogne they “were both in the fields” (33). He observes his mother “with her hands on her hips, head pushed back, watching the clouds gather [...]. She was making her plans in accordance with the rain” (33). This environment, ruled by the principle of the educated guess, by instinct and observation, enables Henri to commit himself to trust in his family, for in a world without predestination, choice—the very act of committal—takes on a privileged significance: it matters.

This consequence also characterizes the value of Villanelle’s commitments to her home city. A proteiform Venice is drawn in the novel as the essence of the variable, of benign and not so benign caprice; it is this environment that both gives licence to Villanelle’s desires, and allows her to develop her strongest sense of trust, which is in herself. It is through her voice that we are introduced to the watery municipality:

The city I come from is a changeable city. It is not always the same size. Streets appear and disappear overnight, new waterways force themselves over dry land. There are days when you cannot walk from one end to the other, so far is the journey, and there are days when a stroll will take you round your kingdom like a tin-pot Prince. (107)

Nothing about this place, then, is fixed or at rest. The city, restless as a stray tomcat, wanders or even “disappears” overnight; no predictable paths emerge; distance—geometry itself—becomes unreliable, and time unsteady. This is a world topsy-turvy: complacency upended, the

visitor cannot expect, cannot predict, the immediate outcomes of their actions; yet they still might feel a kind of ownership, of belonging, either proprietary or reciprocal. “A tin-pot Prince,” says Villanelle: you can wander around the multifarious shiftings and migrations of Venice and reign over it, though it might be a shoddy sort of sovereignty, a cheap, make-do sort of nobility in a place that grants nothing easily. It is faith, that most nebulous and powerful form of trust, that is necessitated by Venice: “here, in this mercurial city, it is required you do awake your faith,” Villanelle says, “with faith, all things are possible” (53). For in a place without certainty the only way you might live with any passion, with any dedication to the results of tomorrow, is to believe wholeheartedly in your ability to navigate the chaos and emerge capable of dealing with the consequences, whatever they may be.

Yet it is not just faith in the self that makes things possible in Venice. Villanelle places her faith in Henri to retrieve her heart from the house of her former lover, the house that is a fixed space at odds with the vibrant mutability that surrounds it. If the shifting canals and telescoping distances of the city enable her trust, that same trust is stifled and restrained by the oppressive nature of the six story “gracious,” “fashionable” home that her female lover inhabits (72). The residence is characterized by the collections housed within it, arrays of “Chinese ornaments,” and “a strange assortment of dead insects mounted in cases on the wall” (72). Compendia of this kind are possessive, jealous, and proud; more than that, they are passive, to be looked at and admired, but not used to any purpose. Later its rooms are revealed to contain “two coffins, their lids open, white silk inside,” “shelves [...] filled with books two deep,” “a map of the world,” and, significantly, “a tapestry some three-quarters done” (131). It is a covetous exhibition, a corpus of emblems signifying a profound desire to absorb, categorize, enumerate, and contain. It is an archive of torpor. The tapestry, of course, depicts a young Villanelle, and it is in a nearby wardrobe room that Henri discovers the “throbbing” jar, which does, indeed, contain her heart. She trusted Henri to venture into the eerie, macabre home where things exist frozen in time to liberate an essential part of herself and bring it back into the dynamic, vital environ of the city. There could be no trust in that house—the loom had proved it: “if the tapestry had been

finished and the woman had woven in her heart, [Villanelle] would have been a prisoner for ever” (133). Yet the question remains, had the woman succeeded, had she woven *in* assurance and *out* any risk of losing the object of her passion, would her consolidated possession have retained any real value for her in the end? Repeatedly in *The Passion* we are confronted with the position that it is only through risk, through surviving the chance of loss, that we value what it is we gain or what it is we already have. Had Villanelle’s heart become part of that house, safely enwoven and displayed on the wall, would the weaver have cherished what she had, or would her prize simply have taken on the properties of an idle curiosity? She certainly would have had no need to trust the object of her obsession, but any definitive answer is beyond the scope of the text, even if the ambiguity left by such a query retains a generative power that mirrors the novel’s own where it comes to uncertainty. It is a possibility that opens up a creative realm.

It is in Russia, in “the zero winter” (88) and the cancelled, bleak campaign trail toward Moscow, that Henri encounters the antithesis of the natural world he so adores in France, the erasure of possibility: the horses freeze, the men freeze, there is nothing to eat. Alongside this deletion of life-giving opportunities, Henri loses his trust in Napoleon. After the Russians set fire to Moscow, Henri serves his Emperor a “scrawny chicken surrounded by parsley the cook cherishes in a dead man’s helmet” (92). This is the night of Henri’s realization: “I couldn’t stay any longer. I think it was the night that I started to hate him” (92). The snow that dominates the space in Russia, the backdrop to his loss of faith, suggests nothing more to him than static repetition. This repetition gives birth to hate, the oppositional expression of love, and the death knell to Henri’s trust: “Is every snowflake different?” he asks. “No one knows,” is his depressed answer (90). There is no way to confirm such a supposition. Even minute variation cannot be assured in the zero winter.

Though he does not know her name at the time, it is Villanelle that breaks open the barren finality of what appears to be more of an exile than a crusade. She appears with some Russian chicken in the kitchen tent and offers some to Henri:

She laughed and said the Russians could hide under the snowflakes. Then she said, “They’re all different.”

“What?”

“Snowflakes. Think of that.”

I did think of that and I fell in love with her. (96)

This is the renewal of Henri’s world. In one sentence Villanelle introduces a practically infinite variation to their surroundings. The assertion that the world is unlimited, that there is some definitive, beautiful mystery that does not repeat itself on all sides, inspires his love, an alternate object of devotion that replaces the one he has lost. It is the beginning of a relationship in which he will invest a great deal of trust, that will develop over months of their struggling through the winter and across the countryside, to make their way back to Venice. Complication, variation, and potential again delineate the details that define the drive to live. Chance is shown again to be an ineluctable component of cherishing what you have and believing in the future.

The question of gambling those things which you value, trusting that fate loves you as much as she loves anyone else, and believing that your chances are in some great equipoise with all others who operate from a position equivalent to your own, gestures towards the experience of another player in the games which suffuse *The Passion*, that of the reader. At one point Villanelle seems to speak on our behalf: “how is it that one day life is orderly and you are content, a little cynical perhaps but on the whole just so, and then without warning [...] you are now in another place whose geography is uncertain and whose customs are strange?” (74). This is a neat description of immersing yourself in a novel, the open range of a shifting countryside; what are we being asked to invest by involving ourselves in such a narrative? Is trust an issue we take seriously as we are surrounded by landscapes evocative and unfamiliar? As Winterson articulates, “the cities of the interior are vast, do not lie on any map” (164). There are fabulous elements here—moving cities, shrunken shoes, unmelting frozen talismans—and equally improbable treks through a dangerous, wintery countryside. She also evokes highly coincidental relationships, where unlikely friends share a common enemy; what here are we being asked to trust? Truth

and trust are not necessarily common bedfellows. If the book itself can be seen as a kind of territorial space, where characters move, and act, and suffer, are we being asked to imagine that there is a value in risking our disbelief for the sake of gleaning some insight, some greater kernel of value that emerges through layers of subterfuge and symbolism? If we are to use the book itself to decipher this quandary the answer may be quite simple: that the value of stories comes out of the narrative features, fantastic or mundane, which allow us to credit fundamental properties of ambiguity as essential to any human experience; that devoting yourself to life means resigning to the fact that there are unsolved mysteries nestled at its very core; and this is a risk we all should take.

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THE LAMB, THE TYGER AND BLAKE: A “MIND FORG’D” REVOLUTION

Amelia Bailey

“The Lamb, the Tyger and Blake: A Mind Forg’d Revolution” was written for ENG308, “Romantic Poetry and Prose” in Professor Reibetanz’s section. It was William Blake’s powerful imagination and language, and its shift before, during, and after the French Revolution, that inspired the thesis of this essay. The essay analyzes the change in metaphorical language throughout three of Blake’s major collections of poetry and prose in order to understand the transformation in Blake’s vision in the time leading up to and proceeding the revolution, from a pure acceptance of God’s benevolence, to an oppositional denunciation of God, and finally, to a more nuanced, elevated and philosophic questioning of God’s morality. As Blake ultimately constructs an image of a God that is both the almighty creator and the human creation itself, the essay concludes that Blake’s questioning of God is ultimately a questioning of man himself. Thank you to Lauren Peat and Toula Nikas for your words of wisdom and encouragement. Special thanks to Professor Julia Reibetanz for her inspiring and insightful course, which has given me the ability to “see a world in a grain of sand.”

Throughout his work, Blake represents the imagination as a means of religious transcendence and as an escape from a society governed by rationality and strict moral conventions. In order to express this radical shift towards the imagination and his reinterpretation of God’s existence within man, Blake creates a new metaphorical and symbolic language that breaks from the confining ideological discourse. Although the change in Blake’s vision was not linear or absolute, the French Revolution and its failure to inspire comparable revolution in England affected Blake’s vision of and relationship with God, expressed through his evolving metaphorical language. His pre-Revolution poetry collection, *Songs of Innocence*, uses pastoral metaphors to express an acceptance of the orthodox conception of man’s fall and God’s benevolence, ultimately arguing for the guardianship of the innocent until the “break of day” (Blake 20). With the advent of the Revolution, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* opposes his earlier works with the use of sexual, satanic metaphors in its call for rebellion. After the Revolution’s failed impact on England, Blake’s metaphorical language becomes increasingly complex and interrogative in *Songs of Experience*, as he elevates his voice in order to question God’s morality. This essay will consider the change in metaphorical language throughout three of Blake’s major collections of poetry in order to understand the transformation in Blake’s vision before, during, and after the Revolution, from a pure acceptance of God’s benevolence, to an oppositional denunciation of God, and finally, to a more nuanced, elevated, and philosophic questioning of God’s morality.

Blake’s poem “Introduction” in *Songs of Innocence* establishes a set of reoccurring, dynamic metaphors that uphold a traditional conception of man’s relationship with God: the child, the Lamb, and the pastoral setting. The natural terms “valleys” (1), “cloud” (3), “Lamb” (5), “reed” (16), and “rural” (17), in conjunction with the cheerful descriptors “pleasant glee” (2), “laughing” (4), “merry cheer” (6), “joy” (12, 20), and “happy” (10), transform this rural scene into a terrestrial paradise. Referring to the child as being “on a cloud” (3) suggests that the child’s purity precedes man’s fallen, adult state. In effect, in his religious transcendence within the edenic setting, the child’s authoritative command to the poet to “Pipe a song about a Lamb” (5),

elevates him to an assertive position that equates him to God. As the optimistic vision of the imaginative child precedes Man's fallen state, the poem accepts the fallen man as well as the Lamb, while Blake's metaphorical language presents the pastoral landscape as God's pure and innocent paradise.

Working on three levels of poetic analysis through its metaphorical language, "The Lamb" reinforces Blake's hopeful belief in the child's imagination as a means of reunification with a virtuous God in his pastoral paradise. Beginning on the literal level, the poem starts with a simple, rhythmic repetition of "Little Lamb, who made thee?" (1, 9), as the innocent child asks the Lamb who made his "softest clothing wooly bright" (6). The sudden shift in the second stanza from innocent questions to assertive statements brings the poem to its symbolic level. By answering his own questions the child takes command, as seen in "Introduction," while the repetition of the soft alliteration "Little Lamb" (1, 9, 11, 12, 19, 20), coupled with the child's description of the Creator as "meek" and "mild" (15), contrasts with, and thus accentuates, the child's new authority. Only through the child's imagination does the lamb become a metonym for Christ, as God is equated to both the lamb and to the child. In effect, Blake reinforces his notion that it is the child's innocent imagination in the pure pastoral setting that can lead to unity with God, and ultimately, to the anagogic level of analysis in which the pastoral landscape is transfigured into a vision of paradise. As such, through this metaphorical conception, Blake's pre-Revolution vision remains faithful to the biblical conception of the Original Sin, accepting Man's fallen state while trusting in a moral God.

With the advent of the French Revolution, Blake's vision radically shifts towards an active rebellion against God, which opposes his earlier passive acceptance and faith in God's morality. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake compiles absolute claims in order to give himself a rebellious voice of authority. The disjointed and freeform poetry breaks from a rational poetic structure in "Proverbs of Hell": "The Road of excess leads to the palace of wisdoms. / Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by Incapacity" (151). Blake's personification of "Prudence" and "Incapacity" in this scene of courtship mocks the passive citizens through their prudence, as he attempts to awaken an

imminent and urgent desire to revolt against society's oppression.

In "Proverbs of Hell," a collection of aphorisms in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake defiles classical religion by reinterpreting the Old Testament *Book of Proverbs* through a satanic perspective. In contrast to the *Songs of Innocence*, Blake attributes a set of sexual and violent metaphors to God that reflect his revolutionary opposition to authority:

The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.
The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.
The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.
The nakedness of woman is the work of God. (22-25)

Blake replaces his hopeful and innocent metaphors of the Lamb/Christ and Child/God with a new set of violent and sexual symbols that allude to the Seven Deadly Sins. Representing the peacock as "pride," the goat as "lust," and the lion as "wrath," directly references the cardinal sins of the fallen man, while the woman as "nakedness" becomes the outlier, emphasizing her free sexual expression. Contrasting these capital vices with God's "glory," "bounty," "wisdom," and "work," Blake challenges the formal conception of the Original Sin, implicating God as the creator of Man's corruption, and thus equating him with Satan. Further, the phonetic repetition of the "p" and "t" sounds, along with the discordant "nakedness" in the final line, creates a harsh cacophony in contrast with the softer "l" and "w" alliterations. In contrast to the lamb's soft alliterations, the satanic metaphors and their harsh phonetic representation serve to depict God's uncontrollable and morally questionable power. In placing the soft alliterations within this new violent symbolism, the innocent "Little Lamb" contrasts with the reinterpreted and corrupt almighty creator. As such, Blake's renewed revolutionary voice evokes a series of satanic metaphors that actively denounce God's benevolence.

As the failure of the Revolution becomes apparent, Blake's initial acceptance of man's fallen state and his belief in God's benevolence is replaced with an embittered and doubtful questioning of God's power. Blake's symbolic language in *Songs of Experience*

continues to produce oppositions similar those found in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, while becoming increasingly complex. Replacing the pastoral, paradisiacal vision with a decaying, urban setting, Blake's poem "London" becomes a metaphor for corrupt power. Creating a series of metonymic oppositions in this post-Revolution poem, Blake establishes an aggressive tension between the abused and the abuser. The "chimney-sweeper" (9) as the child deprived of free imagination and the "Soldier" (11) as the military prostitute are set in stark contrast with the "Church" (10), a metonym for all authoritative religious establishments, and the "Palace" (12), a symbol of hierarchy and Government. Within this binary opposition, Blake becomes the outside observer who does not passively accept, as in *Songs of Innocence*, nor fervently denounce, as in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Rather, he is not an active voice in his poetry, but is an external observer who complicates and questions the morality of a god who creates corruption.

At the crux of his creative maturity, Blake's active poetic voice reappears. He responds to the simple imagery of "The Lamb" with a complex set of metaphors in "The Tyger," creating interwoven allusions in order to elevate this voice and question the morality of God's own "fearful" (4, 24) power. In contrast to the pastoral and urban settings in his previous poems, God's place of creation is a blacksmith shop, comparing God with the Roman forger-god, Vulcan. In the second stanza, Blake asks: "On what wings dare he aspire? / What the hand dare seize the fire?" (7-8), alluding to the myth of Prometheus. Further, the ambiguity of the personal pronoun "he" and the pronoun "hand" not only refer to these mythological figures of creation and deceit, but also to God and the Tyger. Putting into question the delight God may have taken in this satanic creation—"Did he smile his work to see?" (19)—Blake recreates the image of God as a morally questionable creator. With his constant interrogative form, which crescendos in the ellipsis, "What the hammer? What the chain?" and "What the anvil? What dread grasp" (13,15), Blake aggressively builds question upon question, exalting his imaginative voice to the top of the hierarchy and examining the morality of the Tyger/God. Though he does not offer a final answer to this radical thought, Blake's metaphorical language shifts away from a faithful acceptance to an imaginative questioning,

which ultimately elevates his poetic authority.

Throughout his work, God and the imagination lie at the centre of Blake's metaphorical vision. Before the Revolution, Blake saw the child's pure imagination as a way to unite with God. During the Revolution, the imagination grows into a means of free expression and rebellion against God. After the Revolution, Blake's own imagination elevates him to a philosophic questioning of God, a creator of both the abused and the abuser, of good and of evil. At the end of Blake's imaginative process, the Tyger/God becomes each of his own creations. The Lamb, The Tyger, and Blake all transform into metaphors of a beautiful and fearful God, whose moral virtue remains complicated and questionable.

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CONTEMPLATING ART IN POST-9/11 AMERICA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF DON DELILLO'S FALLING MAN

Matthew Allen

Matthew wrote “Contemplating Art in Post-9/11 America” for ENG365, a third-year English class on contemporary American literature, after becoming captivated by the question of whether writing is capable of faithfully rendering catastrophe and trauma. Matthew’s essay examines how Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man* brings the radical conception of art as described by Karlheinz Stockhausen, who believed the September 11 attacks were “the greatest work of art that exists for the whole Cosmos,” into dialogue with the conventional understanding of art characterized by Aristotle and Denis Diderot, who assert [that] art must be clearly demarcated and separated from reality in order to be considered art. By examining the role of suicide bombers, visual art, and the artifice of the text itself, Matthew argues that DeLillo’s novel illustrates how art is both implicit in the attacks of September 11 but also necessary for understanding its aftermath. The world of smoke and ash that was Lower Manhattan on the morning of September 11 remains inarticulable until it is rendered aesthetically and re-framed. Matthew therefore argues [that] DeLillo adheres to the conventional mode of art as a means of understanding the trauma of September 11. Art’s role in *Falling Man* is to act as the poles that orient everyday life. The act of interpretation allows the characters and the reader to navigate a world that blurs artifice with reality, and it is through this act of interpretation that new communities can form.

Karlheinz Stockhausen, a celebrated German composer, interpreted the attacks of September 11, 2001 as a work of art, stating: “Well, what happened there is, of course—now all of you must adjust your brains—the biggest work of art there has ever been [...] the greatest work of art that exists for the whole Cosmos” (Stockhausen 76–77). Although effectively snuffing out his career as an artist and public figure, Stockhausen’s utterance ushered in a new, uncomfortable way of interpreting the terrorist attacks. Arguing that both the attack’s culprits and victims are implicit in the artistic performance of September 11, Stockhausen problematizes traditional understandings of art and its relationship to audience. Aristotle, in his text *Poetics*, depicts the traditional ideology surrounding art, stating: “Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity: such as the forms of the most ignoble animals and of dead bodies” (Aristotle IV). Aristotle therefore shares Stockhausen’s assertion that art can depict disturbing and violent themes; the point of contention that arises is the relationship the audience has to the artistic work. Asserting that the September 11 attacks were “the greatest work of art that exists for the whole Cosmos,” Stockhausen annihilates the demarcating frame that divides artistic representation and everyday life. This division is referred to by Denis Diderot as the “fourth wall,” which is effectively an invisible wall separating the performers and the audience during a theatre play, and, more broadly speaking, dividing artistic creation and reality. Mediating the traditional and transgressive forms of art, Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man* examines how art is both implicated in the destruction of the World Trade Centre and necessary to understanding the aftermath. By examining DeLillo’s use of “organic shrapnel,” the paintings of Giorgio Morandi’s *natura morta*, an Italian term for “still life,” and DeLillo’s use of language—namely, the third-person narrative perspective and permeating sense of ambiguity—in both language and imagery, I will argue that DeLillo problematizes Stockhausen’s transgressive conception of art by linking it to shock and cultural aphasia, while mounting an

argument for the reinstatement of the fourth wall as it allows a nascent community to form and promotes silent contemplation of September 11.

Implicit within Stockhausen's interpretation of the September 11 attacks is the notion that a work of art no longer requires a demarcating framework to exist within the physical world. Instead, Stockhausen asserts that art can occupy and manipulate physical space beyond the frame or stage. DeLillo explores this type of transgressive art through the term "organic shrapnel" and the performance of Islamic extremists (16). After arriving at the hospital with the help of Lianne and a pizza boy, a doctor removes the shards of glass embedded in Keith's face, suffered during the attack, and likens Keith's afflictions with the phenomenon of organic shrapnel, explaining:

The bomber is blown to bits, literally bits and pieces, and fragments of flesh and bone come flying outward with such force and velocity that they get wedged, they get trapped in the body of anyone who's in striking range. (DeLillo 16)

Grotesque and extremely troubling, Stockhausen's methodology interprets the suicide bombers as performers with an audience. The act being performed is martyrdom and relies on the dissolution of the fourth wall and the physical effects the audience suffers through violence, in the form of organic shrapnel in this case. Afflicting the audience with "fragments of flesh and bone," the doctor depicts the audience experience as immediate, invasive, and painful, problematizing this mode of transgressive art. In this way the performance, as an act of violence, repudiates Aristotle's claim that such base and ignoble acts must be mediated through an aestheticized medium, which is what we, as readers, are given.

Furthermore, the importance of performance for Islamic extremists is depicted through the fictional account of Amir Atta, a historical figure regarded as the ringleader of the terrorist group that committed the attacks on 9/11 and the pilot who struck the North Tower of the World Trade Centre, the tower in which the fictionalized Keith works. The narrator interprets Atta's teachings as professing the importance of performing Islamic worship, stating:

[Amir] told them that a man can stay forever in a room, doing blueprints, eating and sleeping, even praying, even plotting, but at a certain point he has to get out [...] Islam is the world outside [...] Islam is the struggle against the enemy. (79-80)

Atta argues that in order to practice Islam one must perform it publicly. Analogous to the blast of the suicide bomber, this outward expansion gestures at the occupying and manipulation of public space and the anxieties of the extremists of being "crowded out" (80). Atta's assertion that "Islam is the world outside" conveys how, with regards to Diderot, Islam is the stage on which the world lies, all of it necessary for performing Islamic beliefs, or punishing others for not adhering to the teachings of the Qur'an. Therefore, the Aristotelian notion that art must be "reproduced with minute fidelity," is null. The performance of Islam is the only art.

The primary effects of the terrorist attack, and of this form of transgressive art that occupies and manipulates physical space, are shock and aphasia. Initially they are depicted through Keith's inability to articulate his thoughts as he walks through abandoned lower Manhattan after emerging from the wreckage of the North Tower:

There was something critically missing from the things around him. They were unfinished, whatever that means. They were unseen, whatever that means, shop windows, loading platforms, paint-sprayed walls. Maybe this is what things look like when there is no one here to see them. (5)

A world with which Keith was once intimately familiar is now estranged by the attack. Keith's inability to articulate the physical world he experiences gestures towards a sense of aphasia, though this is not a symptom of physical brain damage, but of cultural injury. This disruption is aligned with the dissolution of audience as the narrator ponders: "Maybe this is what things look like when there is no one here to see them" (5). The suggestion is that beyond the physical

damage of the attacks, there is a loss of cultural participation that is comprised of both the performance and witnessing of everyday life. Instead, replacing this activity is a world of ash and wreckage from the attack, and a haunting ambiguity. Furthermore, Martin Ridnour, an art dealer and lover of Nina Bartos, discusses how the terrorist attacks affect the art market in Europe, stating: “What I can tell you is that the art market will stagnate. Activity here and there in modern masters. Otherwise dismal prospects” (45). Martin’s insight suggests that the disenfranchisement among the creators and patrons of the European art community echo the dissolution of the community within the abandoned streets of Lower Manhattan. The activity in modern masters is not an ember of hope for the rehabilitation of the arts community, but instead “Trophy art” (45), uninterested in the Aristotelian notion of contemplation as much as it is a reaffirmation of material status. To borrow the metaphor of Diderot’s fourth wall, this reaction from the Western public equates to the abandoning of the theatre, implicating the estrangement from art and the community of audience necessary in its viewing.

The restoration of a cohesive community is seen through the re-formation of audience and Diderot’s fourth wall. This can be seen as the characters of *Falling Man* bind with one another through mutual contemplation over art. The primary setting takes place within Nina Bartos’ apartment and surrounds Giorgio Morandi’s *natura morta*. Depicting everyday items, such as “groupings of bottles, jugs, biscuit tins” stripped to their elemental forms, Morandi’s paintings, according to Lianne, “held a mystery she could not name [...] some reconnoiter inward, human and obscure” (12). Akin to the aphasia following the terrorist attacks, Morandi’s paintings convey ambiguity, something beyond human comprehension. But unlike the transgressive forms of art that rely on shock, *natura morta* pulls the audience in by soliciting contemplation. Martin and Lianne are depicted bonding over one of Morandi’s paintings, providing Lianne with a sense of understanding otherwise absent within her life post-9/11:

Martin stood before the paintings [...] Lianne joined him at the wall. The painting in question showed seven or eight objects,

the taller ones set against a brushy slate background [...] They looked together. ‘What do you see?’ he said. She saw what he saw. She saw the towers. (48-49)

Aligned with the Aristotelian form of art, there is an alluring quality to the Morandi’s minimalist representation that draws Martin and Lianne across the room to experience it. Their movements toward the painting are antithetical to the transgressive rupture of performance art, which moves outward toward the viewers, enabling Lianne and Martin to physically and psychically coalesce as an audience. Although this agreement also speaks to the power of the jihadist performance art to embed itself into the individual, infecting subsequent experiences, it is the union through contemplation and the glimpse of nascent community that is exhibited and produced by the re-formation of the fourth wall.

Furthermore, the term *natura morta*, “still life” or “dead nature,” plays a significant role in understanding the various forms of art within *Falling Man*. Concerned with the tension between mortality and eternity, *natura morta* orients Morandi’s paintings within these two opposing poles. This eternal moment, an instant held indefinitely through the minds of an audience, is prescient of the 9/11 attacks and their consequent aesthetic renderings. The eponymous Falling Man, a performance artist who reenacts the fall of the men and women who jumped from the smoke and flames of the Twin Towers and is described by Lianne as depicting “a body’s last fleet[ing] breath and what it held” (33), further constitutes the theme of *natura morta*. Additionally, the final moments of Hammad and Atta are also implied in this final and eternal moment, along with the passengers of the planes they hijacked.

Nina’s experiences with Morandi’s *natura morta* are indicative of how Aristotelian forms of art possess potentially destructive effects on its viewership. Adamantly disagreeing with Lianne and Martin’s interpretation of Morandi’s painting, as prophetic of the fate of the World Trade Centre, Nina states:

[Morandi’s painting] takes you inward, down and in. That’s what I see there, half buried, something deeper than things

or shapes of things [...] Being human, being mortal [...] After a while I won't need the paintings to look at. The paintings will be excess. I'll look at the wall. (111)

Nina perceives how art can annihilate the self, or usher one into obsolescence through viewer contemplation. Like the Islamic extremists who become martyrs, art, as well as reifying belief and community, is also a conduit for death. The movement “down and in” echoes this annihilation of self and the awareness of internal darkness or death. Possessing the Aristotelian desire for mimetic art, Morandi reflects the uncertainties of life, that which is “deeper than things or shapes of things,” which Nina then enjoys in sadistic contemplation. Nina's assertion that she will finally rest her gaze on the blank wall behind the paintings suggests the obsolescence that Morandi's figures teeter over. In this way DeLillo depicts how *natura morta*, although Aristotelian in form, blur how art functions as a representation and reification of life, instead depicting how it can convey its audience to death, like the jihadists of September 11.

Falling Man, as an artistic work, places itself in the discourse surrounding art's purpose in post-9/11 America. Although the text depicts the events of a real tragedy, containing characters allegorical to real human beings, DeLillo consciously fictionalizes the experience in order to make it presentable to the public. In doing so, DeLillo makes an argument for the importance of Diderot's fourth wall and the need for silent contemplation in the vein of Aristotle. Keith, captivated by a dress shirt blowing in the winds of ash after the fall of the North Tower, depicts how third-person narrative perspective and ambiguity reestablish distance between the reader and 9/11 in the vein of Diderot's fourth wall:

There was something else then, outside all this, not belonging to this, aloft. He watched it coming down. A shirt came down out of the high smoke, a shirt lifted and drifting in the scant light and then falling again, down toward the river. (4)

DeLillo's use of third-person narrative perspective, through the pronoun

“he,” establishes distance between the narrator and Keith's position. Keith is a figure within the narrator's gaze, just as the dress shirt figures in Keith's own gaze. DeLillo's terse sentences do not offer insight into Keith's psyche or why the shirt is alluring to him; instead he only renders the physical experience. The narrator thereby acts as an audience member and beckons to the reader to join him or her to watch Keith and the characters of *Falling Man* as they react to the attacks of 9/11.

Furthermore, the shirt “outside all this, not belonging to this, aloft,” introduces and concludes the text, and sets the contemplative tone prominent within *Falling Man* (4). Suspended and animated yet inanimate, potentially from one of the men or women who jumped from the towers, the shirt solicits contemplation, but like Lianne's experience with Morandi's *natura morta*, it defies understanding. Lianne meditates: “Let the latent meanings turn and bend in the wind, free from authoritative comment,” so conveying the importance of watchful, silent contemplation, but resisting authoritative comment (12). This repudiation of absolute understanding is blatant. DeLillo gestures towards the importance of distancing one's self from definite conclusions as he repeats: “This Book is not to be doubted” (231, 233), first in italics and then in plain text. Although reciting the first line of the Qur'an, DeLillo utilizes the line ironically, pressuring the reader to question their relationship to the text as an audience and drawing into question the text's verisimilitude while satirizing the annihilation of the self in total submission to Islam. Lianne reiterates the case of skepticism, as the narrator writes: “Lianne wanted to disbelieve. Disbelief was the line of travel that led to clarity of thought and purpose. Or was this simply another form of superstition?” (65). The importance of active disbelief, or interpretation and self-reflection in turns, allows Lianne to navigate the text, and seems to be DeLillo's advice to the reader.

Throughout *Falling Man*, DeLillo seems to suggest the inherent dangers of art, and render the September 11 attacks as performance, while also showcasing the nascent community that develops from contemplating art. Stockhausen described a new transgressive mode of art that shattered the fourth wall and saw the audience disperse with fear, plagued by shock and aphasia, and DeLillo gestures towards traditional forms of art that reinstitute a division between artistic

creation and reality. By fictionalizing the events of September 11 and presenting them in the form of a novel, DeLillo implicitly aligns his work with Diderot and with Aristotle's conventional understandings of art. The world of smoke and ash, cultural aphasia, and inarticulable trauma, which was suffered by thousands of New Yorkers, is aestheticized in order to become interpretable. The acts of interpretation, disbelief, and self-reflection, as demonstrated by Lianne, illustrate the ways in which the reader can navigate both the text, and a world that blurs reality and art. It is through the interpretive act that one can reconfigure the relationship between art and reality and re-frame artistic slippage.

Yet DeLillo shows that mere words are unable to draw meaning from the September 11 attacks, and nor, he suggests, should they be able to. Art should not interfere with life but rather help orient the poles in which life operates. There is no singular experience of 9/11, nor any one piece of art that can fully render the complexities of that day. There is only subjective experience and individual contemplation. This is the intermission after a tragic act in the contemporary American drama.

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