IDIOM

English Undergraduate
Academic Journal

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

Volume 4 | 2010

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Editor's Note

On behalf of the Editorial Board, it is my privilege to present you with the 2010 volume of *Idiom: English Undergraduate Academic Journal.*

This year has been focused on the expansion of *Idiom*. We have increased the number of our Editorial Board members to include a broader range of opinions and experiences that are essential to the selection and editing processes. We have also increased the number of essays published in this edition to seven, showcasing an extensive range of accomplished writers. Indeed, after our blind selection process, the Editorial Board was thrilled to discover that we were printing a first-year student's paper in addition to a brilliant mixture of upper-year students' work.

We would like to congratulate the authors on their outstanding contributions to the journal and their infallible patience with the editing process. We would also like to thank everyone who shared their work with us; your essays prove just how diverse and talented students in this institution are. We encourage everyone to submit to next year's volume of the journal.

In addition, we are extremely grateful towards our many sponsors throughout the university, without whom this journal could not be printed.

The selection and editing processes ask a great deal of the members of *Idiom*'s Editorial Board, from early morning meetings to the extensive reading and re-reading of papers. I greatly appreciate the work and dedication each editor has put in this year—*Idiom* would not exist without you.

Extra-curricular activities and *Idiom* especially have been an important aspect of my university career. When I was in first year I submitted an essay to *Idiom*. It was rejected, but I continued to push myself to become more involved until eventually I found myself on the Editorial Board. As Editor-in-Chief for 2009-2010 I strongly encourage students to strive to reach their goals, and perhaps even surpass them. The essays in this edition are examples of students who have done just that. Read them and be inspired to reach and exceed your own goals.

Amanda Lord, Editor-in-Chief
March 2010

Language of Silence: The Unspeakable in Frost's "Mowing" and Plath's "Mushrooms"

Claire Marie Stancek

In both "Mowing" by Robert Frost and "Mushrooms" by Sylvia Plath, the major action is at once spoken and unspeakable. The speaker in "Mowing" hears his "long scythe whispering to the ground" (Frost 2) yet cannot enunciate what is being whispered. The mushrooms are simultaneously the speakers of "Mushrooms" while being "perfectly voiceless" (Plath 16). Why do both poets sustain such focussed exploration of the unutterable within a medium of utterance? How does this 'tongue-tied' quality affect each work's formal elegance? By meditating in words about the inability of words to convey meaning, the artists linguistically parallel death: like the spoken unspeakable, death is the lived unlivable. Death is the destination of existence, which to achieve means to culminate, exceed and destroy being. Robert Frost in "Mowing" and Sylvia Plath in "Mushrooms" each fuse the unspeakable with speaking, creating a paradoxical metaphor for death which they extend throughout their speaker's actions, their speaker's self-consciousness and their allusions. By creating a vocal analogy for death, each poet strives to contain death within art, to speak a silent language.

Firstly, the actions of both speakers combine word and silence and become a figure for death. In "Mowing," the speaker's scythe "whispering to the ground" (Frost 2) is an example of onomatopoeia. The aspirate "wh" blends with the sibilant "s" to aurally imitate a blade softly slicing grass. As onomatopoeia, the whispering is literally the 'speech' of the action; it is the sound or voice that results from the mower's work. Yet through personification, the speaker infuses his labour with an even greater capacity

for language. He rhetorically interacts with us, asking, "What was it [my scythe] whispered?" (Frost 3), as if the sound of the blade were decipherable words. The personification serves to intensify the importance of the speaker's actions since it invests them with an imagined life force. Yet the voice can only speak in the act of killing. The whisper becomes a personification of death itself since the voice of the blade quite literally 'means' death for the harvested hay.

Aside from creating voice, the speaker's actions are also shrouded in silence. Strangely, the first words of the poem are a negation of sound. The speaker begins, "There never was a sound beside the wood" (Frost 1). The speaker's act of mowing is the exception, the "but one" (Frost 1), which sets up a metaphorical imitation of death. The place beside the wood should have sound since it is alive, a part of nature; conversely, the blade should not speak since it is inanimate. Frost inverts the roles of animate and inanimate to imitate the way that death inverts life. The blade becomes the active 'whisperer' while the wood or meadow remains passive and silent since death is the active force. Frost intensifies his metaphor grammatically. In the same way that the speaker's addition of "but one" interrupts his first statement to replace it with another, the voice of the blade takes over the silence beside the wood. At once both sound and silence, it supplants and so "becomes" stillness while paradoxically being noise. The speaking and unspeaking action parallels death: interrupting, replacing and destroying.

While Frost divides speaking and unspeaking actions, Plath blends them in "Mushrooms." Immediately, the mushrooms' collective activity of growing has the quality of a spoken secret. The first word, "[o]vernight" (Plath 1), introduces an unknown process in darkness. Rhetorically keeping us "in the dark," the speakers delay the verb until the fifth line and fill the first stanza purely with adverbs: "very / Whitely, discreetly, / Very quietly" (Plath 1-3). This rhetoric is a way of both disclosing and keeping a secret. The mushrooms describe even while they render this description useless: without a verb, we can attach the adverbs to nothing. Furthermore, their diction is ambiguous. "[D]iscreetly" and "quietly" intensify the attitude of mystery, but "[w]hitely" does not refer clearly to a way of acting. Only later do we realise that the whiteness likely refers to their own colour.

When we discover the verb on the fifth line, the mushrooms' spoken and unspoken action becomes a metaphor for death. They "[t]ake hold on

the loam" (Plath 5) and "[a]cquire the air" (Plath 6), which suggests a kind of appropriation. In their nocturnal creeping, the mushrooms appear like thieves; indeed, when they later relate, "Nobody sees us, / Stops us, betrays us" (Plath 7-8), they seem to hint that a person who saw them would stop them. Yet if they are thieves of "loam" and "air," the mushrooms take the whole world. Like death, they snatch the earth below and the sky above. Furthermore, the word "loam" means mud in its current usage, but in one obsolete meaning, it is the material of the human body. In this sinister pun, the mushrooms are fungus growing on a corpse, yet they are also death itself. By "[t]ak[ing] hold on" the body, they possess it. Their very growing becomes a metaphor for destruction since their increasing strength means that the corpse is progressively decomposing.

Secondly, both speakers' self-consciousness is a way of speaking and not speaking. In "Mowing," the speaker deconstructs his own authority. Even though he is the wielder of the scythe, he is unsure of the sound that it makes, admitting, "What was it it whispered? I knew not well myself" (Frost 3). His aporia is a subtle parallel of death. If he cannot interpret a sound that he makes himself, he calls into question his capacity as a 'sound maker,' or speaker of the lyric. He increases our doubt in the following lines when he poses two guesses framed, "Perhaps it was something" (Frost 4) and "Something perhaps" (Frost 5). This chiasmus inverts the same words as if to suggest that they are interchangeable. Yet if one of the speaker's statements can be changed for another, he becomes unreliable; in a way, he dies.

After problematising his own ability to speak, the mower complicates the other voice of the poem: his scythe's. When he wonders if the blade whispers "about the lack of sound" (Frost 5), he suggests that perhaps "that was why it whispered and did not speak" (Frost 6). On the surface, he is probably reasoning that to preserve the quiet, his scythe might whisper rather than talk loudly. But he does not add *loudly* he claims that the scythe "did not speak." In a poem so preoccupied with utterance, this significant detail transforms the scythe into another unspeaking speaker. By creating a voice that whispers without word, Frost questions the ability of language to express anything. When he paradoxically empties the voice of meaning within verse, he shows how self-doubt signifies death.

The mushrooms also use speech to build and destroy their self-

perception, making their very being a metaphor for destruction. Since their lyric's subject is their own growing, the mushrooms' speech act becomes a self-creation; as the poem grows, they physically grow on the loam. Yet while they speak themselves into being, they also make themselves nothing. For example, they claim to be "[e]arless and eyeless, / Perfectly voiceless" (Plath 15-16), which on the surface matches their identity as mushrooms, but on a deeper level silences their authority. If they are "earless," they cannot be sure if they grow "quietly" (Plath 1); if they are "voiceless," we must not be reading anything. Furthermore, their self-creation becomes self-denial, even self- termination. They "[d]iet on water, / On crumbs of shadow" (Plath 19-20) which changes what should be a description of their "diet," or nutritional needs, into a "diet," or a kind of starvation. By eating water and shadow, they build their identities on "[l]ittle or nothing" (Plath 22). Interestingly, Plath intensifies this self-undoing through enjambment. She ends stanza six at "We," which employs both a line and stanza break to detach the subject from its verb and object, "Diet on water." This structural detail adds force to the mushrooms' verbal unmaking; it parallels the way they become severed from their own being. Similarly, the mushrooms crown their list of affirming "We are" statements such as "We are shelves, we are / Tables" (Plath 25-26) with violent bathos: "We are edible" (Plath 27). The irony transforms their original "shel[f]" and "[t]able" shapes into the imagery of their own consumption; they look like their end on a pantry shelf or dinner table. With a self-perception that speaks and unspeaks their being, the mushrooms' identity is one of utter nothingness.

Lastly, both poems combine voice and silence in their allusions. "Mowing" refers in its very title to Andrew Marvell's Mower poems. Like Marvell's mower, Daemon, Frost's speaker represents death and time as the scythe-wielding (Frost 2) grim reaper even while he is a creative presence with "earnest love" (Frost 10), the pastoral lover. By relying on allusion, Frost both speaks and silences himself. He gains the complexity of Marvell's work through association, but also draws our attention away from his poem to another. This dual strengthening and weakening is a kind of destruction for the poem as well as for all poetry. As soon as a poem enters the canon, it becomes immortalised yet also historicised, strangely 'past.' In the final lines, Frost paradoxically scorns poetry. He concludes, "The fact is the sweetest dream that labour knows" (Frost 13) and as if emphasising it as simply a fact,

he spondaically repeats his opening idea: "My long scythe whispered" (Frost 14). If the whispering is just cutting, he undoes his earlier personification and empties poetic figure of significance. Ironically, he questions art in one of art's most traditional forms, the sonnet, but appropriately alters the rhyme scheme. By not rhyming his final couplet, the last lines are technically not a couplet at all. By 'unmatching' his conclusion, Frost formally underlines the ways in which he unhinges art from importance, combines speaking and not speaking, and, within poetry, dies.

Similarly, Plath unites voice with quiet in her poem's allusions. The final stanza is a reference to both the Old and New Testaments. "We shall by morning / Inherit the earth" (Plath 31-32) parallels, firstly, Psalm 37:11: "But the meek shall inherit the earth" and secondly, Christ's promise in Matthew 5:5: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Yet through irony, Plath transforms the allusions into a way of speaking and not speaking. She alters the "meek" (Plath 26) inheritors from Jews or Christians to mushrooms which evokes and undercuts the Judeo-Christian tradition. This dramatic under erasure, or self-undermining, at once imbues Plath's poem with the weight of religious prophecy while concurrently mocking the source of that authority, the Bible. Of course, Plath's "nudg[ing] and shov[ing]" (Plath 28) mushrooms are not meek at all which, aside from ironizing the Bible, calls into question her own voice: what she says is not what she means. By stripping authority from both religion and herself, Plath rhetorically mirrors the implications of her last stanza. Her final prophecy becomes an almost apocalyptic metaphor for human destruction. For mushrooms to "[i]nherit the earth" (Plath 32) necessitates the death of the earth's current 'masters,' us. Plath makes the threat personal in her last line by concluding, "Our foot's in the door" (Plath 33) which not only anthropomorphises the foot-sprouting mushrooms, but changes their collective voice to the singular, with one foot. The representation of human death becomes immediate and individual. This mirrors Plath's rhetoric of under erasure. On the one hand, prophecy suggests order since it is the fulfilment of a promise; on the other hand, the fulfilment of this prophecy would result in the annihilation of all order, in the extinction of humanity.

In "Mowing" by Robert Frost and "Mushrooms" by Sylvia Plath, the union of speaking and silence becomes a paradoxical metaphor for death, for the way in which death ultimately combines with life by 'completing'

it in the grave. By analysing each speaker's actions, self-consciousness and allusions, we can see how they question poetry itself. Significantly, Frost's speaker is engaged in reaping hay while, at the same time, speaking the poem. He is a speaker who kills the subject of his verse; his "whispering" (Frost 14) is slicing; his "mak[ing]" (Frost 14) is with dead grass. Similarly, it is impossible to separate Plath's growing speakers from what that growing means: as mushrooms, they are a sign of decomposition and rot. Both poets question the ability of poetry to immortalise its subject since their speakers personify destruction. Although both lyrics may have dark implications, they also have an undeniable element of play. Frost freely experiments with the literary canon by impersonating Marvell and rejecting the rhyme scheme of a traditional sonnet. Plath whimsically writes from the perspective of fungus. This way of tempering gloom with a smirk is perfectly suited to the many paired dichotomies throughout each poem and is an almost triumphant way of shrugging off death's power. After all, we will die, but we are living now. Both poets are full of questions, but do not answer themselves in silence: the unspeakable becomes enunciated; questions become poetry.

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A Journey of Perspective: Escaping *The Waste Land*

Brent Stait-Gardner

> No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the apprehension of his relation to the dead poets and artists.
>
> T.S. Eliot *Tradition and the Individual Talent*

In comparing Eliot's development as a writer with respect to his vision and values from *The Waste Land* to *Four Quartets* one first needs to look at *The Waste Land*'s purpose. It sits atop a marble pedestal of sorts as arguably the most significant poetic work of the twentieth century, which is always a dangerous position for any work to be in. To sit looking up in awe at a work, admiring it from below, is the honour society gives to that which it fears; removed from the everyday we don't have to read it as a critique of our own society. As a named great work, we are able to distance ourselves from it and feel safe since it exists on a separate plane from our everyday human lives; Eliot comments later in "Burnt Norton" that "Humankind cannot bear very much reality" (BN I). The purpose of the poem is multi-faceted. On the surface it seems to be a test whereby we as readers are students. The Waste Land, to be fully appreciated, requires a pre-existing knowledge on the part of the reader of the literature of the western literary tradition. Such knowledge permits both recognition of the extensive allusions and references Eliot makes in the poem, as well as, more importantly, an understanding of why such allusions were selected. To treat the poem merely as a crossword puzzle—guessing with the aid of published criticism what 22 Down might

be in relation to 36 Across—is basically to cheat the test, and is therefore defeating its purpose.

If we as readers are unaware of Eliot's allusions his advice would surely be to study, not the poem or its criticism but the foundation of the western literary tradition. The test of reading *The Waste Land* can then be retaken with better results. To recognize an allusion merely because one has read an answer key identifying a work one has vaguely heard of but never read is not to understand the allusion. Eliot's notes on the poem are a sarcastic commentary not just at the failure of the majority or readers to pass the test, but to their apparent complete lack of understanding as to the remedy. This is the aspect of Eliot that W.H. Auden refers to as "the young boy who likes to play slightly malicious jokes" and in that vein readers, in asking Eliot for notes of explanation to the poem's allusions, are in a way "being handed an explosive cigar" (Brooker 506).

Beneath the surface test of knowledge aspect of the poem, we have Eliot peeling away the layers of distraction in an attempt to remove the blinders that prevent one from seeing the sorry state of the society in which one lives. In this way *The Waste Land* is poetry on a level shared in the visual arts with Picasso's *Guernica*. Where Picasso depicts the horror and suffering of modern warfare, Eliot is concerned with the horror of ignorance, complacency and ennui. Both men fear the triumph of the brutality of the barbarians over hope. *The Waste Land* does not hold out much hope for mankind, as we "see crowds of people, walking round in a ring" (WL 56). As Colin Wilson states in his book *The Outsider,* the development of Eliot up to *Ash-Wednesday* in 1930 brought him to the same point as Kafka "culminating in 'The Hollow Men,' with its vision of utter negation, a despair as complete as William James's vastation: complete denial of freedom or even its possibility" (Wilson 119). Whereas with James we are told: "a fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake," (McDermott 3) but with Eliot we are given fearful images of nightmares rooted in sharp perception, such as "Apeneck Sweeney spreads his knees/letting his arms hang down to laugh," (SN 1-2) or "Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?" (WL 126)

The question of can we really die if we have never really lived is significant in Eliot's poetry and essays, and I think this finds root in his early study of American nineteenth century writers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. For example, a substantial influence in *The Waste Land*

and *The Hollow Men* is Thoreau's essay "A Plea for Captain John Brown," specifically:

> Only a half dozen or so have died since the world began. Do you think that you are going to die, sir? No! there's no hope for you. You haven't got your lesson yet. You've got to stay after school. We make a needless ado about capital punishment – taking lives, when there is no life to take. Memento Mori! We don't understand that sublime sentence which some worthy got sculpted on his gravestone once. We've interpreted it in a grovelling and snivelling sense; we've wholly forgotten how to die. (940)

If we exist in "death's twilight kingdom" (HM.IV) are we really alive? Does Milton's *Paradise Lost*, where we have Lucifer boast that if he cannot do good he would rather do evil than do nothing, correspond to the "Mistah Kurtz —he dead" preface to *The Hollow Men*? If so, this may explain history's keen obsession with evil-doers; they at least took action and escaped from the shadows of a twilight filled with the un-living but un-dead. Eliot took up this point in his essay on Baudelaire in which he said "So far as we do evil or good, we are human; and it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than do nothing: at least, we exist" (Eliot SE 344).

The Waste Land opens with ignorance making us "like dull roots to spring rain;" we are not the erect hyacinths but rather the limp and impotent lilacs. When roused to philosophy inhabitants of *The Waste Land* speak of such concepts as nationalistic racial identification with Germany (WL 12). When roused from inaction to action, we see the sterile sexual exploits of a clerk with a girl after dinner and alcohol are consumed; her lifeless presence spread-legged on the bed is all the participation from her he requires (WL 232-242). In the poem there is no beauty in sexual pairing because there is no real connection…the clerk is interested only in a quick orgasm and leaves the girl as soon as this has been accomplished, and she "smoothes her hair with automatic hand" reflecting the automated, meaninglessness of this mindless sexual encounter. A similar idea is in the bar scene where one woman is told "What you get married for if you don't want children?" (WL 165), which mocks the failure of non-sexual connection between husbands and wives as

the previous example mocks the dating scene. When searching for a teacher, the poem gives us Madam Sosostris, whose senses are dulled by a cold. A charlatan advising against accepting advice from less famous charlatans; an astrologer for the listless souls, spiritually adrift, who praise her as the "wisest woman in Europe" (WL 43-45) and have not understood, in their listlessness, that "men at sometime were masters of their fates. / The fault…is not in our stars, / but in ourselves" (Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* I. iii. 140-143).

It is at this point, having laid a foundation of the sense of despair and futility that exists in *The Waste Land*, that I will begin my comparison of Eliot's development between *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*, both in a general and specific sense. I will first discuss broader significant thematic differences, then focus on a close reading of "The Fire Sermon" and contrast it to "East Coker III." In doing so I will attempt to show that *Four Quartets* shows a sense of hope for the future largely absent in *The Waste Land*. It is this acceptance by Eliot that hope may exist that contrasts the two works.

I believe two Shakespearian sonnets can represent the thematic shift I speak of, specifically Sonnet 129 representing *The Waste Land*, and Sonnet 116 the *Four Quartets* (Greig 8). The recurring theme in *The Waste Land* is sexual dysfunction: the seeds in the ground do not sprout, the inhabitants are lilacs not hyacinths, prostitution is recurring, femme fatales lure men from their true path of action to one of listless ruin, and dating is without mental or spiritual connection and is merely a means for brief lustful copulation. People go through the motions without seeing the meaning. The sexual theme of is concisely presented in Sonnet 129: "The expense of spirit in a waste of shame / Is lust in action"… these opening two lines of Sonnet 129 could be a preface to *The Waste Land*. Think of "the young man carbuncular" (WL 231) arriving for his sexual fix, then departing quickly to escape he "gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit," and compare that to "Enjoy'd no sooner but despised straight" from Sonnet 129. *Four Quartets* is more spiritual and complex, but take for example "Love is most nearly itself/When here and now cease to matter" (FQ:EC:V) and compare to "Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,/But bears it out to the edge of doom" from Sonnet 116. The *Four Quartets* takes *The Waste Land* and develops it into a place where the possibility of salvation is real. *Four Quartets* has some of *The Waste Land*'s stark imagery, but it is now possible to yearn "for a further union, a deeper communion/through the dark cold and the empty desolation" (EC:V).

Perhaps there is hope of change.

Eliot himself is the outsider looking at the world apart from both *The Waste Land*'s "crowds walking round in a ring" (WL 56), and *Four Quartets*' "children laughing" (BN I). Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream* comes to mind; to see the world apart—as it is—can be terrifying and can lead to madness. As mentioned earlier, "human kind cannot bear very much reality" (BN I). In this I come back to Colin Wilson's *The Outsider*, in the fifth chapter entitled "The Pain Threshold," specifically:

> This is the Outsider's extremity. He does not prefer not to believe; he doesn't like Feeling that futility gets the last word in the universe; his human nature would like to find something it can answer to with complete assent…supposing a solution does exist somewhere…can I yet hope that it might one day force itself upon me…for Eliot it was not a long step to realizing that this experience of terror on the edge of nothingness was not an unfamiliar experience to many of the saints, Christian and otherwise. (120-121)

If Eliot has opened his eyes to the decay of a suffering world, as he has in *The Waste Land*, in *Four Quartets* he has come to accept that salvation may be possible through the toil of purgatory. Thus Frye sees "what lies below experience is dark night. There is no Hell in *Four Quartets*, which belongs entirely to the purgatorial vision" (Greig 157).

We return to *The Waste Land* being a passive state and *Four Quartets* being an active state, as the essential theme of *Four Quartets* is a quest for order that would contrast with the disorder of *The Waste Land*, and by extension with the disorder of the twentieth century. If we seek redemption, we must then be the outsider who can stand back from time and see its reality separate from the past, present and future. Eliot in *Four Quartets* calls all time unredeemable but "there is no redemption if we recognize only the flux" (Bergonzi 145); standing back from time is the means to its redemption, and thus we cannot redeem what we cannot stand back from. We see the everyday temporal experiences and we participate and live in them, for "the flux is not an illusion, but it is an illusion to regard it as the only reality…within the flux if we deny God, who is the timeless, the eternal, all experiences are the same

in their value, that is, they are worth nothing" (Weitz 53).

It would be suspect to claim *The Waste Land* is Eliot as an atheist spouting that God is dead, and *Four Quartets* is a later Eliot having found God. God is arguably present in all Eliot's major poems, and certainly in *The Waste Land*. What has changed is not the existence of God but the capacity for man to connect with God. Thus, *The Waste Land* is a hell of our own making in that we have chosen to disconnect from each other and from God and, going to Eliot's Baudelaire essay again we find "it is true to say that the glory of man is his capacity for salvation" (SE 344). In *Four Quartets* connections with people and with God are possible and salvation is possible. This is not to say that connections have been formed, but that there is hope they can be – it requires work. If we take *The Waste Land* as a hell, we then can divide mankind into three groups. First are those who willingly choose damnation and do evil by their own volition, such as Kurtz and Lucifer; then there are the vacant beings – the hollow men – who fill their days with, to quote Wordsworth, "getting and spending [as] they lay waste their powers" and whose lack of connection with each other intellectually, spiritually or sexually causes them to inhabit a twilight kingdom where neither death nor life is possible. They are in hell not by choice of free will, but through ignorance of their surroundings and lack of all conviction; there are in a semi-hell, for to exist in true Hell requires free will, which they do not possess. Lastly, we have those who see their surroundings for what they are and seek a deeper communion, and *Four Quartets* is their chance at this. In this *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* are in fact the same world; *Four Quartets* is an attempt to change the surroundings through spiritual rebirth and connections.

I maintain there are elements of Emerson throughout *Four Quartets,* as Eliot shifts the focus from the negative passivity of *The Waste Land* to the soul searching action of *Four Quartets*. To exist in later is not to deny the former, but to overcome it through choice, actively resisting the darkness and fog of complacency. We hear echoes of Emerson's thoughts, one example being from *The Last of the Anti-Slavery Lectures*:

> Gentlemen, it is not possible to extricate oneself from the questions in which our age is involved…liberty is the crusade of all brave and conscientious men—the epic poetry, the new religion, the chivalry of all gentlemen. Now, at last, we are

disenchanted, and shall have no more false hopes" (1216).

To exist in *The Waste Land* as a vacant man – a hollow man – is to live as a slave to worldly passions one does not understand, with no spiritual guidance or beliefs. The task is to struggle to move from ignorance to enlightenment. It is to begin a journey; in the words of Milton in *Paradise Lost*, to discover that "long is the way and hard, that out of hell leads up to light".

Looking at the first section of "The Fire Sermon," the first line tells us "the river's tent is broken" (173), that is, the protective canopy of leafy branches, a feature of summer, has been breached by winter, bringing to mind a lack of shelter. In 174-176 we have, according to Eliot's notes, a reference to Spenser's *Prothalamion*, from which Eliot borrowed the line "Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song." If we were content to see this note as a crossword solution we could check it off and move on, but we wouldn't understand the point of the line. Spenser's poem is a jubilant celebration of marriage and the fertility of the union, of flowers, nymphs, happiness and beauty. Eliot strips the image of its fertility and gives us an image in 179-181 of sterile copulation where the nymphs are good time girls to be used once and then turned away by the trust fund children of London's banking elite who leave no contact information. Eliot turns Spenser's image on its head, which would be lost on one who hadn't read Spenser—the difference between knowing and understanding.

Reading "By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept…"(WL 182) we see it has at least three allusions, the first being Psalm 137 and the weeping lament of the Hebrews, the second an alternate name for Lake Geneva where Elisabeth of Bavaria was assassinated by an anarchist, but there is also an allusion to a line from *Henry IV Part II*, V. iii, 48-49 where in a tavern scene Silence sings over drinks about "leman mine" in a way as to suggest she is a prostitute, the word leman in Shakespeare's time meaning a lover (Greig 26). The prostitute allusion fits in well with the surrounding lines and the infertility images of lust in action. We can see yet another image of prostitution in "The Fire Sermon" 197-198 with "the sound of horns and motors, which shall bring / Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring" being a reference to an Australian First World War troop song in which Mrs. Porter is a well known madam…a brothel owner…in Cairo. Sweeney, as I mentioned earlier, is Eliot's ape-necked parody of a man. Rest and relaxation for the troops is

visiting a brothel. Eliot transfers lines of the song into "The Fire Sermon" 199-201, though he substituted the word feet – "they was their feet in soda water" for the vulgar sexual term for vagina actually used in the Australian song: "they wash their c---- in soda water, / or so they ougther / to keep them clean" (Asher 44). The men do not leave from their degradation of the women unscathed though, for contemporary military advertisements warned servicemen on leave that the vast majority of prostitutes had communicable venereal diseases. The irony here being the sexual abuse comes full circle – the sexual humiliation inflicted is inflicted back in a circular pattern (Highwater 190-193). Eliot closes the first section of "The Fire Sermon" with line 202, which translates from French as "oh, those children's voices singing in the cupola." Any thought of Eliot perhaps putting an image of beauty into this section is quickly dashed though for in the past male choir children were routinely castrated to keep their voices pleasingly high and beautiful, (Greig 87) which robbed them of their future fertility.

In the first section of "East Coker" we are given what at first glance appears destructive: "Houses rise and fall, crumble…are removed, destroyed," but the scene is actually an earth image of soil fertility and regeneration. There is life to everything, and life implies eventual death, but with the prospect of new growth. A house, a factory, a highway are all images of life: a house can provide shelter for a married couple to procreate and raise a family, a factory can provide employment to provide for that family, a highway can allow one to travel from home to work, and for manufactured goods that are created to be moved from the factory. The mention of "an open field" is a fertility image, as it can be used as a farm to grow food—to create life. From the ruins of "old stone" walls we can build new buildings, and from the decaying wood of old structures we can build a warming fire. People as well as "houses live and die: there is a time for a building and a time for living and for generation." The earth is alive and organic, capable of growth. The image is one of potential, far from the sexual infertility of *The Waste Land*, but it solves only part of the problem: it offers the fertility of the countryside, the fertility of connection between man and woman, but does not address the spirituality of the mind. For that we must read "East Coker" beyond the first section, but the point is that Eliot believed for a culture to work towards spirituality and faith it needs a foundation. We have the rustic country life of fertility contrasted with the sterile "unreal city" of *The Waste*

Land. We see dancing around a bonfire, the pairing off of man and woman, the holding of hands signifying a physical connection beyond the merely sexual, and see Eliot's word choices of laughter, mirth, milking, harvest, and nourishing. From the fertile land comes a community. There is a drastic lack of nourishment in *The Waste Land*, yet here in "East Coker" we dispense with the earlier poem's constant references to sex as exploitation and prostitution and instead see the simple yet wholesome country life of the village.

The image of the village brings to mind a sense of community small enough that people know their neighbours. They can still be spiritually hollow men, though, just as the inhabitants of *The Waste Land* are. There is the potential for soul searching, religion, and a benevolent moral code in the community, but it must be worked towards. There is more communication here than in *The Waste Land*, but, as Eliot points out later on in "East Coker," "we must be still and still moving / Into another intensity / for a further union, a deeper communion" (FQ:EC:IV). In this "the problems of art merge into the problems of life – life is a continual exploration of the means of communication…'communion' with God. In both the desire is to achieve greater intensity" (Greig 24). We have the development of potential for spirituality and communion with God—in the ongoing journey we may fail, or we may not. We can only try.

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The Symbolism of Sleep in Samuel Daniel's "Sonnet 49" and Sir Philip Sidney's "Sonnet 39"

Mathura Sabanayagam

In literature, sleep carries highly symbolic connotations. Whether simply a means of resting the body or a representation of death, it can reveal much about a character's psychological state. Renaissance poets often draw upon its symbolism as a means of exploring their speakers' struggles, flaws, dreams, and ambitions—two such examples include Samuel Daniel's "To Delia: Sonnet 49" and Sir Philip Sidney's "Astrophil and Stella: Sonnet 39." In both poems, sleep becomes a powerful source of emotional refuge for the speakers. In resting their minds and bodies, they find relief from the sheer psychological anguish of their daily lives—the emotional pain resulting from a lover withdrawing her affections. For Daniel, to sleep is to "[forget]" his troubles (4). Sleep clearly plays a passive role in "relieving" him of his "languish" (3); its power lasts only until the "morrow" when he must once again face more despair (10). Sidney takes a more optimistic approach towards his problem, initially praising sleep for its capacity to bring "peace" to the suffering, but eventually realizing that it cannot forever protect him from his sorrow (1). The speakers' contrasting attitudes towards the healing power of sleep illustrate a central idea of both poems; while sleep can become a place of spiritual sanctuary, it ultimately provides no permanent resolution to their struggles. The only true means of escape, then, is death.

The speakers' opposing perspectives become clear in the opening lines of both poems where they directly address the personified Sleep. Daniel uses apostrophe to describe Sleep as a "care-charmer," "sonne of the sable Night," and "brother to Death" (1-2). The metaphor "care-charmer"

suggests sleep's ability to lure Daniel into a state of rest and relaxation while the alliteration in the words "sable," "sonne," and "sleepe" creates euphony to reflect the peacefulness associated with rest. However, the references to kinsmanship – "brother" and "sonne" – sharply counteract this seemingly blissful portrayal. In showing how intimately the concept of "sleep" is linked to "death" and "night," Daniel introduces an ironic dimension to his predicament; it is not the comfort of sleep he seeks, but rather the possibility of death.

In this sense, the alliterative 's' takes on a dual effect. Not only does it suggest the sense of mental peace achieved through rest, but it also emphasizes the underlying link between "sleepe" and the "sable Night"—that is, between sleep and death. This idea is further developed through the antithetical phrase, "brother to Death, in silent darkness borne" (Daniel 2). Despite being so closely linked to "Death" and "darkness," sleep becomes ironically associated with birth, and in turn, with ideas of new life and vitality. It is only through death that Daniel may truly free himself. He sees death not simply as an end to his life, but also as a means of salvation. The contrasting rhyming pair of "Night" and "light" heightens the underlying irony of his situation, showing how the "night" —also symbolic of death—becomes his only source of enlightenment amidst his emotional hardships (1-3). Daniel thus establishes the dual nature of sleep's existence at the outset, showing how it serves both to console and to carry associations with death.

Sidney, in contrast, portrays sleep as a universal healing force for humankind. The poem opens with an apostrophe as he welcomes the prospect of sleeping: "Come sleep, oh sleep, the certain knot of peace" (1). The repetition of the word "sleep," coupled with the assonance in "sleep" and "peace" conveys his fierce sense of fondness towards sleep and the relief it brings to his exhausted mind. He continues to celebrate its healing power as the poem progresses, calling it "the baiting place of wit, the balm of woe/The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release" (2-3). The congeries and asyndeton convey the magnitude of sleep's importance as a revitalizing force. Furthermore, the parallelisms, combined with the alliteration in words such as "baiting" and "balm," call attention to its role in unifying all humans under one common aspect: our ability to remedy our sorrows through sleep. Though we may be separated by social barriers such as wealth and status, we can all turn to the prospect of resting to "release" ourselves from our

"[woes]."

It is also significant that Sidney interweaves abstract concepts such as "wit" and "woe" with concrete objects like "place" and "balm" —thus, he suggests sleep's definitive, concrete role in maintaining our spiritual well-being. A clear distinction arises in the speakers' respective stances towards their situation: while sleep is associated with the coming of death for Daniel, Sidney views it solely as a source of comfort. His acknowledgement of sleep's universal significance reflects how firmly he places his faith in its healing abilities. Daniel's poem, conversely, is deeply rooted in personal experience, as Daniel manipulates sleep's symbolism to convey his own desire for death.

The conflicting nature of the speakers' views toward sleep is further reinforced through the poets' manipulation of the sonnet form. Daniel's sonnet takes the form of a single, continuous lament over his failed relationship and the structure, in turn, reflects his inability to move beyond his grievances. The repetition of words such as "never" (11, 14), "still," (13) and "cease" (9), combines with the bleak diction of "languish" (3), "waile" (7), and "disdayne" (14) to illustrate Daniel's reluctance to continue forth with his life. It is through the interplay of light-darkness motifs, however, that the extent of his self-entrapment fully emerges. He calls upon sleep to "relieve [his] languish and restore the light" (3); ironically, though, his "light" —that is, his happiness—lies in the prospect of death. The "daye," symbolic of life itself, serves only as a time to "mourne the shipwreck of [his] ill-adventured youth"—the "shipwreck" being a metaphor for the emotional ruins of his existence (5-6).

Daniel introduces the volta after the octave, as is typical of a Petrarchan sonnet. The sestet traditionally offers a solution to the problem posed in the octave. However, here, we see continued references to death, most notably when Daniel hopes to "never wake" (14). In addition, his resistance to the progression of time becomes more strongly pronounced then ever before. He asks sleep to "never let rising Sunne approve you lyers" (11). Traditionally, the sun's cycle carries connotations of life, rebirth, and renewal, but here, Daniel diminishes its symbolic significance. For him, any hope of salvation lies in death; thus, the coming of a new day bears no importance. A haunting sense of paralysis lingers throughout the poem: condemned to live out the rest of his life in suffering, Daniel can now do nothing but await death. The poem's structure reflects the static nature of his

existence.

Sidney structures his poem to reflect an orderly progression of thought. He first establishes a universal expectation for sleep, exalting it as a powerful restorative force. Then, using a series of battle metaphors, he addresses his own problem, asking the personified Sleep to "shield" him from "those fierce darts" which "Despair" "throws" at him (5-6). The war metaphors not only show the conflicted nature of his mind, but also reveal his fierce determination to overcome his emotional anguish. The gradual shifting of thoughts, from the universal to the personal, creates a distinct sense of forward progression in the poem. Recognizing sleep's potential to bring solace to humanity, Sidney fiercely appeals for his own salvation. The clear sense of reasoning he exhibits here, combined with the battle metaphors, suggests his strong willingness to "shield" himself from further pain. Sidney expresses genuine hopes of conquering his sadness, while Daniel shows a passive acceptance of his sorrow. This fundamental difference reveals itself through the contrasting sets of imagery in the sonnets. Sidney draws upon war metaphors to show his changing psychological state whereas Daniel uses images of stasis to impede the flow of time.

Despite their contrasting approaches towards sleep, both speakers turn to death as a final resort. In the closing couplet, Daniel asks the personified Sleep to "still let [him] sleepe, || imbracing clowdes in vaine / and never wake, || to feel the daye's disdayne" (13-14). Initially, he compared sleep metaphorically to death; sleep now becomes synonymous with death. The caesuras appear at the same position in each line (after the fourth syllable), adding a striking symmetry to the couplet. Although the poem ends on an unsettling note, the caesuras give the impression that a sense of order has been achieved—once again suggesting death's role in ending Daniel's misery.

Sidney continues to address the personified Sleep, offering it "smooth pillows, sweetest bed / A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light" (9-10). In personifying the bedroom as "deaf" and "blind," Sidney evokes the image of a tomb—a place where neither "noise" nor "light" can ever penetrate. The "rosy garland" is multifaceted in its symbolism (11). On one level, it strengthens the association to death, recalling funeral garlands. However, it may also refer to wedding garlands, which symbolize peace and happiness. The alliteration and parallelisms in the phrase "smooth pillows, sweetest bed"

further establish a peaceful atmosphere, evoking the image of a wedding bed. Here, Sidney combines the initial associations to death with symbols of marital union to add a subtle hint of optimism to the poem. Despite his serious contemplation of death, he still hopes to reunite with his lover, if only in an afterlife. The speakers' contrasting attitudes ultimately influence their final decisions concerning death: Daniel, who passively laments his lost love, sees death as a means of fleeing his burdens. Sidney actively confronts his problems; for him, the prospect of death holds significant spiritual meaning.

While Daniel and Sidney initially portray sleep through contrasting viewpoints, they finally realize that sleeping, in itself, cannot bring true happiness. To associate sleep solely with the comforts of physical rest, however, is to diminish its ultimate significance. Through its links to grander concepts such as marriage and death, it becomes much more than a means of relieving one's sorrows. In drawing upon the richness of its metaphorical associations, the poets introduce multiple dimensions of meaning to their suffering—the reader not only recognizes sleep's role as a life-giving force, but also becomes subtly aware of the underlying irony in the speakers' words. It is precisely through this duality of symbolism that sleep becomes a dynamic shaping force in both poems—a single symbol through which the poets so powerfully depict the landscape of human experience.

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Ekphrasis as a Critical Lens: Wilde's Treatment of Paterian Aesthetics

Riley Quinn

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde literalizes the contention that, "it is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors" (Wilde xxiv). Dorian's portrait is the mirror of Dorian's true self: twisted, corrupt, and hideous. At approximately the time that Wilde wrote *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* his contemporary Walter Pater was expounding a unique aesthetic philosophy. Dorian's sorry state can, in part, be attributed to his adherence to such a philosophy, which states that first, art can deliver only experience and impression to the viewer, and second, that only experience and impression are worth pursuing, and finally, that experience and impression are to be pursued for their own sake (Pater). Wilde expresses his objection to Pater's views through his ekphrastic depiction of the painting of Dorian.

The standard definition of ekphrasis comes from the work of James Heffernan: "ekphrasis is the verbal representation of visual representation." That is to say, it is the expression or description of a visual work through a written medium. Heffernan goes on to elaborate upon the supplementary concept of notional ekphrasis. In notional ekphrasis, the artwork being represented, like in the portrait in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is entirely imaginary and even fantastic.

The Picture of Dorian Gray employs what may be termed "reversed ekphrasis" by textually examining the visual representation of Dorian's tumultuous soul. The element of reversal comes from the changes described in the representation of the image: whereas Dorian is presented as forever youthful and therefore static in time, the painting is mobile through time,

transforming with age and experience. Thus, the painting becomes the key philosophical tool for testing the limits of Pater's aestheticism by removing temporal considerations from the aesthetic life.

In this essay, I will argue that Wilde undermines the dominant aesthetic ideology of his time, as represented by Walter Pater. Dorian Gray is both a scientist and an artist, and as such his temperament matches that of Walter Pater's ideal critic. Furthermore, the philosophy by which Dorian lives echoes the philosophy Pater espouses in *The Renaissance* as described above. Wilde uses notional ekphrasis to offer a critique of Pater's aesthetic philosophy. Wilde's critique is namely that Paterian aesthetics enable one to enjoy evil and ultimatelydestroys the bodies and minds of those who practice it. These criticisms are reinforced by the repeated use of the word "burden" and the use of literary chiaroscuro.

In the preface to *The Renaissance*, Pater espouses a conception of the aesthetic person very similar to Wilde's characterization of Dorian Gray. The aesthetic critic "regards…all works of art, the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers…producing pleasurable sensation…His end is reached when he has disengaged [that which makes the thing beautiful], and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element" (Pater xi). It is significant that Pater compares the critic to a chemist. As a reductive scientist, the critic understands beauty in a strictly practical sense: as that which produces pleasurable sensations. Pater's other main requirement of a critic is of "a certain kind of temperament…being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects" (Pater xii). Dorian Gray can be understood as analogous to Pater's aesthetic critic because he is both scientific and romantic: he is deeply moved by beautiful things, but understands them as a chemist. He satisfies "his intellectual curiosity," then he abandons each school of artwork or mode of thinking to move on to his next aesthetic project (Wilde 149).

Dorian believes himself equivalent to the Paterian type explicated above. He characterizes himself thus: "The hero…in whom the romantic and the scientific temperaments were so strangely blended, became to him a kind of prefiguring type of himself" (Wilde 143). Dorian is an artist. He is profoundly interested in the art of life, that is, life as a work of art. He strives to make his own life a beautiful work of art.

> It was the creation of such [imaginary] worlds as these that seemed to Dorian Gray to be the true object…of life; and in his search for sensations that would be at once new and delightful, and possess that element of strangeness that is so essential to

> romance, he would often adopt certain modes of thought that he knew to be really alien to his nature, abandon himself to their subtle influences, and then, having, as it were, caught their colour and satisfied his intellectual curiosity, leave them with… curious indifference. (Wilde 149)

The imaginary world Dorian wishes to create and recreate in each moment is characterized by such words and phrases as "refashioned…fresh…changed... the past would have little or no place" (Wilde 148). These sensations do not necessarily contain pleasantness and niceness so much as newness and strangeness. The life that is to be a work of art must consistently generate new sensations—Dorian takes satisfaction from both "his delicately scented chamber," and "the sordid room of the little ill-famed tavern near the Docks" (Wilde 145). Dorian creates new sensations for himself as his art, allowing him to participate deeply in all artistic pursuits while never becoming devoted to one in particular.

Dorian's scientific leanings are instrumental in the pursuit of his art. Detachment and indifference to particular arts or modes of thinking form this scientific facet of himself. Wilde gives the example of the Catholic Church—Dorian immerses himself in the colours, tastes, and ornamentation of the Catholic Church, loving the contrast of all that beauty with the guilt of confession (Wilde 149). Once the experiences of Catholicism become dull for him, Dorian abandons the church and all of its pleasures to seek out new ones in the "Darwinismus movement," an entirely materialist interpretation of the mind. He moves from a spiritual mode of thought to a wholly physical mode of thought in order to study the new pleasures that will be gleaned from divergent ways of thinking. An aesthete without a scientific bent would devote himself to Catholicism. Dorian, on the other hand, merely experiences Catholicism and, once its pleasures are catalogued, moves on to a new mode of thought with the same goal in mind: to experience it, catalogue it, and abandon it. Without this scientific indifference, Dorian's attempt at creating a life that is a work of art would fail, for it would no longer "possess the element of strangeness…essential to romance" (Wilde 149). His scientific character allows him to experience without the consequence of any attachment or preference.

The all-important temperament, that which combines the scientific and romantic, must arise from a particular belief about the nature of aesthetics. It is likely that Wilde and Pater argue over the same points in their respective works. Pater, in his conclusion, describes the underlying philosophy

the aesthetic critic must hold: "Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us…How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses?" (Pater 249). Wilde uses many of the same words to describe the "new hedonism" that Lord Henry prophesied: "Its aim…was to be experience itself, and not the fruits of experience, sweet or bitter as they might be…It was to teach man to concentrate himself upon the moments of a life that is but a moment" (Wilde 147). The scientific-romantic temperament follows from this belief about life, experiencing each "pulse" at the highest possible intensity of impression is good in and of itself. The romantic experiences impressions at high intensity while the scientist intellectualizes the process, keeping the art, mode of thought, or person at a distance.

Wilde uses notional ekphrasis, "the [verbal] representation of an imaginary work of art," to criticize the characters he creates and, by extension, the philosophy upon which they are based (Heffernan 14). This criticism relies on a reversal of the traditional mode of ekphrasis, which tends to explore the tension between static image and forward-moving observer (Heffernan 5). Wilde inverts the traditional mode by giving motion in time to the image and denying motion in time to Dorian: the painting is in motion, suffering from the fruits of Dorian's experience, whereas Dorian is frozen in time, knowing only experience itself:

> [Dorian would] stand, with a mirror, in front of the portrait… looking now at the evil and ageing face on the canvas, and now at the fair young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass. The very sharpness of the contrast used to quicken his sense of pleasure. He grew more and more enamoured of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul. He would examine with minute care, and sometimes with a monstrous and terrible delight, the hideous lines that seared the wrinkling forehead, or crawled around the heavy sensual mouth, wondering sometimes which were more horrible, the signs of sin or the signs of age. (Wilde 144-145)

The novel verbally represents the portrait, which is the visual representation of what Pater calls the "fruit of experience." In this case, the fruits of experience are the practical consequences of Dorian's unbridled hedonism; consequences that Pater dismisses as irrelevant, writing that "not the fruit of experience but experience itself, is the end" (Pater 249). The reversal of

the traditional mode of ekphrasis allows Wilde to show that the fruits of experience are unambiguously relevant, and that Pater's philosophy is wrong.

Wilde further criticizes Pater by asserting that the aesthetic critic can experience evil but derive only pleasure or interest from it. Dorian is "enamoured" with beauty and "interested" in corruption. His romantic facet is enamoured with his beauty, for it causes pleasant sensation; his scientific facet is interested in his corruption, for it causes new sensation. The words that assign negative ethical value initially appear out of place in the vocabulary of an aesthetic critic – evil and corruption. Pater's aesthetic philosophy assigns no ethical significance to art; it says rather that we must only give mind to the sensations it causes. Dorian uses ethical language to describe his face and soul, but since he is an aesthetic critic, he uses ethical language in a purely descriptive, rather than prescriptive, mode. Though his own evil and corruption interest him, they motivate no reparative actions. This use of ethical language shows that a philosophy that assigns no moral significance to art or aesthetics allows one to appreciate that which is morally reprehensible.

Wilde shows that Pater's philosophy is impossible to follow thoroughly, for it will destroy the physical body and dull the senses that it works so hard to gratify. In her article titled "Hard Science, Soft Psychology, and Amorphous Art," Heather Seagroatt notes the only reason Dorian's temperament and behavior do not destroy him sooner is the portrait: "The portrait literalizes Wilde's contention that 'nature imitates art,' and simultaneously illustrates the unnaturalness of Dorian's lack of physical metamorphosis" (753). Living the life of the aesthetic critic to the extent Dorian does requires a magical portrait, and thus is practically impossible. Consider the character in Dorian's favourite French novel: "the young Parisian…was occasioned by the sudden decay of a beauty that had once… been so remarkable" (Wilde 143). Consider Dorian's friend Adrian Singleton: Adrian participated in Dorian's lifestyle without a painting to transfer his sins onto. As a result he is destroyed, reduced to life in an opium den (Wilde 213). The French book's main character succumbs to physical decay: a human who tries to live without consideration of the fruits of experience will destroy himself in the pursuit of physical gratification. Wilde demonstrates that without the portrait to steal the fruits of experience, the body is destroyed and driven into depression. In this way, the reverse ekphrasis of the portrait becomes a philosophical device: it removes the consideration of the temporal effects of the life of this aesthetic critic. Removing the physical effects of the fruits of experience allows Wilde to test the spiritual limits of Pater's

philosophy. He shows that living such a life is abhorrent and impossible, barring the unlikely possibility that the individual possess a device to the effect of Dorian's portrait.

Wilde shows that following Pater's philosophy is destructive for the conscience and soul. Jean-Paul Riqueleme, in his noted article: "Oscar Wilde's Aesthetic Gothic," examines Dorian's decision to destroy his conscience, and the mortal consequences that follow. He writes "[Wilde] echoes Pater not in order to agree with [his views]…but to present them darkly, in shades of grey, as at base contradictory in destructive and self-destructive ways" (9). Dorian's life has been destructive; his pursuit of pleasure has given way to self-destructive madness:

> Why had he kept it so long? Once it had given him pleasure to watch it changing and growing old. Of late he had felt no such pleasure. It had kept him awake at night. When he had been away, he had been filled with terror lest other eyes should look upon it. It had brought melancholy across his passions. Its mere memory had marred many moments of joy. It had been like conscience to him. Yes, it had been conscience. He would destroy it. (Wilde 253)

The fruits of Dorian's experience, the terror and guilt rendered in paint, dampen Dorian's ability to enjoy experience for its own sake. Consider the state of Dorian's conscience by chapter eleven: "evil and ageing…[corrupt]" (144), and by the final chapter: "more loathsome…than before…[there was] blood on the hand" (252). Wilde shows a strong positive correlation between Dorian's increasing hedonistic contempt for morality and the destruction of his soul. In a pure Paterian context, this correlation would be irrelevant—Pater would say the conscience ought to be neglected because it "requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience" (Pater 251). Dorian, following Pater's philosophy, chooses to go beyond contempt for his conscience. He actively destroys it when its corruption dampens moments of joy for him. To destroy one's conscience is necessary to try and live by Pater's philosophy. In Dorian's case, however, the destruction of his conscience is suicide (253).

To reinforce his criticism of the effects of Pater's philosophy on the conscience, Wilde strategically uses the word "burden" "at important moments…associated with the painting" (Riqueleme 11). Such moments include Dorian's wish that "the face on the canvas bear the burden of his passions and his sins" (Wilde 103), or Dorian's repentance of that wish: "in

what a monstrous moment of pride and passion he had prayed that the portrait should bear the burden of his days…all his failure had been due to that. Better for him that each sin of his life had brought its sure swift penalty along with it" (250). Riquelme notes that Dorian even considers his personality a burden (Riquelme 12). What goes unstated, however, is the burden placed on Dorian from excessive guilt over what he has become by leading an amoral, hedonistic life. By confounding Dorian's attempts at happiness through a life of Paterian aestheticism, Wilde refutes the very same philosophy. The conception of guilt as burden stands in stark contrast to Pater's final claim about the nature of art: "art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake" (252). The portrait, Dorian's soul, ironically satisfies Pater's claim: it takes on the signs of sin and age, growing heavy. Art imposes a burden rather than granting a quality of life.

Wilde also uses chiaroscuro to reinforce his criticism of the ramifications of Pater's philosophy. Chiaroscuro is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as the "treatment or disposition of the light and shade, or brighter and darker masses, in a picture." He uses this device to emphasize the parts of the painting that are most grotesque: "By combining clarity and obscurity, often in a shallowly rendered space, chiaroscuro provides an alternative and a challenge to visual representations that rely on general illumination" (Riquelme 2). It is this ekphrastic device that characterizes the scene in which Basil sees what his creation has become. The action of the scene opens when Dorian "[lights] a half-burned candle."

> An exclamation of horror broke from the painter's lips as he saw in the dim light the hideous face on the canvas grinning at him. There was something in its expression that filled him with disgust and loathing. Good heavens! It was Dorian Gray's own face that he was looking at…There was still some gold in the thinning hair and some scarlet in the sensual mouth. The sodden eyes had kept something of the loveliness of their blue, the noble curves had not yet completely passed away from chiseled nostrils…He seized the lighted candle, and held it to the picture. In the left hand corner was his own name… (Wilde 176).

Wilde shows clearly how sin destroys beauty, and how a corrupt soul can ruin even the most beautiful face. Light and dark in the form of a flickering candle and a dim room are used in this scene to show the terror Hallward

feels at seeing his painting destroyed by corruption. He strains to make out the details of the thinning hair and the sensual mouth. The shock of realization that it is his own work and that it is his name is "traced in long letters of vermillion," emphasizes his own horror at seeing evil in art. This look at a corrupt painting goes far to contradict Pater's conception of art as that which "comes to you…to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass" (252). Through chiaroscuro, Wilde shows us some of the most beautiful parts of Dorian's portrait, and how Hallward is horrified by its corruption. Pater ends up advocating, for the sake of the beautiful, that which destroys beauty.

The Paterian philosophy is intuitionally unappealing because it trivializes art. Art has a high degree of psychological power, enough that it can affect the lives of those who view it. Indeed, art has *too much* power for us to consider it morally neutral. In his preface, Wilde states, "all art is quite useless" (Wilde xxiv), but an ironic reading to the introduction may be necessary in light of the rest of the book. Wilde demonstrates that the blending of science with art that follows from living in accordance with Paterian philosophy is, apart from psychologically and morally reprehensible, ultimately destructive.

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Crossing Moral Ground with Wallace Stegner and Barry Lopez

Alyssa Chrastina

Wallace Stegner once said, "If a writer has only himself to say... his work will be kind of thin" (qtd. in Daniel 41). A story about the environment cannot be about the writer; it must be intimately and engagingly rendered portrait of the land, its animals, and its people. Barry Lopez explains that a writer must develop and express a sense of intimacy with the land if he is to generate a similar sense within his readers. This intimacy is "a feeling that derives from the listener's trust and a storyteller's certain knowledge of his subject and regard for his audience. This intimacy deepens if the storyteller tempers his authority with humility, or when terms of idiomatic expression, or at least the physical setting for the story are shared" (*COG* 63-4). Although Stegner may not be humble, he has a lot to say about the world outside himself. Stegner, in *Wolf Willow,* and Lopez, in *Arctic Dreams,* each develop a sense of closeness with the land that they convey through precise words and striking images in the hope of jolting their reader out of a habitual ignorance regarding the surrounding world. As much as the actions portrayed by environmental history can be immoral, writing is in itself a moral act.

With the intimate knowledge of a landscape that a writer should develop, certain words have the ability to evoke a picture by their sound, as well as their denotation. The visual, emotive, and referential qualities of words intersect meaningfully when Stegner tells the story of the two men he calls the founding fathers of his town. "[F]ounder, creator, landlord, and patron" (241) are the words attached to Martin and Fisher, the men who build up the town of Whitemud. Those are the words that are attached to the

photograph of Fisher "on horseback and in a Chihuahua hat, with Schulz's great staghound beside him, under the flume that crossed the eastern reach of Whitemud," and to the metaphorical image of "Pop Martin" as the wind that blows through the town, touching everyone and everything. They are words that are particularly national rather than precisely regional. Stegner's use of the vernacular "Eheu" sounds the change back to a more regional diction, and signals the fall of the powerful men who ended up "material for a sermon on the vanity of human wishes" (242). "Eheu" is the word attached to the demythicized image of "Homer Martin... jerking soda in a Hollywood drugstore; his mother... running a beauty parlour that catered to the stars; his father... long dead and longer bankrupt" (242). The falling register of words mimics the decline of that founding family, and it tells a parable about the dangers of wealth and greed alongside the personal narrative. The difference in the register of the words also acts as a division between the regional and the national, because words can also represent divisions between nations. Stegner reflects upon the impact of that divide on his childhood: "That was the way the 49th parallel, though outwardly ignored, divided us. It exerted uncomprehended pressures upon affiliation and belief, custom and costume. It offered us subtle choices in language (we stooked our wheat; across the line we shocked it)" (84). The use of vernacular words such as "eheu," "stooked," and "shocked," stemming from Stegner's personal affiliation with the town, makes Whitemud seem more authentic as a place. Especially in contrast to words that are, by nature, generic, the idiom of the Prairie town gives the reader a point of entrance not only into the narrative, but also into the experience of Whitemud.

Words are not limited to making a story seem more alive by giving it a sense of authenticity; sometimes words themselves, or the lack thereof, have the power to tell a story. Part of fostering intimacy with a landscape is in gaining a familiarity with the local language, especially with those as evocative as the Eskimo languages. Although there is an Eskimo word for the Europeans and Americans that come to the Arctic, which means "the people who change nature" (39), Lopez cannot think of a proper word to call the native inhabitants of the Arctic. He uses "Eskimo" with reservation, noting that many of the people whom he blankets under the term do not like it. He uses it, however, to conveniently connect peoples from the entirety of the Arctic region including the Inuit, the Yup'ik, the Inupiar, and the Inuvialuit or, in other words, "the native arctic people European explorers have met since the sixteenth century" (418). These diverse, ancient, and noble peoples do not want to be referentially reduced to "eaters of raw

flesh." The Eskimo have developed, partly as a mechanism for survival in the harsh Arctic climate, a sophisticated vocabulary for things and ideas that do no exist in the English language. Lopez has taken the time to learn many of those words and share them with the readers of *Arctic Dreams*. Some of these words create playfully imaginative images, such as *oomingmaq*, the word for musk ox. Literally translated, it means "the animal with skin like a bear" (57). The word for polar bear, *pisugtooq*, means "the great wanderer" (92) and does not just refer to the great distances the animal covers, but also to the personality of the bear himself: he covers the ground "successfully and intelligently" (93). Some words describe rare and seemingly impossible occurrences; events that seem impossible until witnessed. One such word is *ivu*, and it is the word the Eskimo use when "[s]uddenly in the middle of winter and without warning a huge piece of sea ice surges hundreds of feet inland, like something alive" (176). Yet if vernacular words can make a story seem alive, they can also tell a story about death, loss, and failure. While Lopez uses "Eskimo" out of convenience, he uses the word *hihakusha* out of compassion. It is the Japanese word for "explosion-affected people... those who continue to suffer the effects of Hiroshima and Nagasaki." He adds that the "Eskimos are trapped in a long slow detonation. What they know about a good way to live is disintegrating" (410). Their colourful and expressive language is slowly deteriorating as well as their way of life, and Lopez himself is almost at a loss of words to describe impact of this process on himself and the Eskimo peoples. In turning to a third language, the absence of an appropriate word in his own native tongue to articulate this loss tells a story of its own.

Words do not have to be uniquely vernacular to tell a story about a particular place, nor do they have to be grandiose or ostentatious; sometimes the smallest words carry the heaviest burdens. For example, Stegner says, "If is a big word in the history of a town like Whitemud. If it had happened to have its beginnings in a wet cycle rather than at the beginning of a cycle of drouth. If the war had not persuaded people, for mixed patriotism and profit, to plow up a lot of the prairie that was either too dry or too far from the railroad..." (257) if, if, if. This continual repetition of "if" perhaps tells more about the people of Whitemud than Stegner could have if he had attempted to elaborate. When a person is continuously thinking "what if," they are denying what is, and attempting to avoid responsibility for what has been. The sort of wilful ignorance that the repetition of "if" in the epilogue represents echoes an earlier refrain: the "I wish somebody had told me" or the "I wish I had known" of chapter nine. Discovering the history of his

town, of the land he grew up on, and of the people who lived on it before him is not only a necessary act for Stegner, it is a moral act as well. It is the resolute decision to consciously counter ignorance and indifference with intimacy and knowledge.

Writing environmental history – engaging in the act of translating into text not only a physical landscape, but also the plants, animals, and people that are inextricably connected with that landscape – is a notoriously slippery territory. Lopez writes about the caution that a historian or reader should proceed with: "the caution with which one should approach any journal, of the tendency to make a single appealing narrative stand for the entire experience or, worse, to stand in place of the experience" (*AD* 374). This conviction is perhaps his motivation to include stories from a number of people from a number of cultures throughout a number of decades. The narratives he includes range from journals of nineteenth century arctic exploration, to Eskimo parables, his own travels, and his own transcriptions of conversations with biologists, oil workers, and more. However, even this polyphony of voices sounding out from throughout time and place cannot capture everything. He writes, too, that "[t]he perceptions of any people wash over the land like a flood, leaving ideas hung up in the brush, like pieces of damp paper to be collected and deciphered. No one can tell the whole story" (*AD* 273).

In "Genesis," the short story that links the two halves of *Wolf Willow*, Rusty comes to a keen awareness of the difficulty of creating even a sketch, let alone the full story. When he looks over the journal he has kept since his departure from England he mocks the journal entries as nothing but a "windy and prize-essay series of notations" that are nothing but "colorful items to be incorporated into letters home" (170). These first impressions are not only trivial, but fundamentally fallacious: "Rusty had loaded that part of the journal with data on the country, much of it, as he saw now, in error... it seemed false and shrilly enthusiastic and very, very young when he read it over in the tent, while a frozen guy rope outside, within three feet of his ear, hummed like a great struck cable" (171). Rusty's journal contains reductive portraits of the land he encounters as well as the men he travels with. For example, there is "apelike Panguinque with his good nature and his total disregard for cleanliness" and "little birdy Slippers with his sore feet" (170). These portraits (caricatures, even) isolate aspects of the person in question and, while they are "colorful," they are also not only false but thin: they don't say much beyond that isolated image. Words alone cannot tell the story, but must be part of some larger design if they are to come any sort of significant

meaning. As Lopez writes,

> We *delineate* the life history of the ground squirrel. We *list* the butterflies: the sulphurs, the arctics, a copper, a blue, the lesser fritillaries. At a snap. We *enumerate* the plants. We *name* everything. Then we fold the charts and catalogues, as if, except for a stray fact or two, we were done with a competent description. But the land is not a painting; the image cannot be completed this way. (*AD* 172, italics mine)

Lists and catalogues of information such as Lopez includes in the notes at the back of *Arctic Dreams* make for a kind of empirical knowledge that is necessary in order to create the image, but they do not tell a meaningful story by themselves.

Lopez and Stegner use a variety of techniques to tell the history of an environment; one of the most important methods they both employ is imagery. Certain images in the text that stand out as if they were snapshots. These snapshots use words to capture images, ideas, and emotions that say much beyond the black and white text that produces and contains them. They are portraits of flesh and blood – sometimes literally of blood and always vivid enough for the reader to feel in the flesh. On the surface, Stegner and Lopez might be writing environmental history, but at the heart of their prose is the desire to make their readers aware of, and care about the land as well as its inhabitants. Images have the unique power to captivate the heart as well as the eye, and are perhaps why Lawrence Buell suggests that "[t]he power of images seems key to making individuals and groups feel place connectedness" (73). He describes place as being a "specific resource of environmental imagination... The more a site feels like a place, the more fervently it is so cherished, the greater the potential concern at its violation or even the possibility of its violation" (56). Portraits of place are invaluable resources for Stegner and Lopez since they are writing about places that, for most of their readers, are remote, desolate, and unknown – but also profoundly beautiful. Images of Prairie and Arctic beauty work to captivate and intrigue the reader, while images of violence elicit equal measures of disgust and concern. Often, beauty and violence go hand in hand.

Unearthing the history of a place is a way of shaping or reshaping the way one sees it. In *Wolf Willow,* Stegner recalls some of the joy and beauty he associated with his native landscape:

> In some way of ignorance and innocence and pure perception I have bent my entire consciousness upon white anemones among the white aspen boles. They were rare and beautiful to me and they grew only there in the dapple of the woods – flowers whose names I did not know and could not possibly have found out and would not have asked, because I thought that only I knew about them and I wanted no one else to know. (122)

The ignorance Stegner derides in this passage was his own lack of knowledge about the death of Marmaduke Graburn, a Mountie who died in the field where Stegner found innocent repose. It is not the death of Graburn in particular that is significant. The young man's demise is but one death in a violent, bloody, battle-filled history of the plains. This passage, more importantly, criticizes the habits of mind and lack of awareness that characterize general thinking, and asks the reader to look into their own personal history so that they can be aware of the threads of darkness and violence that can underlie even the most seemingly benign image of beauty, ignorance or denial of the past is often more dangerous than the past that is denied. This passage goes beyond giving an image of a landscape; it gives the reader a sense of a place with a history that cannot be denied.

Lopez conjures a similar contrast between natural beauty and human violence when he shares an entry from the ship's log of the *Cumbrian*, an Arctic whaling outfit in the nineteenth century. An essential difference between the two anecdotes is that in Stegner's story the violence is acted out between people, whereas Lopez portrays a scene in which violence is perpetrated against an environment that, while seemingly harsh and violent in its own way, cannot articulate a defence against human threats. The beauty of nature is breathlessly described by Lopez as he sees it, and how the whalers likely saw it: "Pods of white belukha whales glided ghostlike beneath their keels. A thousand auklets roared through the ship's rigging in a wildshower of sound." The sheer poetry of the passage builds to a climax when he describes the walruses: "Walruses with their gleaming tusks and luminous whiskers swam slowly across calm bays in water burning like manganese in the evening sun" (*AD* 5). It is not enough for Lopez to present the image merely for its own sake, and so this expressive passage has a sanguineous counterpoint, related straight from the pages of the log itself, July 26th, 1823:

> along the floe edge lay the dead bodies of hundreds of flenched whales... the air for miles around was tainted with the foetor

> which arose from such masses of putridity. Towards evening, the numbers come across were ever increasing, and the effluvia which then assailed our olfactories became almost intolerable. (*AD* 5-6)

The whaler who wrote that entry in the log may have been attempting to use deliberately distancing words and phrases such as "assailed our olfactories" in order to counter the emotional impact of the vision of carnage he encountered that day. The reader has the option to close the book or turn the page, yet this option is likely considered only after the words are read.

Scenes of such pure violence, carnage, and waste, like the one mentioned above, seem to haunt Lopez even as he attempts to find a deeper significance to them. For instance, he accompanies a group of Yup'ik men on a hunting trip and describes the scene "from where blood soaks the snow, then, and piles of meat and slabs of fat and walrus skin are accumulating, from where ivory tusks have been collected like exotic kindling" (*AD* 408). During this experience he admits, "I am not entirely comfortable on the sea ice butchering walrus like this... The killing jars me in spite of my regard for the simple elements of human survival here" (*AD* 408). When Lopez allows himself to admit to his own discomfort he creates a bond with the reader as it is likely that most of his audience does not make a living hunting, and is thereby unaccustomed to such scenes of death. He also cautions his readers not to judge too hastily about such a scene: "The blood in the snow is a sign of life going on, of other life going on. Its presence is too often confused with cruelty" (*AD* 409). Misunderstanding, in Lopez's view, is just as dangerous as ignorance is to Stegner. What the image alone does not convey is the deep respect and regard the Yup'ik have for the animals they depend on. This scene represents an underlying beauty: the continuation of life and the honouring of living things.

One critique of *Wolf Willow* is that it focuses largely on human history and the necessity for human community, whereas in *Arctic Dreams* Lopez creates a more complete ecological history: land, plants, animals, as well as people are all intimately connected. Stegner's focus is understandable. *Wolf Willow* is the story of a child growing up in a land that he found unforgiving, harsh, and unchangeable; the land was more a threat to people than people to the land. However, as Nancy Parker says, "some writers are interested only in the aesthetics of writing, but for Wally writing is a moral act. He cared deeply about what it means to live in a complex world" (qtd. in Benson 9). If the moral sense is there, it is easily extendable to the rest of the "complex

world." In *Geography of Hope*, a memorial tribute to the late Wallace Stegner, Lopez describes an encounter he had with the man:

> Stegner saw a continuum, I think, in which writers were part of the human community, with obligations and responsibilities – which might or might not turn out to political expression. A separate continuum linked writers, a more-or-less-loosely knit group of men and women intent on telling stories and feeling various degrees of professionalism and spiritual allegiance to each other (117-8).

His sense of spiritual allegiance is one of the main things that Lopez admired about Stegner, and it tied the older writer not only to other storytellers, but also to the land and people they told stories about. Stegner himself was on the board of the National Parks Commission, the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, and the Committee for Green Foothills to name but a few organizations. It was, as Benson puts it, "dreary work" but it "helped to establish national and local parks and the principle of wilderness preservation" (48). Stegner's commitment to the environment, evident in his writing and in his voluntary work, is a powerful example of how a simple desire for awareness about one's self and one's surroundings can grow into a life-guiding, world-encompassing moral principal.

Stegner and Lopez, in a conscious battle against habitual modes of indifference and ignorance, hope to pass on to their readers the desire for intimacy with the natural world, and an awareness of the impact of human interactions upon it. They accomplish this with a moral attitude that begins with the subject and extends to the reader. Stegner and Lopez remain faithful to the environments they depict by attempting to know it as fully as possible; they remain faithful to their readers by rendering those environments in ways that are engaging and memorable. Precise knowledge, regionally specific language, and vivid imagery are techniques that a writer can use to communicate the spirit of an environment, but they are also ways that a writer can hope to inspire a reader to care about the future of that environment.

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Rebuilding Ruins: Two Approaches to Liminality in *Arrow of God*

Emily Hass

Ominously hovering over Achebe's *Arrow of God* is the advent of colonialism. In a culture in transition, the reader bears witness to the psychological struggle of the central character for whom personal identity is no longer a birthright: like culture itself, it is liminal,[1] both indeterminate and unstable in its transition. In this twilight period of indeterminacy and ambiguity, there is the potential for both new perspectives as well as profound disorientation. Whether the liminal poses opportunities for change and rebirth, or, whether it poses the threat of ruin, disintegration and destruction seems to depend on two different attitudes towards meaning and identity. The clan Umuaro exemplifies a synthetic approach to liminality by merging existing forms with new ones and building upon what functions in old systems while integrating the new. Ezeulu, chief priest of the clan of Umuaro, typifies a more analytic approach as he seeks to isolate what is indeterminate and ambiguous. He considers truth absolute and unchanging. Significantly, he cannot tolerate the unknown and in the context of liminality, this intolerance creates deep conflict, for liminality necessarily resists immediate comprehension and

1 Liminal: a. gen. Of or pertaining to the threshold or initial stage of a process. rare. b. spec. in Psychol. Of or pertaining to a 'limen' or 'threshold' (*OED*). Liminality: a transitional or indeterminate state between culturally defined stages of a person's life; spec. such a state occupied during a ritual or ritre of passage, characterized by a sense of solidarity between participants (*OED*).

exhaustive analysis: the essence of "betweeness" is, indeed, its indeterminacy. The synthetic approach is better equipped to make sense of this as it accommodates indeterminacy by foregrounding processes over results and the suspension of comprehension over immediate understanding. By placing the indeterminate squarely in the context of overall transition, the synthetic approach grounds the disorienting threat of the liminal. This tolerance for necessary indeterminacy allows Umuaro to cross the liminal threshold of colonization changed but intact; likewise, it is the intolerance of uncertainty that renders Ezeulu a demented high priest, crushed by the uncertainty he is unable to conquer.

The divergent attitudes towards analytical, fixed meaning and synthetic meaning-making are exemplified in *Arrow of God* in the case of the land dispute with the neighbouring clan Okperi. According to Ezeulu, the land originally belonged to Okperi and Umuaro has no claim over it. Ezeulu justifies this claim by appealing to ancestral knowledge that he considers self-evidently true, for, as he stresses repeatedly, "A father does not speak falsely to his son" (16). However, his rival Nwaka immediately reminds the clan of the limitations of individual human knowledge stating,

> We also know that the lore of the land is beyond the knowledge of many fathers... [Ezeulu] speaks of events which are older than Umuaro itself. I shall not be afraid to say that neither Ezeulu nor any other in this village can tell us about these events. (16)

By claiming that knowledge of the land is not only unknown but also unknowable, Nwaka indirectly points to the mutable nature of ancestral myths. Consciously aware of this process of meaning-making, Nwaka nonetheless invokes his own myth in which Umuaro has a claim to the land; this version also serves the current interests of Umuaro which is an agricultural community where residents are often described as hungry. Nwaka shrewdly perceives sites of indeterminacy as opportunities for meaning-making.

Repeatedly in his public position as chief priest, Ezeulu is unable to accept "lore" that is "beyond knowledge." However, suspending comprehension of the indeterminate to build meaning is a characteristic at the heart of Umuaro's inception. Umuaro came to exist when the six villages came together to defend themselves against the soldiers of Abame who abducted citizens and sold them as slaves; Umuaro itself is a product of the collective will. The god Ulu was "made by the fathers of the six villages" for protection (15). The fathers hired medicine-men to create the god, and,

from this a myth is born: "from that day on they were never again beaten by an enemy" (15). It is important to note that Ulu serves not only to unite the six villages but also to displace the anxiety aroused by the attack regarding a problematic question: why did the gods fail to protect the six villages to begin with? Instead of attempting to answer this troubling question, the clan suspends their comprehension during this transition and builds a new model of meaning-making founded on the idea that Ulu is a stronger god and therefore able to protect them. The clan is thus able to adapt in times of crisis, even if it means revising what they formerly considered sacred. This demonstrates Umuaro's capacity for synthesis which foregrounds processes over results in the decay, destruction and rebirth of meaning.

Ezeulu is unable to accept the fact that Umuaro's foundation is built on the shifting ground of changing belief; indeed, he views all change beyond his control with deep suspicion. He is inclined to repeat, "the dead fathers of Umuaro looking at the world from Ani-Mmo must be utterly bewildered by the ways of the new age"; through this he indirectly expresses his own bewilderment (14). Indeed, the new ways (which are actually traditional ways) incense Ezeulu, who views Umuaro's lack of stability concerning what he deems self-evident truth as errors of apocalyptic proportions, evidence of "the ruin of the world" and "the world's ruin" (15, 6). This deep, underlying hostility towards change that is beyond his control helps explain his unwillingness to steer his clan away from destruction later in the novel.

Beneath this intolerance for indeterminacy, Ezeulu privately faces his own crisis of uncertainty. Behind Ezeulu's public appearance as chief priest— stable in power, unshakeable in conviction and decisive in action— the reader glimpses him wrestling with doubt concerning the metaphysical status of his power, exemplified in the opening scene of the novel: "Whenever Ezeulu considered the immensity of his power, he wondered if it was real" (3). In the course of these thoughts Ezeulu reveals anxiety and dissatisfaction with his ritual, symbolic role as chief priest. On one hand, he acknowledges he is "merely a watchman" as he waits for the new moon, eats the sacred yams that serve as a calendar, and marks the time before announcing the New Yam festival, a purification ritual which precedes the harvest (3). However, he recognizes that such symbolic power is arbitrary and contingent: "his power was no more than the power of a child over a goat that was said to be his... the day it was slaughtered he would soon know who the real owner was" (3). From the history of Umuaro we know that the "real owner" is not a supernatural deity, but the power invested in one through the collective will of Umuaro. These thoughts create great anxiety for Ezeulu

who prefers a stable view of power. Even in his private uncertainty, however, Ezeulu is psychologically unwilling to suspend his comprehension and accept the limitations of his knowledge for he possesses a mind "never content with shallow satisfactions" which time and again "creeps to the brinks of knowing" (4). Thus, while the clan of Umuaro is aware of the limitations of individual knowledge in a world constantly in flux, Ezeulu's "will-to-know" and conquer the unknown ultimately destroys him because Umuaro is in a historically liminal position characterized by uncertainty. In his need to comprehend, Ezeulu grows increasingly alienated and disoriented in this historical moment.

Arrow of God marks the beginning of this particular liminal moment in history at the end of the conflict with Okperi. The conflict was settled when the white man governing Okperi intervened by seizing and destroying all firearms. This act threatened the sovereignty of Umuaro which thus far had resisted all attempts at colonization. Significantly, it also challenged their current model of meaning: that united under Ulu they were protected and would be able to defend themselves from external forces. Umuaro becomes fraught with uncertainty and begins the process of synthetic meaning-making. The clan marks the historic moment by naming an age group as "the Breaking of the Guns" for children born at this time. They mythologize the white man, comparing him to a leper due to his white skin and view him with suspicion. The situation is complicated by Ezeulu's actions with regard to the white man. Ignoring the community's appeals for caution, he sends his son to the first missionary school in Umuaro. Akuebue attempts to warn Ezeulu of the clan's suspicion but Ezeulu responds contemptuously: "What does the clan know... you were here when the clan chose to go to war with Okperi... who was right in the end... Every word happened as I said it would" (131). In reply, Akuebue reminds him of the strength of the collective and their power stating: "no man however great can win judgment against a clan... Umuaro will always say that you betrayed them before the white man" (131). He furthermore reminds Ezeulu that they are a society in the midst of transition stating: "What happened in [your father and grandfather's] time and what is happening today are not the same; they do not even have a resemblance" (131).

Umuaro's liminality, the clan's mistrust of Ezeulu's intentions, Ezeulu's seemingly inexhaustible will-to-know, and the undercurrent of uncertainty that privately runs through his thoughts all converge when Umuaro hands over Ezeulu to the white man at Okperi. By transferring their central authority to the hands of the white man, Umuaro forces Ezeulu to

accept their collective will and recognize that the identity of the community itself is changing, for it is not the custom of the chief priest to leave Umuaro and his duties. After they pass judgment and determine he should go to Okperi he states, "When I called you together it is not because I am lost... Sometimes when we have given a piece of yam to a child we beg him to give us a little, not because we really want to eat it but because we want to test our child" (145). Thus, Ezeulu reveals he is not truly deferring his will to the community; he is actually testing them. Curiously Achebe describes Ezeulu as facing his exile happily as he speaks "almost with gaiety" (145). The reader only understands this later. When Nwaka condemns Ezeulu in the judgment at the marketplace, we learn that Ezeulu's mind is once again creeping to the brinks of knowing: he is planning revenge which had "suddenly formed in his mind" and the thought of this plan is his only consolation in prison (160). The pleasure arises out of the fact that Ezeulu will at last be able to comprehend the nature of the change that has taken place in Umuaro while also determining the extent of his power as chief priest. This is because during his imprisonment in Okperi he misses two new moons and refuses to call the day of the New Yam festival.

Ezeulu attempts to justify his hostile decision to postpone the New Yam Festival but the contradictions in this justification starkly reveal Ezeulu's disorientation and alienation from his people. When he is approached by Nwosisi and Obiesili who claim the New Yam festival should have been announced at the last new moon, Ezeulu argues, "...no Ezeulu can lose count. Rather it is you who count with your fingers who are likely to make a mistake, to forget which finger you counted at the last moon." (204) Ezeulu confuses the signifier for the signified by claiming that the sacred yams themselves are more essential than the seasons they measure and the harvests they represent. This confusion is reminiscent of Ezeulu's unsubstantiated belief that his power as chief priest is more essential than the power of the clan who created this position. By testing whether his community will accept the symbolic tradition of the sacred yams as inviolable law, Ezeulu is also testing whether they will accept his symbolic power as absolute. Yet both claims are utterly dissociated from reality and remind us that there is an undercurrent of uncertainty haunting Ezeulu's private thoughts, spurring his ulterior motives. More importantly, it is revealed to the clan how alienated Ezeulu has become and how far removed his beliefs are from their best interests.

Ezeulu's erroneous judgment and alienation from the new reality is exemplified in his glaring misreading of the power of the white man. Foregrounding this misreading with an appeal to the inviolability of his

words ("No man speaks a lie to his son") he states to his son, "In Okperi I saw a young white man who was able to write his book with the left hand... I could see that he had very little sense. But he had power...Why? Because he could write with his left hand" (189). Ezeulu reveals his limited knowledge as a father, a fundamental flaw in the system of ancestral knowledge he highly values. The error is ironic in that Ezeulu mistakes what is arbitrary—Clarke's left-handedness—for what is essential, much like his misreading of the sacred yams and his position.

While Ezeulu's decision to postpone the New Yam festival publicly reveals how disoriented and alienated he has become, it is also a critical moment because in facing a crisis, Umuaro is required to act and adapt. Before Ezeulu announced his decision, Ofoka humbly admitted that uncertainty still plagued Umuaro stating, "Why did we agree with [Nwaka]? It was because we were confused. Do you hear me? The elders of Umuaro are confused" (188). However, when faced with starvation the leaders of the village come together and declare that the sacred yam tradition must be altered. To persuade Ezeulu, they cite historical examples of change within Umuaro but Ezeulu maintains a stubborn, completely hypocritical silence. Ezeulu's ancestors took part in reforming these traditions for Ezeulu used the same reasoning to defend his authority in the aforementioned argument with Akuebue. It is clear Ezeulu is only willing to transform tradition when he does so of his own will, flattering his authority and power; he is unwilling to do so when it requires him to submit to the wishes of others. In his flat refusal to participate in synthetically building new traditions, Ezeulu publicly reveals his long-held hostility towards collective change.

While Ezeulu sits isolated in his hut, Umuaro abandons their attempts to persuade him to change his mind. In their deep anxiety, they consider offering a sacrifice to the Christian missionary. Achebe writes: "So the news spread that anyone who did not want to wait to see all his harvest ruined could take his offering to the god of the Christians who claimed to have power of protection from the anger of Ulu" (216). At the same time, Ezeulu is faced with devastation beyond all comprehension in the sudden death of his son Obika. The people of Umuaro read this sudden, inexplicable tragedy as Ezeulu's punishment, evidence that "no man however great was greater than his people; that no one ever won judgment against his clan" (230). In the aftermath, the trajectory for Umuaro finally becomes clear. A new myth orders their world: "The Christian harvest which took place a few days after Obika's death saw more people than even Good-country could have dreamed" (230). As for Ezeulu, he is first crushed by the recognition

that his strategy of comprehending the unknown has failed. He is buried by innumerable questions that are ultimately unknowable, a situation that for him only points towards "the collapse and ruin of all things," with no hope of rebirth or redemption (229). Ezeulu is ultimately destroyed by his inability to see meaning as a process that must be built, not a substance that can be discovered; that meaning need not be protected against the danger of uncertainty, but the danger of the despair that comes in viewing uncertainty as disastrous.

The brilliance of *Arrow of God* lies in its own indeterminacy, created by the complex portrayal of Ezeulu's minds and motives, and the fluctuating beliefs of the clan. Just as cultural and personal identity are no longer birthrights, clear, exhaustive meaning is no longer the right of the reader for no interpretation is complete. As Achebe states in the preface to the second edition, the text welcomes rereading, suggesting that meaning in literature is also more about processes than final products. While both Ezeulu and Umuaro's attempts to wrestle with uncertainty reveal the natural human desire for cohesive systems of understanding, the beauty of *Arrow of God* is that it forces us to view these systems as necessarily limited and fundamentally impermanent. Although Ezeulu was unable to see it, the reader is given the opportunity to see his destruction as a ruin out of which new structures will be rebuilt. In this, it is the reader who comes to forgive Umuaro's defection and see Ezeulu's fate as his "high historic destiny as victim, consecrating by his agony—thus raising to the stature of ritual passage—the defection of his people", a vision of Ezeulu which Achebe outlines in the preface. In coming to view Ezeulu's destruction as a part of a passage, the reader joins Umuaro in embracing the specific meaning of liminality: "a state occupied during a ritual or a rite of passage, characterized by a sense of solidarity between participants" (*OED*). We join in a collective, creative vision of history in which all ruins can be rebuilt.

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"Sole Partner and Sole Part:" Hierarchy and Peerage in *Paradise Lost*

Natasha Nardone

When God creates mankind, He establishes the new race within His existing hierarchy and infuses man with free will. He explains the importance of this quality in Book III of Milton's *Paradise Lost,* stating "I made him just and right, / Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (III.98-9). God maintains that without free will, man's obedience is insignificant because it is not based on choice. However, He recognizes the danger of free will in that it gives man the ability to choose disobedience; man, like Satan, is "free to fall." In the relationship of Adam and Eve, which is created hierarchically, free will facilitates the development of a peerage relationship by allowing the couple to relate to each other and make decisions outside of the established order. While their interactions vacillate between obeying God's hierarchy and interacting as peers, the resulting tension between hierarchy and peerage becomes problematic for their relationship. Their roles lose clarity, their expectations of each other shift, and this ambiguity manifests itself in the identification of Adam as both Eve's superior and follower, and Eve as both Adam's subject and peer. Unable to interact solely based on a relationship of either hierarchy or peerage, Adam and Eve experience difficulty and confusion when decision making, thereby facilitating the occurrence of the Temptation and the Fall of both of God's human creations.

The tension between hierarchy and peerage is established from the onset of Adam and Eve's relationship, influencing their subsequent interactions. When they first meet, Adam establishes his dominance in their

relationship, exerting his superior position in the hierarchy from the outset. This is accomplished when he, "with [his] gentle hand / Seized [Eve's], [she] yielded" (Milton IV.488-9). However, in this incident, Eve's yielding is as important as Adam's seizing. To yield implies that one has a choice in the situation—either to submit or to rebel—and the use of this verb thus supports Eve's assertion of free will in her decision to yield. In doing so, Eve establishes her relationship with Adam as one predicated upon hierarchy and peerage, and not solely hierarchical.

Their relationship evolves, and readers witness the height of the tension between hierarchy and peerage when Adam and Eve debate whether they should work in the garden together or separately (Milton IX.205-386). Eve introduces the idea of dividing the labour in order to avoid the distraction they experience while together. Adam rejects the proposal, yet praises Eve for her suggestion: "Sole Eve, associate sole, to me beyond / Compare above all living creatures dear, / Well hast thou motioned, well thy thoughts employed" (Milton IX.227-9). His loving remark of "Sole Eve, associate sole" reminds readers of the tension between hierarchy and peerage: while "Sole Eve" sets her up as distinct from Adam, and therefore susceptible to God's hierarchy, "associate sole" establishes their existence as joined, describing a relationship based in peerage. The resulting confusion of this dual relationship is established in the following clause, "to me beyond / Compare above all living creatures dear," wherein Adam describes Eve as superior to him among God's creations because of his love for her. He continues to try to persuade her to remain together, citing the threat of their "malicious foe / … [who] seeks to work [them] woe and shame / By sly assault" (Milton IX.253-6). In Adam's opinion, it is "Safest and seemliest" for Eve to stay "by her husband … / Who guards her, or with her the worst endures" (Milton IX.268-9). The sibilant alliteration of "safest" and "seemliest" not only adds rhythm to the line, but also reminds readers of the serpent, Satan's later chosen form while undertaking the Temptation. Additionally, the latter part of this segment, in which Adam promises to guard Eve or endure the worst with her, contains promises based in both hierarchy and peerage. Whereas guarding Eve sets up Adam as stronger and more capable, and therefore the superior, enduring the worst with her sets up the two as equal to the situation and the negative results that may ensue.

The tension between hierarchy and peerage continues to manifest

itself in Adam's references towards Eve throughout their debate, specifically in relation to her name. While at first he engages in a peer-based approach, "[striking] a note of persuasion and reconciliation [by] stressing Eve's uniqueness" and using her individual name, "Sole Eve, associate sole," Adam changes his approach when Eve persists with her idea of working individually (Leonard 41). Resorting to her broader title, he states, "O *woman*, best are all things as the will / Of God ordained them" (emphasis added, Milton IX.343-4), a statement which highlights how his argumentation has now switched from peer-based to hierarchical. It was Adam who named her in such general terms after her creation – "woman is her name, of man / Extracted" (Milton VIII.496-7) – and his recourse to "woman" here, in place of "Eve," serves as a reminder of "her origin in him," God's established hierarchy, and consequently, her expected obedience (Leonard 41).

Adam's hierarchical arguments continue with his discussion of reason's role in free will and the necessity of obedience, reminders with which he hopes to sway Eve to his opinion by recalling God's hierarchy and Eve's place therein. However, his hierarchical debate stops at line 370, at which point he switches back to peer-based ideas. Rather than command Eve to work with him and thus avoid trial by their "foe," he gives her permission to go and work alone, if that is what she deems appropriate. In Adam's opinion, Eve is better off to "Go; for [her] stay, not free, absents [her] more" (Milton IX.372). It follows that Eve chooses to work separately, and Adam lets her go. However, Adam "errs when he permits her to have her way, and abdicates his proper responsibility" (Low 35). It being "Adam's [duty] to divert Eve from sinning," he should have handled this debate differently (Musacchio 137). Rather than granting her permission to leave "against his better judgment," Adam should have "[commanded] her to stay and [allowed] her to choose whether or not to obey the command," an instance mirroring God's prohibition against eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge (Musacchio 137-8). In this situation, it would have been much harder for Eve to leave because it would imply her direct disobedience to her superior. Essentially, the debate's fluctuation between hierarchy and peer-based arguments leads to a problematic conclusion, wherein Eve feels overconfident in her ability to repel temptation, and Adam is portrayed in "effeminate subjection" for failing to assert his authority in allowing Eve's dominance (Bowers 271).

After Eve leaves to work alone, the serpentine Satan approaches her

and proceeds with his Temptation (Milton IX.531-732), eventually convincing Eve to transgress and Fall by tempting her ambition and pride. The serpent regales her with his own tale of elevation in the "true order of Paradise" (McColley 34), a hierarchy which depends on the "Beasts of th' Earth' (IV, 340-341) observing their subservience to mankind; on Eve, who was made for God in Adam, observing her subservience to her husband; and on Adam, the image of God, observing his subservience to his Maker" (Chambers 130). Satan endeavours to persuade Eve that, just as he has moved from beast to rational being, so she can move from man to god. He tempts her linguistically by creating new names and illustrious titles, calling her "Empress of this fair world, resplendent Eve" (Milton IX.568), "Sovereign of creatures, universal dame" (Milton IX.612), and "Queen of the universe" (Milton IX.684). He calms her fears of transgression by promising that she will not die in eating the fruit, stating "look on me, / Me who have touched and tasted, yet both live, / And life more perfect have attained" (Milton IX.687-9). He entices her with the idea of her own renown, telling her that she "shouldst be seen / A goddess among gods, adored and served / By angels numberless, [her] daily train" (Milton IX.546-8). His rhetoric is designed to play into her ambition, soothe her fears, and disrupt the established hierarchy, and Satan succeeds in his designs. He is able to convince Eve by exploiting the fact that she "is not submissive enough" (McColley 34), a fact readers begin to witness in her debate with Adam about their working together or separately. As an inferior being, "she ought to behave like one" (McColley 34-5), yet her hierarchical ambitions, combined with her increasing freedom in her relationship with Adam, make her vulnerable to the serpent's venomous language.

After her Fall, Eve considers hiding her new understanding from Adam in order to advance herself further:

> [Keeping] the odds of knowledge in [her] power
> Without copartner? So to add what wants
> In female sex, the more to draw his love,
> And render [her] more equal, and perhaps,
> A thing not undesirable, sometime
> Superior, for inferior who is free? (Milton IX.820-6)

Here, she further reveals her hierarchical motivations for transgressing, as

epitomized in the final line recorded: "inferior who is free?" She recognizes her current standing as lacking in power in the established order, and so ambitiously sets her sights higher. However, the serpent has caused her to forget that, although she holds a lower position hierarchically, God has given her free will and therefore, though "inferior," she is free; his words twist the truth in order to convince her to transgress. Additionally, intermixed with her hierarchical motivations, readers can discern her desire to be a better companion for Adam. Encompassing an incentive based more in peerage, her desire to "the more draw his love" aims to level their relationship by reaffirming their unity. However, after these considerations, and upon remembering the weight of her transgression, Eve fears death and the thought of Adam wedding "another Eve" (Milton IX.828). She therefore resolves to tell him in order to tempt him to follow her transgression. Again, this decision is motivated by both hierarchical and peer-related ideas, as revealed when Eve states, "Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe: / So dear I love him, that with him all deaths / I could endure, without him live no life" (Milton IX.831-3). Her inability to live without him can be attributed to their joint nature as "one flesh, one heart, one soul" (Milton VIII.499) – a peer-based idea – while it can also be due to her reliance on Adam, who she deems the "sole in whom my thoughts find all repose, / My glory, my perfection" (Milton V.28-9).

Once Adam learns of Eve's transgression, he briefly debates his options and quickly decides that "from [her] state / [His] never shall be parted, bliss or woe" (Milton IX.915-6). He explains his decision to Eve, who celebrates his choice and provides him with the fateful fruit (Milton IX.917-99). In explanation for his determination to follow her, Adam reasons that death has not come to either the snake or Eve, and he doubts that "God, creator wise, / Though threatening, will in earnest so destroy / Us his prime creatures" (Milton IX.938-40). His confidence in God's hierarchy and his personal value within that order gives him the rational base for his decision. However, he throws rationality aside in his main motivation for transgressing: his link with Eve, a purely peer-based notion. As he explains:

> So forcible within my heart I feel
> The bond of nature draw me to my own,
> My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;

> Our state cannot be severed, we are one,
> One flesh; to lose thee were to lose my self. (Milton IX.955-9)

Their unity is emphasized linguistically throughout Adam's explanation of his transgression: the repetition of "one" at lines 958 and 959 highlights their joint nature; Adam's echoing of Eve's commitment to remain together, "bliss or woe" (Milton IX.831 and 916), shows that they are of one mind; their mutual expression of the sentiment that life without the other is no life at all demonstrates their reciprocal reliance on each other. Adam thus decides to disobey God "because of his love for Eve" (Musacchio 111), disregarding hierarchy and obedience by using his free will to favour his peer-based relationship with her.

The interaction of hierarchy and peerage, which pervades Adam and Eve's relationship and plays a large role in their decision-making process, creates a tension in *Paradise Lost* that acts as a root of ambiguity in God's defined order and facilitates the onset of the Temptation and Fall. Establishing this tension between hierarchy and peerage as a vehicle of Adam and Eve's transgression, one must question whether the Temptation and Fall could have been avoided while both hierarchy and free will, which allows for a peer-based system, are integral to God's plan for Creation? Answering this in the negative is contrary to the concept of free will, as God articulates when he states that man is "Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" (Milton III.99). However, the contradicting systems of hierarchy and peerage create ambitions that must be tempered with submission, and unity that must be counteracted by ranked divisions— situations lacking definition and thus challenging to manipulate. The answer to the previous question is thus equally hard to derive because, though Adam and Eve have the choice between obedience and disobedience, the nature of their relationship makes each choice seem equally beneficial: Eve transgresses to raise herself and be more fully united with man she loves, while Adam transgresses to remain bound to "[his] own / … One flesh" (Milton IX.956-9).

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Acknowledgements *International Festival of Authors*
Misha Teramura

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