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# When the Divine Lady Becomes a Genius: The Journey from *Joi* to Lack in Courtly Love Poetry

JENNIFER CRONE

Nothing is wonderful but the soul, which, when great itself, finds nothing great outside itself.
Petrarch[1]

The glorious lady of my mind.
Dante[2]

Hee that shunns love doth love him self the less.
Mary Wroth[3]

for I / Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free
John Donne[4]

The twelfth century, metamorphosed by the rediscovery of Ovid, was besotted with love. Writing love lyrics to their Ladies, the troubadours of Southern France invented the genre of courtly love poetry, which would

[1] Petrarch, 'Letter to Dionisio da Borgo San', Sepalcrohttp://petrarch.petersadlon.com/read_letters.html?s=pet17.html (26.10.12) [Original Source: James Harvey Robinson, *The First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters*, (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1898)]

[2] Dante, 'La Vita Nuova', in H. Oelsner ed., *Dante's Vita Nuova Together With The Version of Dante Gabriel Rossetti,* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1908), p. 3

[3] Lady Mary Wroth, *Pamphilia To Amphilanthus*, in Josephine A. Roberts, ed., *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), Poem 83. Wroth breaks her sonnet sequence into individually numbered sections. Roberts adds a single continuous numerical sequence for all the poems, indicated throughout this essay in square brackets.

[4] John Donne, 'Holy Sonnet XIV', in John Hayward, ed., *John Donne: A selection of His Poetry*, (Hammondsworth, Middx: Penguin Books, 1950), p. 172

become the literary language of heterosexual love for five hundred years. At the same time the mystic Bernard of Clairvaux wrote and preached obsessively about the Shulamite of the amatory biblical text *Song of Songs*, whose passionate song of love to her bridegroom - *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!* - Bernard interpreted as the speech of Mary, the mother of Christ.

It is customary to regard the troubadours' brilliant, witty, and raunchy love songs as the starting point for the secularization of love and sexuality.[5] But Julia Kristeva suggests that the lyrical jouissance with which the troubadours expressed their fervor for their ladies was a song of *Joi*, a celebration of being, that was very similar to the Christian beatitude experienced by the amorous mystic Bernard. According to Kristeva, both experiences of exalted happiness were founded on the certainty of possessing the loved object. In the case of Bernard of Clairvaux, for Kristeva, this was God. But, importantly for this essay, Bernard's most beloved object was a divine Lady, the Shulamite. Kristeva argues that while the troubadours did not possess their Lady, as she was always unobtainable, at the very least, they possessed 'the Word'. We know of this *Joi* of possession through their literary utterances. 'Identification with the song-Word and the Creator, a joy of incantation-creation, is the only perceptible evidence … for beatitude in general and courtly jouissance in particular.'[6] These subjects glorified love before reason, seeming to proclaim, '*Ego Affectus est'*.[7]

To observe the twelfth century parallel between the profane and the divine Lady, consider this fragment of troubadour Arnaut Daniel's song, *En cest sonet coind' e lèri* (*On This Precious and Joyful Music*), with its double entendre about the Pope:

> No vuolh de Roma l'empèri
> In qu'òm n'en fass apostòli
> Qu'en lièis non aja revèrt

[5] Julia Kristeva discusses this question at length in her chapters on Bernard of Clairvaux and the troubadours in Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, Leon S. Roudiez trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp.151 – 169 & 280 – 296.
[6] Kristeva, p. 153
[7] Literal translation: 'I was affected'. Kristeva defines *Ego Affectus est* as an *I* that is not yet an ego 'because he thinks "I" *is* because *I love.'* This 'I' 'does not point to itself as a basic identity, split as it is between the Other and the affect. An *I* that is passion.' Kristeva, p. 169

Per cui m'art lo còrs em rima;

[I want neither the empire of Rome
Nor anyone to make me Pope
If I were not to return to her
For whom my heart burns and eats away at me.][8]

The listener is presented with an image that may function both as a joke on the Pope, and as a compliment to the singer's lover. If the 'her' to whom Arnaud's singer wants to return if he were made Pope is his lover, the lyric casts a flippant aspersion on the celibacy of the Pope; on the other hand, the singer might just as easily be innocently complimenting his lady by comparing her with the Pope's divine Lady. This ambiguity, or excess, of meaning, along with the troubadours' brilliance of wit, and the virtuosity of their rhythms and rhymes, transcend the direct message of their songs, and proffer them as signs of love's intensity, or *Joi.*

In order to be a loving subject, one must be able to idealise, and identify with, the Other. It is no accident that in twelfth century mysticism and courtly love poetry this is achieved by idealising the Lady, or that the language of courtly love poetry is the first literary form to be expressed in the mother-tongue, for this idealised love is founded on the memory of the baby's earliest love. For Kristeva, idealised love for the Lady is a displacement of the infant's devastating upheavals of desire for the mother's body, with their sexual and homosexual passions:

> Respectful and respectable love for an idealized (maternal) object spares the delights and the pangs of sadomasochism - the divine is finally a goddess, priestess of archaic power, which allows less to repress than to separate raving desire from its refinement.[9]

The troubadours' songs, or *sonets*, influenced the development of the sonnet. Though designed to be read, rather than sung, the sonnet retained the musical structure of the troubadours' *canzone*, which divided the stanza into two parts, with a *volta* or 'turn' separating the two parts. This became

[8] *or:* if I could not, with respect to her effect a change
for whom my heart makes art and rhyme.
James J. Wilhelm, ed. and trans., *The Poetry of Arnaut Daniel* (New York & London: Garland, 1981), pp. 40-43, in Kristeva, pp. 284-286
[9] Kristeva, pp. 75-76

the syntactical structure of the sonnet in Italian, a poem of fourteen lines, broken into an octave and sestet with a turn at the end of the octave.[10] Courtly love poets channeled their desires into this 'well wrought urne',[11] in a veritable explosion of sonnet writing idealizing the Lady. By the end of the seventeenth century, some three thousand writers had produced a massive two hundred thousand sonnets.[12] In this paper, I will argue that love sonnets became so popular over this five hundred year period because their space enabled the relationship between the sonneteer and the Lady to develop into a new type of humanist self-love that flowered as the Renaissance 'genius'. In this process, the divine Lady comes to represent the poet's own 'soul'; in other words, the Lady becomes a 'genius'. In order to examine in detail how this merging of identities occurred, I will pay especial attention to the metaphor of 'the hunt'.

The notion of genius has an etymology extending back to classical times, when, as Kristeva points out, the genius was divine. The Latin *genius* evokes

> a 'particular god' who watches over each man, thing, place, state. This 'presence of a god' from birth, sharing the destiny of the 'being' and disappearing with him, translates from the start an intrinsic communion between the divine and the human.[13]

Later on when the Gospels proclaim the 'good news' of the Messiah, the bond with the divine becomes

> a gift of love, received and given back, that in its very gratuitousness fulfills a promise and brings into being a pact, thus tracing the outlines of the optimal space for a social and historic exchange. The 'singularity' of Christian genius … implies the *putting into action* of the divine … which is the presence of love of and for the Other.[14]

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[10] Michael R.G. Spiller, *The Development of the Sonnet: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 13 - 17
[11] John Donne, 'The Canonization', in Hayward, ed., p. 28
[12] Spiller, p. 83
[13] Julia Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, trans. Beverley Bie Brahic, (Columbia University Press: New York, 2009), p. 30
[14] Ibid, p. 31

In the renaissance, 'men, who were losing God … displace transcendence toward the best among them. … The traits of the "genius" and/or the divinity within each of them' are conferred onto matchless works of art or vanish 'into the person who has the quality of "genius"'. [15] As we shall see, the Renaissance 'genius' gains in stature through the absorption of his genius, the Lady, but it is a pyrrhic victory. With the loss of the Lady's divinity, the confidence of possessing the object dissolves, and the *Joi* of courtly love poetry is transformed into the anguished awareness of desire's lack.

During the thirteenth century, the *stilnovisti*, of which Dante and Cavalcanti were leading poets, developed a new kind of 'I', a persona that is mirrored by the beloved Lady.[16] For the *stilnovisti,* the relationship between the Lady and her lover is comparable to the relationship between God and the world, and the language in which the Lady is celebrated is shaped by the Deuterocanonical biblical text *Wisdom of Solomon*. Wisdom as the feminine face of God, -- who participates in creation, who is 'more beautiful than the sun', and, 'reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well'[17] -- is apparent when Dante portrays his beloved Beatrice as Christ when they meet at the end of the *Purgatorio*[18], and ends the *Commedia* after Beatrice leads him to 'l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle' [the love that moves the sun and other stars].[19]

The sonnet form was used by the *stilnovisti* to describe the Lady's greeting, or *salute,* an ordinary word for greeting that has the etymological meaning of 'salvation'. In the *salute,* the Lady appears and bestows her

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[15] Ibid, pp. 31-32

[16] Spiller, p. 28.

[17] Wisdom of Solomon 7:29 – 8:1

[18] The editor and translator of the new Penguin Classics edition of the *Commedia*, Robert Kirkpatrick, supports this interpretation of Cantos 30 & 31 in the *Purgatorio*. He also notes that in Canto 33 Beatrice speaks in the same words that Christ used to address his disciples, in Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio,* Robin Kirkpatrick, ed. and trans. (London; Penguin Classics, 2007), pp. 481 & 497. For a fascinating theological discussion on the precedence of Wisdom as the textual model for Christ, see Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is,* rev. ed. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2002), pp. 94 – 100.

[19] Robert M. Durling discusses the importance of the Wisdom of Solomon in Dante and Petrarch's conception of the Lady in Robert M. Durling, ed. & trans., *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 25

love upon the speaker of the poem, arousing an epiphany in him, before passing on her way, in a gift of gratuitous love that functions like the 'putting into action of the divine', which Kristeva attributes to the Christian 'genius'. The sonnet is the record of the singularity of this moment and its impact upon the speaker, which can be so overwhelming that it strikes the poet dumb, as in Cavalcanti's sonnet:

> Chi è questa che ven; ch'ogn'om, la mira,
> che fa tremar di chiaritate l'âre,
> e mena seco Amor, sì che parlare
> null'omo pote; ma ciascun sospira?
> O Deo, che sembra quando li occhi gira,
> dical Amor, ch'i'nol savria contare:
> cotanto d'umiltà mi pare,
> ch'ogna'altra ver di lei i' la chiam'ira.
> Non si poria contar la sua piagenza,
> ch'a lei s'inchin'ogni gentil vertute
> e la beltate per la sua dea la mostra.
> Non fu sì alta già la mente nostra,
> e non si pose 'n noi tanta salute,
> che proppriamente n'aviàn canoscenza.[20]
>
> [Who is she coming, whom all gaze upon,
> who makes the air all tremulous with light
> and at whose side is Love himself? That none
> dare speak, but each man's sighs are infinite.
> Ah me! how she looks round from left to right
> let Love discourse: no words will come from me.
> Lady she seems of such humility
> as makes all others graceless in men's sight.
> The beauty which is hers cannot be said;
> to whom are subject all things virtuous,
> while all things beauteous own her deity.
> Ne'er was the mind of man so nobly led
> nor yet was such redemption granted to us
> that we should ever know her perfectly.][21]

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[20] Mario Marti, ed., *Poeti del Dolce Stil Nuovo*, (Florence: 1969), 133, in Spiller, p. 31

[21] D. G. Rossetti, trans., *Dante and His Circle, 1100-1200-1300*, rev. ed. (London: 1874), 134, adapted, in Spiller, p. 31

The function of language in Cavalcanti's sonnet is not to communicate a message to the Lady, with whom the poet does not speak, but to express the self in its inarticulate experience of epiphany. The sonnet is well shaped to contain the speaker's contemplation of the symbol of the Lady as a reflection of his interior life. Its form requires the poet to come to the point, twice, at the end of the octave and the end of the sestet, and to develop the octave in the sestet in some way. This structure demands more than a simple statement of feeling, but its brevity does not allow for philosophical or narrative development. In the octave Cavalcanti's speaker describes his experience of the *salute*; in the sestet he considers the Lady's moral impact. The sonnet closes by returning to the self-awareness of the speaker, reflected in unspoken visual language that conveys the speaker's *joi* in his spiritual encounter with the Lady, who leads him toward redemption.

The Lady alters the composition of the air as she fills it with light, but she is without real substance; the abstract qualities of her beauty and gift of love are apprehended primarily through the responses she stirs up in the poet. The speaker's feelings of love merge with the affects the Lady produces, and the silent discourse of Love, so that the boundaries between the speaker, Love, and the Lady become indistinct. The sonnet records the moment of the poet's self-awareness of this internal psychic transformation, in which the Lady merges with his own psyche.[22]

When Petrarch began to compose love sonnets to his beloved Lady, Laura, in 1330, he inherited the /I/ of the *stilnovisti*. Petrarch's originality lay in the way he expresses the imaginings of his 'great soul' through the metamorphosis of an entire landscape. The speaker in the *Rime* merges his self with the Lady through the repeated use of puns on her name, Laura. 'Laura' derives from 'laurus', the laurel or bay tree, which crowns Apollo, the patron of poets. In this doubling Laura represents both the Lady whom the speaker loves, and the poet's aspiration to win the laurel crown of poetry. The name 'Laura' can also be heard and read as both 'l'aura', 'the breeze', and 'l'auro', 'gold'. The breeze stands both for the effects Laura produces on the landscape, and for the speaker's inspiration, while gold represents both Laura's hair and Apollo, the sun God, who inspires all poetry and is the protector of poets.[23] For example, the opening of *Rime* 196 has three richly layered meanings:

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[22] See Spiller, pp. 30 - 34 for a detailed discussion of these points.
[23] Spiller, pp. 52 - 53

> L'aura serena che fra verdi fronde
> Mormorando a ferir nel volto viemme …
>
> [The calm breeze that through the green leaves comes murmuring to strike my face …
>
> or
>
> Laura, in her serenity, who comes among the green leaves with whispered speech to strike my attention …
>
> or
>
> The exalted laurel (poetry) that speaks gently among its green fronds (poems) and comes to strike my attention …][24]

We can see the same metaphors at work in Petrarch's famous *Rime* 190, in which the poet's persona leaves his work to follow a sweet doe, another image for the Lady. The doe appears in the shade of the laurel tree/laurel crown of poetry, when the sun is rising, a reference to the god Apollo, source of poetry and patron of poets, at a time in infertility, implying creative drought. The poet's persona is like a miserable miser seeking the doe as a treasure to hoard within his own mind:

> Una candida cerva sopra l'erba
> verde m'apparve, con duo corna d'oro,
> fra due riviere, all'ombra d'un alloro,
> levando 'l sole, a la stagione acerba.
> Era sua vista si dolce superba,
> ch'i' lasciai per seguirla ogni lavoro:
> come l'avaro che 'n cercar tesoro
> con diletto l'affanno disacerba.
> 'Nessun mi tocchi,' al bel collo d'intorno
> scritto avea di diamanti et di topazi.
> 'Libera farmi al mio Cesare parve.'
> Et era 'l sol già vòlto al mezzo giorno,
> gli occhi miei stanchi di mirar, non sazi,
> quand'io caddi ne l'acqua, et ella sparve.

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[24] Spiller, p. 61

> [A white doe on the green grass appeared to me, with two golden horns, between two rivers, in the shade of a laurel, when the sun was rising in an unripe season.
>
> Her look was so sweet and proud that to follow her I left every task, like the miser who as he seeks treasure sweetens his trouble with delight.
>
> 'Let no one touch me,' she bore written with diamonds and topazes around her lovely neck. 'It has pleased my Caesar to make me free.'
>
> And the sun had already turned at midday; my eyes were tired by looking but not sated, when I fell into the water, and she disappeared.] [25]

The inscription that the persona sees on the doe's collar refers to a legend, told by Solinus, that, three hundred years after Caesar's death, white stags were found with collars inscribed 'Noli me Tangere quia Caesaris sum' [Do not touch me for I am Caesar's]. These words are a conjunction of two passages in the Latin Vulgate. In John 20:17 Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection and says to her: Do not hold me [noli me tangere] since I have not yet gone up to my father. In Matthew 22:21 Jesus tells the Pharisees to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. In the conjoined phrase reported by Solinus a substitution has taken place. The white stag – symbolising Christ who belongs with God - is usurped by the temporal monarch, Caesar.

Robert During, the standard translator of Petrarch into English, suggests that in Petrarch's Rime 190, 'my Caesar', probably means God. Even if this is so, by using the name of an earthly ruler to represent God, and showing Caesar as possessing the doe, in place of 'Love Himself' who stood beside the Lady in Cavalcanti's poem, Petrarch starts down the road to humanism. The doe may belong to God, but she is also an image created by, and belonging to, the poet, earthly Caesar, whose imagination has set her free. Like God, the poet can create an abundant and ever-changing landscape, which he delights in filling with symbols of ecstatic self-contemplation. That, Narcissus-like, the God/poet might be leaning over

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[25] Francesco Petrarch, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, trans., Robert M. Durling, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 336

the river gazing at his own image reflected in the surface of the water, is suggested by the ending of the poem, when the speaker falls into the water and the vision disappears. [26]

In Ovid's myth, Narcissus mistakes his reflection for solid reality. When he tries to embrace it, the surface of the spring is disturbed and the image disappears. In horror, Narcissus beats himself to death. His tragedy is that he did not understand the image to be a reflection of himself. Early Christian thought reworked the *topos* of Narcissus to create an inner space in which the image is acknowledged to be a reflection, and Narcissus is transcended. Plotinus sees the soul as creating a mirror of the world, or reflection, that leads it towards the ideal of Beauty.[27] By creating reflections of the world the eye becomes 'inner', and rather than being dazzled by the 'bright objects' of the world, the eye looking inwardly sees the 'beauty of the good soul'. And as with the *stilnovisti*, the speaker is changed spiritually by the beautiful visions seen within his soul. 'He has become other, he is no longer himself.'[28]

Petrarch inherits transcendental Narcissism from Christian tradition. But for Petrarch, the experience of looking and reflecting is no longer expressed as a spiritual *salute* from the Lady that brings salvation. Petrach's *Joi* come from the unending delight of gazing with love at the greatness of his own soul. Even though the speaker's eyes are tired, they are still not sated by the image of the doe when he falls into the water. As Kristeva puts it, explaining Plotinian Narcissism, '(This) is a self sufficient love that radiates in itself and for itself – a felicitous, dazzling return of Narcissus.'[29] What we are seeing here is the internalisation of the Lady by the Renaissance poet-genius. Unlike the Narcissus of Ovid's myth, Petrarch knows that the doe is the idealised reflection of his mind. Therefore the poem ends lightly, almost humorously, with the speaker's mishap of carelessly falling into the water, rather than with the tragedy of his death.

Wyatt's translation of Petrarch's *Rime* 190, 'Who so List to Hounte',

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[26] The latin root of the verb 'di marer', used by Petrarch in line 13 to describe how the poet is looking when his eyes tire, is *mirari*, which is also the root of the English, 'to mirror'. OED Online, Third edition, March 2002

[27] Kristeva, *Tales of Love,* pp. 106-7

[28] Plotinus, *Enneads*, E. Bréhier, trans. [Belle Lettres], in Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, pp. 108-9

[29] Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, p. 111

famously reworks Petrarch's imagery. Wyatt transposes the doe from Petrarch's abundant, mythical landscape to the competitive field sport of the King's hunt, and at the same time makes the decisive shift in Caesar's identity from God to earthly King, introduced as a threatening third figure in his metaphorical landscape.

> Who so list to hounte I know where is an hynde
> But as for me helas I may no more
> The vayne travaille hath weried me so sore
> I ame of theim that farthest cometh behinde
> Yet may I by no meanes my weried mynde
> Drawe from the Diere, but as she fleeth afore
> Faynting I folowe I leve of therefore,
> Sithens in a nett I seke to hold the wynde
> Who list her hount I put him owte of dowbte
> As well as I may spend his tyme in vain
> And graven with Diamondes in letters plain
> There is written her faier neck rounde abowte
> Noli me tangere for Cesar's I ame
> And wylde for to hold, though I seme tame.[30]

By contrast with Petrarch's sonnet, Wyatt's arduous landscape of the mind wearies and defeats the fainting poet. A wind blows through it that he can't capture in the language or form of the sonnet, which is like a net full of holes. Rather than imaginary plenitude, the poet encounters lack. Even though he has no hope of reaching the hind, he follows, unable to give up his desire although the hind is too wild/dangerous to hold. In the competitive Oedipal world of the King's hunt, Wyatt's persona must accept that the hind belongs to Caesar the King. Wyatt emphasizes this authority's absolute power by holding back his description of the possessive inscription on the hind's collar until the sonnet's epigrammatic closing couplet.

As with Petrarch, the hind is portrayed by the speaker as an image, which his mind cannot draw away from. The speaker does not merge with the divine doe in a moment of spiritual epiphany, or gaze at her as a transcendental Narcissus, in loving self-regard. Rather, dispossessed by the King, the speaker is alone with himself, 'of theim that farthest cometh

[30] Sir Thomas Wyatt, 'Who so list to hounte I know where is an hynde', in Alice Oswald, ed., *Sir Thomas Wyatt: Poems selected by Alice Oswald* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), p. xxiii

behinde'. Deprived of union with the divine or with himself, like Ovid's Narcissus, Wyatt's speaker cannot close the circle of psychic 'internality'. Like the net with which he seeks to capture the wind, his self 'remains open, gaping, mortal',[31] lamenting its lack.

Just as, in the twelfth century, Kristeva finds a connection between the joyful songs of the Troubadours and Bernard of Clairveaux's religious preoccupation with the biblical text *Song of Songs*, so it seems to me that it is no accident that the anguished Oedipal voice of *Who so List To Hunt* coincides not only with Wyatt's loss of Anne Boleyn to Henry VIII, but also with the crisis in religion brought about by the King in order to unmake a succession of Queens, in the process establishing the English reformation, with its repression of images of the divine Lady in the Deuterocanonical Wisdom texts, and Mary herself. Henceforward, in English courtly love poetry, spiritual salvation and a masculine God will be opposed to the self-fashioning of courtly love, which is now guided towards idealisation by Ovid's love Goddess Venus and her son Cupid, who are understood by sonneteers to be literary tropes.[32] But rather than filling the speaker with jouissance, Venus and Cupid victimise and torment their hapless victims, and the poetic emphasis shifts from the jubilatory experiences of transcendence that we have seen in Continental courtly love poetry, to the passions and torments of the early modern subject, in whose internalised landscape desire's lack comes to the fore.

The theme of melancholy lack underpins Lady Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia and Amphilanthus*, the first sonnet sequence to be written by a

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[31] Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, p. 121

[32] See for example, Sonnet V in Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*: 'It is most true, what we call *Cupids* dart / An image is, which for ourselues we carue, / And, foolse, adore in temple of our hart, / Till that good god make church and churchmen starue. … True, that on earth we are but pilgrims made, / And should in soule up to our countrey moue: / True, and yet true that I must *Stella* loue.' Renascence Editions, University of Oregon, 2009 (http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/stella.html). As far as I know, the only English sonneteer to retain the association of the Lady with the Christian divine is Spenser, see for example, Sonnet XXII in *Amoretti and Epithalamion*: 'This holy season fit to fast and pray, / Men to deuotion ought to be inclined: / therefore, I likewise on so holy day, / for my sweet Saynt some seruice fit will find, / Her temple fayre is built within my mind, / in which her glorious ymage placed is …' Yet Spenser sets up this image of his Lady as a Christian divinity only to expose this fantasy as folly later in the sonnet sequence. Renascence Editions, University of Oregon, 2009 (http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/amoretti.html)

woman in English. The opening sonnet in the sequence recalls the opening of Petrarch's *Trionfe*, when, warmed by the early morning sun, with its connotations of new beginnings, Petrarch's persona falls asleep, and, after dreaming that he becomes the victim of Queen Venus and her son Cupid, wakes love struck. Wroth chooses strikingly different language to introduce this Petrarchan theme. From the first line of the sonnet Pamphilia is enveloped in images of darkest night, and, unlike male sonneteers, who delight in and assert their self-knowledge, Wroth portrays Pamphilia in a deathlike state of not knowing herself.

> When nights black mantle could most darknes prove,
> And sleepe deaths Image did my senceses hiere
> From knowledge of my self, …

Pamphilia awakes from the dream as a lover, Cupid having 'martir'd my poore hart'. She burns with passion, and longs for the sight of her beloved, 'Your sight is all the food I doe desire,' [P15]. But throughout the sequence Pamphilia, whose name means 'all loving', is tortured by jealousy in the absence of her beloved, Amphilanthus, whose name means, 'the lover of two'.[33] It is tempting to conjecture that the 'greater powre' that ravishes Pamphilia's 'deere delight' [P29] is not so much a flesh and blood rival as it is his beloved Lady, the internalised image representing his own, self-fashioned, self-infatuation. Whatever the cause of Amphilanthus' inconstancy, in stark contrast to earlier sonnet sequences, the love object is entirely absent from all but two poems in the sequence.

When Pamphilia is in the presence of her beloved, she gazes at him with all the intensity of desire that we expect from a courtly love poet: 'mine eyes enjoye full sight of love / Contented that such hapinesses move.' [P39] But Amphilanthus is not developed in the sequence as an object of the speaker's mind. There are no blazon or carpe diem themes itemising his desirable qualities or expressing the urgency of consummating the relationship. When, in Poem 23, the poet imagines a hunt, she does not picture Pamphilia pursuing an image of the beloved as a charming, desirable stag, in a feminine reversal of Wyatt's imagery. Pamphilia withdraws from the hunt altogether, to sit alone inside, chasing her thoughts in a day-like night, her eyes 'voyd of right' because they can't gaze on her beloved.

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[33] Josephine A. Roberts, Ed., *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), p. 42

In this blank and solitary interior space, Pamphilia's mind flies to the 'wished end' of hawking, in a fantasy of being captured in the talons of her beloved, as a wild bird is captured by a hawk. Pamphilia visualises herself as her beloved's prey, the object of her beloved's desire, which indeed classical psychoanalysis would lead us to expect of feminine desire, but this imagery is presented in a kind of double negative. The metaphor of the hawk does not stand for the symbolic presence of the beloved, but is grasped as a thought, which marks his absence. The desired moment of sexual possession is merely gestured towards in the abstract term 'wished end', rather than being symbolised within an imaginary landscape. In Pamphilia's world of feminine lack, her solitary thoughts are more prized than social pastimes yet her 'sweet thoughts of love' are not true pleasures, but merely 'poore vanities':

> When every one to pleasing pastime hies
> Some hunt, some hauke, some play, while some delight
> In sweet discourse, and musique showes ioys might
> Yett I my thoughts doe farr above thes prise.
>
> The ioy which I take, is that free from eyes
> I sitt, and wunder att this daylike night
> Soe to dispose them-selves, as voyd of right;
> And leave true pleasure for poore vanities.
>
> When others hunt, my thoughts I have in chase;
> If hauke, my minde att wished end doth fly,
> Discourse, I with my spiritt tauke, and cry
> While others, musique choose as greatest grace.
>
> O God, say I, can thes fond pleasures move,
> Or musique bee butt in sweet thoughts of love? [P26]

For Kristeva, the narcissistic image, on which idealizations of the other are based, is a necessary self-deception that protects the not-yet an Ego from the emptiness of the mother's absence, and thus insures an elementary separation. It is preserved through identification with the speech of the other, and the incorporation of language.[34] It is possible that Pamphilia's thoughts do not conjure up a narcissistic image of her beloved

[34] Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, pp. 25-26

because, according to Kristeva, women are more vulnerable to melancholic breakdown than men. The subject's loss of the archaic bond with the mother, or maternal body, is for men more easily sublated within language, especially poetic language, in which rhythm and tone recapture the joy of that early bond, whereas for women, who are largely excluded from the compensation of symbolic representations, the loss of the mother is more easily experienced as an imprisonment in a dead space of emptiness and loss. For Kristeva, writing is the cure for this melancholy: 'poetic revolution' is a counter-depressant than enables the author to creatively participate in symbolic production, and in the process transform herself and her culture. [35] Of course, in writing a sonnet sequence, Wroth is participating in just such a process of creative transformation. But the speaker of her sonnet sequence is not permitted to perform such a creative, public role. Pamphilia is unable to 'breathe least part' of her passionate love in public:

> How like a fire doth love increase in mee,
> The longer that itt lasts, the stronger still,
> The greater purer, brighter, …
>
> Mine eyes can scarce sustaine the flames my hart
> Doth trust in them my passions to impart,
> And languishingly strive to show my love;
>
> My breath nott able is to breathe least part
> Of that increasing fuell of my smart;
> yet love I will till I butt ashes prove.' [P55]

What Wroth offers us with her persistent images of sleep, night, death, and loss, is an insight into the emptiness behind the screen of the narcissistic image: 'Night cannot grief intombe though black as spite.' [P12] Though she longs for the other, Pamphilia finds only the abyss of the spring in which the reflection of the self disintegrates. By portraying Pamphilia as suffering from the almost total absence of Amphilanthus, to the extent that he is barely imagined other than as an absence, Wroth takes the reader much further into Narcissus' melancholy abyss than does Wyatt. Like Ovid's Narcissus, Pamphilia longs to die.

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[35] Zakin, Emily, 'Psychoanalytic Feminism' in Edward N. Zalta ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2011 Edition)*, (http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/feminism-psychoanalysis)

For all the depth of my hart-held despaire
Is that for you I feele nott death for care;
But now I'll seek it since you will nott save. [P6]

At the apex of the sonnet sequence, Pamphilia considers the alternatives that are available to her in a 'Crowne of Sonnets dedicated to Love', in which she compares her predicament to being trapped in a labyrinth. Petrarch described his love for Laura as a labyrinth of 'lovely branches' in which reason is dead; and one yearning desire is born after another:

Vertute, Honor, Bellezza, atto gentile,
Dolci parole ai bei rami m' àn giunto
Ove soavemente il cors s'invesca

[Virtue, honor, beauty, gentle bearing, sweet words brought us to the lovely branches, that my heart may be sweetly enlimed.] [36]

Petrarch's labyrinth of lovely branches includes the entire body of his *Rime,* whereas Wroth's labyrinth is a closed cycle of fourteen sonnets in which the last line of each poem becomes the first line of the next poem in the sequence. Rather than creating an imaginary landscape, Pamphilia continues to examine her solitary thoughts, in a metaphysical dialogue with herself. And by contrast to Petrarch's delight in his never-ending entrapment, the directions open to Pamphilia are all painful.

In this strange labourinth how shall I turne?
Wayes are on all sids while the way I miss:
If to the right hand, ther, in love I burne;
Lett me goe forward, therin danger is;

If to the left, suspition hinder bliss,
Lett mee turne back, shame cries I ought returne
Nor fainte though crosses with my fortunes kiss;
Stand still is harder, although sure to mourne; …

Yett that which most my troubled sence doth move

[36] Petrarch Rime 211, trans. Robert Durling, as quoted in Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 11

> is to leave all, and take the thread of love. [P77]

The 'thread of love' is not a physical direction, but, as we learn in the following sonnet, the metaphysical concept of Love itself.

> … Which line straite leads unto the soules content …
>
> Which chaste thoughts guide us then owr minds ar bent
> To take that good which ills from us remove,
> Light of true Love, brings fruite which none repent
> Butt constant lovers seeke, and wish to prove;
>
> Love is the shining star of blessings light;
> The fervent fire of zeale, the roote of peace,
> The lasting lampe fed with the oyle of right;
> Image of fayth, and wombe for joyes increase. [P78]

Love, personified in the corona as a mature Cupid in his court, is an idealised masculine divine love, with the qualities of being chaste, constant, and blessed, comparable to Christian love. Pamphilia now attempts a role reversal in the traditional speaking voice of the courtly love poet. Rather than presenting herself as the desiring lover, she proposes to herself that she join Cupid in his court to, 'bee in his brave court a glorious light', that is, to occupy the position of the Lady. [P79]

As the Lady, Pamphilia ejects the Goddess Venus from the court because Venus lusts, which is sinful. In the lovely fifth sonnet of the corona, describing Pamphilia's longed for state of *joi*, Pamphilia differentiates lust from 'true desire', which is elevated by Love into:

> vertues which inspire / Soules with devine love, …
> and guide hee is to joyings; open eyes
> Hee hath to hapines' [P81]

Thus transformed by Love Pamphilia presents herself as offering an epiphany that rains blessedness on her beloved like the *salute* of the Beloved Lady, and suggests that if he rejects this experience, her beloved will lose the opportunity to become a greater soul, more 'parfett' than he is. The poet identifies herself in this role by the use of the pun 'worth', the

common pronunciation for 'Wroth'.[37]

> Hee that shuns love doth love him self the less
> And cursed hee whos spiritt nott admires
> The worth of love, wher endless blessednes
> Raines, and commands, maintained by heavnly fires [P84]

The Crowne of Sonnets contains the speaker's passionate articulation of the joys, fires, ashes and light of her desires. The speaker is also idealised in the feminine architecture of the labyrinth, which metaphorically encircles the interior space of an idealised female body within which Cupid rules as a phallic love God. In Poem 81, the poet makes this connection explicit, 'love is … the womb for joyes increase.' Ultimately though, the Protestant Wroth's attempt to elevate a real desiring heroine to the role of the divine Lady can't be sustained. 'Frayle dull earth' undermines Pamphilia's attempt at self-idealisation by bringing forth 'plenty that in ills abound':

> A timeles, and unseasonable birth
> Planted in ill, in wurse time springing found,
> Which hemlock like might feed a sick-witts mirthe
> Wher unruld vapors swim in endless rounde. [P87]

Like a miscarriage, jealousy undoes Pamphilia's faith of heart and pure thoughts. So as we reach the fourteenth and last sonnet in the corona, these 'mischiefs' bring her full circle, back to her initial position of paralysis.

> Curst jealousie doth all her forces bend
> To my undoing; thus my harmes I see.
>
> Soe though in Love I fervently doe burne,
> In this strange labourinth how shall I turn? [P90]

In the second last sonnet in the sequence, Pamphila overcomes a wintry and desolate mood, to hopefully maintain her love for her beloved in his absence, 'for this state may mend.' In a mirror reversal of the tormented opening sonnet, the final sonnet resolves Pamphilia's state of not knowing herself and her anguished lack. She tells herself:

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[37] Bear, R.S. and Bear, Micah eds., *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, (Renascence Editions, University of Oregon, 1992), bibliographic note, (http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/mary.html#Pamphilia%20)

> My muse now hapy, lay thyself to rest,
> Sleepe in the quiet of a faithful love

This resolution is achieved by abandoning the discourse of Venus and her son with the tormenting 'phant'sies' they provoke, in order to study truth instead, 'which shall eternall goodnes prove,'

> And thus leave off, what's past showes you can love,
> Now lett your constancy your honour prove.' (P103)

Constancy is an abstract Christian virtue, modelled on Christ's love, as expressed, for example, in Hebrews 13:8, 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever'. The sonnet sequence seems so closely to follow Revelation 2:10, 'Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life', that the resolution of the quandary posed in the 'Crowne of Sonnets' could be modelled on it. Although, as we have seen, Pamphilia fails to elevate herself to become the divine Lady, she now absorbs the Lady's attribute of constancy into her wan genius.[38]

Crucially, Pamphilia reasons her way to her rejection of Love's 'phant'sies'. Wroth's valorisation of reason over Love reflects the banishment of love taking place within the Renaissance as the *Ego affectus est*, the loving subject of the *Song of Songs* and courtly love poetry, gives way to the thinking subject, the *Ego cogito*, as it will soon be formulated by Descartes in his *Discours De la Méthode* of 1637.

Wroth reworks the persona of the Petrarchan sonneteer, transforming the metaphor of the Lady into the embodiment of a feminine desiring subjectivity grappling with lack. The pleasurable poetic performance of the human self overcomes the devastations of this abyss, in the creation of a reasoning, if wintry and still lacking, Christian humanist subject, who rejects the dressing up of love in Venus' livery. That this defensive formulation of Pamphilia's Ego is not creatively life-affirming is betrayed by the 'gloewoorme like' appearance of the sun's 'colde beames', and that it leads her to put her poetic genius to rest, in the resolution of her need to

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[38] This interpretation is supported by Wroth's subsequent development of the narrative of *Pamphilia and Amphilanthus* in the prose romance *Urania*. Her editor notes that in the latter work, when Pamphilia accepts the keys to the Throne of Love, the personified '*Constancy* vanished, as metamorphosing her self into her breast.' Roberts, *Wroth*, p. 142

write courtly love poetry. Fittingly, the sonnet sequence that takes the side of reason against Venus and Cupid is the last courtly love sonnet sequence to be published in English.

Wroth's disillusionment with courtly love was shared by the young George Herbert, who wrote in 1610:

> My God, where is that ancient heat towards thee.
> Wherewith whole showls of *Martyrs* once did burn,
> Besides their other flames? Doth Poetry
> Wear Venus *livery? Only serve her turn?*
> Why are not *Sonnets* made of thee? And layes
> Upon thy Altar burnt? Cannot thy love
> Heighten a spirit to sound out thy praise
> As well as any she? [39]

By the 17th Century the inherited tradition of courtly love poetry and its personas, themes and metaphors were no longer a credible way of expressing the self and its aspirations, partly because, as I have outlined, the development of the sonnet tradition enabled the self-fashioning of modern subjectivity, in which the Lady vanished into the poet's persona.

Mary Wroth is a contemporary of John Donne's, and the work of both poets shares a preoccupation with metaphysics and scepticism about courtly love, particularly with regards to the constancy of the beloved. But while Wroth ultimately portrays Pamphilia's constancy as an honourable expression of true love, Donne mocks the very idea of the Lady's constancy, along with other common tropes in courtly love poetry.

This satirical downgrading of the Lady is identified by Kristeva as the collapse of the idealisation necessary for *Joi* to be experienced in heterosexual love relationships. 'The Lady need no longer be exalted: an object to be conquered, in the same way as the rest of the world, the feminine character is a target of satire. … Reason, prevailing more and more, was to banish Love and *Joi* and, with them, not woman (was she ever truly the main preoccupation of courtliness?) but the very possibility of idealisation supported by the possible-impossible meeting with the other sex.'[40]

[39] George Herbert, 'double sonnet', in F. E. Hutchinson, ed., *The Works of George Herbert*, Rev. ed. (Oxford: 1978), p. 206, as quoted in Spiller, p. 177.
[40] Kristeva, *Tales of Love,* p. 296

Donne undermines the idealisations of courtly love poetry with the hard-edged reality of a lovers tryst, not only as thematic content, but also in form and style, in 'Woman's Constancy', a sonnet that breaks away from the traditional sonnet form.

> Now thou hast lov'd me one whole day,
> To morrow when thou leav'st what wilt thou say?
> Wilt thou then Antedate some new made vow?
>               Or say that now
> We are not just those persons, which we were?
> Or that oathes made in reverentiall feare
> Of Love, and his wrath, any may forsweare?
> Or, as true deaths, true maryages untie,
> So lovers contracts, images of those,
> Binde but till sleep, death's image, them unloose?
>               Or, your owne end to Justifie,
> For having purpos'd change, and falsehood; you
> Can have no way but falsehood to be true?
> Vaine lunatique, against these scapes I could
>               Dispute, and conquer, if I would,
>               Which I abstain to doe,
> For by to morrow, I may think so too. [41]

Donne uses dramatic techniques and plain speaking to break up the predictable smoothness, rhymes and turns of the sonnet form. His sonet has an odd number of lines, seventeen in total, of irregular lengths, and while in broad outline it has much the same proportion as the sonnet, its raggedness allows Donne to mimic the sardonic turns of the speaker's wit. In the last four lines of the poem the speaker appears to come to the point with a conventional couplet, in which like a courtly love poet, he asserts that he could persuade his lover to be constant, but then he mirrors the couplet with another one expressing the opposite stance: that the speaker won't take the love poet's position of persuasion and seduction, because he too may want to wriggle out of the vows he made in the moment of passion.

Donne's speaker mocks the very notion of metaphorical images in courtly love poetry, with the mirroring within the poem of images comparing true deaths that untie true marriages with 'lovers contracts,

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[41] John Hayward, ed., *John Donne*, p. 25

images of those', unloosed not by death, but by death's image sleep. The endless, Ovid inspired, metamorphoses of Laura into charming images of the doe, the laurel tree, and so on, in Petrarch's Rime, for example, are here derided as nothing more than the refractions of an empty hall of mirrors, that can bend any kind of falsehood into the semblance of truth. Donne's speaker is a lover for whom love vows are meaningless, who cannot idealise his lover in order to experience a compelling lifelong, creative passion. He is destined instead to be always lacking, in the constant search for new objects of desire, which will always reveal themselves to be empty images.

Later in his life, Donne would show us the difficulties that the Renaissance genius would have in connecting with an increasingly intangible male God amidst the spiritual uncertainty of the early modern world, with its great strides of reason and knowledge, the New Philosophy that filled the seventeenth century with such anxiety. As Kristeva describes it, with the advent of the *Ego cogito*, 'internal space closes up to the benefit not of a journey in the folds of the soul and of its lining, the utterance, but of one bent for knowledge and possession of the outside.'[42] The speaker in Sonnet XIV of the Holy Sonnets expresses this anguish as a kind of exile from, and desperate longing to be ravished by, precisely the epiphanic experience of Love's affects that proved so ecstatic for Cavalcanti's medieval speaker in his encounter with the Lady's *salute*:

> Batter my heart, three person'd God; for, you
> As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;
> That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee,'and bend
> Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.
> I, like a usurpt towne, to'another due,
> Labour to'admit you, but Oh, to no end,
> Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,
> But is captiv'd, and proves weake or untrue.
> Yet dearly'I love you,'and would be loved faine,
> But am betroth'd unto your enemie:
> Divorce mee,'untie, or breake that knot againe,
> Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
> Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,
> Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.[43]

[42] Kristeva, *Tales of Love,* p. 296
[43] John Hayward, ed., *John Donne*, pp. 171-2

For Donne's speaker reason is no help in the labour to admit God or experience his affects. In order to know God's love, the speaker yearns to feel God's affects on his body, but this is precisely what he cannot feel. God's touch is too light and innocuous to imprison the speaker, who in begging for a more thorough ravishment inscribes the amatory space of his desire in language that bursts with syllables shoe-horned into the pentameter lines of the sonnet, roughly trampling over what had once been the rocking iambic rhythm of courtly love sonnets inspired by the Lady.

Donne's love poem 'The Sunne Rising' represents the epitome of Renaissance self-fashioning, and it also includes his most complex reference to the theme of 'the hunt', in which Donne's lover persona offers a bravura display of self-mastery and high self-esteem. He begins the poem by addressing the sun as a 'busie old foole, unruly Sunne' who is a 'sawcy pedantique wretch', in a marked contrast to Petrarch's idealisation of the sun as the god Apollo, patron of poets. At the time when the medieval order of the universe is being overthrown by the Copernican revolution, Donne undermines the old fashioned idealisations of courtly love by presenting the sun as having an unruly orbit. However, his persona has such complete mastery and power that he can tease the cheeky old sun, and order it around. He instructs the sun to 'Goe tell Court-huntsmen, that the King will ride,' rather than bothering the lovers with the morning light.

Donne's lover is 'all States', offering the treasures of 'both th'India's of spice and Myne, as well as perhaps being in all states of sexual arousal. Having thus demoted the Lady to the status of a conquered world, the speaker takes the position of its ruler. He tells the sun that he is all the kings in the world: 'those Kings whom thou saw'st yesterday/ … All here in one bed lay.' Unlike Dante, who reflects the reverence of the *stilnovisti* for their Ladies, when he concludes the *Commedia* after Beatrice leads him to 'l'amore che move il sole e l'altre stelle' [the love that moves the sun and other stars], Donne's male lover imposes his own will on the sun: 'Shine here to us, and thou art every where; / This bed thy centre is, these walls, thy spheare.' Donne's persona exemplifies the absorption of the Lady in the Renaissance 'genius', who places himself at the centre of this humanist universe, which is his to command.[44]

'The Sunne Rising' is a vigorous and jubilant love poem, yet as we have

[44] Ibid, pp. 26-27

observed, Donne would not spend his life in such a state of bliss. Donne's speaker's fantasy is conjured up at the moment when the Renaissance genius has lost possession of the divine Lady, and with her loss, the genius has also lost the loving subject's ability to *Joi*.

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An earlier version of this essay was awarded the 2012 John Bell and Joyce Williams Prize in Shakespeare Studies.

# Finding a Form for Modern Love: The Marriage of Form and Content in George Meredith's *Modern Love*

NATASHA MOORE

There are few aspects of George Meredith's 1862 sonnet sequence *Modern Love* that have not proved problematic in criticism of the poem, from the time of its publication to the present day. Across the century and a half of its reception history, critics have consistently disagreed on such fundamentals as what actually happens in the poem (is the wife in fact unfaithful? what is it that prompts her suicide?) and how many personae are relating the story (whether husband and narrator; or husband-and-narrator, a single consciousness shifting between first- and third-person narration). They have offered innumerable readings of its more obscure passages – such as the famous concluding lines of the sequence, with their 'ramping hosts of warrior horse' throwing 'that faint thin line upon the shore',[1] which in spite of manifold and ingenious efforts remain less cryptic than many of the glosses designed to explicate them – and assigned a full spectrum of values to the 'modernity' invoked by the poem's title, from stark psychological realism to scientific rationalism or a moral principle of equality between the sexes. Oddly enough, one of the work's most conspicuous departures from convention, the spillage of each of its fifty sonnets from the customary fourteen to sixteen lines, has attracted perhaps the least controversy of almost any feature of *Modern Love*. Any student of literary form knows to identify a sonnet first and foremost by counting lines; yet Meredith's breach of this all-but-inviolable law passes largely unchallenged through the upheavals of a century and a half of scholarship on the text. The poet in his correspondence referred to the individual units of *Modern Love* more than once as sonnets; sonnet XXX of the poem itself gestures self-reflexively towards its generic affiliation, the

[1] Phyllis B. Bartlett (ed.), *The Poems of George Meredith*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

husband concluding a bleak meditation on the ephemerality of love between 'scientific animals' with a sardonic 'Lady, this is my sonnet to your eyes'; and his reviewers, obliging in little else, seem to have accepted the designation equably enough.

Several critics, to be sure, have since made efforts to mount a formal defence of Meredith's chosen form, whether based on literary precedent or the self-justifying purposefulness of the expansion. Some appeal to the Italian caudate or 'tailed' sonnet of sixteen lines to diminish the unorthodoxy of the poem, or else to underscore the complexity of its engagement with the sonnet tradition. Meredith himself apparently thought to dismiss the notion of kinship between the two elongated forms by responding to an enquiry from William Sharp, who wished to include one of the poems of *Modern Love* in an anthology of contemporary sonnets, that 'The Italians allow of 16 lines, under the title of 'Sonnets with a tail.' But the lines of 'Modern Love' were not designed for that form.'[2] Sharp was only the first to disregard this somewhat evasive gloss on the unusual length of the sections of *Modern Love*, labelling them 'essentially "caudated sonnets"' in *Sonnets of this Century* anyway; perhaps the most recent is Kenneth Crowell, who argues in his article '*Modern Love* and the *Sonetto Caudato*: Comedic Intervention through the Satiric Sonnet Form' for an artful coyness in Meredith's remarks to Sharp, and for a reappraisal of the sonnet sequence in relation to the 'tailed' sonnet's tradition of political critique.[3] Others simply point to the effectiveness of the added lines in mirroring the inconclusiveness of the poem as a whole. Barbara Garlick, for example, suggests that the extended form 'belies the possibility of both the glib couplet conclusion of the Elizabethan sonnet and the justificatory tone of the Petrarchan sestet', and sees in the symmetry of each sonnet's four *abba* rhymed quatrains a structural echo of the poem's general sense that 'there can be no clear-cut resolution, only a presentation of event and weighing of argument in the futile attempt to paint a just picture of disintegration'.[4] Meredith's critics as a body have been eager to

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[2] George Meredith to William Sharp, November 12, 1885, in C. L. Cline (ed.), *Letters of George Meredith*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), II, p. 798.

[3] William Sharp, *Sonnets of this Century* (1887), 8 vols. The remark is reported by William T. Going in *Scanty Plot of Ground: Studies in the Victorian Sonnet* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), p. 102. Kenneth Crowell, '*Modern* Love and the *Sonetto Caudato*: Comedic Intervention through the Satiric Sonnet Form', *Victorian Poetry* 48:4 (2010), 539-557.

[4] Barbara Garlick, 'The Message from Her: Anthony Thwaite's *Victorian Voices* and George Meredith's *Modern Love*', in Penny Gay, Judith Johnston and

endorse *Modern Love*'s claim to sonnethood in spite of the superfluous lines, presumably because it aligns itself so closely with the sonnet tradition in other respects – most overtly in its pointedly archaic diction ('my Lady', 'thee'/'thy', 'paths perilous' (XXVIII), 'languishing in drouth' (XXXII)) and deployment of the conventional imagery of *amour courtois* (stars, roses, poison, hair, eyes, lips, and so on) frequently characteristic of Renaissance sonnetry.[5] The invocation of the sonnet form, fourteen lines or no, is central to the poem's *raison d'être* as (in Meredith's words) 'a dissection of the sentimental passion of these days'.[6]

In contrast to the rigid formulae of the neoclassical genre-system on the one hand, and the outright rejection of genre constraints by such early twentieth century critics as Benedetto Croce on the other, most writers on genre and poetic form in recent decades affirm both the indispensability of genre to artistic production and the elasticity of generic reference. While many commentators on *Modern Love* have found ways of accommodating Meredith's sixteen-line sonnet within traditional definitions of the form, a more malleable conception of generic affiliation makes, I suggest, a more promising starting-point for a consideration of the form of *Modern Love* – such as underpins William Going's conclusion, in his study of the

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Catherine Waters (eds), *Victorian Turns, Neo-Victorian Returns: Essays on Fiction and Culture* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), p. 195. Cynthia Tucker, similarly, argues that the division of Meredith's sonnets into 'four uniform and independent units' serves both 'to promote an attempt at logical thought' and to 'structurally prevent its consummation', creating the effect of 'a mind desperately grappling with an experience which can never be fully resolved or understood'; Alison Chapman takes a slightly different line, reading into the supplementary lines an 'attempt to delay the sonnet's traditional volta and closure, just as the tortured speaker attempts to postpone the final dissolution of his marriage'. Cynthia Grant Tucker, 'Meredith's Broken Laurel: "Modern Love" and the Renaissance Sonnet Tradition', *Victorian Poetry* 10:4 (1972), 351-365: p. 355n6; Alison Chapman, 'Sonnet and Sonnet Sequence', in Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman and Antony H. Harrison (eds), *A Companion to Victorian Poetry* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 99-114: p. 110.

[5] It should be noted that Marianne Van Remoortel, in her recent work *Lives of the Sonnet, 1787-1895: Genre, Gender and Criticism* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), identifies a period of *Modern Love* criticism in the first half of the twentieth century that takes an 'exclusively novelistic approach' to the poem and as a result neglects or denies its claim to the sonnet form (p. 135). However, disagreement over the generic label nonetheless constitutes a surprisingly minor aspect of *Modern Love* criticism.

[6] George Meredith to Augustus Jessop, September 20, 1862, in *Letters*, I, p. 156.

Victorian sonnet, that Meredith 'must be given credit for knowing what he was about when he decided upon a verse form that would above all things be flexible: it should suggest the sonnet without being one in its strictest sense' (p. 104). To treat generic membership less as a pass/fail test than a set of resources which can be more or less fully mobilised by a poet, according to the relation he wishes his work to bear to the established associations and implications of a particular genre, is to recognise how Meredith could so successfully bring into play the range of meanings which inhere in the sonnet tradition while flouting the most basic of the form's conventions.

In this *Modern Love* displays its consanguinity with a group of other mid-Victorian poems arising at least partly out of a common intention of demonstrating the legitimacy of contemporary, everyday life as a subject for poetry – an ambition rendered controversial both by a widely-shared sense that the modern age was unpropitious to poetry, and by the rapid rise of the novel as the form most naturally suited, it seemed, to representing the fragmented and mundane realities of the nineteenth century. That Meredith's most novelistic poem belongs to the same category as such other mid-century 'verse-novels' as Arthur Hugh Clough's *The Bothie of Tober-na-vuolich* (1848) and *Amours de Voyage* (written 1849, first published in 1858), Coventry Patmore's *The Angel in the House* (1854-1862), and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856) has been noted before. Graham Hough, in the introduction to his volume of Meredith's poetry, has no doubt that *Modern Love* should be classified with these works – or that the enterprise as a whole may be dismissed as a failure:

> Among the many phantom projects that haunted the imagination of the mid-nineteenth century was the poem of modern life, the poem that could deal with contemporary circumstances and settings as naturally as earlier romantic poetry had dealt with historical and legendary themes… Success was variable, and never of a very high order… Meredith in 'Modern Love' is clearly working the same vein, and his title is meant to call attention to the fact.[7]

[7] Graham Hough, Introduction to *Selected Poems of George Meredith* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), pp. 5-6.

It is not clear that Hough's scepticism is entirely justified; several of these poems were immensely popular at the time of their publication, and several (not, with the honourable exception of *Aurora Leigh*, generally the same works) are attracting increasing attention from scholars of the period today. Clough and Meredith in particular forge new, unconventional, and highly flexible poetic forms capable of uniting within themselves both the dignity and heightened intensity with which verse tends to imbue its subject, and a naturalness more readily associated with prose.

For all of these writers seeking to poeticise what must have seemed, in more ways than one, the most novelistic of ages, it was by fitting the mundane or awkward or confronting elements of contemporary life to the contours of traditional poetic genres – such as epic, pastoral, and sonnet sequence – that they hoped to establish the ongoing compatibility of daily experience with the beauty and dignity of poetry. Meredith's fellow poets of this school look mainly to the epic as a means of affirming the worth of modern, everyday life, in defiance of a pervasive contemporary rhetoric declaring the age of heroism long past, and the present a comparatively petty and prosaic affair. Clough, for example, casts his narratives of an undergraduate reading party (*The Bothie*) and a classically-educated young gentleman's first experience of modern, 'rubbishy' Rome (*Amours de Voyage*) in Homeric hexameters in order to test the validity of the epic impulse in the modern world, and Barrett Browning employs a full panoply of epic conventions – division into books, epic similes, ship catalogues, voyage and homecoming motifs – in her triumphant account of the hero as woman of letters. In *Modern Love* Meredith turns instead to the discourse of courtly love that found expression in particularly the Petrarchan sonnet tradition, measuring the chequered reality of a modern, middle-class marriage against its idealised conventions. As is the case with Clough, Patmore, and Barrett Browning, it is largely through the apparent antagonism of form and content (in a sonnet sequence chronicling the painful implosion of a once-loving marriage) that Meredith grapples with the place of the 'poetic' in actual modern life, and of actual experience within 'modern' poetry.[8]

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[8] Meredith's membership of this movement towards the poetic representation of modern, everyday life is, however, more qualified than for these other poets. *Modern Love*, as is well known, arises most directly out of Meredith's own unhappy experience of his marriage to Mary Ellen Nicolls (daughter of Thomas Peacock), and thus in terms of its genesis serves only secondarily as a contribution to the defence of modern subjects in poetry. Meredith also differs from the leading figures of this school in being the only one to actually write novels as well as

1. Mismatch: form versus content in *Modern Love*

Perhaps more than any other poetic form, the sonnet in its fixity functions as a play on expectation. Conditioned by long tradition to both formal (anticipating the customary volta or turn in the thought of the sonnet) and thematic (the exaggerated devotion of courtly love) conventions, the seasoned sonnet reader encounters the text progressively as a series of confirmations of, or deviations from, the expected. The sense of disjunction that is the predominating effect of *Modern Love* arises from an elaborate counterpoint of form with content; the rhyme scheme of the individual units of the poem and their relation to one another conjure up the outlines of the sonnet sequence, yet the refusal of a volta, the obstinate symmetry of each sonnet with its additional pair of lines, resists the conventional logic of the genre. Similarly, the poem's imagery and diction invoke the love sonnet's traditional range of associations, while the reality with which they correspond is a thoroughly unromantic one of domestic misery and alienation. Both formal and thematic features of Meredith's poem, then, show up the tension between the generic mould of the sonnet and the content or story of *Modern Love*, a tension that in fact mirrors the predicament of the husband in the poem. The sequence records his struggles to come to terms with the disjunction between prefabricated form and actual content in his own life – the gap between the one-size-fits-all institution of marriage and his idiosyncratic experience of it, between expectation and reality.

Thus the husband's fragmented narration of the dissolution of his marriage largely depends on the interactions of the traditional sonnet form with the novelistic realism of the poem's 'modern' content. By casting his experience of marriage in the middle of the nineteenth century in terms of the stylised woman worship and romantic posturing of courtly love, the husband-narrator weighs the literary paradigm against the reality of 'modern love' and finds it profoundly anachronistic – irreconcilable to either the banality of domestic life in the modern world or the rationalistic outlook of Victorian science. The latter is brought repeatedly to bear on the romantic clichés that no longer hold true for the protagonists' marriage, notably in the personifications of 'Nature' that punctuate the sequence. A product both of his time and his trauma, the husband aligns his own sense

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poetry; indeed, he had already engaged with the personal trauma of his wife's infidelity in very different mode in his first full-length novel, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859).

of disillusionment in a love he thought immutable with the contemporary vision of nature 'red in tooth and claw', defined by transience, and ranging from cheerful indifference to cold callousness in its relation to the human world. In the shift from divinely ordered and ultimately benevolent creation to a chaos of blind, indiscriminate forces to which *Modern Love* bears cynical witness, 'Love' is evacuated of the mystery and sublimity with which poetic tradition invests it and reduced to 'a thing of moods' (X), a chance conjunction of elements subject to change and decay along with everything else. Throughout the poem the language of courtly love is juxtaposed with that of scientific and specifically evolutionary discourse, to varying effects. The tension between the two is at its most acute in the pained cynicism of sonnet XXX (already quoted in part for its overt, if sardonic, claim to sonnethood):

> What are we first? First, animals; and next
> Intelligences at a leap; on whom
> Pale lies the distant shadow of the tomb,
> And all that draweth on the tomb for text.
> Into which state comes Love, the crowning sun:
> Beneath whose light the shadow loses form.
> We are the lords of life, and life is warm.
> Intelligence and instinct now are one.
> But nature says: 'My children most they seem
> When they least know me: therefore I decree
> That they shall suffer.' Swift doth young Love flee,
> And we stand wakened, shivering from our dream.
> Then if we study Nature we are wise.
> Thus do the few who live but with the day:
> The scientific animals are they. –
> Lady, this is my sonnet to your eyes.

The 'sonnet' expresses in theatrically poetic idiom – 'Pale lies the distant shadow of the tomb', 'Love, the crowning sun', 'Swift doth young Love flee', 'shivering from our dream' – a thoroughly unpoetic sentiment, precisely opposed to the protestations of the exalting and eternal nature of love in the service of which such language is traditionally deployed. While this sonnet achieves a kind of grim resignation to the lesson of Nature's ruthlessness and impermanence, commending the resolutely modern detachment of 'scientific animals', the struggle involved in replacing the old, romantic paradigm with the new, empirical one registers in an earlier sonnet dealing with the same principle. Sonnet XIII opens with a Nature

once more personified and vocal about her predilections: '"I play for Seasons; not Eternities!"' she declares, 'laughing on her way', and affirms the applicability of the maxim for '"All those whose stake is nothing more than dust"'. Affecting, in quintessential Victorian fashion, a matter-of-fact realism about 'the laws of growth' that apparently govern the natural world, the husband-narrator cannot quite persuade himself that the social, human realm is subject to the same logic, that love is merely a matter of elective affinities between 'scientific animals':

> This lesson of our only visible friend,
> Can we not teach our foolish hearts to learn?
> Yes! yes! – but, oh, our human rose is fair
> Surpassingly! Lose calmly Love's great bliss,
> When the renewed for ever of a kiss
> Whirls life within the shower of loosened hair!

Here traditional sonnet motifs such as roses and eternity (underpinned by the hackneyed fair/hair, bliss/kiss rhymes) take on a power and sincerity absent from the husband's more mechanical use of courtly love conventions (such as his later description of 'the sweet wild rose' as his mistress's 'emblem' (XLV)). The problem for 'modern' lovers is not simply that their inherited language and conceptual framework for romantic experience is incompatible with reality as conceived by modern science, but that they continue, despite giving intellectual assent to the materialist's view of the universe, to find the old ideals instinctively compelling.

If the cold rationalism of a nineteenth-century scientific worldview – seeing only randomness and decay where previous generations had discerned immortality and divine purpose behind the transience of the physical universe – assaults the courtly love tradition from lofty intellectual heights, eroding the same code from below is the sheer prosaicism of everyday married life. The classic formulation of the incompatibility of marriage with romance, and specifically of lawful, lifelong, wedded love with the passionate intensity of sonnet-love, is Byron's:

> There's doubtless something in domestic doings,
> Which forms, in fact, true love's antithesis;
> Romances paint at full length people's wooings,
> But only give a bust of marriages;
> For no one cares for matrimonial cooings,

> There's nothing wrong in a connubial kiss:
> Think you, if Laura had been Petrarch's wife,
> He would have written sonnets all his life?[9]

Marriage, in short, is inherently unpoetic. The sonnet in its brevity and concentration lends itself to the somewhat static ecstasy of chivalric love-at-a-distance, whereas the humdrum, durational texture of the marriage relationship finds its natural expression in the narrative protraction of the novel, especially in the domestic realism that seemed at the time of *Modern Love*'s publication to be fast becoming the sole purview of the mid-Victorian novel. Fitting the novelistic reality of 'domestic doings' (if characterised more by isolation and acrimony than by 'matrimonial cooings') to the sonnet form, Meredith expounds in *Modern Love* the married lovers' conundrum of how to fit the high romance of poetic tradition to the confines of the domestic sphere when long familiarity and the banality of 'household matters' (V) make a nonsense of the grand gestures of courtly love. The spaces of the poem concretise the mismatch between romantic form and prosaic content, enacting the dramatics of the love-stricken sonneteer within the incongruous settings of middle-class Victorian domesticity: the bedroom, the fireside, the dressing-room; around the dinner-table, 'on the cedar-shadowed lawn' (XXI); celebrating Christmas in a country house, strolling along the terrace, and so forth. Typical is the contrast in sonnet XXXIV between the threatened eruption of matrimonial hostilities (characterised in terms of newspaper reports on Mount Vesuvius and Niagara Falls, 'The Deluge or else Fire!') and the restrained blandness of the actual conversation: 'With commonplace I freeze her, tongue and sense. / Niagara or Vesuvius is deferred.' That 'commonplace' renders the elegant poses of *amour courtois* both false and absurd.

The implication of both the title and the melodramatic/mundane dialectic of *Modern Love* is that the impossibility of sustaining the ardours of courtship in the face of the wearing daily routines of married life is a specifically modern predicament. This anxiety is of a piece with contemporary concern over 'how deeply *unpoetical* the age and all one's surroundings are', as Matthew Arnold famously lamented to Clough.[10]

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[9] Jerome J. McGann (ed.), *Don Juan*, in *Lord Byron: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), III.8.

[10] Howard Foster Lowry (ed.), *The Letters of Matthew Arnold to A. H. Clough* (London: Oxford University Press/Humphrey Milford, 1932), p. 99 (February 1849).

Humphry House explains that one of the 'big problems' for this generation was

> to try to see the daily life of Victorian England – complete with all its keepings of dress and furniture and social habits – as having an equivalent spiritual and human significance to that which medieval life had in all its details for medieval poets and painters […] There seemed to be an irreparable cleavage between the facts of modern society and the depths it was recognised poetry ought to touch.[11]

Whether or not medieval artists did, in fact, find their daily lives poetic is a question rarely raised in nineteenth century discussion of the age and its relation to poetry (Barrett Browning's assurance in *Aurora Leigh* that 'Camelot to minstrels seemed as flat / As Fleet Street to our poets' is a rare exception).[12] For the most part, Victorian social commentators inherit and develop a linear pattern of literary history according to which the progress of civilisation corresponds to an inverse decline in the beauty and heroism on which poetry was thought to thrive. The banality of everyday life, the inhospitableness of the domestic sphere to the raptures characteristic of traditional love poetry, presents itself as a peculiarly modern malady – as though the Renaissance love sonnet brooked no gap between its own rhetoric and the social realities of the period, and only in the age of trousers and drawing-rooms and railways, of middle-class respectability and comfort, had this rift between the two opened up. As with House, this historical relativity seems to infect, or at least inflect, the way in which more recent critics of *Modern Love* assess the poem's relation to its nineteenth century moment. Alan Barr, for example, equates the mundane with the modern in remarking that Meredith's imagery throughout the sequence 'contributes strongly to its modernity, inculpating us and our mundane existences'; and Stephen Regan suggests that the sonnets reveal that 'there was something tragically *anachronistic* in those mid-Victorian concepts of love which still drew on a tradition of Romantic idealism nurtured by Platonic and chivalric notions of goodness and purity',

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[11] 'Pre-Raphaelite Poetry', BBC Third Programme (1948), printed in James Sambrook (ed.), *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 128-29.
[12] Margaret Reynolds (ed.), *Aurora Leigh* (New York: Norton, 1996), 5.212-13.

apparently endorsing the assumption that such ideas were at one time more applicable to ordinary human experience than they are today.[13]

This acute sense of the prosaicism of daily life in nineteenth century England competes with an adverse Victorian tendency towards the glorification of the domestic sphere as the locus of all virtue, happiness, and meaning in British life. The tension between the two is also comprehended in the form/content antithesis of *Modern Love*: the disjunction of sonnet form with novelistic content functions, not as a simple opposition between past and present, but also as a critique of the romantic idealisations typical of Meredith's own period ('the sentimental passion of these days') and their remoteness from the realities of contemporary marriage. The husband of the sonnets is distressed not only by the discrepancy between a conception of love inherited from the past and its manifestation in the modern world, but equally by the impossibility of fitting his experiences of love to the patterns his own society holds up as authoritative – whether in the form of literary precedent ('Fairy Prince' (X), tragic figure (XV), Byronic hero (XX)) or of social etiquette (from stiff restraint to righteous indignation). He spends much of the sequence attempting to conform his own behaviour, that of his wife, and their daily interactions to pre-existing templates – vengeful husband, fallen angel, classic love triangle, and the like. The poses he strikes and the dramas he plays out (whether in his head or in actuality) constitute an effort to order his experiences according to the moulds furnished by his culture. From injured but magnanimous spouse to egoistic philanderer, the protagonist finds the conventional roles and responses open to him at once inadequate to the actual complexity of life and relationships, and ludicrous in light of the obdurate selfhood of others, their refusal to play along with his little fantasies.

The most blatant example of this 'fitful role-playing'[14] on the part of the husband-narrator is the Othello scene of sonnet XV. He carefully stage-manages the episode: he sets the scene, describing his wife's posture in sleep, with one arm hanging down beside the bed; he gives himself stage directions: 'Now make fast the door', 'Now will I pour new light upon that

[13] Alan P. Barr, 'How All Occasions Do Inform: "Household Matters" and Domestic Vignettes in George Meredith's *Modern Love*', *Victorian Poetry* 42:3 (2004), 283-293: pp. 285-86; Stephen Regan, Introduction to *Modern Love* (Peterborough: Daisy Books, 1988), pp. 8-9 (italics mine).
[14] Stephen Regan, 'The Victorian Sonnet, from George Meredith to Gerard Manley Hopkins', *The Yearbook of English Studies* 36:2 (2006), 17-34: p. 25.

lid'. Sneeringly, he delivers his contrived lines ('Sweet dove, / Your sleep is pure. Nay, pardon: I disturb. / I do not? good!') and melodramatically confronts her with the props with which he has earlier provided himself – an old love letter she wrote to him and an approximate double of it, written more recently to another. The direct reference to Othello which interrupts this careful performance – 'Sleep on: it is your husband, not your foe. / The Poet's black stage-lion of wronged love, / Frights not our modern dames: - well if he did!' – betrays at once the theatricality of his actions (the attempt to align his experience with the archetypal representation of jealous love) and the incongruity of trying to recreate the wrath of Shakespeare's Moor in a modern bedroom. Rod Edmond treats these lines rather dismissively, observing that 'Othello's passion is ridiculously inappropriate for modern love, and the wish that this were not so ("well if he did!") is bombast. Othello's revenge was terrible; the husband's will be petty and modern'.[15] He overlooks, however, the husband's evident frustration at the pettiness of his actions, at the hollowness of the literary exemplar of the jealous husband when transplanted into actual everyday life in the middle of the nineteenth century. Even more damning than this mid-sonnet acknowledgment of the toothlessness of the modern husband is the complete ineffectuality of the confrontation: though the scene is manufactured apparently in order to bring matters to a head with his wife, the dramatic encounter makes no impact whatsoever on the progressing narrative of the sonnet sequence, or of the marriage. The following sonnet reverts nostalgically to an anecdote concerning the couple's 'old shipwrecked days' (XVI), and by XVII the pair are back gaily performing a set-piece of impeccable host and hostess, 'waken[ing] envy of our happy lot' amongst their dinner-party guests with their 'Warm-lighted looks, Love's ephemerioe' – in fact a mere side-effect of the exhilaration of the pretence. Cutting across the classic Victorian distinction between public and private spheres, the couple find their society performance taking on a grim authenticity ('we / Enamoured of an acting nought can tire, / Each other, like true hypocrites, admire') while their relations to one another are increasingly mediated through a series of conventional dramatic roles. The domestic realm becomes subject to the same laws of antagonism and duplicity as the outside world of commercial and political competition (significantly, Meredith's working title for the poem was the ambiguous 'A Love Match').

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[15] Rod Edmond, *Affairs of the Hearth: Victorian Poetry and Domestic Narrative* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 212.

*Modern Love* is the chronicle of a husband’s repeated failures to accommodate his experience of marriage within existing parameters – whether derived from the courtly love tradition, nineteenth century evolutionary thought, or the stock responses of literary and social convention. While only the first of these comprises an integral part of the sonnet sequence’s generic baggage and therefore comes automatically into play when the form, language and imagery of the genre are invoked, the continual jarring of form against content, of expectation against actuality, comes to ramify more broadly. The pattern of pre-existent, more or less rigid forms failing to comfortably contain the awkwardness and irreducible complexity of the content assigned to it manifests itself across all levels of the poem. The structural quirk of each sonnet’s extra pair of lines reflects the overflow of the poem’s subject matter from the bounds of the conventional sonnet sequence, which in turn mirrors the discordance between the couple’s actual marriage and the interpretative tools they bring to it. The oppositions between past and present, the conventional and the natural, literary exemplars and real people, according to which the husband-narrator orders his experiences are undergirded by the generalised conflict of codified system with messy reality embodied in the use of the sonnet form to represent the workings of ‘modern love’.

## 2. The Love Match: form and content reconsidered

If *Modern Love* is ostensibly governed by an ethos of conflict and even violence (from the opening sonnet’s ‘sword that severs all’ to the ‘fatal knife’ and ‘ramping hosts of warrior horse’ of the concluding lines to the sequence), closer scrutiny of the poem’s anatomy reveals an unexpected correspondence between form and content which belies their apparent antagonism. This symmetry is evident both in the gradually-evolving argument for hybridity (in life and art) that runs through the poem, and in the self-contained tensions of the sonnet form itself within the context of Victorian literary debates.

Much of the frustration and bewilderment expressed by *Modern Love*’s husband-figure, as we have seen, stems from his repeated discoveries that life simply will not fit into the clear-cut categories favoured by social custom, philosophical precept, or artistic representation. Sonnet XXXIII, which sees our hero delivering to his mistress (a touch pretentiously) a kind of art history lecture on Raphael’s painting *St Michael Vanquishing Satan*, questions the black-and-white treatment of good and

evil, blame and infidelity, implied in the arch-angel's apparently effortless victory over Lucifer:

> 'Oh, Raphael! when men the Fiend do fight,
> They conquer not upon such easy terms.
> Half serpent in the struggle grow these worms.
> And does he grow half human, all is right.'

The moral ambivalence of human, and particularly matrimonial, battles – the inaccessibility of the high ground to either party – is again contrasted to the easy logic of conventional fiction, with its clearly defined heroes and villains, in the oft-quoted conclusion to sonnet XLIII:

> I see no sin:
> The wrong is mixed. In tragic life, God wot,
> No villain need be! Passions spin the plot:
> We are betrayed by what is false within.

The attempt to account for 'the death of Love' (XLIII) between husband and wife, and to assign responsibility for the tragedy, is thwarted by the difficulty of ascertaining anything so tangled and murky as human desires, motivations, and actions. This realisation about the nature of life and love is neatly encapsulated in the husband's early observation – prompted by his sense that past, present and future, reality and illusion, are becoming distressingly blurred – that 'the whole / Of life is mixed' (XII). The conception of reality as itself a kind of hybrid, an often confused mixture of factors and registers (tragedy and comedy, melodrama and banality, high seriousness undermined by the petty or ridiculous), serves as a *de facto* defence of *Modern Love*'s generic mixing. The work's abrupt shifts in tone and fusion of poetic form with novelistic content find their rationale in this vision of life as characterised by miscegenation and dissonance.

This at once metaphysical and aesthetic principle of hybridity renders intelligible some of the more enigmatic aspects of the poem. A reading of the form-content dichotomy of *Modern Love* as a straightforward critique of the unreality of the sonnet tradition and its attendant values via the domestic realism of the mid-Victorian novel struggles to account for glitches in both the vapidity of its sonnet conventions and the verisimilitude of its novelistic aspects. (The exuberance of Meredith's own style as a novelist, very unlike the more sober realism of fellow practitioners like Eliot and Thackeray, complicates this picture further.) At

certain points in the poem, that is to say, the supposedly bankrupt resources of the sonnet form assume a new vigor and substance; and, conversely, the husband-narrator's sole direct reference to the novel appeals, confusingly, rather to the melodrama of a trashy French novel than to the prosaicism of the more realistic variety. As has already been observed of sonnet XIII's lament for 'our human rose', the hackneyed imagery of the conventional love sonnet with which Meredith punctuates the sequence has a disconcerting way of breaking its habitual banks and becoming a channel for genuine, spontaneous emotion. The poem's recurrent star metaphors furnish probably the most pronounced example of this pattern. From as early as sonnet II, in which the husband declares his wife 'A star with lurid beams […] crown[ing] / The pit of infamy', the sonnets seem to run the gamut of conventional signifieds for 'star'. Sonnet IV identifies the stars with high Philosophy, as distinct from Passion: 'Not till the fire is dying in the grate, / Look we for any kinship with the stars.' Yet, between the representation of his own past misdemeanours as 'like some aged star, gleam[ing] luridly' (XX) and an expression of bitterness in the face of simpler lives and loves in sonnet XXII ('You burly lovers on the village green, / Yours is a lower, and a happier star!'), the husband abandons the term's standard associations of lustre, distance, fate, and so on in a suddenly wistful description of his wife who, coming to after having fainted, 'looks the star that thro' the cedar shakes: / Her lost moist hand clings mortally to mine' (XXI). Cliché has modulated into live, affecting metaphor. In similar fashion, a number of critics have remarked the way in which sonnet stereotypes assume, at times, a kind of grotesque realism. Cynthia Tucker catalogues some of these effects: 'Neither the woman's coldness and cruelty, the inevitable sonnet-Lady's epithets, nor the husband's distraction, sleeplessness, and want-of-voice, the traditional symptoms of true courtly love, are preserved as mere literary devices but emerge here as psychological realities'.[16] Equally, the husband's histrionics become, in hindsight, grimly literal; throwaway phrases such as 'The

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[16] 'Meredith's Broken Laurel', p. 354. In the same vein, Hans Ostrom notes how 'the particular conventional motifs of the sonnet tradition become actual qualities of mind – as if a mask one was used to wearing to charm friends suddenly became a real face', and Carol Bernstein writes of the image in sonnet IX, of the husband drinking his wife's expression 'from her eyes, as from a poison-cup', that 'a glance that feeds *as* a poison cup is transformed from the similative to the literal with the wife's suicide'. Hans Ostrom, 'The Disappearance of Tragedy in Meredith's "Modern Love"', *Victorian Newsletter* 63 (Spring 1983), p. 30; Carol M. Bernstein, *Precarious Enchantment: A Reading of Meredith's Poetry* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1979), p. 11.

misery is greater, *as I live*' and 'thy mouth to mine! / Never! *though I die thirsting*' (XXIV, italics mine) go beyond mere empty rhetoric as the game the two are playing becomes, in earnest, a matter of life and death.

At the precise halfway point of the sequence, the much-discussed sonnet XXV likewise undercuts generic expectation, though with an inverse movement from the supposedly realistic to the absurd. As the only overt reference to the novel form that broods over *Modern Love* as a whole – a kind of reverse mirror image of the archaic, artificial, quixotic love sonnet around which the work is constructed – the reader might reasonably anticipate some kind of apology for the poem's at once shocking and yet banal subject matter. The novel this pivotal sonnet invokes, however, is not the inventory of domestic detail and investigation of complex, authentic selves rapidly becoming the nineteenth-century norm, but the notoriously sordid and sensational French variety:

> You like not that French novel? Tell me why.
> You think it quite unnatural. Let us see.
> The actors are, it seems, the usual three:
> Husband, and wife, and lover. She – but fie!
> In England we'll not hear of it. Edmond,
> The lover, her devout chagrin doth share;
> Blanc-mange and absinthe are his penitent fare,
> Till his pale aspect makes her over-fond:
> So, to preclude fresh sin, he tries rosbif.
> Meantime the husband is no more abused:
> Auguste forgives her ere the tear is used.
> Then hangeth all on one tremendous IF:
> *If* she will choose between them. She does choose;
> And takes her husband, like a proper wife.
> Unnatural? My dear, these things are life:
> And life, some think, is worthy of the Muse.

Many a critic has puzzled over the anomaly of this sonnet's preposterousness; Cathy Comstock pinpoints the difficulty in the narrator's choice of 'the most incredible setting of the poem for an insistence upon the correspondence between art and life'.[17] Comstock gets around the apparent incompatibility of the melodramatic plot of the novel described

[17] Cathy Comstock, '"Speak, and I see the side-lie of a truth": The Problematics of Truth in Meredith's *Modern Love*', *Victorian Poetry* 25:2 (1987), 129-41: p. 139.

with the statement of realistic intent capping it by relinquishing the force of the latter, interpreting the sonnet as a whole as an indication that the husband may not be the reliable narrator-figure he seems – a wink to the judicious reader not to accept his version of events as any more accurate or impartial than the paradigm furnished by this flimsy French romance. I suggest, rather, that just as the counterintuitive shift from stereotype to psychological realism in some of Meredith's traditional sonnet imagery reflects the husband's alarm at seeing his experience overstep the literary bounds he tries to prescribe for it, the flamboyance of the novel his wife is reading in sonnet XXV serves as a comment on the frequently perverse nature of reality. The justification of mimetic art via this farcical narrative of Edmond, Auguste, and his irresolute wife has its roots in the husband-narrator's bitter realisation that his own life seems to have taken on the contours of farce (theatrical confrontations, game-playing, love triangles) – and also, perhaps, in Meredith's awareness of his public's distaste for a realism willing to stoop to the sordid, grotesque, or ludicrous in human relationships. 'In England we'll not hear of it': the mid-Victorian novel reader wishes to believe in an ordered, rational, morally unambiguous reality and therefore demands that the novelist navigate carefully between a Scylla of melodrama and Charybdis of banality. In *Modern Love* Meredith as poet embraces both, suggesting that life is more complex and uneven than either the idealising sonnet tradition or the decorous domestic novel allows.

In this regard the poem is more unblinking in its realism even than the contemporary novel; the poet's apparently self-defeating choice of a light, fashionable novel as a model for his own narrative principles becomes a serious defence of the artist's right – indeed, duty – to represent life as the often unpleasing or laughable mixture of elements that it is. An American critic, writing soon after Meredith's death in 1909, favourably compared his efforts to fuse high and low, tragedy and comedy, the earnest and the ridiculous, in his work to the practice of poets and novelists across the nineteenth century:

> Tragi-comedy as the position of equipoise in life and art – that, in Meredith's time, was a notable discovery […] Wordsworth had been obliged to seek out the great universal impulses in the cottages of Cumberland peasants. The Brontës studied them in mad country squires. George Eliot found them among the yeomen of Warwickshire. Even Thomas Hardy has had to resort to shepherds and dairy-maids

> – so fugitive is our sense of solemn splendor from the roar of cities and civilized men […] That is hardly to see life whole. Meredith sought his splendor in another place. His problem was how to make tragedy and comedy meet together in the drawing-room. Comedy was there to stay; but as for tragedy, Thackeray, for example, avoided it. Dickens and his public preferred murder.[18]

Alongside such iconoclastic poets as Clough and Barrett Browning, the Meredith of *Modern Love* champions a poetry capable of treating the seemingly petty and often depressing life of modern, urban, bourgeois England, dignifying the daily interactions of the drawing-room, bedroom, garden, dining-room, without smoothing over the irregularities of actual experience. The hybrid form of the poem – sonnet sequence married with novel, with unexpected variations on the conventions of both – takes its cue from the hybrid nature of modern life.

A brief reappraisal of the sonnet's generic implications, in its nineteenth-century rather than Renaissance incarnation, reaffirms the complex symmetry of form and content in *Modern Love*. Although the effect foregrounded by Meredith's use of the sonnet is one of disjunction, an understanding of the debates which raged across the nineteenth century on the nature of the form nuances this picture of opposition and renders it, on the contrary, a multifaceted symbol of the broader concerns of the poem. The tensions inherent both to marriage, as experienced by our protagonist, and to the position of poetry in the modern world, find a parallel in the internal contradictions of the sonnet as conceptualised by nineteenth-century poets and critics. Wordsworth's prolific sonnet production and yet stated ambivalence towards the form at the beginning of the century set the terms for the constantly reprised discussion of the sonnet of the following decades.[19] Joseph Phelan, in his recent study of *The Nineteenth-Century Sonnet*, offers a comprehensive summary of the poles around which the two camps ranged themselves in these debates:

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[18] S. P. Sherman, *Nation* 88, 3 June 1909. Reprinted in Ioan Williams (ed.), *George Meredith: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1971), p. 495.

[19] Jennifer Wagner, in her study of the career of the nineteenth-century sonnet, is particularly concerned to establish Wordsworth's centrality to debates about the form throughout this period. See *A Moment's Monument: Revisionary Poetics and the Nineteenth-Century English Sonnet* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996).

> It is both spontaneous and rule-governed, both personal and conventional. […] It is an ephemeral and occasional form, and at the same time a 'monument' which will immortalize both poet and subject […] As a conventional and arbitrary form it runs counter to the prevailing belief in the necessity of an organic connection between form and content, leading to a series of attempts to 'organicise' the form and demonstrate its indissoluble connection with certain states of mind and feeling. Again, as a form proverbial for its insincerity it seems to conflict with the very strong post-romantic emphasis on sincerity as a criterion of poetic value, and the result of this conflict is a sustained endeavour to position the sonnet as the most sincere and personal of poetic forms […][20]

Thus the sonnet contains within itself the full spectrum of paradoxes that mark the marriage relationship, to the bewilderment and frustration of both husband and wife in *Modern Love*: as an intersection point of the most private and personalised of experiences with the most public and commonplace social roles; a freely-chosen imprisonment; the institutionalisation of spontaneous, intense emotion; the tethering of immortal passion to daily routine. C. Day Lewis identifies 'the deepest cause of the [couple's] agony' and 'the basic theme of the poem' as the 'demoralising, paralysing effect of a bond created, and then abandoned, by love'.[21] This is the tension vividly bodied forth by the form of *Modern Love*: the problem of maintaining sincerity within the bounds of formality.

From this perspective, the relation between form and content in Meredith's most novelistic poem becomes much more than one of simple opposition. Both the sonnet form and the narrative content of *Modern Love* explore the nature of convention and conventionality and its effects on authenticity, and therefore double one another in spite of their superficial conflicts. This mirroring of (discordant) form and (contentious) content turns the tables on those contemporary critics who objected to the mismatch of the two. Richard Holt Hutton, for example, expressed his disapproval of Meredith's

[20] Joseph Phelan, *The Nineteenth-Century Sonnet* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 2.

[21] C. Day Lewis, Introduction to *Modern Love* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948), p. xix.

choice of poetry rather than the novel as the appropriate form for the story in no uncertain terms:

> Clever bold men with any literary capacity are always tempted to write verse, as they can say so much under its artistic cover which in common prose they could not say at all. It is a false impulse, however, for unless the form of verse is really that in which it is most natural for them to write, the effect of adopting it is to make the sharp hits which would be natural in prose, look out of place – lugged in by head and shoulders – and the audacity exceedingly repellent. This is certainly the effect upon us of this volume of verse.[22]

The underlying assumption of the verdict is that the kind of subject matter treated by *Modern Love* is inherently unsuited to representation in verse, inherently 'unpoetical'. Yet the question of what is 'natural', in life and art, is one of the chief preoccupations of the poem, which sets out to discover whether and in what respects reality does conform to poetry by enacting the process of fitting life to verse (self to society, love to marriage). Though it could not be accommodated within mid-Victorian canons of poetic beauty, Meredith's controversial sonnet sequence is masterful in its matching of form to content. Structured throughout by a recurrent opposition of sincerity to artifice, the poem establishes marriage and poetry as tropes for one another and therefore, by mediating an investigation of the place of both love and poetry in the modern world through the sonnet tradition, proves an unexpectedly fitting form for modern love.

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[22] *Spectator* 35, 24 May 1862. Reprinted in Williams, p. 92.

# Making Sense of *Deadwood*: Seth Bullock and the Indian

SIMON PETCH

The action of the first season of *Deadwood*[1] begins in July 1876, the month following the Battle of the Little Bighorn (June 25th). George Armstrong Custer, his final battle, and the political questions raised by the circumstances of the Sioux (who had defeated him) are referred to throughout all three seasons of *Deadwood*, but the first season is saturated with the fresh and living memory of Custer's last stand. The Deadwood camp (as its inhabitants call it) has grown up in the heart of the Black Hills of the Dakota Territory, at that time the most contested area of land in the United States. The Black Hills were sacred to the Sioux, to whom they had been deeded by the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868 (sometimes referred to as the Sioux Treaty). Following the discovery of gold in the Black Hills in the early 1870s, the Treaty was violated by the United States, behind a smokescreen of translation and rewriting.[2] The Sioux, many of whose tribes had never been happy with the Treaty, responded reciprocally to such cynicism by refusing to remain on the reservation land assigned to them by the Treaty. This is why Custer and the Seventh Cavalry were in Montana in the summer of 1876; they were riding shotgun to a shameful government policy.

Most of the action of *Deadwood* takes place indoors, in several locations within the camp, or in its busy, crowded thoroughfare. The sources of light usually come from outside the buildings in which the action happens, and the thoroughfare is an habitually threatening place. The combined effect of backlighting, interiority, and overcrowded social space

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[1] *Deadwood: The Complete First Season* (Home Box Office, Inc., 2004).
[2] David Milch, *Deadwood: Stories of the Black Hills* (New York: HBO/Bloomsbury, 2004), 148. Milch is the creator of *Deadwood*.

is that 'the cinematography is often claustrophobic.'[3] At the beginning of Episode 6, 'Plague,'[4] the viewer is apparently released from this *mise en scène*, as the first of four establishing shots frames a view of the Black Hills. For only the second time in the series we are outside the confines of the camp, but also without the contextual landmarks to which we have become accustomed. This liberation into the unfamiliar may be unsettling, an effect emphasized by the fact that there is no music to set the scene or establish the mood.

In the course of the two preceding episodes Wild Bill Hickock has been shot at the card table, and his killer, Jack McCall, has been tried and found 'innocent.' The judge instructed the jury to acquit the acknowledged killer in accordance with the law of custom. There is no law in Deadwood: in the words of Albert Swearengen, proprietor of the Gem Saloon, 'we're illegal.' Because Deadwood is not a legally-constituted community, for the court (which is any case a somewhat makeshift arrangement) to return a 'guilty' verdict would be to assume the power and authority of a sovereign community; and such an assumption could prejudice any future relationship that Deadwood's inhabitants might wish to negotiate with the United States, especially regarding annexation by the Territories of Dakota or Montana. No-one sees this more clearly than Swearengen himself, the presiding genius of the camp. He leans on the judge, and does so out of strongly-held community spirit. As he confides to his fellow publican Cy Tolliver: 'For outright stupidity the whole fucking trial concept goes shoulder to shoulder with that cocksucker Custer's thinking when he headed for that ridge.'[5] The main potential consequence of the trial, for Swearengen, is that the Deadwood community is isolating itself in its own vulnerability.

Following the acquittal of Jack McCall, Seth Bullock, friend of Wild Bill, one-time sheriff in Montana, and a future sheriff of Deadwood, rides out of the camp in pursuit of his friend's killer, and into the landscape we see in the opening shot of 'Plague.' The four establishing shots are evidently of the natural environment, but the fourth includes an Indian

[3] David Drysdale, '"Laws and Every Other Damn Thing": Authority, Bad Faith, and the Unlikely Success of Deadwood,' in David Lavery, ed., *Reading Deadwood: A Western to Swear By* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2006), p. 140.
[4] Directed by Davis Guggenheim, written by Malcolm MacRury, who had also collaborated on Episode 2, 'Deep Water.'
[5] Episode 5, 'The Trial of Jack McCall,' directed by Ed Bianchi and written by John Belluso.

funeral bier, which the viewer is unlikely to identify yet. There follow four shots of Bullock riding through the woodland, the third of which is almost certainly a point-of-view shot from the perspective of the Indian who is about to attack him, although the viewer is unlikely to intuit that either. The attack of the red man on the white man, announced by the arrow that goes into his horse, surprises the viewer as much as it surprises Seth Bullock.

From the moment of the attack, the viewer is thrust back into the familiar Deadwood world of claustrophobic struggle. The ensuing fight is shot in a *mélange* of medium and close-up, and its turning-point is the close-up of Bullock's hand reaching for a rock. From this point, the sequence is composed of ten distinct shots, in which the rock hits the Indian's head sixteeen times. The quickly-varying perspectives of these shots constitute an aggressive visual syntax that keeps the violence in the viewer's face: visually, there is nowhere to go. While the red man intrudes as an alien and aggressive presence, the visual emphasis of the sequence gradually shifts to the violent response of the white man. The final close-ups take us from the bloodied face of the dead red man to the blood-stained face of the living white man, whose expression is anything but triumphant.

The violence is neither stressed nor softened by music, but such sounds as there are amplify the intensity of the visual imagery. The initial stillness of the establishing shots is both visual and aural, and is broken by the sound of the rider, the rush of the arrow, the whinnying of the stricken horse, the thump of horse and rider crashing to the ground, the blow against Bullock's head, the chanting and spitting of the Indian, the gasps of the struggle, and then the appalling and repeated thud of rock against bone. Bullock wins the fight against the odds, and probably to the viewer's relief, because he has been established as a significant figure of moral probity in Deadwood. But what he does here is alienating, and, if his final expression is anything to go by, even self-alienating.

Bullock collapses into unconsciousness, from which he is rescued and revived by his (and Hickock's) friend Charlie Utter, who is returning to Deadwood from a business trip. Utter's subsequent explanation of the Indian attack is for the viewer as well as for Bullock. Towards the end of the fourth episode of this season, 'Here Was a Man,'[6] a Mexican has ridden into Deadwood bearing the severed head of an Indian – the very Indian, it now appears, whose (decapitated) corpse rests on the funeral bier that we saw in the final establishing shot, and which was being watched over by the

[6] Directed by Alan Taylor, written by Elizabeth Sarnoff.

Indian who attacked Bullock, presumably a friend or fellow-tribesman of the dead man. Utter now explains the markings on the Indian's pony, which has not been visible until now, and also why the arrow was aimed for the horse rather than Bullock himself: to be honorable, revenge had to be hands-on. Bullock, himself a man of honor, responds by saying that they should dig a grave, to which Utter replies: 'His way to heaven is above ground and looking west.' Before riding back to Deadwood, they get the body of Bullock's assailant onto the funeral platform.

The late afternoon luminescence now reveals that this episode of *Deadwood* has lasted only a single span of daylight, that it is more concentrated even than Aristotle's prescription that a dramatic action should unfold 'within one circuit of the sun.'[7] Such compressed unity of time heightens the focused quality of 'Plague,' riven as it is with many kinds of sickness.[8] There is the outbreak of smallpox, the control and management of which has suddenly become the camp's most pressing issue; there is Alma Garrett's conflicted condition, her actual withdrawal from opium addiction and her simulated opium high; there are the loaded dice and the crooked crap game at the Bella Union; and there is the pervasive threat of violence against women, represented here in the growing and disturbing tension between Joanie Stubbs and Cy Tolliver. Yet nothing is more rotten in the state of Deadwood than the racial disharmony of red and white. As will be shown, this incident of Bullock and the Indian leads back to the Metz massacre, which has been wrongly but (by some) knowingly attributed to 'those godless heathen cocksuckers.'

That is why this encounter between Bullock and his Indian assailant is such an appropriate structural basis for this episode. The attack, Bullock's response, and the Indian's death constitute the episode's opening sequence; after this the viewer's attention is divided between events within Deadwood itself and the site of the attack on Bullock, which is revisited twice. Twenty-five minutes into the episode, Utter happens across the unconscious Bullock and the dead Indian. And then, after a further twenty minutes, and in the episode's penultimate sequence, we see Utter and Bullock getting the Indian's body onto the funeral platform. The starkly visible head wound reminds us of what happened earlier. As Utter moves from the bier, and evidently acting on an afterthought, he turns to re-

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[7] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Poetics,* trans. Leon Golden, commentary by O.B. Hardison, Jr. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p.10.

[8] See Erin Hill, ' "What's Afflictin' You?" Corporeality, Body Crises and the Body Politic in *Deadwood*,' in Lavery, ed., *Reading Deadwood*, pp. 171-183.

position the dead man's left leg, which has fallen to the side, after which he and Bullock exchange a glance of mutual acknowledgment. So are they all, all honorable men. The concluding frames of the sequence, as men and horses disappear to the left, recall (and the final frame may even repeat) the last of the four establishing shots with which 'Plague' opened. Bullock's encounter with the Indian has led to Bullock's encounter with Utter, and this, as we shall see in the next episode, propels Bullock into a challenging encounter with himself.

For what has happened here haunts Bullock. In the next episode of the series, 'Bullock Returns to the Camp,'[9] Bullock, clearly in some emotional distress, confides in his business partner, Sol Star. The two men are in their hardware store, and Bullock's words, unprompted by anything in his previous conversation with Sol, come right from his conscience: 'That Indian fought like hell … [He] had to kill me for coming on the burial place, and maybe it'd been me that had killed his friend, cut his friend's head off, so his friend wouldn't have eyes to see the sunset all the years he'd be lying there dead. So he had to kill me for that too. And he couldn't before he laid hands on me, or the killing wouldn't be honorable. We fought like fucking hell, I tell you that much. And I never once had the upper hand. It just happened out the way it happened out. He was just trying to live, same as me, do honor to his friend, make some fucking sense out of things. We wind up that way and I wind up after beating him till I couldn't recognize his face. For Christ's sake!'

Bullock has listened carefully to Charlie Utter's explanation, but what he says here goes beyond a reprisal of that. Bullock interprets the encounter in the light of his own experience, and finds equivalences between his own behavior and that of the Indian. The Indian was trying to honor his friend, as Bullock was trying to honor Wild Bill; and both, more generally, were 'just trying to live' and 'make some fucking sense out of things.' Utter's more detailed explanation gets subsumed in a plot that Bullock constructs by analogy with his own circumstances, so that what Utter has said provides substantiating details for Bullock's own plotting of this experience, in which he and the Indian were engaged in similar quests. As Peter Brooks has shown, plotting is one way of making sense, not only of

[9] Episode 7, directed by Michael Engler and written by Jody Worth.

texts, but also of life; and it is just such plotting that Bullock undertakes here, by imposing an 'intentional structure' on the Indian's action.[10]

Bullock cites Utter as his authority – 'Charlie figured out how it must have been' – but his own account inflects what Charlie Utter has said with a 'structuring operation'[11] that is interpretive, that relies on analogy, and that proceeds by a series of inferences for which there is no objective evidence. He cannot be sure, for example, that the decapitated Indian had been a friend of the man who guarded the bier: this may have been a tribal responsibility. Bullock's fiction, for that is what it is, of a tragic coincidence is thus ironic, and the irony is made explicit by his overlooking the crucial disjunction between his own motivation and that of the Indian. Seth Bullock is hunting Jack McCall, who killed his friend Wild Bill Hickock: this couldn't be more individualized, more personal, than it is. The Indian, on the other hand, apparently attacks the first white man who happens across the sacred ground of the funeral bier, but whose personal identity is irrelevant. As Bullock acknowledges, it might have been he who had killed and decapitated a red man; but it wasn't, and that fact presumably counted little with the Indian who was the instrument of vengeance. So there is a lack of fit, even a collision, between the motivations of the Indian and those of Bullock. The irony of this particular encounter, in Bullock's vigorous interpretation of it, is created by the similarity between his own action and motivation and those of the man he killed; but Bullock's irony is itself subject to a further twist of the ironic screw. Bullock's irony is grounded in sympathetic identification with the Indian, an identification that crucially overlooks the fact that their encounter was brought about by no personal connection between the individuals involved. Bullock is not a racist. His thinking about the encounter is untainted by racial considerations, although the causes of this encounter could not be more racial than they are; because its primary cause is the killing and decapitation of a red man whose death is to be avenged by another red man (who may be a friend, or a fellow-tribesman, or both) against any white man who happens along.

This brings us back to the violence, which, the visual and aural techniques ensure, has to be endured by the viewer and cannot be put into any 'perspective.' David Milch has said of *Deadwood*'s violence that it is

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[10] Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: OUP, 1984), p. 12. Brooks' subtle expoundings of 'plot' and 'plotting,' in the first chapter of this book, have helped to shape my interpretation of this sequence.
[11] Ibid, p. 10.

'simply another form of human interaction,' and 'a way of doing business.'[12] In this sequence the violence is causal rather than casual, logical rather than personal, for it is the principle on which red and white races 'interact.' It is how they 'do business' with each other, and Bullock's emblematic function in the sequence is that of the white American man. Milch has said that *Deadwood* took shape as 'a reenactment of the story of the founding of America.'[13] This sequence, and Bullock's place in it, are central to Milch's conception: 'I wanted Bullock to kill the Indian and bear the mark of Cain: He gets a big scar on his forehead when he kills the Indian at the beginning of the sixth episode. That is a completely fabricated incident, but I did not want to exempt Bullock from the more general sin of what we did to the Indians.'[14] This adds further to the ironic dimensions of the encounter: Bullock sees the incident in terms of human brotherhood – 'He was just trying to live, same as me' – but he ends up carrying the mark of Cain for killing his human brother. More important, Milch's own plotting of the incident, the 'intentional structure' that he imposes on it, creates a level of discourse to which Bullock is subject, but of which he is unaware. He cannot think of himself as a representative of his race, any more than he can see himself as a descendant of Cain: such historical and mythical reverberations are beyond his knowledge of an encounter in which he had to fight for his life. Therefore the irony that inflects his own plotting is structural as well as dramatic, for it involves historical dimensions of which he is unaware, and which he can never know. His own plotting is defined by his place within the drama, in the fictional world of *Deadwood*, whereas Milch's additional plotting invokes levels of history and myth that situate this fictional world in a larger context, a context of which Bullock is himself part but which he cannot know. This encounter is less an encounter between individuals, which is how Bullock's conscience prompts him to see it, than it is a clash between races. It is less a matter of Seth Bullock and the Indian than a matter of white man and red man, and the historically-determined dynamic of violence between them. While Bullock's victory is the fight may seem implausible (as he says, he never once had the upper hand), it is determined by the logic of the historical plot.

Analysis of the layering of these plots, the fictional plot in which Bullock is involved and of which he is conscious, and the historical plot which is part of Milch's 'intentional structure' but which Bullock cannot

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[12] Milch, *Deadwood: Stories of the Black Hills*, p. 153.
[13] Ibid, p. 12.
[14] Ibid, p. 201.

know, may assist the viewer, who, like Seth Bullock, and like Bullock's version of his assailant, is 'trying to make some fucking sense out of things.' Although this sequence lasts less than three minutes, it incorporates an almost self-contained action, in the Aristotelian sense, in so far as it contains a beginning, a middle, and an end.[15] These three stages of the action can be referred to the two levels of plot, the fictional plot involving Bullock, and Milch's historical plot, which can themselves be brought into relationship with each other through a pattern of aggression and response that characterizes the interaction of white and red races.

The first stage in the tripartite pattern here suggested is invasion and colonization, including the incidental (rather than systematic) killing of displaced indigenous inhabitants. At the level of fictional plot, the counterpart here is the murder and decapitation of the red man on the funeral bier. This, the mainspring of the sequence, is its 'beginning,' and the historical marker would be the Treaty of Fort Laramie, in which an apparent agreement masked a process of exclusion and control. The second stage in this pattern involves the response of the indigenous inhabitants against the invasive action of the colonizing power, in this case the reaction of the red man against the policies of the white man – avenging, indiscriminate attacks provoked by a sense of injustice. The fictional counterpart here – the 'middle' of the sequence - is the Indian's attack on Seth Bullock, and the historical marker here is represented by the Sioux victories against the U.S. army in the summer of 1876, especially at the Little Bighorn. The third stage in this pattern is characterized by the counter-reaction of the aggressor, a reaction at once extreme, excessive, and genocidal. The fictional counterpart to this is Bullock's desperate response to the attack on him, which leaves the red man dead and unrecognizable, and which brings the sequence to its 'end.' The historical marker here is the Massacre of Wounded Knee in 1890, where the Seventh Cavalry took its terrible revenge for the defeat at the Little Bighorn.

The 'arrangement of the incidents'[16] in this sequence therefore offers a thumbnail sketch of the relations between red and white races at the historical period during which the fiction of *Deadwood* takes place, and this microcosmic history determines the structure of the sequence. The unrecognizability of the dead Indian is significant because it demonstrates that, however troubled Bullock may be, the individual conscience counts for little in inter-racial relationships as represented here, which are

[15] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 14.
[16] Ibid, p. 12.

characterized by the white man's founding failure to *recognize* the red man, to acknowledge his rights and his existence.[17] This is, in Milch's words, the 'general sin of what we did to the Indians.' The individual conscience may count for little, but it does not count for nothing, for this encounter leaves its mark on Bullock in ways other than the scar on his forehead. As he says to Sol Star, 'That Indian saved Jack McCall's life,' because, diverted from his personal vengeance, Bullock soon 'decides to turn [McCall] over to the U.S authorities instead of killing him.'[18] Star reminds Bullock that McCall's life won't be saved for long. But it will be terminated by public justice rather than private vengeance, the very justice to which Bullock was so steadfastly committed in the opening episode of the season, 'Deadwood,'[19] in which he hung a man to save him from lynching, thus carrying out a judicial sentence rather than handing him over to a mob. In the episodes subsequent to that in which he kills the Indian, 'Bullock becomes more willing to take part in the business of bringing order to the Deadwood camp.'[20] His encounter with this Indian is pivotal in this first season of *Deadwood*, for it constitutes a transformative stage in Bullock's grooming for the rôle of sheriff that he is destined to assume, by looping back to the conscientious and committed sheriff in Montana Territory whom we saw in the very first episode.

The model of beginning, middle and end that is fundamental to Aristotle's sense of 'the arrangement of the incidents'[21] in plot may be applied to *Deadwood*'s first season in other, more expansive ways that clarify the pivotal quality of both this sequence and this episode, although the distinction between Bullock's story – the story Bullock tells himself, and in which he consciously participates – and the larger story of Deadwood remains crucial. As far as Bullock is concerned, the arrow thudding into his horse is the 'beginning' of something of great import for himself. His encounters with Utter, and later with himself, bring him to the 'recognition' and 'reversal' that define the 'middle' of the complex

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[17] The actor who plays the Indian is uncredited, either in the 'Dramatis Personae' section of Milch, *Deadwood: Stories of the Black* Hills, 6-9, or in the 'Cast and Crew' section on the HBO *Deadwood* website: http://www.hbo.com/deadwood/about/index.html#/deadwood/cast-and-crew/index.html (accessed June 2011).
[18] Hill, '"What's Afflictin' You?"' 176.
[19] Directed by Walter Hill, written by David Milch.
[20] Hill, '"What's Afflictin' You?"' 176.
[21] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 12.

Aristotelian plot,[22] for these qualities characterize his interpretation of what has happened, and, from where he stands they are the center of his story. The Indian's rôle in the incident gets reversed, in Bullock's mind, so that the man who tried to kill him is now recognized, if not as a friend, then at least as a kindred spirit doing honor to his friend. Bullock's abandonment of his pursuit of Hickock's killer signals the effect of some transformation in himself, leading eventually to his declaration, in authentic Deadwood idiolect, and with full awareness of what he is doing: 'I'll be the fucking sheriff.' In Bullock's story, 'the arrangement of the incidents' is determined by the shifting needs of his changing self, and its 'ending' is his willing acceptance of judicial office in Deadwood.

The Indian's arrow also points beyond this partial story conjured by Bullock's imagination to yet another, more comprehensive configuration of the story of *Deadwood*, and so to yet another 'arrangement of the incidents,' one in which Bullock's encounter with the Indian is plotted quite differently than it is in his own fragmentary version. The Metz massacre is the 'beginning' of the action of Deadwood, in the full Aristotelian sense of that term: 'that which is itself not, by necessity, after anything else but after which something naturally is or develops.'[23] This, the mainspring of the plot, leads indirectly to the encounter between Bullock and the Indian. For although Swearengen did not authorize the massacre, he has an interest in covering up for those who truly were responsible, and so he knowingly encourages the erroneous belief that the massacre was carried out by Indians by offering 'a personal fifty dollar bounty for every decapitated head of as many of these godless heathen cocksuckers as anyone can bring in tomorrow.' A decapitated head promptly turns up in the camp, and it is on account of this head that Bullock nearly becomes the scapegoat for the fall-out from Swearengen's scheming. As the structural backbone of 'Plague,' the sixth episode of a twelve-episode season, this encounter between Bullock and the Indian thus becomes the 'middle' of the first season's complex plot. In this expanded plot, the qualities of reversal and recognition now characterize a grander shift in Bullock's motivation than his merely personal and subjective response to his assailant. Reversal here is quite literal, as Bullock turns from his pursuit of McCall and goes back to Deadwood, and this reversal is impelled by a recognition that more is at stake than personal revenge. By the end of the twelfth episode of *Deadwood*'s first season, the formerly 'illegal' community now has a sheriff and a mayor, and Bullock has

[22] Ibid, pp. 18-19.
[23] Ibid, p. 14.

accepted his true institutional rôle, in Deadwood and in *Deadwood*, as the principle of justice. However tragic the history of red and white relations, the overall development of this season is towards a comedic resolution, as symbolized by the dance, traditional emblem of comic harmony, between Jewel and Doc Cochran.[24] As Jewel insists, and as she even gets Doc to say, each of them is now 'as nimble as a forest creature' – a further allusion to the transformative magic of comedy's green world. This is anything but the quintessential Aristotelian tragic 'ending,' 'after which there is nothing else';[25] it is rather a comic vacuum in which, in accordance with the necessarily infinite possibilities of serial television drama, everything is suspended and nothing is terminated.

Milch's claim that the Indian killed by Bullock is 'the only Indian' in *Deadwood*[26] overlooks the decapitated red man whose head (brandished in Deadwood's thoroughfare in the first season's fifth episode, 'The Trial of Jack McCall') remains a presence in the Deadwood camp. Uncertain of what to do with it, and somewhat embarrassed by it, Swearengen eventually secretes it in a box, in a cupboard, in his office at the Gem Saloon. Throughout all three seasons of *Deadwood*, Swearengen talks confidentially to the box, which he addresses as 'Chief,' about the situation in the camp. These addresses are dramatic monologues rather than soliloquies. A generic pre-condition of the dramatic monologue is the existence of a silent auditor, whose presence shifts the introspection of a soliloquy into more socially-conscious expression. Overlooking the Deadwood thoroughfare from his balcony, Al Swearengen is a thoroughly social being,[27] a natural operator whose *raison d'être* is plotting, in the sense of creating 'intentional structures' that may inflect 'the arrangement of the events' to his own advantage. Plotting is how he makes sense of things, and so these monologues constitute a vibrant version of the world

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[24] For a consideration of dancing as a convention in the Western genre, see Simon Petch, 'Stepping Westward: Dancing, the Western, and John Ford,' *Journal of the West* 47:4 (Fall 2008): 78-83.

[25] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 14.

[26] Milch, *Deadwood: Stories of the Black Hills*, p. 201.

[27] Ian McShane (who plays Swearingen): 'Swearingen knows that one great thing, which is that nobody's in control, ever, really.' Quoted in Milch, *Deadwood: Stories of the Black Hills*, p. 21.

according to Al Swearengen, thereby turning the silent head into an eloquent rhetorical presence at the heart of Deadwood's social life. [28]

The equally silent Sofia, the sole survivor of the Metz family, and a living reminder of their massacre, is a similarly potent presence in Deadwood. Like the 'Chief,' whose nomination endows him with authority, Sofia, whose name means 'wisdom,' represents an exercise of power that has somehow slipped beyond Swearengen's control. This situation creates a symbolic alliance between the head and Sofia, for their existence takes Swearengen into deep water by representing what he can't contain,[29] and this creature of plotting finds himself taunted, even haunted, by plots of his own that have slipped beyond his control. Swearengen may not have authorized the Metz massacre, but he did authorize the murder of Brom Garrett, and his robust attempts to appropriate the Garrett claim are thwarted – appropriately – by the man who was also the near-victim of the aftermath of the Metz bloodbath. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap? Hardly, in Deadwood. But here one of Swearengen's plots gets neatly tripped by the unforeseen aftermath of another; and although Bullock's growing interest in the affairs of Alma Garrett is erotically-driven, and so an aspect of *Deadwood*'s sexual comedy, his rôle as sheriff makes him an apt instrument of poetic justice.

Tucked away in the Gem Saloon, witness to Deadwood's comings and goings and killings, the decapitated head is at the heart of Deadwood's business. It represents the vigorous plotting of Al Swearengen, and is the origin, both symbolic and literal, of the layered plots that converge and explode so dramatically in the sixth episode. It is also at the heart of America's business, and a reminder, throughout the three seasons of *Deadwood*, of the resonant encounter between Seth Bullock and the Indian.

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[28] Each of Swearengen's 'Blow-Job Monologues,' as Milch calls them (*Deadwood: Stories of the Black Hills*, 81) – his musings as he is being fellated by one of his employees – is also delivered in the presence of a silent head.
[29] The second episode, directed by Davis Guggenheim and written by Malcolm MacRury, is titled "Deep Water."

Simon Petch's articles on the Western film have appeared in *Arizona Quarterly*, *Film Criticism*, and *Journal of the West*.

# The Autonomous Camera in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*

PAUL SUNDERLAND

This study into the aesthetics of camera movement in the cinema of Stanley Kubrick is due to an interest in the relationship between technology and cinema. Analysis of some of the major developments in moving camera technology demonstrates the close connection between technological development and moving camera aesthetics. As new technology becomes available, filmmakers are afforded greater freedom in the ways in which a moving image can be achieved. Kubrick's position at the forefront of technological developments in the cinema throughout his career, as well as his stylistic preference for camera movement, make his body of work a logical focal point for a discussion of this kind. *2001: A Space Odyssey* was ground-breaking in its use of special effects – an achievement that would earn the director an Academy Award. *Barry Lyndon* featured radically new lenses that allowed sequences to be filmed entirely by candlelight.[1] By focusing on Kubrick's use of the Steadicam in *The Shining* this discussion will focus on a less-widely acknowledged aspect of Kubrick's use of cinematic technology. In my discussion I suggest that Kubrick's innovative use of the Steadicam challenged the spectator's perception of cinematic space. I attempt to show that Kubrick introduced a radically new form of camera movement that fundamentally altered the use of movement as a narrative and stylistic device. In departing from conventional moving camera aesthetics, Kubrick's camera becomes a self-conscious narrative device, entailing a rejection of the illusion of realism with which narrative cinema is conventionally concerned. This self-consciousness accounts in part for the authorial presence, or directorial 'signature', apparent throughout *The Shining*, and traceable across the director's cinema.

[1] For a detailed discussion of this see Ed DiGuilio, 'Two Special Lenses for Barry Lyndon,' *American Cinematographer* 57, no. 3 (1976): 276-7.

Kubrick and the aesthetics of camera movement in *The Shining*

The climax to *The Shining* depicts Danny being pursued through a large, snow-covered hedge-maze by his axe-wielding father, Jack. Danny deftly weaves through the narrow hedges of the maze as the camera pursues him relentlessly from behind. The imposing walls of the maze accelerate past the edges of the frame, emphasizing the speed and desperation with which Danny runs. Bright lights at the ends of the tunnels seem to beckon to him through the falling snow as he frantically flees his father. The sequence is permeated by an excessive amount of movement, but immediately noticeable is the ease with which the camera moves to pursue Danny through the tight spaces of the maze. At one point Danny falls; the camera slows down, and then accelerates to pursue him as he rises and begins running again. A moment later Danny abruptly doubles back in the direction from which he has come, but the camera accommodates his change in direction with ease – it stops, pulls back, and turns to follow him in one fluid movement. It appears that this camera is floating through space, not questioning the dense materiality of the earth but hovering blithely above it. It pursues Danny relentlessly, free from the restrictions of gravity and materiality, embodying a kind of freedom and autonomy rarely displayed in narrative cinema prior to *The Shining*.[2]

This sequence represents a fundamentally new form of cinematic movement made possible by developments in the early 1970s in the stabilization of hand-held cinematography. These developments were perfected in 1975 in the Steadicam, a device that combines the mobility of a hand-held camera with the stability of a dolly, producing a graceful and fluid image in motion, while simultaneously allowing the free movement of the apparatus through space. After seeing a reel of test footage shot by an early prototype in 1974, Kubrick wrote to Garret Brown, the Steadicam's inventor, to tell him that the footage shot by the 'hand-held mystery stabilizer was spectacular' and that it 'should revolutionize the way films are shot.'[3] *The Shining* was Kubrick's first film subsequent to the invention of the Steadicam, and it is unsurprising that a director so enthusiastic about

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[2] In a discussion of several technological developments in the 1970s allowing greater freedom in camera movement, Salt includes among the Steadicam's unique effects the tendency 'to feel as though it has a life of its own,' and 'a slight look of 'balloon-like' motion'. See Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis*, (London: Starworld, 1992), p.278.

[3] Quoted in Serena Ferrara, *Steadicam: Techniques and Aesthetics* (Oxford: Focal Press, 2001), p.30.

both camera movement and technological development in cinema should utilise the aesthetic possibilities afforded by the new technology. In assessing Kubrick's use of the Steadicam, Brown found that Kubrick used the device 'as it was intended to be used, as a tool which can help get the lens where it's wanted in space and time without the classical limitation of the dolly and crane.'[4] Pipolo similarly argues that *The Shining* represents 'one of the most spectacular applications of technological invention to the illusionist seductions of the medium.'[5] While earlier films had used the new technology for conventional camera movements,[6] Kubrick's film was the first major production to use the device as a distinct narrative and imagistic voice, one that is 'independent, superior and capable of tying together events, anticipating them and abandoning them exactly because it knows the story and chooses how to tell it to us.'[7]

Camera movement is Kubrick's most consistently self-conscious stylistic characteristic and numerous examples from any film in his body of work testify to its importance to his directorial style. The ubiquity of camera movement in Kubrick's cinema points to a restlessness with conventional spatial aesthetics. Overt tracking movements forward or backward in *Paths of Glory* and *A Clockwork Orange* suggest an attempt to breach the frame separating the diegesis and its observer. The zoom in *Barry Lyndon* alters the relationship between the spectator and the object of the gaze. The viewer's spatial orientation is overwhelmed by the tracking shots of Dr. Poole as he circuits the control room in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Kubrick's predisposition towards camera movement suggests he recognised and was attracted to the Steadicam's ability to reconfigure the relationship between the spectator and the diegesis and to more closely approximate the full immersion of the spectator in the cinematic space – a goal the director's relentless tracking-in-depth tries to achieve. But there is

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[4] Quoted in Ferrara, *Steadicam*, p. 30.

[5] Tony Pipolo, 'The Modernist and the Misanthrope: The Cinema of Stanley Kubrick,' *Cineaste* 27, no. 2 (2002): 12.

[6] The first Steadicam shot in a feature film is a 2-minute tracking shot in *Bound For Glory* (1976). Beginning from a raised platform, the camera descends to the ground and then follows David Carradine as he moves through a crowd. The device was also used in *Marathon Man* (1976) to add dynamism to the shots of Dustin Hoffman running through Central Park and the streets of New York. *Rocky* (1976) features the celebrated sequence in which the Steadicam follows Rocky as he climbs the stairs to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In none of these films however, does the device demonstrate the autonomy and self-consciousness it attains in *The Shining*.

[7] Ferrara, *Steadicam*, p. 81.

another distinct difference between the earlier camera movements characteristic of Kubrick's cinematic style, and what I will refer to as the panoptic[8] gaze in *The Shining*. The apparatus that pursues Danny through the maze demonstrates the ability to move anywhere in space. Not only can it maintain the subject of its observation in a perfectly-framed shot, it can anticipate the movement of characters. This spatial 'awareness' marks a significant development on previous camera movements, which are conventionally used to support the story through a character's point-of-view. The track, for instance, is an explicit register of movement within the frame usually tied to character. Antoine's run to the beach at the end of *The 400 Blows* (1959) demonstrates tracking's conventional characterological function – the movement in this case conveys the sense of freedom for which Antoine yearns. [9] Likewise, *Jules et Jim* (1962), to use another example from Truffaut, demonstrates the use of hand-held cinematography in the mediation of character. In the famous scene of Oskar Werner, Henri Serre and Jeanne Moreau racing each other on the Parisian bridge, 'the freedom of the camera and the freedom of the characters are one.'[10] Camera movement in cinema has thus been aesthetically normalised as a function of point-of-view. The unique development brought to the cinema by the Steadicam is the materialisation of a presence dislocated from conventional point-of-view itineraries.

Kubrick: 'A parody puppeteer in the shadows'

Kubrick's films have typically been met with a combination of confusion and disappointment upon release, and *The Shining* was no exception. Gregg Smith sums up the response: 'some critics complained that the film was too complicated and didn't make sense, others that it was

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[8] Foucault uses Bentham's Panopticon – a circular prison arranged so the cells at the periphery are constantly visible from a single central point – as a metaphor for the functioning of power in society. He writes: 'The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad; in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen.' See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*: *The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), pp. 201-202.

[9] For a detailed account of this sequence see Lucia Nagib, *World Cinema and the Ethics of Realism*, (New York, NY: Continuum, 2011).

[10] John Calhoun, 'Putting the 'Move' in Movie,' *American Cinematographer* 84, no. 10 (2003): 81.

too slow, still others that it was not scary enough.'[11] *Variety* wrote that Kubrick destroys 'all that was so terrifying about Stephen King's bestseller,'[12] and Dave Kehr found that the 'imagery – with its compulsive symmetry and brightness – is too banal to sustain interest.'[13] Given the film is a long, ponderous story about unremarkable and unlikeable characters, it is hardly surprising that some of the response was negative. Its release also coincided with a surge in popularity in 'slasher' films, and as a 'thinking person's horror film,'[14] *The Shining* was unlikely to appeal to audiences accustomed to films like *The Amityville Horror*, *Halloween*, and *Friday the 13th*, all of which were released in the three years prior to *The Shining* to significant commercial success.[15]

Smith adds that it was not just popular critics that disliked the film, but that academic critics were disinterested because they saw it as 'a horror film and as such not worth paying attention to.'[16] Smith's point here is that the contemporary critical dismissal of *The Shining* as a genre film was a simplistic reduction of its thematic and stylistic complexity. As with previous 'genre' films in his career, the horror genre to Kubrick was hardly a strict system of rules and conventions to which a film must conform, but rather a framework on which to construct a unique conceptual vision. Richard Jameson argues that categorising *The Shining* as a horror film is as helpful as describing *Dr Strangelove* as an 'anti-war film', or *2001: A Space Odyssey* as an 'outer-space pic', or *Barry Lyndon* as a 'costume picture.'[17] He argues that '*The Shining* is a horror movie only in the sense that all Kubrick's mature work has been horror movies – films that

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[11] Greg Smith, ''Real Horrorshow': The Juxtaposition of Subtext, Satire, and Audience Implication in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*,' *Literature/Film Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (1997), 300.
[12] 'Review: 'The Shining',' *Variety*, accessed June 11, 2013, http://variety.com/1979/film/reviews/the-shining-1200424592/.
[13] 'The Shining,' Dave Kehr, accessed June 13, 2013, http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/the-shining/Film?oid=2686751.
[14] Amy Nolan, 'Seeing is Digesting: Labyrinths of Historical Ruin in Stanely Kubrick's *The Shining*,' *Cultural Critique* 77 (2011), 184.
[15] While partaking in the narrative and visual tropes of the horror genre, *The Shining* clearly deviated from the conventions of both the slasher and supernatural horror film. However, few contemporary analyses in criticism attempt to interrogate the nature of this deviation, which I locate in the film's stretched out suspense, intrusive comedy, and the absence of sympathetic characters with which to identify.
[16] Smith, 'Real Horrorshow,' 300.
[17] Richard Jameson, 'Kubrick's Shining,' *Film Comment* 16, no. 4 (1980), 29.

constitute a Swiftian vision of inscrutable cosmic order.'[18] Contemporary audiences expecting a conventional horror film similar to the commercially successful slasher films of the late 1970s were thus unlikely to be impressed by a film that not only dispensed with the conventions of the horror genre, but one that strategically deviated from the classical Hollywood style to conform more closely to what Bordwell would describe as an 'art' film.[19]

Smith and Jameson both suggest that audiences judging the film according to aesthetic criteria based on classical convention were unlikely to appreciate *The Shining*'s narrative irresolution, ambivalent point-of-view, unlikeable characters and general ambiguity. Furthermore, the film's overt self-consciousness was likely to further alienate audiences accustomed to a style that effaces all traces of the author – a 'rule' ignored by Kubrick throughout his career. Jameson makes the point that it is more helpful to categorize *The Shining* as 'A Stanley Kubrick Film' than as an example of the horror genre.[20] Mamber puts this another way: 'Behind all the hotel doors setting ghastly images in motion, dripping blood out of elevators, providing the unexplained means of escape to frequently trapped characters, lies the director himself, a parody puppeteer in the shadows.'[21] Kubrick's frequent inclusion in lists alongside the great auteurs of cinema – Hitchcock, Welles, or Antonioni, for example – is in part due to this authorial presence, or directorial 'signature'. By rejecting the effacement of the author typical of the classical style, Kubrick's cinema demonstrates a modernist[22] sensibility that exposes the fictionality of the text, foregrounding both the narrational process, apparatical construction of the image, and the presence of the author.

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[18] Jameson, 'Kubrick's Shining,' 29.
[19] David Bordwell, 'The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice,' In *Film Theory and Criticism: 6th Edition*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 774-782.
[20] Jameson, 'Kubrick's Shining,' 29.
[21] Stephen Mamber, 'Parody, Intertextuality, Signature: Kubrick, DePalma, and Scorsese,' *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 12 (1990): 34.
[22] I use the term in accordance with Bordwell's conception of a modernist cinema: 'that set of formal properties and viewing protocols that presents, above all, the radical split of narrative structure from cinematic style, so that the film constantly strains between the coherence of the fiction and the perceptual disjunctions of cinematic representation.' See Bordwell, 'Art Cinema', pp. 780-781.

The incongruity of a 'difficult' modernist sensibility with a conventionally marketed genre film goes some way toward explaining the film's early mixed reception, but as with other Kubrick films *The Shining* has risen in both popular and critical esteem in the decades subsequent to its release. It has become the subject of numerous critical studies and works of scholarship, with most critics focusing on the film's narrative elements – plot, story, and characterisation – in discussing the film's thematic concerns. These analyses have shown that the film is a complex exploration of American history,[23] patriarchal repression,[24] and the American nuclear family,[25] which connect to broader ideas that recur throughout Kubrick's cinema, such as humanity's preoccupation with war, the maintenance of male-dominated systems of power, and the incompatibility of social institutions with human nature.

Though these thematic aspects have been widely discussed, the film's stylistic and formal qualities, particularly the use of the apparatus, have generally been under-acknowledged in critical discussion. I argue that an analysis of stylistic and formal qualities, in addition to narrative and thematic concerns, is essential to forming a comprehensive interpretation of the film. My analysis attempts to demonstrate how the authorial presence inherent in much of Kubrick's cinema is manifested in medium-specific tropes. Deviations from classical convention foreground the presence of the author and make manifest the narrational process intrinsic to Kubrick's unconventional style. My discussion focuses on the implications of Kubrick's use of the Steadicam as a self-conscious narrative device in contravention of classical convention. In order to understand the ways in which the Steadicam is utilised specifically and self-consciously in *The Shining* as a fundamentally new form of camera movement, it is necessary first to examine the development of camera movement in the context of the development of the classical narrative style.

## Camera movement and the illusion of realism

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[23] See for example Nolan, 'Labyrinths,' 180-204.
[24] See for example Robert Kilker, 'All Roads Lead to the Abject: The Monstrous Feminine and Gender Boundaries in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*,' *Literature/Film Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2006): 54-63.
[25] See for example Frank Manchel, 'What About Jack? Another Perspective on Family Relationships in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*,' *Literature/Film Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (1995): 68-78.

In an article on the aesthetic implications of camera movement, John Calhoun argues that of all the visual arts, only cinema has the ability to 'reframe a continuous image.'[26] This alters the relationship between the spectator and the frame, and allows a filmmaker to link a series of geographically disparate objects or spaces in an uninterrupted sequence. As early as the late 1890s, filmmakers experimented with camera movement, suggesting the technique has been integral to the medium since its inception. A short sequence depicting movement in *Panorama du Grand Canal pris d'un Bateau from 1896*, 'likely … the first travelling shot in the history of cinema,'[27] was achieved by attaching the camera to a gondola and capturing a series of buildings as the camera floated along the canals of Venice. The shot is typical of early examples of camera movement that, due to an absence of panning heads and other specialised equipment, used available means of transport as the method of moving the camera. Attaching the camera to a train became one of the most popular methods of achieving movement, and Nielsen points out that by the early 20th century there had already developed two-subcategories of train mobility: 'panoramas' – shots filmed from the side of a moving train, which could articulate a spatial layout – and 'phantom rides' – shots filmed from the front of a moving train, which offer the thrill of 'spectacular viewing positions.'[28]

Short films featuring panning shots began appearing in the early 1900s, and in 1903, *Hooligan in Jail* featured one of the earliest examples of a dolly shot. The sequence begins with a long shot of a prisoner seated at a table. A guard enters to place some food on the table. The camera then dollies in to capture the prisoner's facial expression. The movement in this early example is notable, as Nielsen points out, as it 'varies from its conventionalized use in classical narrative cinema.' He argues that the shot 'does not really invite the viewer inside the [hooligan's] mind.' Rather, the hooligan is a 'stock character whose grimacing is a comic performance, and it is this *presentational comic performance* which the push-in ultimately facilitates' (italics original). The movement is accompanied by the 'direct audience address of the hooligan', further relinquishing any attempt 'to sustain the illusion that he inhabits an autonomous fictional world.' [29] One of the earliest examples of camera movement was thus

[26] Calhoun, 'Movie,' 73.
[27] Jakob Nielsen, 'Camera Movement in Narrative Cinema: Towards a Taxonomy of Functions' (PhD diss., University of Aarhus, 2007), p. 89.
[28] Ibid, 89.
[29] Nielsen, 'Camera Movement,' 93.

indifferent to the realistic illusion of the cinema that would predominate with the rise of a classical style.

Tom Gunning points out that though this early cinema was not 'dominated by the narrative impulse that later asserted its sway over the medium,' by 1906 these early examples of what he calls a 'cinema of attractions' would be overtaken by a different set of 'spectator relations.'[30] This different set of spectator relations developed into the classical Hollywood cinema, in which style would become increasingly subordinate to narrative. The classical cinema is predicated on a diegetic world that pre-exists its representation by the cinematic apparatus, and the role of the apparatus is to communicate the diegesis as seamlessly as possible, effacing all traces of the author and the means by which the author communicates. By effacing all traces of authorial activity, classical cinema aims to achieve an 'invisibility of style', with the audience focusing 'on constructing the fabula[31], not on asking why the narration is representing the fabula in this particular way.'[32] Classical camera movement can thus be seen as any movement of the apparatus that attempts to communicate the narrative as unobtrusively as possible. Ferrara writes that classical movement aids 'in the construction of the story and … in obtaining the best possible portrayal of what is happening.'[33] This includes 'following an actor's movements', and 'illustrating and depicting the setting.' Camera movement from the early 1900s would increasingly be constrained by this imperative.

An example from D.W. Griffith's 1916 film *Intolerance* demonstrates the conjunction of experimental camera movement and narrative from the early 20th century (figures 1-3). David D. Samuelson writes in *A Brief History of Camera Mobility* that the simultaneous track in and down on the Gates of Babylon set means the camera shows the 'whole Babylonian scene from a high angle … before being lowered and pushed forward toward a two-head close-up.'[34] The sequence (figures 1-3) is said to contain

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[30] Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction,' *Wide Angle* 3, no. 4 (1986), 64.
[31] Bordwell defines 'fabula' as 'the narrative events in causal chronological sequence'
[32] David Bordwell, 'Classical Hollywood Cinema: Narrational Principles and Procedures,' in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 25.
[33] Ferrara, *Steadicam*, p. 9.
[34] David Samuelson, 'A Brief History of Camera Mobility,' *American Cinematographer* 84, no. 10 (2003), 90.

the 'first shot where the camera changed height and tracked forward and backward.'[35]

Fig 1

Fig 2

[35]Ibid, 90.

Fig 3

Samuelson points out that the details of how this cinematic milestone was achieved have been lost to history, but it is believed a large tower was built across two railway wagons, and the camera then lowered from the tower as the wagons were pushed forward by hand. John Calhoun notes that the 'obvious reason for the shot was to first establish the scale of the set, and then to move closer to verify that actual human activity was taking place in it.'[36] This early example of an experimental shot – anticipating the invention of the crane by a decade in its combination of vertical movement and movement in depth – thus had the narrative function of orientating the audience to the scale and grandeur of the scene.

The basic moving camera technologies were widely available by the 1930s and directors were free to explore the aesthetic implications of movement.[37] In his discussion of Renoir's *Grand Illusion*, Bazin demonstrates that cinematic realism is one of the aesthetic possibilities provided by a mobile camera. His analysis focuses on how camera movement eliminates the need for editing, which he believes separates 'reality into successive shots which [are] just a series of either logical or subjective points of view of an event.'[38] Consider the sequence from *Grand*

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[36] Calhoun, 'Movie,' 73.
[37] Salt, *Film Style,* p. 206.
[38] Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 2*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 28.

*Illusion* in which the camera looks down from a high angle on Cartier in the courtyard as he shouts off-screen to an unseen prisoner (figures 4-6).

Fig 4

Fig 5

Fig 6

As their brief dialogue comes to an end, the camera pulls back to reveal first a window frame through which the camera has been filming, and then the interior of a room where two prisoners are seated, one of whom was shouting to Cartier moments earlier. The movement shifts the focus of the scene from Cartier in the courtyard to the conversation between the two prisoners in the room above, effectively linking two dramatically and spatially distinct scenes. Bazin sees this kind of movement as fundamental in preserving dramatic and phenomenological unity. 'By moving the camera to "reframe" the scene instead of cutting,' he writes, 'Renoir is able to treat the sequence not as a series of fragments but as a dramatic whole.'[39] Realism is achieved by eliminating the need to introduce an 'obviously abstract element into reality'[40] through editing. 'It is through such techniques,' Bazin argues, 'that Renoir attempts to portray realistically the relations between men and women and the world in which they find themselves.'[41]

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[39] Andre Bazin, *Jean Renoir*, trans. W. W. Halsey II and W. H. Simon (London: W.H. Allen, 1974), p. 64.
[40] Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, p. 28.
[41] Bazin, *Renoir*, p. 64.

Significant developments in realism would also be achieved with the advent of hand-held cinematography, the rise of which Calhoun attributes to the coincidence of advances in mobile sound and camera technology, and 'the ascendancy of personal style in film.'[42] A hand-held camera is free from the restrictions imposed by a dolly or crane, allowing it to move freely through space. The technique would become associated with the directors of the French New Wave, who used it to disrupt the conventionally stable frame of the classical style. Godard's use of the technique to follow Jean Seberg as she makes a circuit of the house towards the end of *Breathless*, demonstrates the mobility the technology provided as well as the realism it could add to the image. The extra mobility meant that the camera could now follow characters through space, and Geuens suggests that as 'the camera stuck close to the protagonists and followed them from room to room, from inside a building to the street, the artificiality of the studio was left behind – the grime of the "real" world paradoxically providing a breath of fresh air.'[43] The camera that could move freely could also affect the spectator viscerally. Geuens notes that in following a character a hand-held camera achieves 'the recreation of some of the sensations experienced by a human being undertaking these actions.'[44] In endeavouring to provide a sensation of movement, these experiments with mobility were increasingly a departure from classicism and a narratively inscribed progression. They attempted to provide movement as an affective quality of the cinematic medium. The extra mobility of the hand-held camera had significant narrative and aesthetic opportunities, but the lack of stability inherent to the practice was an issue for filmmakers wanting to maintain a stable image within a constantly reframing spatial environment. This stability was not technologically possible with the hand-held apparatus seen in cinema prior to *The Shining*.

## The Steadicam: 'Pure visual presence'

The Steadicam was a development in moving camera technology as significant as the dolly, the crane, or hand-held cinematography, and one that, according to Geuens, 'significantly altered the look of films.'[45] It was originally invented by Garret Brown to 'improve the look of [his] hand-

[42] Calhoun, 'Movie', 80.
[43] Jean-Pierre Geuens, 'Visuality and Power: The Work of the Steadicam,' *Film Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (1993), 11.
[44] Ibid, 11.
[45] Ibid, 8.

held shooting.'[46] The device's original patent describes it as a 'portable camera equipment system especially adapted for operation by a camera operator in motion'[47]. It is 'substantially free-floating in a manner to isolate [it] … from unwanted lateral and vertical movement caused by the motion of the camera operator.'[48] Ferrara notes that the extra stability of the device is achieved by the use of three basic principles: shifting the camera's centre of gravity, spreading the camera mass, and isolating the camera from the movements of the operator.[49] These three principles combine in a device that 'responds to the demands of one's hands with the grace and fluidity of a jazz dancer.'[50] This stability and responsiveness produce the fluid and graceful movement characteristic of Steadicam shots.

Camera operators frequently complain that the instant dynamism and kinetic energy provided by a Steadicam shot has meant that the device is often overused in contemporary cinema.[51] Bordwell writes that 'the shot pursuing one or two characters down corridors, through room after room, indoors and outdoors and back again, has become ubiquitous' in contemporary American cinema.[52] He attributes this to the influence of directors whose work is marked by virtuoso camera movements – among whom he includes Kubrick – and to the increasing availability of 'lighter cameras and stabilizers like Steadicam.'[53] Geuens argues that the excessive visuality characterising much contemporary film calls for 'no less than a different type of scopic regime.'[54] As an example he discusses a shot from James Cameron's *Terminator 2*, which he describes as 'a flashy display of Steadicam pyrotechnics.'[55] The sequence begins with a close-up of a computer screen. The camera tracks left and then pans to reveal a spacious scientific laboratory where a number of scientists are busily working at computers and desks. After establishing the layout and extent of the set, the camera moves forward through the space, intermittently panning left or

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[46] Ibid, p. 11.
[47] Ibid, p. 14.
[48] Ibid, pp. 14-15.
[49] Ibid, pp. 18-19.
[50] Geuens, 'Visuality,' 12.
[51] These views on contemporary Steadicam use can be found in Ferrara, *Steadicam*, pp. 101-157.
[52] David Bordwell, 'Intensified Continuity: Visual Style in Contemporary American Film,' *Film Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (2002), 20.
[53] Ibid, 20.
[54] Geuens, 'Visuality,' 15.
[55] Ibid, 14.

right to follow or leave the movement of various characters, eventually coming to focus on Miles Dyson, the director of the laboratory, as he converses with an assistant. The camera tracks 90 degrees around the two men then follows them as they walk through the laboratory. The camera moves through a doorway into a separate enclosure, stops to watch another brief conversation before moving to follow Miles to the door of a heavily-secured vault. The camera finally comes to a rest, and the sequence is ended with a cut taking us to the other side of the vault.

Geuens writes that the sequence is permeated by 'so much visual distraction' that it represents an 'implicit indifference toward what was once a basic tenet of the classical film language through which this kind of text still officially operates.'[56] The camera initially moves into the laboratory independently, only subsequently focusing on the characters in the room, and even then 'it is no longer possible to say … that we are in the best possible position from which to apprehend their conversations and view their activities.'[57] The movement of the camera far exceeds the narrative demands of the scene and as such 'cannot be explained through the use of traditional narrative or aesthetic agencies.'[58] It marks a significant departure from the purely descriptive camera movements of a classical style.

In *The Shining*, Kubrick introduced a highly specific and self-conscious use of Steadicam movement that anticipates Geuens' example from *Terminator 2* and that Bordwell has argued has become ubiquitous since the early 90s. The first post-credit sequence of *The Shining* starts with Jack entering the doors of the Overlook Hotel's spacious and well-lit lobby (figures 7-12). He enters the lobby left of frame and the camera tracks laterally to follow him as he approaches a reception desk that soon enters the frame from the right. He has a short conversation with a receptionist who gestures to Ullman's office off-screen and behind the camera. The camera then follows Jack as he moves towards the office, first panning anti-clockwise to give a panoramic view of the expansive set. The camera then follows Jack through one doorway, pauses as he hesitates at a second, and follows him into the office as he is invited in by Ullman. The camera finally becomes stationary inside the office to observe a brief conversation between the two characters.

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[56] Ibid, 14.
[57] Ibid, 14.
[58] Ibid, 15.

Fig 7

Fig 8

Fig 9

Fig 10

Fig 11

Fig 12

A relatively simple classical arrangement would suffice in conveying the sequence's straightforward narrative material. A long shot would establish Jack's entrance to the lobby; a cut to a mid-shot would show his brief conversation with the receptionist; a cut to the inside of Ullman's office would show Jack entering the room moments later. This causal montage would effectively establish the spatial contours of the environment and 'direct' the gaze of the spectator toward its key significatory elements. Instead, Kubrick films the sequence as a continuous shot, showing the entirety of Jack's movement from the front doors of the hotel lobby to his arrival in Ullman's office nearly a minute later. Kubrick's decision to film the sequence without a cut recalls Bazin's analysis of camera movement in *Grand Illusion* described earlier. It could be said that Kubrick films the entire sequence as a continuous take in an attempt to portray 'realistically the relations between men and women and the world in which they find themselves.' But this sequence has none of the subtlety of Renoir's movement. Kubrick instead revels in the exuberant visuality provided by a fully mobile apparatus. In blocking Jack's movement, Kubrick ensures he walks around the camera on his way to Ullman's office, allowing the camera to perform a wide circle to follow him, orientating us to the vastness of the set and establishing the camera's ability to go everywhere and see everything. Furthermore, the Steadicam's eerie floating sensation betrays a pensiveness unachievable with conventional hand-held cinematography. Not only does visuality here thoroughly exceed the demands of the scene, it 'superimposes over the conventional action a panoptic demonstration of pure visual presence.'[59] The camera here is not describing a setting; it is announcing a vast and precarious cinematic space of which it is unmistakably the centre.

Geuens notes that though the movement of the Steadicam through space may parallel that of the dolly, the former device embodies a 'clinical distance' and a 'sterilized indifference'[60] that lend an inherent artificiality to the image. In discussing camera movement in Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog* he writes that the 'slow, determinate, carefully executed dolly movement' alongside the latrines of an Auschwitz block 'interrogate[s] the palpability of the cracks in the concrete.'[61] He argues that the intentionality of the movement conveys the filmmaker's determination to negotiate the denseness of the world. This expresses the filmmaker's 'concern with the

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[59] Ibid, 15.
[60] Ibid, 15.
[61] Ibid, 15.

very muteness of the photographic image and its failure to evoke but the phantom of an event that was then and is now still truly unspeakable.'[62] In contrast to the dense materiality of the dolly, the levitation of the Steadicam diminishes this connection between the material world and the apparatus. The Steadicam is dematerialized – it is liberated from the restrictions of gravity or physicality, and is consequently unable to negotiate the material reality of the world. Attendent to this liberation is a sterilization of the image. Following Geuens's reasoning, the idea of substituting the palpable materiality of Resnais' dolly movement with the 'clinical distance' and 'sterilized indifference' of the Steadicam would be repellent.

Kubrick uses the sterilized image produced by the Steadicam's dematerialization to suggest an indifferent and detached cinematic space in *The Shining*. The Steadicam's indifference to the material reality of the space is emphasised during one of Danny's rides through the labyrinthine corridors of the Overlook Hotel on his tricycle. The floor that Danny covers on his route is primarily made up of hard floorboards, but at several points during his ride he crosses a rug, the soft, muted sound of which differs from the harshness of the wooden floorboards. The contrast between the two sounds makes palpable the material reality of the hotel. The Steadicam that follows close behind Danny is noticeably unaffected by the change in material, instead gliding detachedly along. Girard writes of this sequence that 'the extremely low position of the camera and the amplified sound of the bike's wheels awaken in the spectator a feeling of malaise and of the unknown.' [63] She attributes this effect to the shot's coding as 'a subjective camera' with 'no imaginable subject.' The camera's point of view 'thus becomes monstrous, dogging the little boy in an irrepresentable, menacing fashion.' The unsettling feeling produced in the spectator is a result of the Steadicam's ability to materialise a panoptic gaze that is dislocated from a conventional point-of-view itinerary.

## Spatial aesthetics and the configuration of a 'presence'

Camera movement is a stylistic characteristic with which Kubrick is often associated, and the ubiquity of the technique throughout the director's

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[62] Ibid, 15.

[63] Quoted in Elizabeth Mullen, 'Do You Speak Kubrick? Orchestrating Transgression and Mastering Malaise in *The Shining,' Image & Narrative* 10, no. 2 (2009): 100.

cinema suggests a dissatisfaction with conventional spatial aesthetics. In looking at the way Kubrick attempts to reconfigure spatial aesthetics in *The Shining*, it is helpful to consider an account of camera movement given by Brown, who, in addition to inventing the device, was the Steadicam's operator on *The Shining*:

> When the camera begins to move, we are suddenly given the missing information as to shape and layout and size. The two-dimensional image acquires the illusion of three-dimensionality and we are carried across the divide of the screen, deeper and deeper into a world that is not contiguous to our own.[64]

Movement in depth is the attempt to reconfigure the conventional relationship between the diegesis and its observer, which places the diegesis on one side of the frame, and the spectator firmly on the other. By moving forward or backward in space the spectator is invited to probe the cinematic world presented in the diegesis. Kubrick's constant attempt to breach the threshold separating the diegesis and the spectator is evidenced by a trope that recurs throughout his cinema: a character walks towards the spectator through a symmetrical tunnel as the camera tracks backwards. Kubrick often combines this movement with a wide-angle lens, distorting the frame by emphasising objects in the foreground and pushing the background into the distance. The combination of an exaggerated sense of depth produced by the wide-angle lens and the tracking movement of the camera gives the illusion that the sides of the tunnel are accelerating from the edges of the frame towards a central vanishing point.

An early example of this is the sequence showing General Mireau marching through the trenches inspecting his troops in *Paths of Glory* (figure 13). The camera tracks backwards to anticipate the General's movement, pausing occasionally as he talks to the soldiers, whom he has decided will soon be going over the top to meet German machine-gun fire. As the General marches past, the wounded and demoralized soldiers lining the sides of the trench accelerate from the edges of the frame towards the vanishing point, reflecting the General's indifference towards them.

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[64] Quoted in Calhoun, 'Movie,' 74.

Fig 13

The same effect is achieved in *A Clockwork Orange* as Alex walks through the record store to collect a record he has ordered (figure 14). Again, the walls accelerate past the edges of the frame towards a distant central point. Pop-cultural ephemera lining the walls accelerate into the distance as Alex walks aloofly by. In this sequence the distinction between the diegesis and the observer will be further breached in a metafictional disruption of realism: at the conclusion of his walk through the store Alex will stop at a counter where an LP for Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* is prominently displayed.

Fig 14

Kubrick's innovation in *The Shining* is to reverse the direction of the tracking. The frequent shots of Danny riding through the hotel position the spectator behind him, inches above the ground (figure 15). As Danny rides forward we follow him toward the distant vanishing point in the centre of the frame. The vanishing point is what Jameson labels a 'tear in the membrane of reality' in his description of one of the film's visual motifs:

> Virtually every shot … is built around a central hole, a vacancy, a tear in the membrane of reality: a door that would lead us down another hallway, a panel of bright color that somehow seems more permeable than the surrounding dark tones, an infinite white glow behind a central closeup face, a mirror, a TV screen … a photograph.[65]

These tears 'in the membrane of reality' represent the threat of subsumption posed by the hotel. Kubrick's use of a wide-angle lens in the lengthy forward-tracking shots produces the same distortion as in the examples from *Paths of Glory* and *A Clockwork Orange*, but by tracking forward the walls of the tunnel accelerate towards us. This produces in the spectator the sensation of being pulled into the frame towards the distant vanishing point. Paradoxically, the extra stability provided by the Steadicam compounds this sensation by lacking the materiality that permeates a dolly shot. It is the relentless forward-tracking movement through a distorted tunnel coupled with the Steadicam's dematerialization that makes so tangible the hotel's threat of subsumption.

[65] Jameson, 'Kubrick's Shining,' 30.

Fig 15

Throughout *The Shining*, the apparatus consistently and overtly demonstrates autonomy from the diegesis with which it is concerned. In a discussion of Antonioni, Seymour Chatman calls this autonomy 'the wandering camera', or the moments in a film where 'the camera seems to wander on its own, in an objective, not a subjective, manner.'[66] He describes a shot of the desert in *The Passenger* where the camera, instead of focusing on the character within the diegesis, in this case Jack Nicholson's Locke, pans away and wanders on its own for a moment, as if liberated of its conventional characterological function (figures 16-18). 'Locke is often picked up accidently and contingently, as if diegesis (or at least this diegesis) were not the camera's real responsibility,' he writes. 'The effect is strangely tense, as if the camera itself did not know what to expect.'[67] Of the same film, Kenneth Johnson argues that 'it is specifically camera movement in an unmotivated situation that gives the wandering camera a unique sense of "presence".'[68] 'When the camera so wanders,' he writes, 'we become aware, because our "classical" expectations have been disrupted, of a foreign presence.'[69]

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[66] Seymour Chatman, *Antonioni, or, the Surface of the World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 196.
[67] Chatman, *Antonioni*, p. 197.
[68] Kenneth Johnson, 'The Point of View of the Wandering Camera,' *Cinema Journal*, 32 no.2 (1993), 51.
[69] Chatman, *Antonioni*, p. 56.

Fig 16

Fig 17

Fig 18

*The Shining* opens with a series of 'wandering camera' movements immediately establishing the camera's autonomy. The first is a shot from a helicopter as it flies over a lake in what starts as a conventional establishing shot. The camera soon foregrounds its autonomy by veering to one side to avoid trees on an island in the middle of the lake. The second and third shots are also from a helicopter, this time establishing the presence of Jack's car as it drives through the mountains towards the Overlook Hotel. In each shot the car is a tiny object far below and the camera tracks from behind – a visual motif that will recur throughout the film. In the fourth shot the camera pulls in close to the car but flies past as if it were unconcerned, or as if, as in Chatman's earlier example, this diegesis were not its real responsibility.

The omniscience of Kubrick's camera in *The Shining* distinguishes it from Antonioni's camera in *The Passenger*, which appears to 'not know what to expect'. An example of this is in one of the Steadicam shots that haunt Danny through the corridors. Generally, the Steadicam tracks him at a uniform distance, but at one point the distance between Danny and the camera varies. As he rides through the corridor the camera slows down, allowing Danny to speed ahead until he gets further and further away. Once he is far from the camera in the distance at the end of the corridor he abruptly turns a corner and disappears from the frame. Conventional narrative cinema demands that the camera follow the character, telling the story from their subjectivity, but this camera lingers for a moment in the corridor after Danny has disappeared (figure 19). Ferrara writes that this is 'evidence of the presence of a gaze from above, pointing to something which, precisely because the spectator can not clearly identify it, creates tension.'[70] The pause occurs moments before Danny's second encounter with Grady's two daughters, during which flashes of their slaughtered bodies are intercut with shots of them asking Danny to come and play with them 'for ever and ever and ever.' The camera lingers in the corridor after Danny has left moments before this encounter occurs; in effect, it knows what awaits him around the corner.

[70] Ferrara, *Steadicam*, p. 9.

Fig 19

On one level, this use of an autonomous camera creates an anthropomorphic setting, achieving the cinematic equivalent of the literary personification that animates the hotel in King's novel. But I suggest that Kubrick's use of an autonomous camera is also offering a meditation on a metaphysical problem with which he is concerned. A camera liberated of its conventional function in cinematic discourse problematizes the distinction between fictional worlds and the apparatus that communicates those fictional worlds. This forces us to question our most basic assumptions of reality. As Johnson points out, 'the wandering camera calls attention to the relationship between the nature of narrative and the nature of our existence.'[71] By pulling away from a character and acting on its own, the wandering camera suggests that 'since characters are the product of discourse, we, like fictional characters, might also owe our "being" to our subject positions in language.' Kubrick's innovative use of the Steadicam thus not only has important narrative and aesthetic implications, but by calling attention to its function in cinematic discourse, it also raises metaphysical speculation on the nature of reality and of our existence within it.

[71] Johnson, 'Wandering Camera,' 53.

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# ‘Their Death-Like Faces’: Physiognomy and the Uncanny in *The Man of Feeling* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*

TIMOTHY GAO

In 1855, the waxwork museum of Madame Tussaud embarked on a public relations campaign to rebrand what was popularly known as the ‘Chamber of Horrors’ exhibit into the more respectable ‘Chamber of Comparative Physiognomy’.[1] As a Chamber of Horrors, the exhibit’s sensational displays of violence and criminality, often directly modelled on the latest headlines, pandered to the gratuitous and morbid curiosity of Victorian audiences. As a Chamber of Comparative Physiognomy, the same exhibit (for the contents were unchanged) became an instructive opportunity for the public to learn and practice the art of detecting and repudiating immorality in facial features. The museum’s interchanging of one for the other shrewdly identifies the ambiguity between the two interpretations of the same waxworks and, under its new name, continued to attract both kinds of customers.

Physiognomy’s apparent interchangeability with sensational entertainment was a result of its declining reputation since the late eighteenth century. The seventy years between the publication of Henry Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling* (1771) and Charles Dickens’s *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) were characterised by an increasing loss of faith in the art of reading faces, a change in attitudes that the two novels track. But as their protagonists struggle to interpret a world of uncanny and duplicitous faces, the cynicism of both novels begins to extend beyond the reading of features and into reading itself. Like the waxwork faces at Madame Tussaud’s, sentimental novels present a representative surface

[1] Sharrona Pearl, *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2010) pp.38-9.

that claims to provide moral instruction through interpretation, especially through its characteristic bodily displays of weeping and suffering. By tracking the changing status of physiognomy through the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, Mackenzie and Dickens's texts also acknowledge the analogous decline of the sentimental novel itself, as it begins to occupy an increasingly ambiguous position between moral 'Physiognomy' and gratuitous 'Horror'.

The classical tradition of physiognomy operated on physical and ostensibly observable correlations between the body and the mind. The *Physiognomonica,* a treatise commonly misattributed to Aristotle and the earliest surviving Greek work on physiognomy, suggests that

> when investigating the external marks of courage, we ought to collect all brave animals, and then to inquire what sort of [physical] affections are natural to all of them but absent in all other animals…[T]o be able to tell whether our selected marks were really signs of courage or of this other character…[the animals] must not have any mental affection in common except that one which we are investigating the signs.[2]

This kind of inductive investigation, employing an almost scientific method of observation, collation, and control, establishes classical physiognomy as a tradition of physical evidence. As the pseudo-Aristotle admits, such a practice is therefore limited to physical information, and cannot interpret

> affections of soul whose occurrence produces no change in the bodily marks on which the physiognomist relies…you cannot recognise a doctor or a musician, for the fact of having acquired a piece of knowledge will not have produced any alteration in the [body].[3]

Although heavily influenced by the *Physiognomonica*, early modern physiognomists distinguished themselves from the classical tradition by grounding their practices in supernatural and religious justifications. For example, Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1643) claims that 'There are mystically in our faces certaine characters which carry in them the motto of

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[2] Aristotle, 'Physiognomonica.' Trans. T. Loveday and E. S. Forster. *The Works of Aristotle*. Ed. W. D. Ross (London: Oxford UP, 1913), pp.805b-6a.
[3] Ibid, p.806a.

our Soules, wherein he that cannot read A. B. C. may read our natures…The finger of God hath left an inscription upon all his workes.'[4] Although he explicitly cites 'Aristotle…[and] his acute and singular book of physiognomy', Browne's physiognomic practice is very different, a deduction from an assumption of divine creation rather than an induction from observation.[5] In another homage to the pseudo-Aristotle, in 1702 booksellers printed and sold a work entitled *Aristotle's Compleat Master Piece*, a collection of seventeenth-century essays on midwifery, physiognomy, palmistry, and home remedy recipes all (strategically) misattributed to Aristotle.[6] Exploiting Aristotle's name and (erroneous) association with physiognomy to fantastic success (the work reached thirty editions by 1771), the *Compleat Master Piece* reproduced some of the pseudo-Aristotle's principles but also added claims that the configuration of the face was determined by the planets and the Zodiac, and that physiognomy interpreted the future as well as personalities. As well as bastardising the *Physiognomonica*, however, the *Master Piece* is also clearly influenced by Thomas Browne's new, divine conception of physiognomy in its description of 'the Head and Face' as 'the *Index* which Heaven has laid open to every one's View to make a Judgement therefrom'.[7] In the eighteenth century, the inductive logic of classical physiognomy had been adapted into a practice based on supernatural and religious faith in the honesty of physical signs.

So rather than expertise or specialised knowledge, Henry Mackenzie's 1771 sentimental novel *The Man of Feeling* portrays physiognomy as a deeply spiritual and ethical practice. Harley, the eponymous *Man of*

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[4] Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici [and] Its Sequel Christian Morals*, ed. John Peace (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1844), p. 102, quoted in Juliet McMasters, 'Physiognomy: The Index of the Mind,' *Reading the Body in the Eighteenth-century Novel*. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 42.

[5] Browne, *Religio Medici*, p. 102.

[6] Although technically the writers of the *Compleat Master Piece* are also technically pseudo-Aristotles, to avoid confusion, I will continue to refer to the third-century B.C. writer of *Physiognomonica* as 'the pseudo-Aristotle'.

[7] 'Aristotle's compleat master piece, in three parts: displaying the secrets of nature in the generation of man. Regularly digested into Chapters and Sections, rendering it far more useful and easy than any yet extant: To which is added, a treasurer of health or, the family physician: Being Choice and Approved Remidies for all the several Distempers incident to Human Bodies.' The thirtieth edition. (London, 1771) *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Gale, University of Sydney. 21 Nov. 2013. 114.

*Feeling*, encounters a series of faces throughout his travels in London and the countryside that test his ability to interpret and respond to the genuine and the deceptive. In one of his successful physiognomic readings, Harley notes the 'thin and hollow' face of a prostitute, and is able to interpret its 'remains of tarnished beauty', its 'deadly paleness', the 'clayey whiteness' of her lips, and eventually the 'glister of new-washed tears' on her cheeks.[8] Moved by Miss Atkins's verbal and facial tale of woe, Harley feeds her and gives her money. Although mocked by the 'the sneer of the waiter' who identifies him as a 'cully' (39), and subject to 'a burst of laughter round the table' by friends who believe him to have been 'bubbled by a fine story invented by a whore' (40), the prostitute's honesty and Harley's reading are both eventually validated by the timely arrival of her father as a corroborating witness. This episode of physiognomic success not only vindicates Harley's perceptiveness, but also his generosity and benevolence, as well as his trust in the conformity of signs to significance. Harley's ability to interpret and react to faces without suspicion or dismissiveness is a mark of faith and moral distinction that sets him above his friends and the hotel waiter.

As well as physiognomy, Harley's behaviour also exemplifies the models of sympathy and sensibility developed during the eighteenth century. Texts like Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) responded to philosophical debates about the origin of moral motivations by pointing to sympathy as an imaginative moral sense. These eighteenth-century debates in Scottish Enlightenment philosophy, and primarily the works of Hume and Hutcheson, investigated the universal human capacity for 'pity or compassion…[that] The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without' and attempted to determine its cause.[9] Smith's model argued that 'our fellow-feeling for the misery of others…[originates] by changing places in fancy with the sufferer, that we come either to conceive or to be affected by what he feels.' [10] For example, Smith identifies our instinctive flinch at the sight of others' physical traumas as the same instinct that makes 'the very appearance of grief and joy inspire us with some degree of the like emotions', a spontaneous and imaginative creation of 'an analogous

[8] Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, ed. Brian Vickers, Stephen Bending, and Stephen Bygrave (London: Oxford U.P., 2001), pp. 37-41. All subsequent references to this edition are incorporated in the text.

[9] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2002), p. 11

[10] Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 12.

emotion…in the breast of every attentive spectator' that compels us to react to suffering.[11] Smith's valorisation of sympathy as a universal moral sense was influenced by, and in turn informed, the popular eighteenth-century concept of sensibility. As Janet Todd has noted, sensibility in the eighteenth century was similarly understood as a moral sense, a 'delicate emotional and physical susceptibility…the faculty of feeling, the capacity for extremely refined emotion and quickness to display compassion for suffering.'[12] In both sympathy and sensibility, perceptiveness is intrinsically linked to compassion.

Mackenzie's portrayal of Harley's sympathetic perception anticipates the model of ethical physiognomy that Johann Caspar Lavater, a Swiss pastor, would develop five years after *The Man of Feeling*. In addition to consolidating information from the *Physiognomonica*, *Religio Medici*, and other disparate sources, Lavater's work is also visibly influenced by theories of sympathy and sensibility.[13] Speculatively connecting physiognomic interpretation with moral philosophy, Lavater argues that 'Physiognomonical sensation is in itself as truly good, as godlike…as moral sensation; perhaps they are the same.'[14] Such a conflation casts the physiognomist in the role of Smith's 'attentive spectator', creating a new parallel between physiognomy and the moral perceptiveness of sympathy and sensibility. As Barbara Benedict has argued, these already interconnected philosophies lend themselves to cooperation:

> Physiognomy provides two stable concepts that make it especially appealing to sentimentalists. First…[sentimentalism] advocates a rarefied perceptive sympathy similar to the perception endorsed by physiognomy. Secondly, physiognomy presupposes a unity between observer and observed, object and meaning, sign and significance, that heroicizes naïve perception.[15]

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[11] Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp. 13-4.
[12] Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 7.
[13] *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* had been translated into German in 1770.
[14] Johann Caspar Lavater, *Physiognomy, Or, the Corresponding Analogy between the Conformation of the Features and the Ruling Passions of the Mind* (London: Cowie, Low and co, 1826), p. 314.
[15] Barbara M. Benedict, 'Reading Faces: Physiognomy and Epistemology in Late Eighteenth-Century Sentimental Novels.' *Studies in Philology* 92.3 (1995): 318-9.

By presenting physiognomy as a moral sense, both Lavater and Mackenzie depict the physiognomist as someone who conflates perception with moral reaction. In the eighteenth century, Harley's ability to read Miss Atkins's face and his predisposition to respond compassionately are not independent qualities, but one and the same.

In the eighteenth century's version of physiognomy, the ability to interpret and react appropriately becomes a test of moral standard and religious belief. Building on Thomas Browne's idea that the face is an 'inscription' left by 'the finger of God',[16] Lavater represents physiognomic interpretation as a means of understanding or rejecting divine and moral precepts:

> Give the eye that asks, that comes recommended to thee by Providence, or by God himself, and which to reject is to reject God, who cannot ask thee more powerfully than when entreating in a cheerful, open, innocent, countenance. Thou canst not more immediately glorify God than by wishing and acting well to a countenance replete with the spirit of God, nor more certainly, and abhorrently, offend and wound the majesty of God, than by despising, ridiculing, and turning from such a countenance.[17]

So far from being an elite skill or an eccentricity, Lavater's physiognomy is an essential instinct of recognising the moral instructions divinely inscribed onto every 'countenance'. As he argues, 'all scepticism, infidelity, and ridicule of religion, naturally originate in the want of this knowledge and sensation.'[18] The failure of Harley's friends to recognise genuine suffering has much more serious implications than merely the economic; in such a test of faith, physiognomy and sensibility are moral standards that sort the virtuous from the unfeeling.

But it is not only God's inscription of faces that compels moral behaviour and tests sensibility; so too do authorial inscriptions of texts, especially sentimental literature. Lady Louisa Stuart's frequently quoted recollection of reading *The Man of Feeling* '[as] a girl of fourteen not yet versed in sentiment' anxiously recalls her 'secret dread [that] I should not

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[16] Browne, *Religio Medici*, p.102.
[17] Lavater, *Physiognomy*, pp.317-8.
[18] Ibid, pp.45-6.

cry enough to gain the credit of proper sensibility'.[19] Similarly, an anonymous writer in *The Monthly Review* asserts that 'the Reader, who weeps not over some of the scenes [*The Man of Feeling*] describes, has no sensibility of mind.'[20] Both of their accounts testify to the way in which readers were expected, not only to be affected by the novel, but to physically mimic Harley's tearful reaction to most of the novel's scenes. The novel is a sentimental education that combines lesson and test: designed to induce a particular response through example, it also serves as a benchmark for that response. Robert Burns, as a devoted student of the novel, declared it 'a book I prize next to the Bible…[and one of] the glorious models after which I endeavour to form my conduct'.[21] Later, writing to another friend, Burns reiterates:

> From what book, moral or even pious, will the susceptible young mind receive impressions more congenial to humanity and kindness, generosity and benevolence…than from the simple affecting tale of poor Harley?[22]

Burn's comparison of the sentimental novel to 'even pious' texts echoes both Browne's description of the face as divine inscription and the novel's conception of its own story, which the curate describes in the framing narrative as being 'no more a history than it is a sermon' (4). At the end of writing Harley's life, his biographer also reflects on it with religious and moral awe as being 'worth a thousand homilies! every nobler feeling rises within me! every beat of my heart awakens a virtue!' (98) Both the sentimental novel and the human face are therefore readable surfaces from which interpretation is inextricably connected with moral sensation. Just as Smith's 'attentive spectator' is motivated into moral action through sympathetic spectatorship, and Harley is physically and emotionally

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[19] Louisa Stuart, *Lady Louisa Stuart; Selections from Her Manuscripts.* Ed. James Home (New York and London: Harper & Bros., 1899) p.235.

[20] 'Art. 21. The Man of Feeling.' *The Monthly Review, Or, Literary Journal*. Ed. Ralph Griffiths and George Edward Griffiths. Vol. 44. (London: Henderson, 1771), p. 418.

[21] Letter to John Murdoch, 15th January 1783, in Robert Burns, *The Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. J. De Lancey Ferguson and G. Ross Roy. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), p. 17.

[22] Letter to Mrs Dunlop, 19th April 1790, in Robert Burns, *Works: With an Account of His Life and Criticism on His Writings, to Which Are Prefixed Some Observations on the Character and Condition of the Scottish Peasantry*, ed. James Currie (Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, 1847), p. 155.

compelled to benevolence by his sentimental reading of faces, *The Man of Feeling* facilitates a reading that similarly compels its readers to virtue.

The novel, however, is by no means consistent in its endorsement of sensibility, physiognomy, sentimental literature, or even its own protagonist; all four occupy difficult and ambiguous positions within *The Man of Feeling*. Although Harley constantly 'blesse[s] himself for his skill in physiognomy' (34), his encounter with Miss Atkins is outweighed by many more instances in which misreading renders him vulnerable to exploitation and ridicule. Harley mistakes a former pimp for a gentleman (22-3), a 'decent-looking' madman for a sympathetic guide (24), and a con man for a generous sentimentalist (33-6), to which his more worldly friends respond with the advice 'to be a little more cautious in the future; and as for faces – you may look into them to know, whether a man's nose be a long or short one.' (40) Harley's repeated failures – or as he understates, the fact 'his inclination to physiognomy had met with some rubs in the metropolis' (57) – seem to validate this kind of materialistic suspicion against physiognomic idealisations of divinely inspired surfaces.[23] Furthermore, the inclusion of these episodes of misinterpretation subtly undermines Harley through an increasing ironic distance as the story passes from Harley to his biographer, to the framing editor who rediscovers the manuscript, to Henry Mackenzie, and finally to the reader.

Different interpretations of whether the novel genuinely promotes Harley's practices of sensibility and physiognomy as useful models of behaviour have therefore divided on how closely the multiple framing perspectives should be conflated. Many modern critics like Ralph Jenkins echo Burns's perspective by seeing Mackenzie as 'hold[ing] up Harley as a model for emulation'.[24] Other critics, like David Spencer, have been more cautious in reading a 'significant distance between Mackenzie himself and Harley his hero' by suggesting that Mackenzie, although sympathetic and appreciative of the ideals that Harley represents, ultimately advocates a perspective 'tempered with common sense and worldliness [which] his

[23] For Harley's interpretive errors, also see Maureen Harkin, 'Mackenzie's Man of Feeling: Embalming Sensibility.' *ELH* 61.2 (1994): 330-2.
[24] Ralph Jenkins, 'The Art of the Theorist: Rhetorical Structure in The Man of Feeling.' *SSL* 9 (1971): 5, quoted in William Burling, 'A 'Sickly Sort of Refinement': The Problem of Sentimentalism in Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling.' *Studies in Scottish Literature* 23.1 (1988): 138.

hero's is not'.[25] Less commonly, critics like Michael Rymer and John Sheriff have argued that the novel is an outright anti-sentimental text that satirises and deprecates the ideals of its own protagonist.[26] Depending on the amount of ironic distance each critic varyingly interprets between Mackenzie and Harley (with the biographer and the editor subsumed in between), the novel can ambivalently compel the reader to behave more like its protagonist, or warn the reader to do the exact opposite.

Because *The Man of Feeling* passes such an uncertain judgement on Harley, rather than a sentimental education, the novel becomes an existential dilemma in interpretation. The novel can function as an endorsement of sensibility and physiognomy *only if* the reader already takes the novel at 'face value' as a sentimental text. Similarly, the novel can only warn its readers against 'naïve perception' if they are already suspicious enough to detect Mackenzie's warning. The circular logic of both interpretations makes determining any moral recommendation from the text impossible. To do the first, and conflate the novel's multi-layered frames with its surface, is to expose oneself (like Harley) to exploitation and ridicule. To do the latter, and emphasise the satiric gap between framing narratives, is to risk becoming (like Harley's friends) part of the 'selfish, interested, and unthinking world' (95) that would have dismissed Miss Atkins's genuine suffering as 'a fine story invented by a whore' (40). William Burling has blamed this uncertainty on a 'failure' of clarification:

> [Mackenzie's] failure to make [his point] clear in *The Man of Feeling* resulted from two artistic faults: the lack of a clearly defined, admirable protagonist; and the unfortunate decision to employ a fragmented, episodic plot. These flaws have produced the wildly diverging interpretations.[27]

Burling concludes, 'Artistic ineptitude can, indeed, result in interpretive problems.'[28] But rather than a failure to articulate a clear position either way, the fragmented scraps of narrative, accidentally salvaged by a stranger

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[25] David Spencer, 'Henry Mackenzie: A Practical Sentimentalist.' *PLL* 3 (1967): 314-26, quoted in Burling, 'Sickly Sort of Refinement', 138.
[26] Michael Rymer, 'Henry Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling.' *DUJ* 68 (1975): 68, quoted in Burling, 'Sickly Sort of Refinement', 139; John K. Sheriff, *The Good-natured Man: The Evolution of a Moral Ideal, 1660-1800* (University: University of Alabama, 1982), p. 90.
[27] Burling, 'Sickly Sort of Refinement', 136-7.
[28] Ibid, 146.

from a curate's gun, recreate the kind of difficult and uncertain surface that repeatedly confounds Harley's physiognomic skills.[29] Just as Harley struggles to interpret and react appropriately to an imperfect and duplicitous world, the reader's interpretation and reaction to the fragmented text forces an impossible choice between compassionate naïveté and unfeeling worldliness.

A shift between the two opposed modes of interpretation can be seen reflected in the novel's changing reception from its initial success in 1771 to its deeply unfashionable reputation in the nineteenth century. Lady Stuart, rereading *The Man of Feeling* aloud to a party in 1826, notes a 'sad change' in audience reactions that many critics have cited as emblematic of a shift in reading tastes:

> Nobody cried, and at some passages, the touches that I used to think so exquisite – oh dear! They laughed…Yet I remember so well its first publication, my mother and sisters crying over it, dwelling on it with rapture…This circumstance has led me to reflect on the alterations of taste produced by time.[30]

Lady Stuart's conclusion is very perceptive in its imputing of 'This circumstance' to a general, social change in modes of reading. Later in the century, an 1886 edition of the novel would append a facetious 'Index of Tears' that, as Stephen Balding speculates, suggests that 'the repertory of sentimental effects…has become a repertory of mirthful effects, perhaps to be read aloud in the Victorian parlour to an audience only needing to hear these categories of tears in order to trigger a rather different physical response.' (110) More than just a change in fashion, however, the transformation of tears to laughter represents the reading public's increasing ironic distance from the sentimental hero, and a change in reader identification from Harley to 'Harley's sober friends, who often laughed very heartily at [his] awkward blunders' (14). If physiognomy and sensibility compel the reading subject to physically mimic the read object, to weep when they see weeping, then the new satiric mode of reading is an anti-physiognomic mode that compels an opposite physical reaction to surfaces, that laughs when Harley bursts into another fit of tears.

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[29] Also see Barbara Benedict, 'Reading Faces', 327: '[T]he reader who sees only the surface is a fool or a hypocrite…if he sees beneath the surface, he perceives his own duplicity, and stands self-condemned for deceit.'

[30] Stuart, *Selections*, p. 235.

Besides Harley's worldly friends, however, the satiric reader of the nineteenth century also becomes more troublingly embodied by the character of Daniel Quilp in Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Quilp's comic sadism exemplifies the inappropriate reaction, the compulsion to laugh at the sight of weeping:

> [Nell's] voice was lost in sobs as she dropped upon the old man's neck; nor did she weep alone.
>
> These were not words for other ears, nor was it a scene for other eyes. And yet other ears and eyes were there and greedily taking in all that passed, and moreover they were the ears and eyes of no less a person than Mr Daniel Quilp, who…actuated, no doubt, by motives of the purest delicacy…stood looking on with his accustomed grin.[31]

The emphatic repetition of 'other ears' and 'other eyes' not only serves to emphasise Quilp's intrusion, but also to draw a disturbing parallel between Quilp's voyeurism and our own. Unlike the typical sentimental novel, which hopes to shape the reader into the sentimental hero through sympathetic involvement, the privacy that Dickens emphasises in this scene perversely identifies the reader, not with Nell and her grandfather, but with the detached position of the sadistic voyeur, reaffirming the distance between the sufferers and the ostensibly sympathetic spectator. As a fellow reader of the sentimental 'scene', Quilp interrupts our interpretation with his own, brings our 'motives of the purest delicacy' into question, and enacts the potential of the reader to regard Nell's tears with humour rather than pity, with ironic distance rather than sympathetic connection. As an embodiment of the anti-sentimental, anti-physiognomic, satiric mode of reading, Quilp's presence in the novel anticipates the perspective of Oscar Wilde's now famous witticism, that 'One must have a heart of stone to read the death of Little Nell without laughing.'[32] Such a readerly reaction is one that Quilp, had he survived to witness Nell's death, might have happily agreed with.

In addition to embodying the satiric reader, Quilp also functions as a satiric display. As a display, the face of the ideal physiognomist is not only

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[31] Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*. (London: Penguin, 2012), pp. 95-6. All subsequent references to this edition are incorporated in the text.
[32] Priscilla Schlicke and Paul Schlicke, *The Old Curiosity Shop: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland Pub., 1988), p.69.

a reflection of their virtue, but also the kind of honest surface that validates physiognomy itself in a demonstration of 'unity between observer and observed, object and meaning, sign and significance'.[33] This important function of the physiognomist's face leads Lavater to suggest that

> No one, whose person is not well formed, can become a good physiognomist…No person, therefore, ought to enter the sanctuary of physiognomy who has a debased mind, an ill-formed forehead, a blinking eye, or a distorted mouth.[34]

Quilp, who has all of these features, is a physiognomic nightmare where signs are wholly disconnected from significance:

> [Quilp was] so low in stature as to be quite a dwarf, though his head and face were large enough for the body of a giant. His black eyes were restless, sly, and cunning… his complexion was one of that kind which never looks clean or wholesome. But what added most to the grotesque expression of his face, was a ghastly smile…appearing to be the mere result of habit and to have no connexion with any mirthful or complacent feeling… (Dickens 28)

The size of his face is not an indicator for the size of his body, the appearance of his complexion is independent of his actual cleanliness, and his smile has 'no connexion' with any significance usually imputed to the smile. Just as anyone who reads the face of the ideal physiognomist is reassured that surfaces reflect meaning, and are therefore compelled to become more like the ideal physiognomist themselves, conversely, anyone who reads Quilp's face is confronted with the gap between sign and significance, and are more likely to be driven to suspicion and paranoia.

Both in his face and his behaviour, Quilp's satiric display resembles the figure of Punch, the hero of the portable puppet show. In their encounter with Short and Codlin, two Punchmen, Nell and her grandfather notice 'the figure of the hero himself, his nose and chin as hooked and his face as beaming as usual…unequally balanced against his exceedingly slight legs' (Dickens 163) The 'imperturbable character' of the puppet Punch therefore uncannily recalls the similarly disproportionate body of

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[33] Benedict, 'Reading Faces', 318.

[34] Lavater, *Physiognomy*, 97.

Quilp, especially his fixed and decontextualised smile. Aside from physical resemblances, Rachel Bennett has also compiled an extensive series of similarities between Quilp's behaviour and Punch's: they both taunt dogs; bully others verbally and physically, and with improvised weapons; delight in surprising others, especially by returning from the dead; abuse their wives; mistreat children; and attempt to evade arrest.[35]

The 'deliberate connection between Quilp and Punch' that Bennett notes throughout the novel serves to reinforce Quilp's connection to satiric reading.[36] Punch shows derive their enjoyableness from a black humour that provokes audiences to laugh at Punch's serial killings of his wife and child. Importantly, the audience's satiric reaction depends on an anti-physiognomic assumption of ironic distance between representation and reality, between surface and meaning. Just as Lady Stuart's friends laugh at Harley's weeping because its representative excess disconnects it from real suffering, Punch's audiences also laugh at the excess of an act of *puppet* infanticide, not a real one.[37] As Dickens attempts to explain in a letter in 1849, eight years after his depiction of Punch in *The Old Curiosity Shop*:

> In my opinion the Street Punch is one of those extravagant reliefs from the realities of life which would lose its hold upon the people if it were made moral and instructive. I regard it as quite harmless in its influence, and as an outrageous joke which no one in existence would think of regarding as an incentive to any course of action, or a model for any kind of conduct. It is possible, I think, that one secret source of the pleasure…is the satisfaction the spectator feels in the circumstance that likenesses of men and women can be so knocked about, without pain or suffering.[38]

If physiognomy and sensibility insist on an unbroken chain between representation, interpretation, sympathetic reaction, and moral behaviour, Punch shows are designed to break that chain, to isolate representation from 'the realities of life', and to separate surfaces from moral meaning.

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[35] Rachel Bennett, 'Punch Versus Christian In The Old Curiosity Shop.' *The Review of English Studies* XXII.88 (1971): 426-33.
[36] Ibid, 429.
[37] Wilde, playing on the same joke, also laughs 'to *read* the death of Little Nell', not to see it.
[38] Letter to Mary Taylor, 6th November 1849, in Charles Dickens, *The Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Jenny Hartley (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2012), p. 204.

The role of the 'spectator', rather than a Smithean process of imagining in themselves the 'pain or suffering' of the spectacle, becomes one of enjoying a representation of pained or suffering bodies by *not* sympathising.

The same ironic distance between reality and representation that makes Punch shows enjoyable also provides the 'secret' pleasures of the Victorian waxwork. Again, uncanny objects of satirical reading are marked by an interchangeability with Quilp's body: Nell is terrified of Mrs Jarley's waxworks due to her 'imagining a resemblance, in some one or other of their death-like faces, to the dwarf…she would almost believe he had removed the figure and stood within the clothes…they looked so like living creatures' (288).[39] So although Mrs Jarley repudiates Punch as 'a low, practical, wulgar wretch, that people should scorn to look at', her own waxworks are associated with exactly the same kind of morbid entertainment that Punch provides and Quilp enjoys. As Mrs Jarley explains of her model of 'Jasper Packlemerton':

> [He] courted and married fourteen wives, and destroyed them all by tickling the soles of their feet when they were sleeping in the consciousness of innocence and virtue. On being brought to the scaffold and asked if he was sorry for what he had done, he replied yes, he was sorry for having let 'em off so easy…Let this be a warning to all young ladies to be particular in the character of the gentlemen of their choice. Observe that his finger is curled as if in the act of tickling, and that his face is represented with a wink, as he appeared when committing his barbarous murders. (Dickens 282)

[39] Rather than Freud's concept of the uncanny, which dismisses the 'Uncertainty [of] whether an object is living or inanimate' as being 'quite irrelevant in connection with…other, more striking instance[s] of uncanniness', this essay will borrow more from Ernst Jentsch's earlier study *On the Psychology of the Uncanny*. For Jentsch, the uncanny quality of lifelike dolls, waxworks, and corpses arise from their subversion of 'The human desire for the intellectual mastery of one's environment'. See Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. Josef Breuer and Anna Freud. Trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1955), p. 230; Ernst Jentsch, 'On the Psychology of the Uncanny,' trans. Roy Sellars, *Angelaki: A Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 2 (1996): 16.

Like Madame Tussaud's, Mrs Jarley directs her audience to an interpretation of waxwork features that conveys a specific moral 'warning to all young ladies'. This ostensibly moral goal, however, is undermined by her ludicrously sensationalised tale of unrepentant murder and implied sexual deviance, which is obviously the real draw of the show.[40] For Mrs Jarley's audiences, the moral pretence of physiognomic reading creates a guise of social respectability under which they can freely enjoy sensationalism and titillation.[41] Furthermore, the physiognomy that Mrs Jarley encourages reveals, not the moral and creative powers of God, but Mrs Jarley's cartoonish depictions of the 'wink' and the (also euphemistic) curled finger. For Dickens's own audiences, the juxtaposition of pain and laughter in death-by-tickling becomes reflected in the laughter with which readers are compelled to react to the darkly comic figure of Jasper Packlemerton. Both Mrs Jarley and Dickens use the waxworks as a source of morbid pleasure and black humour, of 'sensation' without 'moral sensation', by exploiting the disconnection of representations from reality.

But although satiric reading itself asserts the distinction between black humour and real sadism, the line between represented and actual suffering is one that Quilp blurs and exploits for his own entertainment. His ability to laugh at Nell's weeping is partly due to his voyeuristic tendency to regard it as a 'scene'; later, after enacting his plot to frame Kit for theft and exile him to Australia, Quilp purchases 'a great, goggle-eyed, blunt-nosed figure-head of some old ship' (609) that he considers to resemble Kit, and takes as much pleasure in violently assaulting Kit's uncanny double as he does ruining the real Kit:

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[40] This seems to have been a recognised sensational trope in the nineteenth century. An 1869 edition of the *Illustrated Police News*, another purveyor of criminal sensationalism, reports (and depicts) a man in Northumberland tickling his wife into madness. See 'Tickleing a Woman's Feet - A Wife Driven Mad.' *Illustrated Police News* [London] 11 Dec. 1869: 1. Paul Margueritte's 1886 pantomime *Pierrot assassin de sa femme* ('Pierrot, murderer of his wife'), cited in Derrida's discussion of mimesis, also features a husband who tickles his wife to death. See Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, ed. Barbara Johnson. (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 292. See also Joost Abraham Maurits Meerloo, *Creativity and Eternization* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1967), p. 218, '[B]eing *tickled to death* means taking part in sexual orgasm and experiencing the *stirh und werde* feelings (to die and to be resurrected) provoked by deep sexual satisfaction.'

[41] Mrs Jarley's business sense seems to have anticipated the aforementioned tactics employed by Madame Tussaud's in 1855.

> 'Is it like Kit – is it his picture, his image, his very self?' cried the dwarf, aiming a shower of blows at the insensible countenance…' Is it the exact model and counterpart of the dog – is it – is it – is it?' And with every repetition of the question, he battered the great image…
>
> Although this might have been a very comical thing to look at from a secure gallery, as a bull-fight is found to be a comfortable spectacle by those who are not in the arena, and a house on fire is something better than a play to people who don't live near it, there was something in the earnestness of Mr Quilp's manner which made his legal adviser feel the counting-house was a little too small… (610)

Quilp's 'earnestness', which Sampson Brass rightly finds disturbing, breaks down the distinction between 'the great image' and Kit's 'very self'. Each repeated question 'is it – is it – is it?' is punctuated by an answer in the form of Quilp's blows, which are motivated by the assumption that it is, it is, it *is* Kit that he is assaulting. In turn, Sampson Brass himself transforms reality into representation by recognising that real events – such as bull-fights, house-fires, and Quilp's mania – can lose their reality and become 'a very comical thing', 'a comfortable spectacle', and even 'better than a play', given enough distance between spectator and spectacle.[42] Sampson's discomfit at Quilp's beating of the figure-head, ostensibly another instance (like Punch shows and waxworks) where the 'likenesses of men and women can be…knocked about, without pain or suffering', seems to expose a paradox in Dickens's defence of Punch: the fun of satiric reading depends not only on its unlikeness to life, but equally and simultaneously, on its 'likenesses'.[43]

If Harley struggles to read and react to the duplicitous faces of eighteenth-century London, the series of 'insensible countenance[s]' that populate *The Old Curiosity Shop* present even greater challenges to the practice of physiognomy. First, the hollow and unchanging expressions of the Punch puppet, the waxwork figures, and the Kit figure-head render

[42] This potential is realised during Kit's prison visit scene, in which Kit's baby sibling reacts to the tears of its family and friends by 'crowing and laughing with all its might – under the idea, apparently, that the whole scene had been invented and got up for its particular satisfaction.' (Dickens 604-5) The baby's inappropriate response is caused by a voyeuristic perspective very similar to the one frequently occupied by Quilp and the reader.

[43] Dickens, *Selected Letters*, p. 204.

them impervious to attempts to read meaning from their faces. Secondly, the ease with which Mrs Jarley 'alter[s] the face and costume [of the waxworks]…turning a murderess of great renown into Mrs Hannah More' (285-6) demonstrates an essential interchangeability between the faces of murderesses and moralists, which Mrs Jarley's audiences are unable to differentiate. Thirdly, the function of Punch shows and waxworks as popular entertainment encourage sensational or satiric reactions to faces that emphasise a pleasurable, voyeuristic distance between observer and observed. The world of *The Old Curiosity Shop* teems with uncanny objects that refute physiognomic principles and encourage their viewers to read with suspicion and distance.

The final uncanny object that both *The Man of Feeling* and *The Old Curiosity Shop* present is the sentimental corpse, produced by the deaths of Nell and Harley. In both novels, the death of the protagonist is marked by an uneasy transformation of the sentimental body into the insensible corpse. Harley's biographer, Charles, struggles to reconcile the two:

> I saw that form, which, but a little before, was animated with a soul which did honour to humanity, stretched without sense or feeling before me. 'Tis a connection we cannot easily forget…I felt a pulse in every vein at [calling his name]. I looked earnestly in his face; his eye was closed, his lip pale and motionless. There is an enthusiasm in sorrow that forgets impossibility; I wondered that it was so. (97)

Charles's reading of Harley's body is a confused oscillation between living and dead, between the extraordinarily feeling body of Harley and the total insensibility of the corpse. As Charles himself reflects, his inability to disconnect one from the other derives from exactly the kind of 'enthusiasm in sorrow' that Harley embodied in life, a physiognomic perceptiveness that conflates 'likenesses' with 'the realities of life'.[44] Similarly, the characters of *The Old Curiosity Shop* 'did not know that [Nell] was dead, at first' (Dickens 715), a misperception drawn out by the village child's 'dream…of her being restored to them' (716) and then to extremes by her

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[44] Dickens, *Selected Letters*, p. 204. Charles's reflection echoes Adam Smith's theoretical observation that 'We sympathise even with the dead…from our putting ourselves in their situation, and from our lodging, if I may be allowed to say so, our own living souls in their inanimated bodies.' Smith admits that this is the 'very illusion of the imagination' that accounts for the moral fear of death. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 16.

grandfather's inability to recognise her lifelessness. Like Punch, Quilp's figure-head, and Mrs Jarley's waxworks, the bodies of Nell and Harley are deceptively life-like, presenting a semblance of life without life itself. The sentimental body, which ought to elicit a sympathetic and moral response to its genuineness, is ultimately transformed into another 'insensible countenance', an uncanny and duplicitous representation to confuse and confound the physiognomist.

The profusion of puppets, waxworks, figure-heads and reanimated corpses in both novels reflect the fact that, in the nineteenth century, the sentimental body was becoming increasingly replaced by uncanny representations. Dissection was (and remains to this day) a traditional and integral part of surgical training, not only for learning anatomy but also to inculcate what eighteenth-century anatomist William Hunter called 'a sort of necessary inhumanity, the use of cutting-instruments upon our fellow creatures.'[45]Even before performing dissections, a student must familiarise themselves with corpses by having 'first attended a complete course of demonstrations' by someone else, to prevent reacting with 'disgust to a study, from which he ought to receive pleasure and advantage.'[46] Viewing the corpse, a representation of the living body, desensitised medical students and suppressed their natural reactions, helping them to remain unaffected by disgust or sympathetic pain during surgeries which were still largely performed without anaesthetic.

But even as dissection distanced the student from the suffering patient, the dissected corpse itself became substituted by the anatomical waxwork, creating yet another layer of representation between the viewer and the real body. In a version of Mrs Jarley's and Madame Tussaud's exhibitions of criminality, anatomical waxworks modelled healthy and diseased bodies with their symptoms displayed and their internal organs exposed; one famous figure featured in Dr Joseph Kahn's museum was an 'anatomical Venus', the front of whose chest and stomach could be lifted up to reveal her lungs, heart, and digestive tract, all recreated in wax.[47] As

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[45] William Hunter, *Two Introductory Lectures, Delivered by Dr. William Hunter, to His Last Course of Anatomical Lectures ... To Which Are Added, Some Papers Relating to Dr. Hunter's Intended Plan, for Establishing a Museum in London, for the Improvement of Anatomy, Surgery, and Physic* (London: J. Johnson, 1784), p. 67.

[46] Ibid, 108.

[47] A. W. Bates, 'Dr Kahn's Museum: Obscene Anatomy in Victorian London.' *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 99.12 (2006): 619.

A. W. Bates has noted, anatomical waxworks attempted to function as a replacement for dissection: an anatomical Samson (reportedly to have cost 500 guineas to construct) was advertised as being 'Very Interesting to the Faculty Medical Students and the Public…with a view to superseding the use of dead bodies', and another advertisement exploited the scandal of 'The dreadful murders committed to procure subjects for dissection' to offer waxworks as a substitute.[48] Despite this, however, anatomical museums were open to both medical professionals and the general public, offering, as one review described, 'an exhibition where scientific minds will find curious material, where ordinary minds may be brought to consider the most extraordinary facts.'[49] Satiating the demand for both sensation and instruction, anatomical waxworks are emblematic of the increasing substitution of 'likenesses' for real bodies, and the increasing numbness of sympathetic responses as the body passes from representation to representation.

Between 1771 and 1841, *The Man of Feeling* and *The Old Curiosity Shop* tracked the dominant mode of interpreting bodies and faces as it shifted from a physiognomist's faith in divine creation towards an anatomist's division of material signs from moral significance. At the same time, as Janet Todd has argued, the reading of sentimental literature underwent a similar shift:

> It is not even an education in sympathy that is primarily provided [by sentimental fiction] but rather a course in the development of emotional response, whose beginning and end are literary. The reader learns how to respond to fictional or narrated misery…[which is] contrived, fictive, in no way a pattern for life, and it feeds into, rather than out of, the book.[50]

Resembling the hyperbolic unreality of a Punch show, or the lifeless appearance of life exemplified by Nell and Harley's corpses, sentimental fiction itself has become an uncanny representation, an illusion of moral meaning. Todd's argument echoes Mackenzie's own conclusion in 1785 that audiences have become accustomed to 'impressions which never have

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[48] A. W. Bates, '"Indecent and Demoralising Representations": Public Anatomy Museums in Mid-Victorian England.' *Medical History* 52 (2008): 8.
[49] 'A Sight to Be Seen!' *Leader* 10 Sept. 1853: 885+. *Nineteenth Century Collections Online*. Web. 29 Oct. 2013.
[50] Todd, *Sensibility*, 93.

any effect upon their conduct … [a] separation of conscience from feeling.'[51] Just as Madame Tussaud's waxworks sensationalised the face for public titillation, the sentimental novel itself gratuitously displayed its representations of suffering as a textual 'Chamber of Horrors'. At the end of the eighteenth century, the physiognomist and the sentimentalist find themselves in an endless and inescapable world of ungrounded representations, a room of 'insensible countenance[s]' indistinguishable from the living, an environment in which interpretation and action are possible only through suspicion, dispassion, and a 'necessary inhumanity'.

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[51] Henry Mackenzie's article in *The Lounger*, 18th June 1785, included as Appendix I in Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, p.102.