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Signature _____

Typed name: Professor Daniel Albright

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Passionate Correction: The Theory and Practice of Modernist Revision

A dissertation presented

by

Hannah Sullivan

to

The Department of English and American Literature and Language

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
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Advisors: Daniel Albright, Leah Price, Werner Sollors Hannah Sullivan

Passionate Correction: The Theory and Practice of Modernist Revision

Abstract

The early twentieth century in literature was a period of second chances. James Joyce and Virginia Woolf each spent a decade on their first novels, discarding complete drafts along the way; Henry James took three years to revise his already published work for the *New York Edition*. The poets fared no better. *The Waste Land*, Ezra Pound's first Canto, W. H. Auden's *Collected Poems*, and Marianne Moore's *Complete Poems* were all multiply rewritten.

This dissertation examines the importance of textual revision to Anglo-American modernism. I ask why modernist writers revised so laboriously, what modes of self-editing they preferred, and how they figured the process of textual genesis. Revision is not normally understood as an activity exceeding the idiosyncrasies of individuals. My work shows that it can and should be historicized as a form of cultural practice. In the first chapter, I discuss and criticize available models for theorizing revision. In subsequent chapters, I make use of methods from genetic criticism and social text editing to analyze the process of textual development from early manuscript drafts to final published editions.

The modernist practice of revision was enabled by changes in technology and the literary marketplace in the 1890s. At the same time, revision is an exemplary figure for

modernism itself. By rereading a text, the revising writer pays homage to what is already there, but rewriting devalues and may even destroy the original version. This oscillating movement answers to a fundamental tension or puzzle in modernist thought between innovation and tradition, "making it new" and nostalgia for the past.

Where pre-twentieth century writers were uncertain and uneasy about the benefits of revision, modernist writers tend to portray textual change in positive terms as an inevitable process of "gradual betterment." Literary critics and editors have gladly adopted this teleology. At the same time, the most famous acts of modernist revision display a surprising pleasure in textual destruction. In chapters on Henry James, Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden I explore the relationship between textual practice and early twentieth-century ideas about progress, selfhood, efficiency, and organic form

Passionate Correction: The Theory and Practice of Modernist Revision

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I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, and to Ian, with love.

Introduction: Revision and Modernism

> This felt awkwardness sprang, as I was at a given moment to perceive, from my too abject acceptance of the grand air with which the term Revision had somehow, to my imagination, carried itself—and from my frivolous failure to analyse the content of the word. To revise is to see, or to look over, again—which means in the case of a written thing neither more nor less than to re-read it.
>
> Henry James, preface to *The Golden Bowl* (1909)[1]

By insisting on revision's most literal definition "to see, or to look over again," Henry James was being both scrupulously honest and importantly disingenuous.[2] In the preface to *The Golden Bowl* he claims that the act of revision, which had originally seemed to "bristle with difficulties," became possible only once he had dissevered rereading or "reperusal" from rewriting, something "so difficult, and even so absurd, as to be impossible."

This project explores the way in which authors reread and rewrote their own work in the early twentieth century. It does so by tracing the genetic history of individual texts in a range of genres, from their manuscript and typescript drafts to published forms. James's prefaces provide a unique description of a sustained revisionary process, but his battles with revision were far from unique. Three years after the publication of the *New York Edition,* Thomas Hardy was to produce a similarly monumental project, the 1912 Wessex edition of his own novels.[3] James Joyce spent more than ten years working

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[1] Henry James, preface, *The Golden Bowl* (1909; New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1971), xvi.

[2] See chapter one for a discussion of the etymology of the word "revision," 40-42.

[3] The most comprehensive study of Hardy's post-publication revision process is by Simon Gatrell, *Hardy the Creator: A Textual Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988). For this edition, Hardy altered dialect forms, rewrote and expanded his prefaces, changed the fictional topography of his fiction to identify it more

towards *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and discarded a thousand-page novel in the process; Virginia Woolf was nine years writing and rewriting *The Voyage Out*.[4] The poets fared no better. *The Waste Land*, Ezra Pound's first Canto, W. H. Auden's *Collected Poems*, and Marianne Moore's *Complete Poems* were all multiply rewritten. In the epigraph to that volume, Moore slyly indicated that the volume's purported comprehensiveness was not quite accurate: "Omissions are not accidents."[5]

Like other acts of textual mediation, such as editing and translation, revision is not normally historicized. It is often assumed either that all writers revise in essentially the same way, which would make analyzing revision uninteresting, or that they revise in entirely personal and idiosyncratic fashions, which makes analysis impossible. The "timeless, placeless" positivist tradition of Anglo-American textual editing has tended to prefer the former view, because it implies that there are general rules for dealing with textual variation.[6] French genetic criticism, with its minute focus on the drafting practices of individuals, inclines towards the latter, investigating "the physiognomy of the draft page" as "a most individual characteristic, like a kind of thumbprint of the writer's mind."[7]

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closely with the imaginary "Wessex," and added the "General Preface." He was over seventy when he began this work of "twice rereading and reworking his fiction" (176).

[4] The earlier versions of both of these texts have subsequently been edited and published, as *Stephen Hero* and *Melymbrosia*. See: James Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, ed. Theodore Spencer (New York: New Directions, 1955); Virginia Woolf, *Melymbrosia: A Novel*, ed. Louise de Salvo (San Francisco: Cleis, 2002).

[5] Marianne Moore, *Complete Poems* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

[6] "The timeless, placeless philology of the older school" is contrasted by Leo Spitzer with "the concrete *hic et nunc* of a historical phenomenon." This study inclines towards the latter approach. Leo Spitzer, *Linguistics and Literary History: Essays in Stylistics* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), 14.

[7] Daniel Ferrer, "The open space of the draft page: James Joyce and Modern Manuscripts." First published in George Bornstein and Theresa Tinkle eds., *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print and Digital Culture*

In fact, not at all writers revise to the same degree, or in the same fashion, or with the same self-confidence; and habits of revision can change over a writing life. Donatus tells us that when Virgil was composing the *Georgics* he was primarily an excisive reviser: "In composing the *Georgics*, the verses which he had thought out (*meditatos*) early in the morning, he dictated later, and throughout the day reworked and reduced to a very few."[8] But by the time he wrote the *Aeneid*, his practice had altered. He began working in portions and, more curiously, in prose, producing what we would now term "pre-writing" or a very detailed plan: "The *Aeneid* was written out first in prose, and laid out in twelve books; then he started to work on sections as the spirit moved him, not developing a fixed order." Some writers profess to disavow revision entirely. In his *Essentials of Spontaneous Prose*, Jack Kerouac warned against too many afterthoughts: "Never afterthink to 'improve' or defray impressions, as, the best writing is always the most painful personal wrung-out tossed from cradle warm protective mind-tap from yourself the song of yourself."[9] More than a hundred years earlier, Keats made a similar argument for spontaneity "And shall I afterwards, when my imagination is idle, & the heat in which I wrote, has gone off, sit down coldly to criticize when in Pss^{on} of only one faculty, what I have written, when almost inspired?"[10]

(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998). Also available online, Institut des textes & manuscrits modernes, 10 May 2008 <http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=23616>.

[8] Aelius Donatus, *Life of Virgil*, trans. David Wilson-Okamura, rev. 2005, 74, 3 May 2008 <www.virgil.org/vitae/a-donatus.htm>.

[9] Jack Kerouac, "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," *Evergreen Review* 2.5: 72-73

[10] From Richard Woodhouse's criticism of one of the sonnets, 1820. Quoted by Philip Horne, *Henry James and Revision*, 20.

On the other hand, the likelihood that any individual text will be revised is influenced by a range of historically specific factors; some of these, like publishing profits and printing technology are institutional; others, like length and metrical choice, are aesthetic and individual. It is easier to revise before publication on a computer than it is in manuscript; Virginia Woolf's drafts of "A Sketch of the Past," which I discuss in the third chapter, show how easily the revising pen runs out of space. And post-publication revision is only possible if there *is* a second publication. Pinker's delicate negotiations with publishers about an "Edition de Luxe" were the prerequisite for James's arduous three-year process of rereading.[11] It is also easier to revise some literary forms or genres than others. In a closed metrical form like the villanelle, there is less opportunity for change than in free verse.[12] A narrative about familiar, public events has more fixed points—less margin for alteration—than fiction or poetry. I will be arguing that in the early twentieth century an unusual confluence of different factors, from changes in typesetting to a preference for *vers libre*, created an ideal breeding ground for textual revision.[13]

Modernist revision can be distinguished from Romantic or post-modernist practices of revision in both its scale and its scope. Not only did modernist writers revise more frequently, more urgently, and at more points in the lifespan of the text than their

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[11] Philip Horne quotes extensively from James's correspondence with his agent about the *New York Edition*. See *Henry James and Revision*, 1-19.

[12] It is sometimes suggested that in manuscript cultures, complex interlocking forms such as terza rima were developed precisely to avoid scribal interpolation.

[13] Michael Levenson sums up the debate about *vers libre* as a debate about freedom in art. T. S. Eliot argued in 1917 that *vers libre* could only be defined by absence (of pattern, rhyme, and metre), but that its battle-cry was hollow: "there is no freedom in art." John Gould Fletcher replied to Eliot's *New Statesman* piece and castigated its conservatism: he claimed that *vers libre* aims precisely "to evade the bounds of regularity." See Michael Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 151.

predecessors, they were also more self-conscious and self-advertising about their own practice. Henry James's prefaces explicitly signal that the text within has been altered, while Pound's provisional titles, *A Draft of XVI Cantos*, and *Draft of XXX Cantos*, imply that revision will take place at some future time.[14] By contrast, Tennyson's 1842 edition of his work is simply titled "Poems, by Alfred Tennyson, in Two Volumes," with no suggestion that the republished poems had been heavily revised.[15] After the modernist period, there has been something of a return to earlier practices. Jack Kerouac is legendary for producing the type roll manuscript of *On The Road* in a two week binge. Frank O'Hara didn't need much time for his poems "because he usually got what he was after in one draft, and he could type very fast, hunt-and-peck fashion."[16] Philip Roth told a *New York Times* reporter that he deliberately refused to reread his earlier works because "I would have been tempted to make changes. But that part of my life is long gone and closed. Whatever those books are, they are."[17]

Given that the slogan of modernism was "make it new," why did so many writers spend their time "exquisitely re-assimilating and re-enjoying" the old?[18] This study argues that the relationship between aesthetic revolution and textual revision is neither

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[14] *A Draft of XVI Cantos* was published in Paris in 1925; five years later, Pound was still not able to commit himself to a final form, and his next book-length issue of the *Cantos* was titled, in correspondence with the year of the century, *A Draft of XXX Cantos.*

[15] Joyce Green discusses Tennyson's revisionary activities during his ten-year "silent" period in "Tennyson's Development during the 'Ten Years' Silence' (1832-1842)," *PMLA* 66.5 (1951): 662-697.

[16] Joe LeSueur, *Digressions on Some Poems by Frank O'Hara, A Memoir* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2003), xiv.

[17] In an interview in 2005 with Charles McGrath. J. Stephen Murphy contrasts Roth's position to James's: "For Roth, revision is a temptation to be resisted; for James it was an artistic necessity," "Revision as a 'Living Affair' in Henry James's New York Edition," *Henry James Review* 29.2 (2008): 163-180, 163.

[18] "The 'old' matter is there, re-accepted, re-tasted, exquisitely re-assimilated and re-enjoyed—believed in, to be brief, with the same 'old' grateful faith…" Henry James, preface, *The Golden Bowl*, xvii.

arbitrary nor counterintuitive, but an illustration of the complex dialectic between tradition and the individual talent, the past and the present. As T. S. Eliot put it in 1917, "This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity."[19] Even the slogan "Make it new," which seems to capture modernism's mission so accurately, was not really new. In *Canto* 53, Pound tells us that he found it on the bath tub of the Emperor Tching.[20] In fact, the textual history is even more complicated than that: "Pound's phrase... is a translation (from French) of a translation (from Manchuan or Mongolian Chinese) of a translation (from twelfth-century neo-Confucian Chinese) of a text of greater antiquity than the earliest parts of the Hebrew Bible."[21]

Fifteen years before he began the preface to *The Golden Bowl*, Henry James had written a tale about a novelist called Dencombe, an insatiable but miserable post-publication reviser, a "passionate corrector, a fingerer of style."[22] In the second chapter, I read James's elegant and uncannily predictive fable as marking the transition from nineteenth- to twentieth-century literary culture, and from Victorian to modernist

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[19] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), *Selected Essays: 1917-1932* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932) 3-11, 4. Eliot assigned the date 1917 to the essay incorrectly when it was reprinted in this edition, a mistake which some subsequent critics have followed.

[20] "Tching prayed on the mountain and/ wrote MAKE IT NEW/ on his bath tub/ Day by day make it new/ cut underbrush,/ pile the logs/ keep it growing." Ezra Pound, *Canto* 53, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1970), 264-5.

[21] Kurt Heinzelman, *Make It New: The Rise of Modernism* (Austin: Harry Ransom Research Center, 2003), 132.

[22] Henry James, "The Middle Years," *Tales of Henry James*, eds. Christof Wegelin and Henry Wonham (New York and London: Norton, 2003), 211-228, 219. This edition reprints the 1895 first book text.

practices of revision. Dencombe is not revising his published novel only for the sake of stylistic polish, but because he is profoundly anxious about the possibility of hermeneutic dissemination. By reiterating his work, he is also retaining control of it. "His ideal would have been to publish secretly, and then, on the published text, treat himself to a terrified revise, sacrificing always a first edition and beginning for posterity and even for the collectors, poor dears, with a second."

"The Middle Years" illustrates that the modernist "passion for correction" was influenced by both aesthetic and institutional factors. Dencombe's commitment to "rare compression" suggests that he subscribes to the aesthetic values of an emerging avant-garde.[23] At the same time, his slightly dismissive reference to "the collectors, poor dears" locates him firmly within a proto-modernist publishing sphere. He claims that the profession of literature has presented him with extreme difficulties from the beginning, and is insecure and anxious about finding readers for his work. Like George Gissing's novel *New Grub Street*, and Kipling's poem "The Three Decker," James's tale can be read as a valediction to a profitable and stable Victorian literary marketplace.[24]

During the 1890s, many of the central institutions of publishing, including the circulating library, the three-volume novel, and the weekly review, began to collapse.[25] As returns in the publishing industry diminished, a broad readership gave way to what

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[23] Discussing James's increasing interest in short forms, Simon During comments that "'Shortness,' by the 1890s, was an international signifier of value." Simon During, "Writing outside the Book," *Cultural Critique* 16 (1990): 129-160, 133.

[24] George Gissing's 1891 novel savagely dissects the contemporary literary marketplace, suggesting that the genuinely talented writer can no longer make a living from literature. Kipling's poem from 1894 carries the subtitle "The three-volume novel is extinct," and depicts the venerable form sailing off to "the Islands of the Blest."

[25] "The last novel in three-volume format was probably published in 1897... and with it came the end of the circulating library." Simon Gatrell, *Hardy the Creator: A Textual Biography*, 5.

Lawrence Rainey has termed "an uneasy mixture of patron-investors, collectors, and speculators on the rare-book market, all situated within a complex and highly unstable institutional space."[26] I will be arguing that these economic changes facilitated the practice of both pre-publication and post-publication revision. Because it was often difficult for writers to publish their work at all, they tended to spend longer reworking it in manuscript.[27] Moreover, commercial book-length publication was often preceded by scattered "pre-publication" in little magazines or boutique editions. As publication became more of a process, and less of an event, writers were encouraged to "treat [themselves] to the terrified revise" between editions, encumbering already published texts with new second thoughts. At the same time, technological changes in type-casting allowed writers to survey their whole books in proof before first publication; sometimes they used this opportunity to make substantial changes.[28] After receiving the galley proofs of *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald thanked his editor Maxwell Perkins for giving him the chance to revise: "With the aid you've given me, I can make Gatsby perfect."[29]

Dencombe's endless, agonized, speculation about the rights and wrong of revision reverberate through the twentieth century. W. H. Auden branded "September 1, 1939,"

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[26] Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 40.

[27] Richard Ellmann details the revisions that Joyce continued to make to *Dubliners* during the period after he had "finished" it but before it was to appear in print. To the despair of his publishers, these changes were almost never a solution to their own practical and legal problems. "If I had written your stories," Richards wrote, "I should certainly wish to be able to afford your attitude." Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 212-223.

[28] Simon Eliot discusses the technological changes that brought in "cheap and plentiful movable type" in the late nineteenth century. Simon Eliot, "The Business of Victorian Publishing," in Deirdre David ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 37-60, 58.

[29] See Kenneth Eble, "The Craft of Revision: *The Great Gatsby*," *American Literature* 36.3 (1964): 315-326, 315.

and "Spain 1937" as "trash" that he was ashamed to have written, and banished them from his *Collected Poems*. In Orwell's dystopia *1984*, textual revision is married to the threat of endless historical revisionism within a totalitarian state. By destabilizing a text the jobbing reviser is also, and purposefully, destabilizing history. But words sometimes present a curious recalcitrance to change, as Ampleforth explains to Winston Smith:

> 'We were producing a definitive edition of the poems of Kipling. I allowed the word "God" to remain at the end of a line. I could not help it!'...'It was impossible to change the line. The rhyme was "rod." Do you realize that there are only twelve rhymes to "rod" in the entire language?'[30]

If "The Middle Years" adumbrates the preoccupations of the next generation, the preface to *The Golden Bowl*, with its curiously literal insistence on revision as "seeing again," begins to analyze them. At the same time, its self-conscious indirection and obliquity, continual anxiety about representation, and "bristling" syntax make it one of the earliest examples of modernist prose style: before everything else, it is difficult.[31] It was written early in 1909, after James had finished most of his revisions for the *New York Edition* and around the time that he began to wonder whether or not this "task of the most arduous sort" had been worthwhile.

The possibility of a collected edition of his works had first been mooted in 1900, but the edition was not definitively arranged, or named, until 1905. After discussing what this "Handsome Book" might look like, and what it should contain, James asked his publishers to put his already published novels "into condition for revision for me."[32]

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[30] George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Plume, 1983), 237.

[31] This difficulty may have an autobiographical element; James wrote the preface in 1909, after three of the most "exhausting and overwhelming" years in his career. Philip Horne notes that it was "certainly written under some stress," *Henry James and Revision*, 2.

[32] In a letter to Pinker, Aug. 7 1905. Quoted by Philip Horne, *Henry James and Revision*, 6.

Their solution was to gut his books and paste the individual pages on larger sheets, with substantial margins for annotation. In September 1905, James wrote to Pinker to thank him for "the beautiful, beautiful last job of pasting-up work... which has put the book into a form it is a joy for me to work upon."[33] In that letter, he is more honest about the kind of labour that revision involves than he would be three years later. As the artisanal phrase "work upon" makes clear, these revision copies were designed less for rereading—any edition of James's published books would have satisfied that purpose—than for rewriting. And when James reread he did rewrite, massively, covering the sheets with balloons, wavy lines, crossings out, additions, and substitutions.[34] Once he had finished, he sent the marked-up pages back to his publishers who turned them into proofs, which were then "reread"—or rewritten—again.

For his most recent novels, which included *The Golden Bowl*, this process was easy and pleasurable; James the reader was able to meet James the writer "halfway, passive, receptive, appreciative, often even grateful."[35] The earlier novels presented a more profound problem; for between the nineteenth-century writer and twentieth-century reader a dissociation of sensibility had occurred. Writers in the next generation were able to use the break between the Victorian and Edwardian or Georgian periods as a symbol of their own modernity; "On or about December 1910," Virginia Woolf quipped, "human

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[33] Horne comments that "the beauty James found in the pasted-up sheets... is that they afford him a margin for revision, more space into which to expand with new sense," *Henry James and Revision*, 7.

[34] The annotated manuscripts of *The American* and *Portrait of a Lady*, both in the Houghton library at Harvard are two of the best visual examples.

[35] Henry James, preface, *The Golden Bowl*, xiii.

character changed," but for James the "frequent lapse of harmony" between past and present was painfully self-reflexive.[36]

Running through a range of metaphors to describe the relationship between his old self and current self, the past writer and present reader, he found himself lighting on the image of surface and depth: the past is a path, covered in snow, its tracks invisible. And it can be accessed only clumsily or arbitrarily; more often, the new traveler will simply be fracturing the ground.

> It was, all sensibly, as if the clear matter being still there, even as a shining expanse of snow spread over a plain, my exploring tread, for application to it, had quite unlearned the old pace and found itself naturally falling into another, which might sometimes indeed more or less agree with the original tracks, but might most often, or very nearly, break the surface in other places.[37]

James's image of a midwinter field covered in snow is a remarkably adequate metaphor for the half-written, half-blank pages that Macmillan produced for him. As Julie Rivkin notes, "the snowy expanse is very much like the white paper, and those footprints the alphabetical characters of a particular 'passage'."[38] But it also belies his depiction of himself as an ideally docile or receptive reader; in fact, it shows that rereading of a certain kind is not really reading at all. Trying to trace over the "original tracks" is impossible, and involves scarring the landscape forever, by "breaking the surface" of the blank expanse of snow. As an activity that intermediates between past and present,

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[36] Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," *The Captain's Death Bed* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950), 94-119, 96. The piece was first delivered as a paper in Cambridge, in May 1924, and subsequently printed under the (more Eliotic and more solemn) title "Character in Fiction" in *The Criterion* in July 1924. Leonard Woolf reprinted the essay in *Collected Essays by Virginia Woolf*, ed. Leonard Woolf, vol. 1 (London: Hogarth, 1966), 319-37, 320. Here it contains the misprint "in or about December, 1910," a version which is now widely circulated on the internet.

[37] Henry James, preface, *The Golden Bowl*, xiii-xiv.

[38] Julie Rivkin, "Doctoring the Text," *Henry James's New York Edition: The Construction of Authorship*, ed. David McWhirter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 142-163, 146.

between prior textual states and future ones, revision is equally ambiguous: it is an act of homage, but also one of destruction. By revising his earlier novels for an expensive new limited edition, James was essentially attempting to remove them from circulation; by writing on the blank marginal expanses that Macmillan created, he was both finishing and finishing off the texts he read.

James's metaphor is double-edged, because the winter plain stands not only for the revised page but for the present. The familiar image of a landscape covered in snow works both temporally and textually, and as a result, it produces a peculiar equation. Not only does it suggest that a written page resembles coverable tracks, but that time itself is structured like a palimpsest, on a surface-depth model. The "clear matter" that once constituted the past is covered up by the present "shining expanse of snow," to the point where it becomes unlearned and invisible. This topographical model goes against the grain of James's own argument; it reveals the theoretical impossibility of retrospection at the same time that it lays out James's own hand. James's anxiety about the passage of time and his own belatedness is itself a modern emotion, but this particular metaphor, I think, is decidedly modern*ist*.

Fredric Jameson has argued that "depth models" are the fundamental hallmark of modernist thought, and that they are abandoned in turn by the "poststructuralist critique of the hermeneutic."[39] The examples that he provides include the Marxist distinction between appearance and essence, the structuralist model of signifier and signified, the existential model of authenticity and inauthenticity, and the Freudian concept of latent and manifest. To Jameson's list we might add some more specifically literary imaginings

[39] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 12.

of surface and depth: Joyce's "deeply deep" epiphanies; Pound's vortex, "from which and through which and into which, ideas are constantly rushing"; Yeats's "widening gyre"; Hemingway's iceberg principle; and Woolf's image of a fin rising "in the wastes of silence" before sinking "back into the depths."[40]

All of these models are essentially hierarchical, with the privileged term buried at the bottom of the heap. The task of the interpreter, analyst, or expert is to penetrate below the surface of things to the heart of the matter, "bringing to light" the buried material he has unearthed. They are not all linguistic, but all of them are readily amenable to linguistic construal. Freud's 1925 essay "A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad" displays how easily vertical topological models fit with intuitive ideas about linguistic signification (Coleridge's "thoughts too deep for words") and available technologies of writing.[41] He begins by suggesting that the best way to preserve a memory over time is to commit it to a "writing-surface," which might be either a piece of paper or a slate. And yet neither medium is exactly satisfactory. The paper is soon filled, which prevents new thoughts from being recorded, but the slate is infinitely erasable and unable to retain permanent traces. Kierkegaard had made a similar point in his essay on repetition, where he asked "Who would wish to be a tablet upon which time writes every instant a new inscription? or to be a mere memorial of the past?"[42]

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[40] Bernard compares thought to a fin rising and falling after spending an evening reading. Curiously, the image follows a description of comparing different texts of Shakespeare; it is a thought with a revisionary tinge. Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (1931), with an introduction and notes by Gillian Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 228.

[41] Sigmund Freud, "A Note Upon the 'Mystic Writing Pad'," (1925) *The Penguin Freud Library*, vol. 2, *On Metapsychology. The Theory of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin, 1984), 428-434.

[42] Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology*, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York: Harper, 1964). This passage is quoted by Soheil Ahmed in his essay "Figures of Revision in Wordsworth's Critical Arguments," 29 Feb. 2008 <http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2001/v/n24/005995ar.html>.

Freud finds a solution in the "mystic writing-pad" which he presents as an analogy for human perceptual capacity. This familiar child's toy with two surfaces allows the top surface to be wiped over and repeatedly erased, while retaining faint traces of prior writing on the bottom layer. "If we imagine one hand writing upon the surface of the Mystic Writing-Pad while another periodically raises its covering sheet from the wax slab, we shall have a concrete representation of the way in which I tried to picture the functioning of the perceptual apparatus of our mind." Like James's field covered in snow, the mystic writing pad presents both surface *and* depth, unlike a flat piece of paper (all depth), or a chalk board (all surface).

Repression and textual revision both provide a means to intermediate between two levels, top and bottom. James's revision of his already printed pages for the *New York Edition* illustrates the point in the most literal way; by inscribing pages that were already inscribed, he turned a surface *into* a depth. Figuratively, revision can be regarded as an attempt to make up for a previous linguistic failure, by returning to and re-mining some deeply felt, but superficially expressed, idea. Susan Stanford Friedman equates the two depth-surface models when she suggests that textual drafts "are potentially the 'textual unconscious' of the 'final' text," and this is a form of analogic thought that genetic criticism has developed.[43] I want to go a stage further, to suggest that revision is not only similar to—but an improvement on—"repression" as a way of describing the structural relationship between top and bottom. Unlike Freud's concept of repression, which describes a unidirectional attempt to burrow *downwards*, it has the advantage of suggesting movement in both directions. It does the work of repression but also the work

[43] Susan Stanford Friedman, "The Return of the Repressed in Women's Narrative," *Journal of Narrative Technique* 19 (1989): 141-56.

of psychoanalysis. Revising a text produces a new surface, but it also produces depth: that is, it turns a piece of paper into a mystic writing tablet.

Revision is an exemplary metaphor for movement between surface and depth. Consequently, it is not only a textual practice that modernist writers employed, but a powerful *figure* for modernism as a project. "Break the surface" and "make it new" are suggestive material metaphors for textual revision, but they were once the war-cries of an aesthetic avant-garde.

Modernist aesthetic writing is encrusted, to an almost astonishing degree, with images of surface and depth, and modernist revolution is frequently figured as the free and easy movement between the two. When she dated modernity as beginning "on or about December, 1910" Woolf found a "homely illustration" in the architectural and social segregation of upstairs and downstairs. Where "the Victorian cooked lived like a leviathan in the lower depths, formidable, silent, obscure, inscrutable," the Georgian cook roams feely through the living rooms, "a creature of sunshine and fresh air."[44] Joyce began by trying to produce "deeply deep" epiphanies, but by the time he wrote *Ulysses*, he regarded the search *only* for depth as a form of false profundity. Stephen reflects on his earlier callowness: "Remember your epiphanies on green oval leaves, deeply deep, copies to be sent if you died to all the great libraries of the world, including Alexandria?"[45] Pound used the image of an upturned cone or vortex, "from which and through which and into which, ideas are constantly rushing," to figure a simultaneous

[44] Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," 96.

[45] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1934), 41.

desire for pattern and activity.[46] Yeats's "widening gyre," in which the falconer finds himself relentlessly turning, displays the same appetite for movement.[47] *The Waste Land* begins with the images of lilacs and roots breaking out of the soil; more suggestively, Eliot also presents us with a variety of corpses buried or sunk, "rising and falling," always threatening to surface. As I argue in the fourth chapter, these corpses always invoke the idea of a buried textual corpus.

Phlebas is able to move easily between the surface and the deep because he has been drowned; objects rise and fall more easily, and less predictably, in water than out of it. Modernist writers returned often to watery or suboceanic worlds to think about the relationship between different layers of meaning. In "The Middle Years" Dencombe's rereading of his own work is described as diving underwater into the "great glazed tank of art." In the 1920s, Virginia Woolf described poetry as a means of breaking "the surface of silence with silver fins," and in 1939, when she wrote her final memoir, she compared the recovery of past time to looking into a deep river: "The past only comes back when the present runs so smoothly that it is like the sliding surface of a deep river. Then one sees through the surface to the depth."[48] Hemingway made use of frozen rather than flowing water when he compared the well-constructed novel to an iceberg, "there is

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[46] Ezra Pound, "Vorticism," 1914. See Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), 146.

[47] "Turning and turning in the widening gyre/ The falcon cannot hear the falconer;/ Things fall apart/ the centre cannot hold." W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming," *The Dial* (November 1920).

[48] Virginia Woolf, "The Tale of Genji" (1925) *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Andrew McNeillie, vol. 4 (London: Hogarth, 1994), 264-68, 266. "A Sketch of the Past," *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind, 2nd ed. (London: Hogarth, 1985), 64-159, 109.

seven eighths of it under water for every part that shows."[49] Even here, however, movement is critical: the iceberg represents desired ellipsis, but this ellipsis can only be achieved through revision—by retrospectively transposing the surface to the depths.

Modernist metaphors for literary composition and revision have permeated our own critical vocabulary so completely that their strangeness, and their novelty, is not always palpable. It may be worth reminding ourselves that before the twentieth century revision was *not* usually figured in terms of surface and depth, as a form of bringing to light, repression or, in Pound's phrase, "super-position."[50] As Zachary Leader and Jack Stillinger have shown, Keats was typical in being both an active and meticulous reviser of his own work, and uneasy in general terms about the relationship between revision and inspiration.[51] In a letter to John Taylor, he claimed that one of his own axioms was "That if Poetry come not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all."[52] Byron was convinced that "nobody ever succeeds [in revision] great or small." In the same letter, he boasted that his own poems were written "as fast as I could put pen to paper" and never revised. Like Keats, he uses a metaphor of energy and power, of

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[49] Hemingway uses the image of the iceberg on several occasions. This quotation is from his 1958 *Paris Review* interview. George Plimpton, "An Interview with Ernest Hemingway," reprinted in Linda Wagner-Martin ed. *Ernest Hemingway's 'The Sun Also Rises': A Casebook*, (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 15-32, 29.

[50] Pound describes the one-image poem as a form of "super-position"; later he was to use the same term to describe the way in which his translation of Propertius doubles up Imperial Rome and contemporary England. For the first use, see Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (London: John Lane, 1916).

[51] Zachary Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authorship* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996); Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[52] Letter to John Taylor, 27 February, 1818. Quoted by William Walsh, *Introduction to John Keats* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), 80.

movement outwards: "I am like the tyger (in poesy) if I miss my first spring—I go growling back to my jungle.—There is no second."[53]

Where modernist writers present revision as a form of teleological meliorism ("gradual betterment," in James's phrase), writers before the modernist period were more likely to read textual series in negative terms. They revised, but without investing great hope in revision. Montaigne altered and expanded his essays meticulously, but felt little pleasure in a process that seemed utterly haphazard: "If we were always progressing toward improvement, to be old would be a beautiful thing. But it is a drunkard's progress, formless, staggering, like reeds which the wind shakes as it fancies, haphazardly."[54] Wordsworth looked forward to the moment when the *Prelude* would be completed, but found "the reality so far short of the expectation" that he was "dejected on many accounts."[55] He returned to the poem at intervals for the next forty-five years, but was never really satisfied with it, and never published his work.

By contrast, early twentieth-century writers were optimistic about revision's transformative potential. Beckett's often-quoted lines from *Worstward Ho* stand as a kind of epigraph for the belief that failure is trivial, rightable, rewritable: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better."[56] T. S. Eliot's essays oppose the Keatsian idea that revision is a matter of sitting down "coldly to criticize" something written in a state of inspiration, by repeatedly dwelling on the need for labour, rereading,

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[53] See Zachary Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authorship*, 78.

[54] Thomas Newkirk discusses Montaigne's habits of revision to the *Essais* and his fear that his project was getting worse over time, "Montaigne's Revisions," *Rhetoric Review* 24.3 (2005): 298-315.

[55] William Wordsworth, letter to Sir George Beaumont, 1805, quoted in Philip Horne, *Henry James and Revision*, 27.

[56] Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho* (New York: Grove, 1983), 7.

knowledge, and graft. Instead of dissevering the critical and creative faculties, he conjoins them. In "The Function of Criticism" he takes Matthew Arnold (whom he read as a romantic) to task for overlooking "the capital importance of criticism in the work of creation itself... the larger part of the labour of an author in composing his work is critical labour."[57]

This emphasis on graft is combined with a sometimes surprising pleasure in textual destruction. In the fourth chapter, I discuss Pound and Eliot's deletions from *The Waste Land* manuscripts alongside some scenes of modernist book burning. Frustrated by his inability to write the book he wanted, James Joyce threw the thousand-page *Stephen Hero* manuscript into the fire in a rage. It was eventually rescued, but even the attempt at conflagration proved liberating; shortly afterwards he sat down and began rewriting the same story in a more experimental form as *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* W. H. Auden's extensive post-publication revisions, which I discuss in chapter five, were also made in the belief that the early poems were "trash," fit only for tossing. In the fourth chapter, I suggest that these forms of excisive revision can be read in relation to early-twentieth century technological discourses privileging efficiency, speed, and cleanliness. By removing excess words, the modernist writer produces a harder, leaner text—art for the "Machine-Age."

The primary focus of this project is not editorial, but I pay attention throughout to the editorial problems that extreme, and authorially produced, textual variation creates. In the first chapter, I discuss the problems that extended acts of revision create for traditional Anglo-American editorial theory. The second chapter sets James's

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[57] T. S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism" (1923), reprinted in *Selected Essays*, 3rd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 23-34, 30.

posthumously published and incomplete volume of autobiography *The Middle Years* alongside his 1893 tale of the same title. By looking at the way in which his executor Percy Lubbock edited the typescript for publication, I ask how authorial revision can be distinguished from editorial change. Is there a fundamental difference between revision and editing, and in what might it consist? This question recurs in the fourth chapter. Ezra Pound's and T. S. Eliot's work on the 1921 manuscript of *The Waste Land* has been termed the "quintessential" modernist revision, and most critics have praised Pound for "exorcising" or "purging" the waste from Eliot's long first draft.

Returning to a debate which has played out since Valerie Eliot's 1971 facsimile edition, I consider the ways in which modernist ideas about textuality and revision continue to infect our own modes of thinking. When critics argue that "the manuscript of *The Waste Land* embodied a desire for Pound's curative arrival," they are also indirectly subscribing to a Poundian aesthetic legacy—"economy in art is always beauty," "good writing is writing that is perfectly controlled."[58] I argue that the 1921 manuscript actually displays a tug-of-war between two different literary sensibilities. Pound revised Eliot's draft by excising, but Eliot's own changes were primarily substitutions. Through this process of revision, Pound turned Eliot's long manuscript draft into a highly condensed Imagist long poem, but by doing so he removed important formal and aesthetic aspects from the first draft[59]—its use of eighteenth century metrical forms, its dramatic and dialogic quality, its preoccupation with reading, writing, and literary culture.

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[58] See chapter 4 for a discussion of the problems with Wayne Koestenbaum's argument. The first quotation is from Henry James, preface to "The Altar of the Dead," in the *New York Edition*, reprinted in *The Art of the Novel* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1984), 257. The second is from Ezra Pound, "The Serious Artist, IV," *New Freewoman* 1.11 (15 November, 1913), 213–14.

[59] In 1914, Pound said that "I am often asked whether there can be a long imagiste or vorticist poem." James Longenbach comments that "almost from the start he was impatient with Imagism's studiously

The third chapter considers the relationship between revision and genre by focusing on two posthumously published autobiographical texts. Leslie Stephen's *Mausoleum Book* began as a retrospective attempt to memorialize and eulogize his wife, but it ended in the continuous and open form of the diary. Virginia Woolf's "A Sketch of the Past" covers many of the same events, but in an inverse form: her memoir uses the progressive dating conventions of a diary, but was in fact written retrospectively. Extending the argument of the second chapter, I consider the play between different kinds of textual "finish," and suggest that the temporal structure of autobiography makes it a genre particularly prone to revisionary regression. Like the revising writer, the autobiographer begins by summoning *up* remembrance of things past, alternately recalling and reconstruing the traces on the bottom layer of the mnemonic writing-pad.

This is not a temporally specific argument. Across literary history, texts with autobiographical elements seem to have been particularly prone to reworking; Wordsworth's *Prelude* and Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, revised eight times between 1855 and 1892, would be just two nineteenth century examples. At the same time, autobiography became an increasingly dominant form during the early twentieth century; for Avrom Fleishman, it is "paradigmatic of modern fiction and its attendant forms of self-consciousness."[60] One might say that modernist novelists revised more frequently than their forebears because they chose narrative forms that are intrinsically "revisable." On the other hand, the relationship between form and textual genesis may be contiguous

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miniature world," "Modern Poetry" *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* ed. Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 100-129, 107.

[60] Avrom Fleishman, *Figures of Autobiography: The Language of Self-writing in Victorian and Modern England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 391.

rather than causal: that is, both autobiography and revision may be symptoms of the same propensity to "deep structure."

In the final chapter, I turn outwards to address the relationship between revision and historical process. Henry James abandoned his lifelong commitment to textual meliorism in his final years. The day after Britain entered the First World War, he wrote that "the plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness" had caused him to lose faith in the idea that the world was "gradually bettering." Three days later, he abandoned his unfinished novel of modern American life, *The Ivory Tower*. Is it possible to sustain a belief in revision as an act of textual amelioration without having a similarly optimistic view of history? The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 had a similar effect on W. H. Auden, but instead of giving up revision he embraced it as a form of textual expiation. From the perspective of the 1950s, he looked back in horror at the glibness of "History to the defeated/ May say Alas but cannot help nor pardon": "To say this is to equate goodness with success. It would have been bad enough if I had ever held this wicked doctrine, but that I should have stated it because it sounded to me rhetorically effective is quite inexcusable."[61] He adopted an attitude of severe retrospection towards his own earlier work, altering individual lines and phrases and also deleting entire poems. The line "We must love one another or die," in "September 1, 1939," became first, "We must love one another and die," and finally nothing at all, when the poem was deleted. After September 11, this poem was widely circulated on the internet, and it is now one of Auden's best known works. Should it be read at all and, if so, in which form?

[61] 1965 foreword, reprinted in W. H. Auden *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Random House, 1976), 15-16.

James's image of a snowy field with two sets of tracks is a complicated model for revision, and I try to take its complications seriously. Textual editors need to look for simple solutions, and they usually end up arguing preferentially for either the top or the bottom layer of tracks. Edward Mendelson states that "obligation and judgment are agreed" in choosing Auden's final wishes over his early published volumes; Louise DeSalvo and Christine Froula agree that Woolf "submerged" significant amounts of "valuable material" as she transformed *Melymbrosia* into *The Voyage Out*. This form of either/or thinking is also prevalent in mid-century literary criticism, where early versions of texts tend to be either savagely denigrated or earnestly acclaimed, figured as history's defeated party or its subaltern heroes.

Poststructuralist criticism also has difficulty talking about revision, but for a different reason: it tries too hard to keep its hands clean. Derrida's 1966 essay "Freud and the Scene of Writing" shows exactly why we should pay attention to both layers of the writing-pad; in fact, Freud's toy provides him with an uncannily perfect ("literally identical") model for deconstruction.[62] The words Derrida picks out of Freud's text are "an unlimited receptive capacity and a retention of permanent traces." But he continues, "Trace as memory is not a pure breaching that might be reappropriated at any time as simple presence; it is rather the ungraspable and unvisible difference between breaches." After a lifetime's experience of "breaching" his own texts, James was not so ready to dismiss the brute fact of simple presence, and nor should we be. Before we can talk about textual change, we need to find and then compare two or more material objects. This may involve placing published editions side by side, comparing a manuscript and a typescript

[62] Jacques Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 196-231, 204.

in a rare book library, or finding two different versions of a poem on the internet. But in each case, it will be a physical and practical enterprise. To read the Houghton typescript of *The Middle Years*, one has to work out how to decode James's handwriting, and how to distinguish it from the traces left by other pens on the page. Understanding Auden's practice of revision requires reconstructing a tortuously complex textual history: we need access to the full set of his first editions, both British and American, and to compare these to his many preserved manuscript notebooks, themselves scattered across Europe and the United States in rare book libraries. The papers of modernist writers are still being acquired and opened up by libraries, and there is also the possibility that further relevant information could come to light at any point. John Haffenden recently discovered an early version of Eliot's Fresca couplets in Vivien Eliot's papers at Oxford, and has convincingly argued that that "these neglected leaves... need to be instated alongside the bulk of the Berg drafts in any future edition of the *Facsimile*."[63]

As a process, revision is neither simple, nor visible, nor perhaps ever fully graspable, but it does leave traces of a very material, visual, even tangible kind. This study is theoretical only in the most practical of ways. It argues that to understand how modernist writers made themselves and their texts new, we should focus our attention on the stubborn, inarticulate, object of their renovations—"it."

[63] John Haffenden, "Vivien Eliot and *The Waste Land*: The Forgotten Fragments," *P. N. Review* 175, 33.5 (2007): 18-23, 23.

Chapter One

Theories of Revision

1.1 Defining Revision

This preliminary chapter provides the groundwork—theoretical and historical—for the claims about modernist revision that I have begun to lay out, and which will be illustrated in finer detail in the four author-based chapters. One of the underlying claims of this project is that revision is inadequately understood.

Many literary critics ignore revision entirely. The discipline of English has committed itself over the last seventy years to a bewildering range of arguments against intentionalism, and yet revision is premised on the possibility of intentional textual change. The New Critics reified the objects of their study as bounded and hermetically sealed "verbal icons," and were uninterested in analyzing textual change over time.[64] Mark Jancovich argues that they "took issue with those approaches that saw meaning as the authorial intention because they claimed that all authors have to work with the medium of language and that, as a result, the meaning of the text will finally escape their control."[65] In their important essay, "The Intentional Fallacy," Wimsatt and Beardsley briefly admit that revision presents a problem for their thesis, "There is a sense in which

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[64] See W. K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1954).

[65] Mark Jancovich, "The Southern New Critics," *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Volume 7: Modernism and the New Criticism*, eds. A. Walton Litz, Lawrence Rainey, and Louis Menand (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 200-18, 212.

an author, by revision, may better achieve his original intention," and just as quickly dismiss it out of hand, "But it is a very abstract sense."[66]

During the 1970s and 1980s, post-structuralism provided a variety of new, and more sophisticated, arguments against authorial intention. Barthes proclaimed the "death of the author" in 1967; three years later, Michel Foucault proposed that the "author" was only a convenient way to organize discourse, a conventional function rather than a natural state.[67] Foucault's claim that the author is a social function is at odds with Wimsatt and Beardsley's dismissal of "external evidence," but the implications of both forms of anti-intentionalism were arguably comparable. Bibliography and textual criticism, which had been the central concerns of literary and hermeneutic study for centuries, were now relegated to the margins of English departments, viewed as accessories to, rather than vehicles for, scholarship.[68]

Increasingly, scholars also lacked the traditional textual and bibliographic skills to make discussion of revision possible: as Hershel Parker archly comments, New Criticism "thrived when the professor could make a career from writing about a few paperback novels or collections or short stories which he (and increasingly she) carried to the beach

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[66] William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," (1946). Reprinted in *The Verbal Icon*, 3-18, 5.

[67] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (1968). Reprinted in *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977) and in *Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alastair McCleery (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 221-4. Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" (1970), *Book History Reader*, 225-31. Barthes argues that "Thus is revealed the total existence of writing: a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author," before pronouncing that the author is dead.

[68] Christine Haynes argues that Derrida and Barthes produced "the most direct assault on the Romantic notion of authorship," but that this attack had begun earlier, with the New Critics and New Bibliography. Christine Haynes, "Reassessing Genius in Authorship: The State of the Discipline," *Book History* 8 (2005) 287-320, 289.

at summer."[69] If bibliographers painted literary critics as amateur dabblers, without the specialist historical and analytic skills properly to understand the books and texts they studied, literary critics had a simpler response: bibliography was boring, "dry-as-dust."[70] The literary critic Edmund Wilson spoke for a generation when he took a potshot at the editor Fredson Bowers, in 1968. "I have been told that his lectures on bibliography are so thrilling that young students often leave them with no other ambition than to become master bibliographers. But I have no reason to believe that he is otherwise much interested in literature."[71]

Despite this unpropitious intellectual climate, some literary critics did study revision during the second half of the twentieth century: to several of their studies I am deeply indebted. Often, they came to the topic almost by chance, and after significant practical experience of editing a single author. Edward Mendelson began exploring the power politics of Auden's revisions only after editing his *Collected Poems*; Simon Gatrell wrote his "textual biography" of Thomas Hardy after a long career editing individual novels. Unsurprisingly, this work tends to be highly specific, meticulous, editorially focused, and untheoretical.

In fact, some of the finest studies of revision, such as Philip Horne's work on Henry James, and Christopher Ricks's analysis of Eliot's post-publication prose

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[69] Hershel Parker, *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons: Literary Authority in American Fiction* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1984), 214.

[70] This was Auden's critical but empathetic verdict on Housman's philological work: "Deliberately he chose the dry-as-dust/ Kept tears like dirty postcards in a drawer." "A. E. Housman," *Collected Poems*, 148-9.

[71] Edmund Wilson, "The Fruits of the MLA," *New York Review of Books*, 10 Oct., 1968, 17.

revisions, are not only untheoretical but *anti*-theoretical.[72] Writing from an exquisitely sensitive tradition of "practical criticism," Ricks and Horne are at their best when examining the smallest possible changes: the valence of a single letter, an adjective, or piece of punctuation. The beauty of this approach lies in its ability to explicate the smallest detail, to swoop between the local and the general; the risk is that it ignores the logical middle ground, and fails to identify patterns or modes of revision. As Garrett Stewart has argued, "Ricks typically sacrifices hermeneutics to isolated deliberation," producing readings rather than "*a* reading."[73]

Because they have an intensely specialized knowledge of the textual history of one author, and often only more glancing acquaintance with the revision and publication habits of others, editor-critics tend to assume that their particular author was unique. Simon Gatrell begins his study of Hardy with a description of the trickle-down structure of Edwardian publishing, explaining that the whole question of his personal textual biography "is closely bound up with, and to a degree directly affected by, the history of the book-trade in Britain and America."[74] This is an intrinsically comparative argument, but Gatrell does not ask whether other authors also used republication as an opportunity for revision until the very end of his study. In a footnote to the conclusion, he notes: "James's own New York edition is a celebrated Edwardian example of an author reworking his texts, in some cases many years after their original publication—and a

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[72] Christopher Ricks, *Decisions and Revisions in T. S. Eliot* (London: The British Library and Faber and Faber, 2003). First delivered as the 2002 Panizzi Lectures.

[73] Garrett Stewart, "Metallusion: The Used, the Renewed, and the Novel," *Modern Language Quarterly* 65.4 (2004): 583-604, 585. Rev. of Christopher Ricks *Allusion to the Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[74] Simon Gatrell, *Hardy the Creator: A Textual Biography*, 6.

comparison with Hardy's Wessex edition would prove instructive, though beyond the scope of this book."[75]

Even John Bryant's study *The Fluid Text*, which attempts to provide a general theory of textual fluidity and variance, is limited in practice; despite pointing out a number of important examples of textual fluidity in the introduction, Bryant focuses the body of his work almost exclusively on Melville's *Typee*. No one who attempts to write about the textual history of multiple authors can possibly match the detailed knowledge of someone who has spent a whole career working on a single corpus, and this project does not purport to do so. I am often reliant on the detailed work of other critics and editors, and restrict myself to a relatively limited range of examples: my readings are a series of deep dives into the manuscript data, rather than a careful trawl along the ocean floor. And yet, despite the practical difficulties, revision (like editing) cries out for a comparative and historical treatment. Theorizing revision on the basis of a single author's practice is akin to basing a description of the nineteenth-century novel on Jane Austen, or a theory of the long poem on Pound's *Cantos*.

In this chapter, I begin by examining some definitions of revision. In one sense, the word has a precise and narrow purchase—changes made to a text after first composition—but it is also easily metaphorized. In James's compulsive attempt to "relive" the work of his earlier years, and in Woolf's verbal reiteration of traumatic memories, we see that textual change can be heavily freighted with other kinds of human hope. This project as a whole is interested in revision in the broadest possible sense, as an act of "re-seeing" or reconceiving the past. While being alive to the possibility of metaphorical extension of the term, I also restrict it in normal use to authorial changes,

[75] Simon Gatrell, *Hardy the Creator: A Textual Biography*, 224.

rather than changes made by editors, publishers, or other agents: in the chapter on *The Waste Land*, for example, I talk about Eliot's substitutive "revisions" (published in black ink on Valerie Eliot's typescript), and Pound's "editorial changes," "alterations," and "excisions."

The first section of this chapter examines the way in which "revision" has been defined, both by common readers and within an Anglo-American tradition of textual theory. A good proportion of the scholarship to which I will be referring in later chapters—from Philip Horne's study, *Henry James and Revision*, to Susan Dick's facsimile edition of *To the Lighthouse*, to Edward Mendelson's edition of Auden's *Collected Poems*—locates itself in or with reference to this tradition. In many cases, I am critical of editors' ready acquiescence in the New Bibliographic term "final intention," and so begin by exploring what that term means, and how it relates to revision. In the second half of this section, I look at some of the ways in which the word revision is used in normal language. Rather than viewing revision—either as a word or a practice—as a timeless, "natural," or inevitable aid to composition, I show that it is historically and technologically contingent. In the second section, I consider two possible ways of theorizing revision, first from a text-based perspective, and then from a communication- or speaker-based perspective. Why is it so hard to describe revision using widely accepted models for textual communication, such as Robert Darnton's communications circuit? What happens to those models when the possibility of diachronic textual change is introduced?

1.12 Anglo-American Editorial Theory

Within textual criticism and literary scholarship, revision refers to a change or changes made to an already finished (not necessarily published) text by its author. Where other forms of textual mediation—translation, editing, expurgation, quotation—can be performed on a text by any interested party, including the original writer, immediate friends and editors, and readers many years later, revision remains the peculiar privilege of authors. Accordingly, it has a special status in a textual tradition devoted to the recovery of authorial meaning.

Most forms of diachronic change are viewed as negative by textual critics: an original text becomes corrupted over time by interpolation, scribal error, bad copyists, and other (negatively viewed) makers of meaning who impose themselves between the original author and the present. In his essay, "The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism," A. E. Housman argue that emendation should be utterly rigorous, requiring both intense linguistic knowledge and creative or artistic ingenuity. By contrast, the scribes who preceded modern scholars, and who were also attempting to transmit and correct corrupt texts to the best of their ability, are viewed without sympathy. "It may be that a scribe who interpolates, who makes changes deliberately, is guilty of wickedness, while a scribe who makes changes accidentally, because he is sleepy or illiterate or drunk, is guilty of none; but that is a question which will be determined by a competent authority at the Day of Judgment, and is no concern of ours."[76] Like emendation, revision has been viewed as a *positive iteration* towards final intentions; like interpolation, editorial intervention has been condemned. In fact, all four textual processes represent

[76] A. E. Housman, "The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism," *Proceedings of the Classical Association* 12 (1922): 67-84. The essay originated as a talk given at the Classical Society the previous year, 2 May 2008 <http://cnx.org/content/m11803/latest/>.

derivative or secondary textual states—someone's "second thoughts"—but, within the tradition of textual scholarship, the first is preserved, the second erased.[77]

The distinction between textual amelioration and degeneration, emendation and interpolation, or revision and editing, is not as solid as Housman suggests. To begin with, forms of textual change tend to *present* in similar ways, even if their provenance, authority, or date varies. We can only reconstruct complex processes of textual corruption—or amelioration—from discrete data points, such as a scribal manuscript, a typescript, a publisher's proofs, and first and subsequent editions. Like the palaeontologist struggling to reconstruct patterns of evolution from a collection of fossils, textual critics have to work by inference.

Sometimes revision can be inferred from a marked copy (published or unpublished) that contains marginal additions, notes, or corrections. But how are we to judge who made the marks? The traditional textual critic would do as much as possible to distinguish different handwriting, ink, styles of annotation, and so on, but it can be difficult to decide whether a small mark—which may have drastic consequences—was made in revision, or as corruption. In the second chapter of the dissertation, I discuss a problem of exactly this kind, struggling to distinguish Henry James's revisions to *The Middle Years* from his amanuensis's self-correction, and his editor's pre-publication tidying up.

In other cases, revision happens silently; the only evidence is the difference between editions or versions. The first edition of a novel may be different from a publisher's proofs, and a third edition may be different from a first version. Again, it can

[77] D. C. Greetham puts it like this, "Truth versus correctness, and (authorial) revision versus (scribal) corruption," "Reading in and Around *Piers Plowman*," *Texts and Textuality: Textual Instability, Theory, and Interpretation* ed. Philip G. Cohen (New York: Garland, 1997), 25-58, 32.

be hard to determine the reason or cause for the delta between two versions. Does it represent revision? Scribner's page proofs of *The Sun Also Rises* begin before the published version of the novel: between proof and first edition, about twenty pages were deleted. From surviving letters, we know that F. Scott Fitzgerald encouraged Hemingway to scrap his "snobbish" and "worn" opening, and that Hemingway then told his publishers exactly how much to cut. Is this revision or is it editing? What would we conclude without the Fitzgerald letter?

The Hemingway example also points to some of the theoretical problems in distinguishing authorial revision from non-authorial editing. As Jerome McGann's work has shown, authors do not usually work in splendid isolation.[78] They often rely heavily on family members, friends, editors, and publishers, and anticipate that certain kinds of correction or alteration will be made before publication. When Mary Shelley was working on *Frankenstein*, she gave her husband "carte blanche to make whatever alterations you please" to the page proofs.[79] In the preface to his edition of the novel, James Rieger suggests that Percy Shelley should accordingly be regarded as "more than an editor" of the 1818 text, as a "minor collaborator," or even a co-author with "a measure of 'final authority'."[80] There is a kind of legal logic at work here: just as an individual may give the power to manage his or her estate to an executor, so an author can voluntarily cede the right to revision to an editor.

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[78] McGann has advocated the importance of texts' social construction from *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* onwards. Jerome McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

[79] Letter dated 24 September, 1817, quoted by Zachary Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authorship*, 191.

[80] James Rieger, Introduction, Rieger ed., *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text*, by Mary Shelley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xviii.

Within the Anglo-American tradition of textual criticism, non-authorial alterations to a text can be regarded as revisions if, and only if, author and editor are "voluntary collaborators." The problem is that "voluntary collaboration" is very difficult to determine. The right to dispose of someone else's property or finances is premised on a signed and countersigned legal contract, but authors are not in the habit of signing off their rights. When T. S. Eliot gave the manuscript of *The Waste Land* to Ezra Pound, was he asking for suggestions or giving Pound the power to revise it? In her feminist analysis of the texts of *Frankenstein*, Johanna Smith questions whether Mary Shelley was acting voluntarily: was she "tired and not very clear-headed," as one of her letters complains, or did she actively want to surrender final intention to someone else? "In other words, was Mary cowed by her husband's greater experience as a writer into adopting his revisions, or did she welcome him as a collaborator?"[81] During the middle of the twentieth century this question was widely debated by editors looking to establish a general principle for selecting a copy-text. Summing up the debate, Thomas Tanselle argued (with specific reference to *The Waste Land*) that "it is possible for someone other than the 'author' to make alterations which are identical with the intention of the 'author,' when the relationship partakes of the spirit of collaboration."[82]

Authorial intention intersects messily with the intentions of other interested parties. It can also shift over time. Anglo-American textual criticism is interested not only in establishing what an author wanted to say, but what he or she wanted to say *finally*. In the *Prolegomena* to the Oxford Shakespeare, McKerrow summed up the work of textual

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[81] See Johanna M. Smith, "Hideous Progenies," *Texts and Textuality: Textual Instability, Theory, and Interpretation*, 121-40, 126.

[82] Thomas Tanselle, "The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention," *Studies in Bibliography* 29 (1976): 167-211, 191.

criticism as an approach towards "our ideal of an author's fair copy of his work in its final state," before going on to discuss the extremely complicated ways in which this ideal might be established in practice.[83] In 1976, Thomas Tanselle questioned the practicality of this approach in his influential essay, "The Editorial Problem of Authorial Final Intention." He gives Melville's post-publication changes to *Typee* as an example. After first publishing the novel in 1846, Melville was asked by his publishers to take out some material critical of the activities of South Sea Missionaries. For the revised edition, Melville removed about thirty-six pages in accordance with the request. Tanselle argues "These changes alter the tone of the book and are not in keeping with the spirit of the original version. There is no question that Melville is responsible for the changes, and in this sense they are 'final'; but they represent not so much his intention as his acquiescence."[84]

Tanselle's solution is to propose that revision takes place on two separate axes, vertical and horizontal. The first type of revision "moves the work to a different plane," and "aims at altering the purpose, direction, or character of a work, thus attempting to make a different sort of work out of it," while the second keeps the work on the same plane, by "intensifying, refining, or improving the work as conceived." He argues that revisions made late in life—like Wordsworth's changes to the *Prelude*, or James's revisions for the *New York Edition*, "will almost surely constitute an effectively different work, since it is unlikely that the author will have the same conception of his work in mind as he had during the process of its original composition." In these kinds of "vertical" revision, editors need not be concerned with preserving only an author's "final

[83] R. B. McKerrow, *Prolegomena, The Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939).

[84] Thomas Tanselle, "The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention," 193.

intention," since there are actually multiple final intentions in play. As examples, Tanselle gives Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, revised eight times between 1855 and 1892, James's novels, and Auden's tendency to "domesticate, within the frame of mind that at any moment possesses him, work conceived in some quite different frame of mind."[85] In the first case, however, editors should still look for, and be guided by, a single "final" intention—that is, by an author's temporally last decision about a work.

In his wise and broad-minded survey of different editorial possibilities, Tanselle admits that it is difficult to draw hard and fast distinctions between different types of revisions ("a quantitative dividing line is not logical," 198). He concludes even more hesitantly, by gesturing outwards to the difficulty of defining "intention" ("too complicated a philosophical issue to be settled here"). I have no presumptions towards providing a more rigorous definition of authorial intention than Tanselle's, but think it is worth considering the premises on which editorial understanding of "final intention" rests. In his posthumous edition of Auden's *Collected Poems*, Edward Mendelson explains that "This edition includes all the poems that W. H. Auden wished to preserve, in a text that represents his final revisions... Fortunately, obligation and judgement are agreed in requiring that this first posthumous collected edition conform to its author's wishes to the extent that they can be determined."[86] What has to be the case for Mendelson's assumption to be valid?

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[85] Tanselle is quoting from Joseph Warren Beach's 1957 study, *The Making of the Auden Canon* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957). See Tanselle, "The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention," 202.

[86] Edward Mendelson, Editor's Preface, *Collected Poems* by W. H. Auden, 11-15, 11. For the 1991 edition, Mendelson revised his preface and toned down the emphasis on an editor's moral obligations.

At the simplest level, the belief that an older author has the right to alter the work of his younger self requires believing that personal identity is stable and continuous over time. Joseph Beach is slightly critical of Auden's tendency to change work that he had conceived in one "frame of mind" after being "possessed" by another. His language suggests that there may be something illogical or unpredictable about the succession of mental states, but he also assumes that the older and younger Auden are unproblematically the *same* writer. In fact, this assumption is not quite as innocent as it seems. It is premised on the belief that personal and therefore authorial identity is stable over time, but this premise is itself by no means universally held—nor easily proved. According to Locke, personal identity over time is not guaranteed, and is founded only on repeated acts of consciousness. He argues, in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, that:

> This may show us wherein personal identity consists; not in the identity of substance, but, as I have said, in the identity of consciousness, wherein if Socrates and the present Mayor of Queensborough agree, they are the same person; if the same Socrates, waking and sleeping, do not partake of the same consciousness, Socrates waking and sleeping is not the same person.[87]

Locke's psychological theory has been developed and extended by more recent philosophers, including A. J. Ayers, John Perry, David Lewis, and Derek Parfit.[88] There is not space here to mount any treatment, or critique, of their positions, but it should be noted that psychological, rather than somatic, theories of personal identity present a problem for "final intention." If an older person can only be considered to be identical

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[87] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), Book II. 29. 19, 342.

[88] Marya Schechtman summarizes the post-Lockean history of psychological continuity theory. Marya Schectman, "Personal Identity and the Past," *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 12.1 (2005): 9-22.

with a younger person if the two "partake of the same consciousness," then a change of mind is sufficient to dissever the link between the two. Tanselle argues that it is "unlikely" that older and younger writers will have "the same conception of [the] work in mind." A stronger argument would claim that—to the extent that early Auden and late Auden disagreed—they were not both "Auden." Consequently, any changes made by the older writer to the younger writer's work would be not revisions, but acts of editing. In fact, according to this influential (and by no means discredited) theory of personal identity, revision is curiously, and by definition, impossible.

1.13 Genetic Criticism

Where Anglo-American editors pursue textual stability, French genetic critics have celebrated the fluidity and mutability of textual versions. The Greg-Tanselle line of textual criticism is interested primarily in published books. By focusing on the ways in which different publication formats produce meaning, Jerome McGann and George Bornstein have continued this tradition. By contrast, genetic critics are interested in the messy manuscript and typescript materials that predate initial publication: instead of the text or the book, they privilege the draft. In the last ten years, the work of theorists such as Michael Groden, Daniel Ferrer, and Louis Hay has become more influential in English studies: the two key moments of reception were the 1996 "Drafts" issue of *Yale French Studies*, and the 2004 publication of *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-textes*. John Bryant's work on textual fluidity may not explicitly inscribe itself within this tradition, but it makes many of the same points: texts are intrinsically unstable, fluid, and evolving; and they do not exist only as "single, materially frozen print-texts," but in a fuller

panoply of material forms, as "working draft manuscripts," "revised and expurgated editions," translations, and adaptations.[89]

As the part of the writing process that creates textual variation, revision is clearly central to genetic criticism. Describing the avant-texte involves detailing a writer's slow progress over time, and many of the finest genetic studies analyze individual acts of revision with astonishing precision. This project is indebted throughout to genetic criticism, and its willingness to slip easily between early and late textual versions. In the fourth chapter, I cross between the 1921 draft of *The Waste Land*, the 1922 published text, and some (excised) portions of the manuscript that reappeared in various other texts over the next decade; in the fifth chapter, I use both Auden's notebooks and his edition history to build up the pattern of his revision.

At the same time, genetic criticism has not actually produced a rigorous working definition of revision. When the term is used, it is in an essentially common-sense fashion, to mean "a change from one textual state to another." More often, however, some form of periphrasis is found. In Ferrer and Groden's essay "Post-Genetic Joyce," we hear about "the different parts of 'Cyclops' developing in the order in which Joyce refined them," about "a progression towards the international language of *Finnegans Wake*," and about "*Ulysses* coming in o being."[90] These sometimes clumsy formulations point to the ways in which genetic criticism is underpinned by an inherited bias against intentionalism. John Bryant is honest about his own anxiety, and chary in his use of

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[89] John Bryant, *The Fluid Text: A Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 13.

[90] Daniel Ferrer and Michael Groden, "Post-Genetic Joyce," *The Romanic Review* 86.3 (1995): 501-12.

"some." "I have also found that one cannot talk about fluid texts without some consideration of intentionality. This, of course, is heresy."[91]

1.14 Historical Usage

Within the Anglo-American textual tradition, "revision" has become an extremely delimited term. It may be worth reminding ourselves that—in both their everyday and historical uses—the words "revise" and "revision" have more general purchase. As literary critics, we tend to think that the word's basic meaning—its denotation—is textual, and that other uses, such as "revising an idea" "a revised self" or "revisionist history," are metaphoric extensions. In fact, this is not etymologically true. In normal language, revision refers neither to changes that are specifically authorial, nor to changes made to texts.

The English verb "revise" was borrowed from the French "reviser" some time in the late sixteenth century, and the noun "revision" came into use in the early seventeenth century.[92] In 1611, John Cotgrave defined the word very broadly in his *English Treasury of Wit and Language*: "*Revision*, a reuision, reuise, reuiew, reexamination, looking ouer againe."[93] In Latin, *revisere* means simply to "look at again," and then "to go and see again" and to "revisit."[94] In Cicero's letters, the imperative *revise* is a frequent injunction—"come and see us again, sometime"; in Virgil and Lucretius, the appeal is

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[91] John Bryant, *The Fluid Text*, 8.

[92] I am taking most of my historical data from the *Oxford English Dictionary* entry for revision. "revise, v." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 7 May 2008 <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezp2.harvard.edu/cgi/entry/50205484>.

[93] "revise, n." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 7 May 2008 <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezp2.harvard.edu/cgi/entry/50205483>.

[94] *reviso, revisere*, *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, repr. 2006), 1647.

often a more impersonal entreaty to good fortune. It is only in late Latin that the word begins to be used with specific reference to textual processes of correction and emendation.

In English, the first use of revision in a textual sense—to mean the correction or rewriting of something already written—occurs in reference to translation, and in the early seventeenth century. In the preface to the 1611 *King James' Bible*, the translators explain that they wanted to mediate the word of God to the reader as directly as possible, but that their desired direction was achieved only through careful scholarship and rewriting. This process of "bringing backe to the anvil that which we had hammered" is a profoundly collaborative activity, involving the work of multiple English translators on texts that had already been mediated and handed down in different languages, and by many intermediaries.

> Neither did wee thinke much to consult the Translators or Commentators, *Chaldee*, *Hebrewe*, *Syrian*, *Greeke*, or *Latine*, no nor the *Spanish*, *French*, *Italian*, or *Dutch*; neither did we disdaine to revise that which we had done, and to bring backe to the anvill that which we had hammered: but having and using as great helpes as were needfull, and fearing no reproch for slownesse, nor coveting praise for expedition, wee have at the length, through the good hand of the Lord upon us, brought the worke to that passe that you see.[95]

Over the course of the next two centuries, revision came to develop its current broad range of textual meanings—to "rethink," "rewrite," "correct," "emend," "to condense by revision." At no point in its pre-nineteenth century history did the word seem to refer specifically to authorial changes. Samuel Johnson was using the word in a modern sense when he told Boswell, "I am engaging in a very great work, the revision of my

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[95] From its very first appearance, revision is marked as a supplementary activity (a "great helpe") and as a potential source of disdain. "The Translators to the Reader," *The Holy Bible: An Exact Reprint Page for Page of the Authorized Version, Published in the Year MDCXI* (Oxford: Samuel Collingwood, 1833).

Dictionary," but revision was just as frequently used to refer to the process we would call editing. Until the early twentieth century, texts issued posthumously, or in subsequent editions, frequently advertised themselves as "revised by" rather than "edited." Samuel Singer advertised his 1856 edition of Shakespeare's plays as "The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare/ The Text Completely Revised, With Notes, and Variant Readings."[96] At the same time, Johnson's witticism about his own revision of Shakespeare suggests that there was some faint, felt awkwardness in this use of the word: "I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor."[97]

1.2 Theorizing Revision: Text-based Models

Revision creates complicated textual histories. But the true history of any single act of revision is almost always more complex than the traces it leaves. Nicholas Jenkins has traced Auden's retraction of the line "We must love one another or die" in meticulous detail, by considering not only the published versions of "September 1, 1939" but also the unpublished variant "We must love one another and die." The poem was first published in *The New Republic* in 1939, and subsequently in the 1940 collection *Another Time*: in both of these versions it contained the offending line. When Auden looked back over his work for the 1945 *Collected Poems*, he retained the poem but omitted the stanza

[96] Singer is at pains to point out this his revision is also an act of scholarship, premised on "sedulous collation of the old authentic copies." S. W. Singer, preface, *The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1856).

[97] Boswell tells this story in a footnote after describing Johnson's fearful response to the ghost in Hamlet. James Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson* (London: H. Baldwin, 1799), 81.

containing this line; a few years later, he decided to delete the poem entirely from his canon. The poem's actual publication history is binary—it either includes the line or doesn't, exists or doesn't exist. At the same time, Auden made various further claims about what the poem *should have* read; at one point, he said that the correct line was not "or die," but "and die."

The first way to analyze revision is by looking *only* at edition histories and, where the evidence is available, at manuscripts. This is what I term a "text-based" approach. Setting aside the question of a writer's intentions, the illocutionary context of the work, and the audience reception, we can think about revision in the way that a palaeontologist thinks about fossils. How many variants are there between different versions of the same text? In what order were the versions composed? Is there any *principle* or *method* that underlies the transformation of the first version (t1) into the final version (tn)? The fourth chapter of this project looks at *The Waste Land* and *The Sun Also Rises* from a text-based perspective. Pound's poems—and the poems of writers whom he edited—have a tendency to get shorter in each successive version, and to exclude particular kinds of narrative and discursive material in favour of tight focus on the "luminous image." By contrast, some critics have argued that Henry James becomes more prolix, abstruse, and meditative with each revision of his novels.

For many writers in the early twentieth century, text-based analysis can be accompanied by other forms of discussion: we can look at *both* the variants between editions of Auden's work, *and* at the various claims that Auden made about why revision or retraction was necessary. In earlier periods, however, text-based analysis is often the only possibility. For twentieth-century writers we usually have precise information about

publication dates and can arrange published variants easily into chronological order. This is not always the case with manuscripts, or with pre-twentieth-century printed books. In his recent study *Revisiting The Waste Land,* Lawrence Rainey tried to work out when the different parts of the "large and disorderly body of manuscript materials which have become known as the prepublication manuscripts" were composed.[98] The earliest readers of the facsimile thought that "The Fire Sermon" was the first section of the poem to be completed, but Rainey's meticulous detective work shows that it was almost certainly written late in 1921, after the first two parts were finished. *Almost* certainly: Rainey admits that his method provides only "reasonable grounds for inferring the dates of the working materials that make up *The Waste Land* manuscripts."[99] On the other hand, he criticizes the work of earlier critics such as Hugh Kenner and Grover Smith for being based only on "assumptions and inferences": the word "inference" occurs six times in his analysis of where Smith went wrong.

If we lack information about the provenance of, or causal relationship between, textual variants, how can we classify one as "a revision of" the other? This question has proved recurrently difficult for Shakespearean scholars. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was suggested that the Folio and Quarto texts of *King Lear*, which had previously been understood as independently corrupt versions of Shakespeare's words, were in fact related *causally*. According to scholars such as Michael Warren, Steven Urkowitz, and Gary Taylor, the Folio text represents Shakespeare's deliberate and careful

[98] Lawrence Rainey, *Revisiting The Waste Land* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), xi.

[99] Lawrence Rainey, *Revisiting The Waste Land*, x.

reworking of his original Quarto version.[100] This "revisionist" argument was extremely influential, and has produced important editorial consequences. If both Folio and Quarto texts are corrupted versions of Shakespeare's original, then the editor will want to work retrospectively, reconstructing the authentic *King Lear* by collating the two texts and removing interpolations. If Shakespeare in fact wrote them both, then we already have *two* authentic *King Lear*s and have no need to edit either of them: this is the position that Leah Marcus takes in *Unediting the Renaissance*.[101] Both of these editorial strategies are perfectly logical. The choice between them must come down to evidence. For Gary Taylor the "obvious conclusion" is "that Shakespeare occasionally—perhaps if we could only see it, habitually—revised his work."[102] In that concessive clause, "perhaps if we could only see it," lies the rub.

1.21 Excision, Extension, Substitution

At the most basic level, all operations made to a written text—whether we call them emendations, interpolations, edits, or revisions—can be of two kinds: addition, and subtraction. Nineteenth-century philologists spent a good deal of time trying to work out

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[100] Michael Warren's 1978 article, "Quarto and Folio *King Lear* and the Interpretation of Albany and Edgar," in *Shakespeare: Pattern of Excelling Nature* ed. David Bevington and Jay L. Halio (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1978) has served as one of the "cornerstones of the two-text theory" since its publication, according to Sidney Thomas, himself a strong critic of the position. For the history of this debate, see Sidney Thomas, "The Integrity of *King Lear*," *The Modern Language Review* 90.3 (1995): 572-84.

[101] Leah Marcus argues for a "temporary abandonment of modern editions in favor of Renaissance editions that have not gathered centuries of editorial accretion around them": only by so doing, will we be able to see that editing is not a transparent practice that grants unmediated access to original texts. Her focus on editing as a form of "cultural practice" has a good deal in common with my interest in historicizing styles and theories of revision. Leah Marcus, *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton* (London: Routledge, 1996), 1-5.

[102] Gary Taylor, "General Introduction," *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 17.

whether scribes were more likely to corrupt texts by adding or removing material, and decided that the addition of new material was a more frequent operation than the subtraction of existing material. This discovery is formalized as the "venerable maxim," *lectio brevior lectio potior*. If emendation and interpolation are viewed as inverse procedures—the modern scholarly editor tries to unpick the corruptions imported by medieval scribes—then it is logical that emendations should be more often subtractive than additive.

When writers edit their own work, they usually make some use of both modes, but will often favor one. Mimi Schwarz has argued that student writers need to become aware of their tendency to "overwrite" or "underwrite," so that the habit can be corrected in revision. Overwriters are "like effusive speakers" who "start by writing out as many words as possible until the 'right' ones appear," while underwriters are "like taciturn speakers" who begin with only a scaffold of words which must then be filled in."[103] Both can "produce successful expression, so long as they know the advantages and potential pitfalls of their tendencies. Overwriters must "prune" and "condense" to add focus; underwriters will have to expand and elaborate to make their meaning clear. In the fourth chapter of this project, I consider Pound and Hemingway as examples of successful "overwriters." In fact, the mission-statement of Imagism turns overwriting into a prescribed method. In principle, there seems to be no reason why an Imagist poem could not be produced agglutinatively, by writing down one central image and then adding to it, but in practice Pound insisted that the best way to proceed was through overwriting and excision. According to F. S. Flint, master Imagists would be able to make this process

[103] Mimi Schwarz, "Revision Profiles: Patterns and Implications," *College English* 45.6 (1983): 549-558, 551, 552, 553.

into a kind of performance, and would "persuade an approaching poetaster to attend their instruction" by re-writing "his verses before his eyes, using about ten words to his fifty."[104]

Combining these two basic modes produces a third major revisionary style—substitution. Rather than deleting or adding large amounts of text, some writers revise by deleting one word or phrase, and then replacing it with another. This kind of revision is "length neutral," in that the final text and first version are of roughly the same size and shape; very often, the substitutions are semantic rather than syntactic, affecting one part of a sentence rather than the grammar of the whole. A facing-page edition is often an effective way to present two versions of a text revised through substitution. Ernest de Selincourt's 1928 edition of Wordsworth's *Prelude* (subtitled "Growth of a Poet's Mind") would be one example. The 1805-6 text is printed on the verso pages, faced by the 1850 text (the only text of the *Prelude* known before this edition) on the recto. One page of text is sometimes a couple of lines longer than the other but, by and large, the two versions keep pace with each other; the differences are to be found *within* individual sentences and verse paragraphs. As an example, compare these two descriptions of a cottage on lake Windermere, from the second book of the poem:

Upon the Eastern Shore of Windermere,	Midway on long Winander's eastern shore
Above the crescent of a pleasant Bay,	Within the crescent of the pleasant bay,
There stood an Inn, no homely-featured Shed,	A tavern stood: no homely-featured house
Brother of the surrounding Cottages,	Primeval like its neighbouring cottages,
But 'twas a splendid place... (1805)	But 'twas a splendid place... (1850)[105]

[104] F. S. Flint, "Imagisme," *Poetry* (March 1913): 198–200.

In both versions, Wordsworth is describing a "splendid" tavern on the eastern shore of lake Windermere, and in both he makes it clear that this building has no kinship with its humble surroundings. The differences between versions are local: the preposition "above" becomes "within," a "Shed" a "house," "surrounding," "neighbouring," and a possessive "of" a possessive noun. These types of changes are typical of the difference between the 1805 and 1850 texts of the poem, taking place at the level of the word or phrase, rather than the sentence, stanza, or even the line. (For aural reasons, Wordsworth quite often keeps the final word of the line; here the half-rhyme between "bay" and "place" is maintained in revision.)

Most writers work similarly, making use of both extension and excision as they revise, but also restricting revision's ambit. An academic revising a paper for publication takes out one quotation and adds another; shortens the introduction to beef up the conclusion; or decides to sacrifice one example to devote more time to another. One of the arguments of this project is that the high modernists did *not* make much use of substitution when they revised, preferring either acts of extreme textual excision or gross extension.

I do not give as much attention to the alternative strategy of revision by extension, which corrects a real or perceived belief that the earliest version was "underwritten," but its presence is almost as pervasive in modernist writing—if less dramatic.[106] Woolf's reworking of autobiographical material in different forms is an iterative process that

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[105] Ernest de Selincourt, *The Prelude of Growth of a Poet's Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928).

[106] Andrew Kappel compares Moore to Proust and Joyce, "Anyone who has glanced at corrected proofs of *À la recherche du temps perdu* or *Ulysses* knows to what extent modern writers could be given to expansion and elaboration when revising." However, his suggestion that this difference is attributable to the difference between "the modernism of the novelists and the modernism of the poets" seems to me misguided. Andrew J. Kappel, "Complete with Omissions," 126.

seems to have no end, where the perceived incompletion or failure of each attempt engenders the next. Pound perceived from this beginning that his *Cantos* would be "really LONG, endless, leviathanic"; his unbounded choice of form allows for the possibility that another canto can always be added, reframing the already achieved work into new patterns.[107] When Proust began writing *À la recherche* in 1909, he was imagining that the whole work could be compassed in three volumes, but it eventually stretched itself out into seven. The individual volumes themselves were also prone to lengthening, with Proust inserting long passages into his text right up until publication. This is a process that has troubled critics from the beginning; as early as 1934, Albert Feuillerat claimed that Proust had "overfed" his novel, overwriting a clear and classical original structure with baroque digressions. "What would have been the third volume of the novel then swelled up, swelled up monstrously, creating in the original harmonious ensemble two enormous excrescences—the story of the vice of Charlus, and the story of Albertine."[108]

As Mimi Schwarz observes, both modes of revision aim at the same end, and neither is intrinsically superior to another. Within literary criticism, however, there has been a general preference for excision over extension. Writers who reduce the length of their work are praised for "pruning," "removing extraneous material," "sharpening," and "tightening," while those who extend it run the risk of diverging from their purpose, overfeeding their work, and overlaying it with "later excrescences of a manner less pure." In a thoughtful article on Proust and genetic criticism, Christine Cano has suggested that this preference is premised on literary criticism's inherited (but often unarticulated)

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[107] Ezra Pound, letter to John Quinn, 24 Jan. 1917, *The Letters of Ezra Pound*, 157.

[108] Cited by Christine M. Cano, *Proust's Deadline: The Temporality of Writing and Publishing* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 62.

aesthetic preferences: "The nineteenth century literary organicism that subtly informs genetic criticism posits organic form as a normative model, a model from which the excrescence-riddled text manifestly deviates."[109] In Feuillerat's metaphors of "tumours" and "growths," she also discerns the operation of "various medicalizing discourses on race and homosexuality that arose in the latter half of the nineteenth century." Other available metaphors for revision draw on the language of vegetative growth ("seed," "flower," "prune"), cooking ("blend," "brew," "concoct"), architecture ("remodel," "rebuild"), psychology ("repress," "work through," "perseverate"), and industrial process ("reorganize," "increase efficiency," "scrap"). Critics who work on revision need to be alert to the ways in which many of these terms "smuggle in an interpretive bias, frequently leading the reader to consider all changes for the better, as if the artist and work inevitably march towards perfection."[110]

1.3 Speaker-based Models

By considering textual variants as fossilized objects, literary critics can make sharp analytic and aesthetic judgments about the difference between, and merits of, earlier and later versions. But text-based approaches alone can also be inadequate. They tell us nothing about the psychological, social, or political motivations for revision and, by placing so much emphasis on the words on the page, they ignore the fact that writing

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[109] Christine M. Cano, "Genetic Aberrations: The Two Faces of Proust," *Textual Practice* 17.1 (2003): 41-60, 43.

[110] In his study of Mark Twain, Victor Doyno argues that genetic critics should be "open-minded" and "sharp-minded" in their use of metaphoric language to make aesthetic judgment about temporal sequences. Victor Doyno, *Writing Huck Finn: Mark Twain's Creative Process* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 13.

is also an act of communication between a particular author (or authors) and historical readers.

J. L. Austin's theory of performative language, and Robert Darnton's "communications circuit" provides two useful models for thinking about writing as an *action*. Within literary studies, they are the two most widely used, and respected, models for analyzing how literary texts create *effects* in the world around them. Can they also explain how revision works as an intentional linguistic action with particular consequences? In the last section of this chapter, I explore some of the ways in which these two models might explain post-publication revision, or any form of revision which is overt and visible, taking place after the first version has already reached a reader or readers. (When dealing with texts like Leslie Stephen's *Mausoleum Book*, which were never intended to be printed or disseminated beyond a limited audience, "publication" needs to be understood in its oldest, broadest sense, as an act of making a text available to someone other than the author.)

In *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin argued that many sentences do not simply state facts about the world, "they do not describe or constate or report anything at all, are not 'true' or 'false'."[111] Instead, "the uttering of the sentence is, or is part of, the doing of an action." With sentences of this kind—Austin calls them "performatives"—the meaning of the sentence, or its locutionary force, is to be sharply distinguished from a) the speaker's *illocutionary* intention in uttering it and b) the *perlocutionary* effect that it has on its recipient. Examples of illocutionary acts might include informing, warning, ordering, and questioning, while perlocutionary acts might include convincing, persuading, shocking, or repelling.

[111] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (1962; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 5.

How might this model work when applied to literature? Austin himself was uneasy about whether his model could accommodate fictional language, and some subsequent critics have suggested that novels are a discourse without illocutionary force.[112] Winifred Horner pursues this idea when he argues that "speech-act theory" needs to be refined into "text-act" theory to "account for written texts: the pastness of writers and their presence within the text, as well as for the pastness of readers and their presence in the act of reading."[113] By this account, "the text act is any individual reading of a text by a single reader." If two students read the same poem for a class, they are performing separate text acts, and if one student rereads the poem twenty years later, he or she will be performing another text act.

Other critics have been less interested in modifying Austin's theory than in applying it. The tension in language between constative and performative utterances has been influential since the 1970s in several veins of criticism, including deconstruction, queer theory and book history. For Paul de Man, as Jonathan Culler argues, "the moments that show us language at its most characteristic are utterances that exhibit a paradoxical or self-undermining relationship between performative and constative, between what they do and what they state."[114] In Judith Butler's work the notion of the performative is used to argue that gender is not what one is, but what one does.[115] Within

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[112] See Richard Ohmann, "Speech, Literature, and the Space between," *New Literary History* 4.1 (1972): 47-63.

[113] Winifred B. Horner, "Speech-Act and Text-Act Theory: 'Theme-ing' in Freshman Composition," *College Composition and Communication* 30.2 (1979): 165-169, 166.

[114] Jonathan Culler, "Philosophy and Literature: The Fortunes of the Performative," *Poetics Today* 21.3 (2000): 503-519, 510.

[115] Judith Butler's most influential work has been *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

book history, the term "bibliographic code" has come to mean the different ways in which texts perform, or are performed, when published in specific material or visual instantiations.

Robert Darnton's "communications circuit" is also an attempt to understand how texts are published, performed, heard, read, and assimilated. He developed the basic model in 1982, as an attempt to describe "how books come into being and spread through society."[116] Subsequent critics have attempted to refine the basic model in various ways, although without fundamentally altering it.[117] Like speech-act theory, the model begins with the author.

> It could be described as a communications circuit that runs from the author to the publisher (if the bookseller does not assume that role), the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader. The reader completes the circuit because he influences the author both before and after the act of composition. Authors are readers themselves... A writer may respond in writing to criticisms of his previous work or anticipate reactions that his text will elicit.[118]

In a schematic diagram, the author and publisher are depicted at the top, connected by arrows that flow in both directions. The other arrows in the circuit flow clockwise around a circle, first to printers, then shippers, then booksellers and finally readers. In the original model, all of the connections in the circuit are depicted as strong block lines except for the final link—connecting the reader back to the author—which is a broken

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[116] Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" *Daedalus* 111.3 (1982). Reprinted in *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (London: Norton, 1990), 107-35.

[117] Robert Darnton claims that "Every once in a while since then I receive a copy of another model that someone has proposed to substitute for mine. The pile of diagrams has reached an impressive height—and a good thing, too, because it is helpful for researchers to produce schematic pictures of their subject." The best-known modification, and the one that Darnton himself discusses, is by Thomas R. Adams and Nicholas Barker, published as "A New Model for the Study of the Book" *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society*, ed. Nicholas Barker (London: British Library, 1993). See Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?' Revisited," *Modern Intellectual History* 4.3 (2007): 495–508, 502.

[118] Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" 111.

line. The implication is that readers possess more minimal agency than the other members of the circuit, in particular, that they have only a limited effect over the behavior of authors.

Both Austin's and Darnton's models are temporal and directional, assuming that speech acts (or text acts) begin with the producer of the utterance, and end with its recipient. For Austin, the illocutionary act is prior to the perlocutionary act; for Darnton, authors are prior to readers. Both models also allow for the theoretical possibility that the action or circuit is not completed. A writer might write and successfully publish a book, but if it is censored and impounded (as *Ulysses* was) it may never, or not immediately, reach booksellers and readers. Likewise, a speaker can successfully produce an utterance, but the listener may not be able to hear or understand it. Austin classifies certain problems of this kind—which lead to an utterance not producing its intended perlocutionary effect—as "infelicitous."

1.31 Limitations

One of the reasons why revision has proved such a recalcitrant object of analysis is that it does not obey the directional logic of either of these two, widely accepted, models of communication. In fact, it points to their limitations. We might say that post-publication revision short-circuits the communications circuit, by reintroducing authorial agency after a book has already been finished and "let go." James reread his earlier novels with a pen in his hand. When he had finished rereading he sent them off for publication, thereby turning readerly annotations into writerly commands. To depict this process on Darnton's communications circuit would be very difficult. How would we

show the author rereading his own work? James asked his publisher to put his earlier novels "into condition for revision for me," and later thanked them for producing "the book in a form it is a joy to me to work upon."[119] Auden edited his collection *On This Island* by using a copy that belonged to a college library. In other cases, authors revise their published work from original manuscripts, ignoring the communications circuit that has already been set in motion.

To account for the possibility of revision, we need to make two modifications to the communications circuit. Rather than envisaging a single journey that moves steadily from one fixed agent to another, we have to allow for the possibility that the circuit can be traversed multiple times. Each separate published version would then represent a new movement around the circuit. A reader who reads *The American* in its original 1877 text, even though he or she might be living a hundred years after the publication date, would still be on the first (1877) communications circuit, but a reader who bought and read the *New York Edition* version in 1907 would be on a secondary circuit. This secondary circuit might be depicted either as a second lap around the initial circle, or as a mirroring circuit drawn three-dimensionally, above or below the initial circuit.

At the same time, we also need to account for the possibility that an author can abruptly restart, foreclose, or generally intervene in the circuit. In the 1950s Auden decided that some of his best known poems from the 1930s were "trash" and tried to prevent their republication. He was attempting to close down a communications circuit that he had initiated twenty years earlier. New copies of these poems could not be published, but the old ones stayed in print and were still subject to modest distribution. The fact that I was able to buy a copy of *Another Time* (the volume containing

[119] See Philip Horne, *Henry James and Revision*, 6.

"September 1, 1939") last year illustrates that the final part of the original circuit is still operating, even though the first two links in the chain have long been broken.

On Austin's terms, both "September 1, 1939," and the 1877 version of *The American* are "felicitous." They are grammatically correct and semantically meaningful utterances (or strings of utterances); and they are performed according to "an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect." Auden's poem presents itself *as* a poem, according to conventional twentieth-century ideas of what a poem is, and *The American* presents itself *as* a novel. Their first readers did not find anything wanting. In fact, one anonymous reviewer of *The American* praised the novel precisely for its success *as* a novel: "James has made a very near approach to a thoroughly successful novel, the nearest approach by any American for a very long time."[120] And yet, by making the decision to revise, Auden and James were implying that their apparently felicitous earlier textual acts were in fact *infelicitous*.

1.4 Revision and Failed Communication

One of the repeated claims of this project is that textual revision creates power struggles between readers and writers. In the next chapter, we see this instantiated quite literally in the relationship between the author Dencombe and his reader Doctor Hugh. Dencombe wants an endless amount of time to continue revising his work, but Doctor Hugh wants him to hurry up and finish, for it is only when the text *is* finished that he can get to work on his "great review." Understanding how revision disrupts normal models of successful or "felicitous" communication explicates this point. Correcting a sentence that

[120] Anonymous reviewer, "Our Boston Literary Letter," *Republican*, 31 May 1877, 3, *Henry James: A Reference Guide*, ed. Linda J. Taylor (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982), 15.

is missing a word, or which contains a peculiarly ambiguous piece of punctuation, bolsters successful communication by aiding readerly comprehension. By contrast, revision can only ever complicate and confuse the relationship between a writer and his or her readers: it entails the retrospective classification of an utterance as infelicitous when it was *in fact* perfectly felicitous.

By revising a text after it has been published, an author reappropriates and repossesses it. Consequently, revision always privileges authorial over readerly determination of meaning. I want to end this preliminary chapter by suggesting that the authorial bias inherent in revision is one reason why early twentieth-century writers revised so frequently, so passionately, and at so many stages in the lifespan of the text. From the beginning, modernism was associated with shock tactics, formal and aesthetic defamiliarization, and peculiar kinds of difficulty: this is as true of visual art and music as it is of literature. It aimed to "shock people out of their conventional ways of seeing things, to make them aware of and not just subject to the changes modernity makes."[121] For Daniel Bell, modernism was forged under the sign of "original difficulty," as a "willfully opaque" attempt "deliberately to disturb the audience—to shock it, shake it up, even to transform it as if in a religious conversion."[122]

The manifestoes produced by the early modernists emphasize in both their form and language a desire to break down easy, inherited, or conventional relationships between artistic producers and consumers. The Futurists claimed: "We want to exalt movements of aggression, feverish sleeplessness, the double march, the perilous leap, the

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[121] Jesse Matz, *The Modern Novel: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 72.

[122] Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 46.

slap and the blow with the fist."[123] Wyndham Lewis's *Blast* combined equally violent language with a more articulate politics, consistently praising the individual over the group, and the artist over the ordinary man: "Popular art does not mean the art of poor people, as it is usually supposed to. It means the art of individuals."[124]

If the Decadents wanted to "épater le bourgeois," the modernists tried to "épater le lecteur" and, very often, they succeeded.[125] In 1914, the *New York Times* printed a long article ridiculing *Blast*: in its mixture of nervousness, skepticism, misunderstanding, and defensiveness, the tone of this anonymous piece resembles many of the early reviews of modernist art. "It is important not because it is the latest, but because it is the last phase of the ridiculous rebellion that has given the world the 'Portrait of a Nude Descending the Stairs' and the writings of Gertrude Stein."[126] Virginia Woolf's descriptions of the audience response to the Post-Impressionist exhibition of 1910 are similar. In her 1939 biography of Roger Fry, she reminded us that these now unsurprising paintings once provoked "violent emotions": "the public of 1910 was thrown into paroxysms of rage and laughter... they were infuriated. The pictures were a joke at their expense... One gentleman, according to Desmond MacCarthy laughed so hard at Cézanne's portrait of

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[123] F. T. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," 1909. Reprinted in *Modernism: An Anthology*, eds. Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman, Olga Taxidou (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 250-253, 251.

[124] Wyndham Lewis, "Long Live the Vortex," *Blast* 1 (June, 1914), 7.

[125] The phrase is usually attributed to Baudelaire or Gautier. In a review of the Post-Impressionist exhibition of 1910, the art critic of *The Times* wrote "It is the old story of the days of Théophile Gautier—the aim of the artist should be 'Épater le bourgeois' and by no means please him! Such as aim is most completely realised by the painter Henri Matisse." The passage is quoted by Virginia Woolf, *Roger Fry: A Biography* (London: Hogarth, 1940), 155.

[126] "VORTICISM THE LATEST CULT OF REBEL ARTISTS; It Goes a Step Further Than Cubism and Futurism, and Is Sponsored by Brzeska, Epstein and Others. Its Official Mouthpiece Is a Cerise Magazine Called Blast." *The New York Times*, 9 Aug. 1914.

his wife that 'he had to be taken out and walked up and down in the fresh air for five minutes'."[127]

The problem with an aesthetic based on shock and defamiliarization is that the individual artist has to work harder and harder to produce the same effects. As Woolf's retrospective comment indicates, things that once seemed disgusting, irritating, or boring (this was how the *Daily Express* described *Ulysses* in 1922) quickly become familiar, assimilated, and easily interpretable.[128] In the 1860s, Baudelaire's preface to *Fleurs du Mal*, which "invites readers to identify with the poet and the beggars and prostitutes he describes," seemed "defiant."[129] By 1922, the boundaries of the avant-garde had shifted and T. S. Eliot reused Baudelaire's phrase, "Hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère," in a much more complex and unsettling way. Within the text of *The Waste Land*, this line is an allusion, in a foreign language, and follows a series of questions about a potential murder; Eliot's speaker addresses the reader as "hypocrite lecteur" only after asking him to prevent a buried corpse from being "dug up." Behind the charge there is, I think, a faint pun on *corpus*, on a body of work with which the reader is asked not to interfere. By 1939, when Joyce published his *Work in Progress* as *Finnegans Wake*, this suspicious address to the reader had become again more complex, and more unpleasant. "My shemblable! My freer!"[130] Shaun says to Shem, suggesting that the reader is not so

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[127] Virginia Woolf, *Roger Fry: A Biography*, 153-4.

[128] See S. B. P. Mais, "An Irish Rebel and Some Flappers," *Daily Express*, 25 Mar. 1922. Reprinted in Robert H. Deming ed. *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1997), Volume 1, 191.

[129] See Pericles Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 46.

[130] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (1939; New York: Viking, 1951), 489.

much *like* the author as a sham-version of him, a would be explicator and "freer" of textual meaning who is in fact "a buffoon, a coward, a forger."[131]

By retrospectively revising, modernist authors were able to continue making difficult works that had in fact been read, interpreted, and understood. In this sense, revision can be thought of as a kind of "aftershock," perpetuating the shock tactics of early modernism after those tactics had themselves been exhausted. Like the early manifestoes of Vorticism and futurism, it allows the writer both to alienate and critique the implied audience for a work, and to advertise the work's novelty, ingenuity, and peculiarity. When Marianne Moore revised her poem "Poetry" for the *Complete Poems* in 1967, she was performing a rather complex form of self-advertisement. By brutally reducing her most self-reflexive poem, she was making "explicit in a consistent way the fact that omissions had been made," and thereby drew attention to the complexity and intractability of her work as a whole.[132] Auden's continual harping on the badness of his work from the thirties can be understood in the same way; with the logic of *praeteritio*, he draws attention to the existence and importance of these poems, even as he repudiates their value. By making ethical and moral arguments against his own work, he is also implicitly criticizing the gullibility of his readers.

To talk about revision is to talk about authorial intention: not authorial intention in a single, stable past tense, but intention as reverberation, intention that makes claims on the present. The chapters of this dissertation will illustrate a variety of different ways in which modernist authors reread their own work, using revision to supplement, replace,

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[131] Patrick A. McCarthy compares Shem to "the artist figure," "A Warping Process," *Work in Progress: Joyce Centenary Essays*, eds. Richard F. Peterson, Alan M. Cohn, Edmund L. Epstein (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 47-57, 55.

[132] Andrew J. Kappel, "Complete with Omissions," 144.

and sometimes antagonize other readers. The intentionalism or will to authority of much modernist writing is curiously at odds with the anti-intentionalism of its reception, and illustrates some fundamental differences between these coeval—and often blurred—hermeneutics. If Pound's phrase "Make it new" shows that even *avant-gardes* have antecedents, the modernist practice of revision reminds us that Romanticism, and Romantic conceptions of authorship, had a surprisingly long afterlife.

Chapter Two

Henry James and the End of the Middle Years

2.1 Introduction

In 1893, Henry James wrote a tale for Scribner's magazine which he titled "The Middle Years," about an inveterate reviser who dies with his latest novel, itself titled "The Middle Years," unfinished and uncorrected. Today the story is best known for Dencombe's passionate last words, "vulnerable and yet somehow triumphant," and often read as James's own defence of art in the face of death.[133] "We work in the dark—we do what we can—we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art."[134] (227) It was republished in a revised form in 1895 in the collection *Terminations*, together with several other tales that take as their subject a writer on the brink of death.[135] In 1909, the story was published again in the sixteenth volume of the *New York Edition*, with some further revisions which depart from both the 1893 and 1895 texts.

When James himself died in 1916, he also left behind him an unfinished and unrevised book titled *The Middle Years*. This uncanny coincidence has been little

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[133] Julie Rivkin, "Revision and 'The Middle Years'," *Tales of Henry James*, eds. Christof Wegelin and Henry B. Wonham (New York and London: Norton, 2003), 470-9, 471. A longer and earlier version of this article appeared in Rivkin's 1996 book *False Positions*. Julie Rivkin, *False Positions: The Representational Logics of Henry James's Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). See especially 40-55.

[134] References to the 1895 *Terminations* text of "The Middle Years" will be given as page numbers in Wegelin and Wonham's widely available edition. Henry James, "The Middle Years," *Tales of Henry James*, 211-228, 227. Some page numbers will be given in parenthesis, in sections where I refer multiple times to this short tale.

[135] These stories, which include "The Death of the Lion," "The Coxon Fund" and "The Next Time," have been read as a thematic "group" for more than fifty years. In 1944, for example, F. O. Matthiessen collected eleven together to make up a volume entitled *Stories of Writers and Artists* (New York: New Directions, 1944).

remarked. In 1917 it was published posthumously by his literary executor, Percy Lubbock, who explained:

> The following pages represent all that Henry James lived to write of a volume of autobiographical reminiscences to which he had given the name of one of his own short stories, *The Middle Years*... In dictating *The Middle Years* he used no notes, and beyond an allusion or two in the unfinished volume itself there is no indication of the course which the book would have taken or the precise period it was intended to cover.[136]

The Middle Years was the last work that James began. Why did he choose to give it a title that he had already used? Specifically, why use a title with such ominous overtones? Dencombe is a writer whose addiction to textual revision has led to a series of painful imbalances between art created and life spent. Because his development has been "abnormally slow, almost grotesquely gradual" (214), and because he is forced to revisit each of his texts in turn, he finds that on his deathbed he is still revising his "Middle Years." As Julie Rivkin has argued, "the textual economy of revision is the existential economy that governs his life's work."[137] When Dencombe dies, it is with a powerful belief that his real life's work remains "undone."

When James began *The Middle Years* in 1914 he was past seventy, in increasingly poor health, and suffused with a sense of his own imminent mortality. Worn down by years of angina, and heavily reliant on nitroglycerin tablets to relieve the pain, he had recently suffered "the wounds, the inconvenience, the humiliation" of having most of his teeth extracted.[138] His recent career as a writer had also been frustrating, marred by the relative failure of the 1908-9 *New York Edition*—perhaps the most ambitious project of

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[136] Percy Lubbock, preface, *The Middle Years*, by Henry James (London: W. Collins, 1917). The preface is also printed in the first American edition (New York: Scribner's, 1917), but was not reprinted in most subsequent editions of the text. The volumes I consulted are in the Houghton library at Harvard.

[137] Julie Rivkin, "Revision and 'The Middle Years'," 472.

[138] See Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Master: 1901-1916* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972), 509.

revision ever conceived. As Philip Horne and Michael Anesko have shown, James believed that this Edition would be a resounding critical success and that it would secure his financial situation. Its preparation, however, became oppressively onerous, "a task of the most arduous sort," smothering its author "like an enormous feather-bed" with "voluminosities of Proof" to be read and corrected.[139] Its publication was even more of a disappointment. James was to remain adamant that the new versions of his texts were an improvement over the earlier ones, and recognized a certain "reality and an honour" in the fact of the edition's existence, but he was also deeply disappointed by its commercial failure, finding it a cause of humiliation and despair.[140]

Most depressing of all was the deteriorating political situation in Europe, which led to the British entry into World War One on August 4, 1914. Some of James's letters from the period, described by Edel as "among the most eloquent of his life," sum up the overriding bleakness that he felt in the face of "horrible, unspeakable, iniquitous things," the coming "fields of unthinkable blood."[141] Many of these letters repeat the vocabulary of incapacity and inarticulacy—from the beginning, James suspected that this war would be something that could not be explained or even spoken of in any available lexicon. Worst of all was the sense that the war "was a hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth which had dominated the public consciousness for a century."[142] The day after Britain entered the conflict, James wrote to Howard Sturgis:

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[139] See Philip Horne, *Henry James and Revision*, 2-3.

[140] See Michael Millgate, *Testamentary Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 90.

[141] Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Master*, 512.

[142] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 8.

> The plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness by the wanton feat of those 2 infamous autocrats is a thing that so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be, with whatever abatement, gradually bettering, that to have to take it all now for what the treacherous years were all the while really making for and meaning is too tragic for any words.[143]

Both the arc of history, the "gradual betterment" of nineteenth-century historiography, and the personal arc of James's own life and writing career have been thrown into radical confusion. Three days later, he abandoned his unfinished novel of modern American life, *The Ivory Tower*, and began work on the autobiographical reminiscence he called *The Middle Years*. Theodora Bosanquet recorded the occasion baldly in her short diary entry for August 8: "Wet. H.J. started 'The Middle Years'—another autobiographical volume."[144]

In 1977, James Babin argued that the title "The Middle Years" makes sense both as a literal description of the contents of James's third volume of autobiography—an account of his early years in London in the 1870s—and, metaphorically, as a description of the writer's rightful place, an interstitial state of being in the world but not of it.[145] Read against the bleak ending of the earlier tale and the particular historical circumstances of August 1914, the choice of final title can also be interpreted more darkly. In this context it becomes an ironic piece of self-abasement, and an acknowledgment of the precarious relationship between revision and mortality. On the

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[143] Unpublished letter to Howard Sturgis, 5 Aug. 1914. I quote fr m Percy Lubbock's typed transcript (in the Houghton library), which provides the same text as Paul Fussell. Edel prints a slightly different text in his biography, plumping for "fiat" instead of "feat" and "making for *meaning*" rather than "making and meaning." The source of the difference between the two texts is unclear to me.

[144] Theodora Bosanquet, diary entry for Saturday 8 Aug. 1914. In Bosanquet papers at Houghton library.

[145] James Babin, "Henry James's 'Middle Years' In Fiction and Autobiography", *Southern Review* 13, 1977: 505-17, 517. Babin is one of the few critics to notice that James is recycling an earlier title, but he does not convincingly explain why.

one hand, revisionary activity is the hallmark of literary authority. Like autobiography itself, it becomes a way of laying a privileged claim to the past. And yet, at the same time, it acknowledges the very *pastness* of the past—its radical distance from us, and the impossibility of living it again. Dencombe's much-quoted last words acknowledge the poignancy of this state of affairs: "'A second chance – *that's* the delusion. There never was to be but one.'" One might suggest that, after the failure of the *New York Edition*, James had come to much the same conclusion, acknowledging with his self-referential title that his "last" was a book that would never be finished and never revised.

2.2 "The Middle Years"

The opening of "The Middle Years" compares the act of reading a book to other kinds of visual interpretation, including the ability to "read" a group of strangers. Dencombe is convalescing on a Bournemouth bench when he catches sight of Doctor Hugh for the first time. He holds his latest novel unopened on his lap, finding more enjoyment in the scene around him. Doctor Hugh, by contrast, is neglecting his party—composed of a fat and sickly Countess and her humble companion—because he is absorbed in his own book, "which, as Dencombe could perceive even at a distance, had a cover alluringly red" (211). From the beginning, the two men are presented as pairing halves. Dencombe is bored of his own work, and finds the "lingering, credulous, absorbed" young man "an object of envy to an observer from whose connection with literature all such artlessness had faded" (212). He is also an invalid, in need of the solicitous care that Doctor Hugh is providing to the Countess. It is only when the drama on the sands "begins to fail" that Dencombe recollects "that he had, after all, another

pastime," and turns to his own recently published novel. His reading behavior begins to mirror Doctor Hugh's guileless enthusiasm; in a peculiarly satisfying way, he is absorbed by both his own text and, metonymically, by himself, the material object of his own book. "He read his own prose, he turned his own leaves, and had, as he sat there with the spring sunshine on the page, an emotion peculiar and intense. His career was over, no doubt, but it was over, after all, with *that*." (213)

The two men are actually reading the *same* book—it happens to have the same title as the tale that we are also reading—but the dance of authorial and readerly misrecognition plays out slowly. First there is a fusing of perspectives: Dencombe realizes that Doctor Hugh has recognized another copy of *The Middle Years*, but its material form—dust jacket, crimson cover, the markers between the closed pages—cannot give away the intimacy of the author's relation to it. Dencombe sees that it is "alluringly red," but not yet that it is alluringly *read.*

> After an instant Dencombe understood that he was struck with a resemblance, had recognized the gilt stamp on the crimson cloth, was reading "The Middle Years," and now perceived that somebody else had kept pace with him. (214)

In a tale concerned with timing and pacing, and the ever present threat of *mistiming*, Doctor Hugh initially assumes that the two men have "kept pace" in their reading; in fact, he seems to assume that Dencombe is in direct competition with him as a reviewer. It is only when the covers are opened—and the text is revealed—that the true situation will be apparent. Like any good critic, Doctor Hugh insists on turning to the text to enable discussion of *The Middle Years* and, when he does so, he realizes that the two copies are not identical.

> He had taken up, as it lay on the bench, Dencombe's copy instead of his own, and his neighbour immediately guessed the reason of his start. Doctor Hugh looked grave an instant; then he said: 'I see you've been correcting the text!' Dencombe was a passionate corrector, a fingerer of style; the last thing he ever arrived at was a form final for himself. His ideal would have been to publish secretly, and then, on the published text, treat himself to a terrified revise, sacrificing always a first edition and beginning for posterity and even for the collectors, poor dears, with a second. This morning in 'The Middle Years,' his pencil had pricked a dozen lights. (219)

Dencombe's status as author is given away not by the fact of his having *written* the tale, but, more curiously, by the fact that he has "corrected" it. By a form of double logic, the author's hand is forced by a practice that destabilizes authority, for Dencombe has been engraving new final intentions on a recently finished text. As H. L. Jackson has shown, readerly marginalia cannot always be easily distinguished from "'authorial revisions,' 'owner's signature,' 'typographical corrections,' and so on."[146] In that case, how is Doctor Hugh able to recognize Dencombe's marks as the sign of authorial correction rather than readerly enthusiasm? The strange metaphor of "pricking lights" implies marking up changes for future correction, but it also carries basic intimations of aggression: "to prick" is normally "to pierce," "to poke," "to wound" or "to hurt."[147]

The Victorian stereotype of the bad reader is very often someone who writes too *much* on a text. Thackeray, for example, envisages the unsympathetic reader of *Vanity Fair* sitting in an arm chair at his club, "rather flushed with his joint of mutton and half pint of wine" as he takes out a pencil "scoring under the words 'foolish, twaddling,' etc.

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[146] H. L. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing In Books* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001). See 260-1 for a discussion of the problem of cataloguing and distinguishing different types of marginalia.

[147] This is the first sense of "prick," according to the *OED*. The fourth sense includes some notions relating to writing, including "to write out changes in figures," but this is now listed as "*hist.*" "prick, v." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 10 Sept. 2006 < http://dictionary.oed.com.ezp2.harvard.edu/cgi/entry/50188418>.

and adding to them his own remark of 'quite true'."[148] Other Victorian novelists were to suggest that this habit of thoughtless scribbling on a text was a gendered one. In her essay "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," George Eliot ridicules those female readers whose "delicate hands" "doubly and trebly score" moral sententiae of an actually trivial nature, such as "In order to forgive, we must have been injured."[149]

Dencombe, by contrast, is a "passionate corrector, a fingerer of style." Driven by a proto-modernist desire for concision and "rare compression" he also seems to be making use of a major modernist strategy for producing it—completing and even publishing a full version, before once again beginning a lengthy and aggressive process of revision.[150] In the fourth chapter of this dissertation, I argue that this form of excisive revision is the normative style of a certain brand of modernism. Ezra Pound made use of it when he wrested his own haiku, "In a Station of the Metro," from a thirty-line poem of "second intensity," and also when he performed his "Caesarean operation" on the long 1921 draft of *The Waste Land*.[151] Valerie Eliot's facsimile edition presents us with the long first draft covered with an enormous variety of wavy lines, straight lines, scribbles, and Poundian ejaculations of distaste. At first glance, the text may appear to be as "doubly and trebly scored" as George Eliot's silly novels, but the aims of excisive and additive marginalia are fundamentally different. Reading notes supplement an author's

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[148] William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, ed. Peter Shillingsburg (New York: Norton, 1994), 6.

[149] George Eliot, "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," *George Eliot: Selected Essay, Poems and Other Writings*, eds. A. S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren (London: Penguin 1990), 140-64, 148.

[150] In the preface to "The Altar of the Dead," James claimed that "in art economy is always beauty." Suzanne Raitt reads this as an early version of the modernist commitment to linguistic efficiency. "The Rhetoric of Efficiency in Early Modernism," *Modernism/modernity* 13.1 (2006): 835-851.

[151] On the genesis of the haiku, see Ezra Pound, "Vorticism," *The Fortnightly Review*, September 1, 1914. The quotation is from Pound's dedicatory verse, "SAGE HOMME," appended to a letter to Eliot written in December 1921. Ezra Pound, *Letters 1907-1941*, ed. D. D. Paige (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 233-35, 234. See also chapter 3.

text through forms of exegesis, digression, repetition and appreciation, but writer's marginalia—would *centralia* be the more accurate term?—remove existing text and provide substitutes. The model is not scoring but scoring out.

These "dozen lights" are, at any rate, sufficient to bring the game of misplaced identity to a close. Doctor Hugh first changes colour, then looks "grave an instant," and then exclaims "'I see you've been altering the text!'." Dencombe's reactions provide an almost perfect physical mirror: he is first "amused at the effect of the young man's reproach," then changes colour "for an instant", then catches sight of Doctor Hugh's "mystified eyes" as he falls himself into an equally mystifying faint. In other words, the identity of the author is revealed—his hand is forced—by the literal marks left by the hand on the printed page. In "The Middle Years," revision is both co-terminous with authorship and its remaining trace or visible sign. For Dencombe, it is also a source of deep embarrassment and shame. In this sense, there is a tight parallel between the revision and the characters' reaction to it—the blush. If revision is both cause, effect, and sign of writing, so blushing can be understood as both the cause, effect and sign of embarrassment. For Darwin, writing twenty years before James, "blushing is the most peculiar and most human of all expressions," partly because its origins are psychosomatic; it is not something that can be willed or stimulated by physical means.[152] In fact, "blushing is not only involuntary; but the wish to restrain it, by leading to self-attention, actually increases the tendency." According to this account, blushing is closely

[152] Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (reprinted New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 310

associated with mental confusion, and also with states of "shyness, shame, and modesty; the essential element in all being self-attention."[153]

In that case, why do the two men blush when Dencombe's identity is revealed? In the preface to the fifteenth volume of the *New York Edition*, in which many of the tales of writers and artists are gathered as a group, James observed that they have in common "their motive... from some noted adventure, some felt embarrassment, some extreme predicament, of the artist enamoured of perfection."[154] In his recent reading of "The Figure in the Carpet" through the lens of queer theory, Eric Savoy has gone so far as to suggest that embarrassment is the underlying and shared thematic of this group, the focal point around which "James's discredited, shamefully exposed authors" and his "submissive, impercipient, bewildered readers" form their complaints.[155] In this case, we might suggest that the reason for Dencombe and Doctor Hugh's *mutual* shame is the recognition that each ideally longs to frustrate the other's desire. At the beginning of the tale it might have seemed, as Julie Rivkin has argued, that the two men "supplement one another in needs and talents" as writer and reader, doctor and patient.[156] And yet this benign possibility begins to dissolve after the shameful discovery that Dencombe has been "altering the text." The accreted layer of revision reveals the unhappy truth: the two

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[153] Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, 321

[154] Henry James, preface, *New York Edition* vol. 1, viii.

[155] Eric Savoy, "Embarrassments: Figure in the Carpet," *Henry James Review*, 20.3 (1999): 227-36, 226.

[156] Julie Rivkin, "Revision and 'The Middle Years'," 475.

men's textual desires—as writer and reader, *re*-reader and new reader—are fundamentally at odds.[157]

Doctor Hugh's belief in the already accomplished perfection of Dencombe's *oeuvre* is embarrassed by the possibility that the text that he has been reading is, in fact, incomplete and erroneous. Originally jealous that Dencombe might prove a rival reviewer, he is now frustrated by an irritant common to all critics: criticism is only as good as the text on which it is based. His own ambition of winning literary glory as a critic is dependent on Dencombe's novels being published, but also on the premise that, post-publication, all readers are equal in the eyes of meaning. This is a version of the fantasy entertained by the reviewer in *The Figure in the Carpet*, who longs to explain Hugh Vereker's novels to the world but is brought up short by the author's insistence that no critic has yet been able to discover "the finest fullest intention of the lot," the "little trick" that provides the key to his work as a whole.[158]

Vereker's critique of the narrator's review (published in a journal titled *The Middle*) is an argument against hermeneutic democracy; for him, as for Dencombe and many of James's other writer heroes, the "finest fullest" meaning of a text remains available only to its author. Moreover, post-publication revision is a very useful guarantor of this opinion. As a textual practice, it promises to allow the author to repossess a text once it has begun circulating in the public sphere, and, therefore, to "re-fix" meaning at the point of origins. Michel Foucault has suggested that the desire to own meaning and

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[157] John Carlos Rowe, who otherwise reads the relationship between the two man as homoerotic wish-fulfillment, also concedes that "Dencombe's 'fainting' is in fictive fact the consequence of this confusion of texts and thus of proper ownership and authority." John Carlos Rowe, *The Other Henry James* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 109.

[158] Henry James, "The Figure in the Carpet," *The Complete Tales of Henry James*, ed. Leon Edel, vol. 9 (Philadelphia and New York: Lippincott, 1964), 273-315, 281-2.

arrest dissemination is a general principle of authorship: "the author is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses..."[159] In that case, the revising author might be regarded as an extreme example of "the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning,"—in fact, of authority in general.

Dencombe's own embarrassment stems most simply from the revelation of an identity he had preferred to keep secret. At a deeper level, however, there is an inevitable tension between his preferred writing practices and the desires of any potential reader. James describes his "ideal" as one squarely oriented towards future generations, "sacrificing always a first edition and beginning for posterity and even for the collectors, poor dears, with a second." At this stage, he is in the very middle of the "terrified revise," reworking an edition that will, in the desired course of things, be eventually scrapped. Michael Millgate's description of James's own aims for the *New York Edition* applies equally to Dencombe; each writer seeks "to obliterate or render obsolete all previous editions...and bestow upon that 'form final for himself' an infinitely pre-emptive textual performance."[160]

Dencombe hopes that Doctor Hugh will cure him, and Doctor Hugh tries to win literary glory of his own by writing about Dencombe's work. Critics such as Julie Rivkin and John Carlos Rowe, who have read the tale as an essentially benign tale of homoerotic wish-fulfillment, assume that both men have their desires gratified. Rivkin argues:

> As a supplement, Doctor Hugh completes Dencombe's deficiency, ministering to both his bodily life and his text. Dencombe need no longer doctor himself. Not surprisingly, this exchange is able to provide for

[159] Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" *Book History Reader*, 225-30, 230.

[160] Michael Millgate, *Testamentary Acts*, 83.

> Dencombe's *The Middle Years* what it does for James's "The Middle Years"—closure, an end to the interminable need to revise.[161]

And yet the ending of the tale is not a happy one. When Doctor Hugh returns to Dencombe's bed-side after a visit to London, the ailing novelist hopes that he will still be cured. However, medical attention seems to be the last thing on the doctor's mind: "He had returned because he was anxious and for the pleasure of flourishing the great review of 'The Middle Years.' Here at least was something adequate..." (226). He explains that he has sacrificed the possibility of a large inheritance for the promise of art: "I chose to accept, whatever they might be, the consequences of my infatuation... A fortune be hanged!" It is at this point that Dencombe makes his famous and impassioned speech, "Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task..." to which Doctor Hugh briefly responds.

Julie Rivkin focuses on the way that, in their final dialogue, the two men repeat and remodulate each other's words, blurring source and echo. She claims that Dencombe has found in Doctor Hugh both his double and his worthy successor—a reader so very ideal that the author need no longer fear the threat of being misread. And yet, following Dencombe's impassioned speech this dialogue also has the tonal qualities of a dying fall. "The Middle Years" would have ended far more resoundingly with the two preceding sentences: "Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art." This ending—in a tale centrally engaged with the problem of endings—actually

[161] Julie Rivkin , "Revision and 'The Middle Years'," 479.

evades rather than accomplishing closure, swerving away from what Frank Kermode has termed "a rectilinear view of the world."[162]

The rhetorical mastery of Dencombe's famous speech cedes in the final lines of "The Middle Years" to readerly doubt. Rather than responding with the mute appreciation that "last words" ought to compel, Doctor Hugh undermines the triumph of the previous, much remembered, speech with "subtle" argument.

> "If you've doubted, if you've despaired, you've always 'done' it," his visitor subtly argued.
> "We've done something or other," Dencombe conceded.
> "Something or other is everything. It's the feasible. It's *you*." (227)

The destabilizing nature of this argument is emphasized again by Dencombe's next line:

> "Comforter!" poor Dencombe ironically sighed.
> "But it's true," insisted his friend.
> "It's true. It's frustration that doesn't count."
> "Frustration's only life," said Doctor Hugh.
> "Yes, it's what passes." Poor Dencombe was barely audible, but he had marked with the words the virtual end of his first and only chance.

By choosing to reply to Dencombe, rather than allowing the author to have his last words, Doctor Hugh is continuing a pattern of behavior evident from the beginning of the tale. His unwillingness to let Dencombe's speech stand is, specifically, a form of readerly arrogation that was evident in his review of *The Middle Years*. At one level, this "great review" is laudatory, but it is also an attempt to substitute readerly for authorial determination of meaning. Not only an "acclamation," it is also "a critical attempt to place the author in the niche he had fairly won"—that is, to control, judge and determine Dencombe's reputation from an alternative perspective. Dencombe, as we have seen, is obsessed with the fantasy of retaining control over his published texts and, accordingly, is

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[162] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 5 and *passim*.

less pleased with this review than Doctor Hugh expects. We are told that he "accepted and submitted: he made neither objection or inquiry, for old complications had returned and he had had two atrocious days" (226). The review seems, in fact, to be the precipitating cause of Dencombe's final decline and withdrawal from the world. Like the narrator of "The Next Time," whose criticism has inevitably deleterious consequences for the authors it treats, we may wonder if Doctor Hugh's admiration will also prove "fatal." That tale, which was first published in *The Yellow Book*, takes as its central figure a nameless reviewer, who sighs with a Wildean self-satisfaction, "Mine was in short the love that killed."[163]

As his health continues to deteriorate, the author begins to give up the only hope that we have seen him entertain—that of the extension or second chance. Doctor Hugh's response to this final admission of failure provides a parallel to the mutual blush that characterized the two men's meeting.

> At this the young man stared; then he exclaimed: "Why, it has come to pass—it has come to pass! The second chance has been the public's—the chance to find the point of view, to pick up the pearl!" (226)

This excitable cry is unexpected and hardly professional, directing attention to the survival of Dencombe's literary corpus rather than the imminent demise of his physical body. It seems that the young man has simply transferred his avid affections; instead of benefiting from the death of the Countess by receiving a large fortune, he will now benefit from Dencombe's by arrogating some of the author's literary celebrity. Dencombe, addicted until the end to the hope of revisionary completion, believes that the real value of his work resides in what he has not yet done: "the pearl is the unwritten—

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[163] Henry James, "The Next Time," *The Yellow Book* 6 (July 1895): 11-59, 14. Reprinted in Leon Edel ed., *The Complete Tales of Henry James*, vol. 9, 185-229.

the pearl is the unalloyed, the *rest*, the lost." By this model, literary glory is not something that can be bequeathed and inherited—it is only a metaphysical ideal, a *terminus ad quem*. For Doctor Hugh, however, the pearl is quite clearly a material object, and one which, by this point in the tale, he believes he is on the verge of "picking up." Rather than an "idealized relation," then, this is a tremendously competitive and fraught depiction of interchange between reader and writer. In fact, in the battle between reading and writing staged by "The Middle Years," we may say that the birth of the reader—or the birth of Doctor Hugh as reader—has to be quite literally achieved at the cost of the death of the author.

2.3 Revision and Textual Control

A more cynical reading of the relationship between the two men figures Doctor Hugh as a grasping fortune hunter rather than an ideal spouse and, accordingly, provides a very different "allegory of revision" from the one proposed by Julie Rivkin. The final dialogue of the tale does not remove the "interminable need to revise"; it merely frustrates Dencombe's opportunity to do so, illustrating that it will always be impossible to complete an "interminable" process within the quickly terminated span of human life. It is an argument against revision on practical grounds and also an illustration of the antagonistic relationship between authorial revision and textual dissemination. Twenty five years later, Henry James was to provide a concise description of revision in the preface to the *New York Edition* of *The Golden Bowl*: "To revise is to see, or to look over, again—which means in the case of a written thing neither more nor less than to re-read

it."[164] In the light of James's own difficulty preparing the *New York Edition* of his work, there is something obviously deceptive about the ease and simplicity which he attributes to the revisionary process. After reading "The Middle Years," we should have a clearer understanding of the precise way in which James's claim is disingenuous. For him, revision is not only an example of re-reading: it is a special and privileged form of reading, and one which intends to frustrate the very possibility of other readings taking place.

In fact, the argument made against revision by the ending of "The Middle Years" is doubly undermined by the tale's own genetic history. Rivkin assumes throughout that the referent of "The Middle Years" is singular—and all of her quotations are pulled from the 1895 text. A more precise account would understand "The Middle Years"—the phrase in quotation marks—as referring to a cluster or series of related texts, published over a period of sixteen years in a variety of different contexts. The title made its first outing in Scribner's magazine in 1893, where the tale ran to eleven pages, preceded by a short story about working class life ("The Fiddler of the Reels") and followed by a saccharine etching of domestic life. It was republished in *Terminations* in 1895, a volume whose own title subtly inflects our sense of the interplay between middle and ending, middle age and old age. Finally it appeared in the fifteenth volume of the *New York Edition* in 1909. In each of these cases, James's pencil seems to have pricked rather more than "a dozen" lights in rereading: there are about three textual variations per page between the 1893 and 1909 texts. In this sense, "The Middle Years" can be understood to refer to a *surplus* of authorial intentions and texts rather than a single, chronologically fixed, textual act. Accordingly, at a genetic level, the title is not so much proof of "an end

[164] Henry James, preface, *The Golden Bowl*, v-xxv, xvi.

to the interminable need to revise" as of the very real possibility of continuing to do so. This is a point which Michael Anesko also makes when he argues that "James's own career can be read as the best revision of this tale, for in preparing his texts for the *New York Edition*, he got what Dencombe is denied."[165]

The fullest possible account of the tale's genesis would consider the manuscript and typescript drafts for the tale but, in accordance with James's usual practice, they did not survive the first emergence into print. We can, however, consider some of the differences between the 1893, 1895 and 1909 texts. Many of these are, in fact, focused on elaborating the frustrating relationship between author and reader that we have been considering. In the first magazine publication, for example, Dencombe's dying words had been delivered in response to an attempt at encouragement from the "bristling young doctor":

> "You're a great success!" said Doctor Hugh, putting into his young voice the ring of all young cheer. (1893)[166]

In *Terminations*, James chose a phrase which exaggerates the intense, perhaps even homoerotic, admiration marking the bond between dying author and young reader.

> "You're a great success!" said Doctor Hugh, putting into his young voice the ring of a marriage-bell. (1895)[167]

For Joyce Carol Oates, this "deliberate, pointed" choice of simile is a revelation of the story's buried theme—"this strange marriage of artist and 'greatest admirer'."[168]

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[165] Michael Anesko, *Friction with the Market* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 144.

[166] "The Middle Years" (1893) was first published in the May volume of Scribner's magazine. Collected in bound volumes as vol. 12 of *Scribner's Magazine*, 609-20, 620.

[167] This text is the one printed in Wegelin and Wonham's edition. "The Middle Years," 227.

[168] Joyce Carol Oates, "The Madness of Art: Henry James's 'The Middle Years'," reprinted in *Tales of Henry James*, 480-3, 482.

She does not comment on the fact that the phrase was added only after revision. And yet, there is something doubly pointed about the way that the text's genetic history undermines its textual content. Why does a tale that thematizes the failure and futility of revision only lay bare its "buried theme" after a revisionary hand has passed over it? Another change made for the *New York Edition* in 1909 also casts this "strange marriage" in a darker light. Originally Dencombe had been depressed by Doctor Hugh's thorough, but not purposeful, inability to understand the meaning of his novel:

> The baffled celebrity wondered then who in the world *would* guess it: he was amused once more at the thoroughness with which an intention could be missed. (1893)

In *The New York Edition* the reader's failure to grasp authorial meaning has become a matter of much more perverse misprision.

> He was amused once more at the diffused massive weight that could be thrown into the missing of an intention. (1909)[169]

Other revisions have less determinate results, and seem, in fact, to be more of a case of "revision for its own sake," a self-enabling production of textual difference. Here, as elsewhere, James is fond of making revisions that aurally recall the original word choice: this process includes the replacement of words by homophones, and by words which differ slightly in sound but which have completely different meanings. This is normally a strategy of substitution more closely associated with poetry than prose, and perhaps with metaphor than metonymy. For example, Dencombe's joy at rereading his own work had originally been described as a type of re-*living*.

> He lived once more into his story and was drawn down, as by a siren's hand, to where, in the dim underworld of fiction, great silent subjects loom. (1893)

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[169] Henry James, "The Middle Years," *New York Edition* vol. 16 (New York: Scribner's, 1909), 97.

In the 1895 text, James replaced "great" by an adjective with a similar central vowel sound—"strange"—thereby increasing the uncanny sibilance of the final phrase, and mimetically creating some of the very "strangeness" that the word introduces. In the *New York Edition*, he made one further change to the sentence, replacing "lived" with its orthographic minimal pair, "dived." Whether or not the final version is an improvement, it is noticeable that the revision can be regarded as *already* implicit in the previous version: it seems to be produced both by the suggestion of minimal difference, and by the elaborate metaphor of a suboceanic fictional world that the 1895 text had contained. A similar, and rather poignant, example is provided a few sentences later as Dencombe reviews his own talent, emphasizing that "only now, at the very last, had he come into possession." The two first versions tell us that "If the achievement had been real, however, the process had been manful enough." Perhaps overcome by the arduous task of preparing the *New York Edition* itself, James edited this sentence in 1909 to read, "If the achievement had been real, however, the process had been painful enough."

Considering genetic and publication history makes it clear that texts can question or undermine themselves from without as well as from within. The difference between versions in a revisionary series tells a narrative of its own, one which can replicate, contradict or simply stand at odds with the conclusions apparently reached by any individual member of the series. Certain themes, symbols or even plotlines may seem more significant when read *across* a series of versions than they do in any single, or even in every, version considered alone: this is an argument to which later chapters of this dissertation will return. The 1893 short story "The Middle Years" is an impassioned argument *against* the possibility of "a second chance"; the lesson it apparently teaches is,

as Doctor Hugh puts it, that "what people 'could have done' is mainly what they've in fact done." And yet it was only in the second chance offered by book publication that James was able to work in some of his central phrases, including the "buried theme" dwelled on by Joyce Carol Oates, and many of the words in the two characters' final Socratic exchange. In 1893, Dencombe had replied to Doctor Hugh's "subtle argument" by saying:

> "We've done something," Dencombe conceded.
> "Something is everything. It's the feasible. It's you!" (1893)

This concession to achievement is already highly uncertain—Dencombe does not believe that he had done what he could, but only, as the dictionary has it, "some unspecified or indeterminate thing."[170] Two years later, this sense of indeterminacy was greatly increased by James's revision:

> "We've done something or other," Dencombe conceded.
> "Something or other is everything. It's the feasible. It's *you*!"

The addition of "other" provides a final example of "The Middle Years" propensity to doubling. Like Miles Standish, in Longfellow's best-selling poem of the 1850s, Dencombe has achieved only an entirely unnamable "something-or-other."

> So he won the day, the battle of something-
> or-other.
> That's what I always say; if you wish a
> thing to be well done,
> You must do it yourself, you must not
> leave it to others![171]

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[170] The first entry for "something" in the *OED* is "Some unspecified or indeterminate thing (material or immaterial)." "something, n. 1[a]." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 10 Sept. 2006 <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezp2.harvard.edu/cgi/entry/50230631>.

[171] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, *Longfellow: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Horace E. Scudder (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1893), 164-84, 167.

The addition of the second indefinite adjective might also be read as an alternative allegory for the bewildering and sometimes intensifying second chances that revision can provide: to revise something is to make it more indeterminate, harder to name, more *other*.

2.4 James and the Postmortem Exploiter

Dencombe dies holding the belief that Longfellow ascribes to Standish: "if you wish a thing to be well done,/ You must do it yourself, you must not leave it to others!" James's own meticulous attention to his texts provides an equally extreme instantiation of the doctrine that we might term textual self-reliance. Philip Horne's study *Henry James And Revision* provides a wealth of illustrations of the—sometimes ludicrous—obsession for control that drove the preparation of the *New York Edition*. Even after the relative failure of that project, however, James did not abandon revision, although he seemed increasingly cognizant of its futility.[172] In 1915, for example, despite the distractions of his war work, his ill health, and the continuing difficulties posed by his three incomplete books, he found himself compelled entirely to "do over" an article on the French actor Coquelin, which had first been published in 1887, and which Brander Matthews wanted to use as the introduction to a book titled *Art and the Actor*. He explained his actions in a letter replying to Matthews' request; the vocabulary of revision is familiar from the prefaces: "I have, as you will see, so very much re-expressed the sense of it as to have had to have recourse to a new text, that is a new pen and new paper, altogether..."[173] This

[172] See Philip Horne, *Henry James and Revision*, 315.

[173] HJ to Brander Matthews, March 24, 1915. Leon Edel ed., *Henry James: Letters*, vol. 4, 1895-1916 (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1984), 744.

is a classic example of revision's ability—as an activity designed to assert and defend authorship—utterly to frustrate readerly desire. Matthews had clearly wanted to print the article *as it stood*: James responds by giving permission with one hand but withdrawing it with the other: "I beg you to be intelligent about this, as you so easily can, and to like it very much as it now, for the first time, stands. It didn't in the least stand before—it but waggled on one leg!"

Within a month, James suffered the first of a series of strokes that left him mentally as well as physically incapacitated. A year later he died, with his last books—*The Sense of the Past*, *The Ivory Tower* and *The Middle Years*—in incomplete draft form. The textual history of these residual works is laden with irony, an irony that is—depending on our temperament—of either a tragic or a dramatic kind. It took Henry James four years of painfully devoted labour to revise his already finished and, in many cases, already revised texts for the *New York Edition*.[174] Percy Lubbock, by contrast, was able to receive permission, edit, and publish all three incomplete texts in the first year following James's death. The *New York Edition* texts are polished and finished to within an inch of their life, or, as some might suggest, a couple of inches past it. *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past* are overtly incomplete, ending mid-sentence or mid-paragraph. Most egregiously, both draft texts are followed by James's "notes," which provide loosely associative musings on the plots' potential lines of development. These are, as Alan Hollinghurst has it, "detailed preliminary thinkings-through of his material, self-communings never intended for publication, and always destroyed when a work was

[174] "Not only were many of James's earlier texts revised between serial and first book publication, but "James had already had the gratification of seeing a fourteen-volume collective edition of his novels and stories brought out by Macmillan & Co., his regular London publishers, as early as 1883." Michael Millgate, *Testamentary Acts*, 80.

completed."[175] In a letter to H. G. Wells in 1902, James emphasized the extreme privacy of this kind of "preliminary private outpouring," confessing that this "voluminous effusion is, ever, so extremely familiar, confidential and intimate—in the form of an interminable garrulous letter addressed to my own fond fancy—that, though I always, for easy reference, have it carefully typed, it isn't a thing I would willingly expose to any eye but my own."[176]

For many years, critics paid little attention to these three texts. More recently, there has been a renewal of interest in James's "fourth period," or what Frederick Dupee terms his "*late* late style"; this has been facilitated in part by the publication of paperback editions of the two novels.[177] There has been almost no discussion, however, of the problems raised by their posthumous status. As a result, otherwise sophisticated treatments, such as Robert Caserio's discussion of history in *The Ivory Tower*, make statements about intentionality that should give us pause. Is it meaningful, for example, to say that "James would seem to incline to the idea that historical fiction is fiction, not history" when he had no intention of publishing the text cited as evidence?[178]

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[175] Alan Hollinghurst, introduction, *The Ivory Tower* by Henry James (New York: New York Review of Books, 2004), xii

[176] Quoted by Marc DaRosa from James's notebooks. Marc DaRosa, "Henry James, Anonymity, and the Press: Journalistic Modernity and the Decline of the Author," *Modern Fiction Studies* 43.4 (1997): 826-859, footnote 13.

[177] Alan Hollinghust's attractive edition of *The Ivory Tower* is a case in point. Hollinghurst's own piece of Jamesian homage, *The Line of Beauty*, was awarded the Man Booker prize in 2004. The description of James's style as "*late* late" comes from the introduction to Dupee's edition of his *Autobiography*, which binds *The Middle Years* together with *A Small Boy and Other* and *Notes of a Son and a Brother*. Frederick W. Dupee, *Henry James: Autobiography*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983 repr.), xiv.

[178] Robert Caserio's article on *The Ivory Tower* is only one example of this problematic tendency to attribute positive intentionality to these texts, despite the fact that James's "final intention" was not to publish them. Robert L. Caserio, "James, Cather, Vollmann, and the Distinction of Historical Fiction," *symploke* 12.1-2 (2004): 106-129, 111.

One way of understanding Lubbock's activity as an editor is to consider the analogous situation presented by his 1920 edition of James's letters. We know that James was unhappy about the idea of his letters being published after his death; he had begun to deal with this problem as early as 1909 when he burned most of his incoming correspondence in a bonfire at Lamb's House.[179] In 1914, he also expressed his final intentions for the outgoing correspondence (over which, of course, he retained no control) in a letter to his nephew, Henry James junior, in 1914:

> My sole wish is to frustrate as utterly as possible the postmortem exploiter—which, I know, is but so perfectly impossible. Still, one can do something, & I have long thought of launching, by a provision in my will, a curse not less explicit than Shakespeare's own on any such as try to move my bones.[180]

James left no instructions for his three unfinished books, but anyone remotely familiar with his lifelong habits of publishing cannot assume that silence should be equated to consent. Michael Millgate concurs with this opinion: "James would certainly have disapproved of Lubbock's editing and publishing *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past*... and especially of their subsequent appearance (in the United States only) as supplementary volumes of that *New York Edition* whose contents he had so deliberately chosen and whose texts he had sought to render so exquisitely 'finished.'"[181]

The best way to understand Percy Lubbock's work as an editor is to compare the surviving typescript of *The Middle Years* with the text that he published, and the final section of this chapter will consider some of the differences between the two texts in

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[179] See in particular a letter to Annie Fields, 2 Jan. 1910. Quoted by Michael Millgate, *Testamentary Acts*, 101.

[180] Letter to Henry James, Junior, 7 Apr. 1914. Quoted by Michael Millgate, *Testamentary Acts*, 101.

[181] Michael Millgate, *Testamentary Acts*, 106.

detail. We can learn something about his self-fashioning as an editor, however, from the short preface which preceded the 1917 text (but which has dropped out of most subsequent editions). Like those written to accompany *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past*, it is concise and self-effacing, silent about both the considerable editorial labour necessary to prepare each text for the press, and the necessary negotiations with member of the James family. So Lubbock tells us, for example, that "A few quite evident slips have been corrected and the marking of the paragraphs—which he usually deferred until the final revision—has been completed."[182] The tone is soothing—attempting to defray suspicion—but the word "slip" should give us pause. How was Lubbock able to discern where James had "slipped"? What marks out the slip from the surprising but *intentional* lexical choice?

The major task of the prefaces to the two novels is to provide a rationale for including James's "pages of preliminary notes," which Lubbock admits "were not of course intended for publication." The preface to *The Sense of The Past* does not have a great deal to say about the matter, but in *The Ivory Tower* Lubbock explains: "It was Henry James's constant practice, before beginning a novel, to test and explore, in a written or dictated sketch of this kind, the possibilities of the idea which he had in mind. Such a sketch was in no way a first draft of the novel... The notes, having served their purpose, would not be referred to again, and were invariably destroyed when the book was finished."[183] Again the smoothness of tone betrays the very real editorial *choices* that

[182] Percy Lubbock, preface, *The Middle Years*.

[183] In the preface to *The Sense of The Past*, Lubbock had only this to say: "The notes on the course which the book was to follow were dictated when he reached the point where the original draft broke off. These notes are given in full; their part in Henry James's method of work is indicated in the preface to 'The Ivory Tower'."

have been made. If the notes were invariably destroyed when a book was finished, and if Lubbock's aim was to complete a task that James did not live to see done, then why publish them? Various answers might be offered to this question, providing a more or less cynical perspective on the intentions of Lubbock and his publishers. To begin with, this might simply be a question of economics. Readers are unlikely to want to pay full price for a very short and incomplete text, and the addition of the notes pads out *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past* to an amplitude which, if not quite Jamesian, is at least respectable. (At 266 pages, the paperback edition of *The Ivory Tower* is very close to modern publishers' ideal length for a novel.) Given that, at his death, James had only written a small fraction of the planned story of each book, the inclusion of the sketches also effects some sort of narrative closure: if we wish, we can find out what was to happen to Rosanna Gaw and Graham Felder, Ralph Pendrel and Molly Midmore. In that way the inclusion of the notes satisfies some of the most basic impulses that drives readers to read—and purchase—novels.

The adverts for *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past* began appearing in a wide range of publications in August 1917; *The Middle Years* followed a month later, with Collins often choosing to puff the third book on the same page as reviews of the first two. The publishers' aims were clearly pragmatic, and the language of these adverts extends Lubbock's own. Again, the main difficulty for the publishers seems originally to have been the necessity of accounting for the books' unfinished status. Why would anyone want half, or a third, of a book when they could have a whole one? Why would anyone want an unpolished and unrevised James book at full price when they could buy *The Golden Bowl* or *The Portrait of a Lady* in a cheap paperback? The strategy adopted,

picked up in more laden terms in the contemporary reviews, was to promise some sort of compensation from the notes and sketches appended to them:

> The novels are unfinished, but printed with each is a sketch outlining the complete story. These sketches are of unique literary interest, since they disclose the methods of work of one of the greatest masters of his craft. Henry James wrote similar sketches for all his novels, but the sketches for "The Ivory Tower" and "The Sense of the Past" alone survive, and none has heretofore been published...[184]

The adversative "but" wi h which this advertisement begins implies that any disappointment engendered by the novels' unfinished state will be short-lived. The second sentence, however, begins to suggest that the sketches may function not only as a replacement, a supplement, for what has been lost, but that they may have a "unique" value of their own. "Unique," "disclose," "alone," and "none heretofore" all emphasize that the publication of these texts is an *event*; in fact, they begin to suggest that the event may be of more interest than the text itself. This language was picked up by the contemporary reviewers, who also seemed to believe that the interest of the "sketches," or the "preliminary, private outpourings" far exceeded the satisfaction of mere plot and length. Many of them devoted far more space to the sketches that Lubbock had appended than to the novels themselves; in so doing, they translated Collins' economic arguments into aesthetic ones. So the anonymous reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* begins somewhat cautiously, telling us that the sketches are only "in a sense almost a compensation for the unfinished state of these stories." As the article proceeds, however, the language grows more rapturously confident of their merits: "these intimate self-communings, these ponderings of his themes, these exultations in their difficulties and

[184] "Collins List" advertises that the two novels are published "today," in *The Times Literary Supplement*, Thursday 6 Sept. 1917, 423.

high beauties, are most extraordinary and fascinating documents, and we would not have missed them for the world."[185]

When we actually turn to the sketches, this position does not seem to be the intuitive one. They are confusing and meandering; even more clogged and circumlocutory ("*late* late James") than the finished portions of *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past*. In fact, the term "sketch" is somewhat misleading. These documents were dictated by James to his amanuensis Theodora Bosanquet, and their digressive, paratactic style is closer to an unstructured stream of consciousness than the provisional lightness of outline implied by the visual metaphor. There are similarities to Beckett's monologues. A typical passage, for example, from the notes to *The Ivory Tower* mingles the relatively familiar language of James's "art of fiction" with the tedium of a plan for future work, and ends with two unanswerable rhetorical questions.

> Of course I can but reflect that to bring this splendid economy off it must have been practiced up *to* VII with the most intense and immense art: the scheme I have already sketched for I and II leaving me therewith but III, IV, V, and VI to arrive at the completeness of preparation for VII, which carries in its bosom the completeness of preparation for VII—this last, but a like grand law, carrying in *its* pocket the completeness of preparation for IX and X. But why not? Who's afraid?[186]

The manner in which Lubbock blurs James's wishes and his own—promoting his own literary celebrity by capitalizing on a text "inherited" from a dead author—is deeply reminiscent of the relationship between author and reader that James had sketched out in "The Middle Years," and in other tales from the 1890s. As a thematic group, these "tales of writers and artists" present us with a series of agonistic struggles between older and

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[185] This anonymous review was printed a few pages after the advert to which I have already referred. "The Great Henry James Question," *TLS*, Thursday 6 Sept. 1917, 427.

[186] Henry James, *The Ivory Tower*, ed. Percy Lubbock (London: W. Collins, 1917), 338.

younger men of letters—between writers and their readers, their editors, and acolytes. Ironically enough, Lubbock himself was to acknowledge the similarity in the preface to *The Ivory Tower*. Here he justifies his own decision to publish James's posthumous work, including his rough "sketches" for the finished novel, by referring back to "The Death of the Lion," a tale which presents us with a dying writer's concern for his incomplete last work. He explains, "If justification were needed for the decision to publish this 'overflow' it might be found in Paraday's last injunction to his friend: 'Print it as it stands—beautifully.'" And yet Paraday's command is never fulfilled; the "inedit" has been lost in mysterious circumstances, perhaps "wantonly destroyed," perhaps through "some hazard of a blind hand."[187] Although the exact events remain mysterious, there is a strong suspicion that editorial negligence might have played a part—perhaps even that the editor has lost the text himself.

Given that the tale establishes the very impossibility of printing a text "as it stands," illustrating the self-serving motivations of a writer's executors, it is a perverse text to cite in defence of editorial liberties. Today Lubbock is commonly regarded as a sensitive disciple of James, whose own *Craft of Fiction* mediated between the delicate complexity of James's theory of the novel and the demands of a growing mass market for literary criticism.[188] This unhappy choice of quotation, however, seems an example of the kinds of strong misreading and misprision that take place in the battle for textual authority. As Dencombe (eventually) puts it, it is a show of that "diffused massive weight that could be thrown into the missing of an intention."

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[187] See "The Death of the Lion," *The Complete Tales of Henry James*, vol. 9, 77-118, 118.

[188] Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (New York: Scribner's, 1921). Lubbock's "post-Jamesian" theory of the novel is discussed in some detail by Nicholas Dames in "Wave-Theories and Affective Physiologies: The Cognitive Strain in Victorian Novel Theories," *Victorian Studies* 46.2 (2004) 206-16.

2.5 The Houghton Typescript of *The Middle Years*

Doctor Hugh is able to uncover Dencombe's secret—his authority—without difficulty because the "lights" that his pencil has pricked are unmistakeably the signs of post-publication, authorial correction. The 1914 typescript of *The Middle Years*, now in the Houghton library at Harvard, is, by contrast, a more palimpsestic and more indecipherable material object, displaying an unusually high level of mediation and amendment. It is a prime example of what Jerome McGann has termed a "thick text," encumbered by a complex process of posthumous transmission and also by James's choice of writing technology.[189] By this period, instead of writing by hand and having the manuscript typed up at a later date, he was dictating to his amanuensis and directly to type. On top of the base layer of type, three kinds of accretions are evident, including Theodora Bosanquet's typed cancellations and additions of text, black pen corrections in James's own distinctively bad hand, and a mixture of red ink and pencil markings. At least the majority of these must be Lubbock's own, as we know that he completed "the marking of the paragraphs," and many of the red crayon marks break up the continuous text to indicate the start of a new paragraph. Others make genuine corrections on the text, changing James's age on arriving in England, for example, from the "twenty fifth year" to the factually correct "twenty-sixth." If we view the text as something like an archaeological site, then we can assume that the red pencil and crayon emendations are the most recent layer of revisions, and that the typescript changes are the oldest.

Without even looking at the verbal content of the text, the material marks on the typescript already contradict both Theodora Bosanquet's and Percy Lubbock's claims

[189] See Jerome McGann, "The Socialization of Texts," for a more detailed definition of "thickness," *The Book History Reader*, 39-47, 42.

that the text was not revised. Lubbock's preface tells us that the chapters begun in 1914 "were laid aside for other work towards the end of the year and were not revised by the author." Bosanquet, whose somewhat puzzling note stands at the top of the Houghton typescript, adds that "The original dictated typescript was not revised by Mr. Henry James except in so far as it was his usual habit to revise as he went along." The distinction being made here between "revision as he went along" and revision at, presumably, some more conclusive time is not altogether clear. Did James revise the text or not? The fact that he was able to add his own corrections in pen to the typescript must suggest that he reread the document after he had finished dictating it, and therefore that at least some process of iteration and "second chances" took place, even if no "final intention" was reached.

Bosanquet's note serves, in fact, as an illustration of some of the contradictions inherent in traditional notions of authorial "final intention." "Final" is an ambiguous adjective in English. Nor, I suggest, has its adoption by textual critics been without confusion; a temporal meaning (the last item in a series) is commonly equated with a goal-oriented one (the perfected end).[190] McKerrow's often-cited 1939 definition, "our ideal of an author's fair copy of his work in its final state," is a good example of the problem, invoking in a few words both a *material* notion of finality ("fair copy") and a *essential* one ("our ideal").[191] James's final intention for *The Middle Years* has to be regarded in the second of these senses as "no intention": the text was not finished and he

[190] "final, a." 1.a. "Coming at the end (of a word, a series)," 2.a. "Marking the last stage of a process; leaving nothing to be looked for or expected; ultimate," 3.a. "Putting an end to something (rarely const. *of, to*); putting an end to strife or uncertainty; not to be undone, altered, or revoked; conclusive." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 2 Sept. 2006 < http://dictionary.oed.com.ezp1.harvard.edu/cgi/entry/50084858>.

[191] R. B. McKerrow, *Prolegomena for the Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 17-18.

left no instructions for publishing it. On the other hand, the material marks on the typescript indicate that some of his intentions about the text were subsequent to, or more final than, others. By the strictest logic, we should not be reading this text at all. As Helen Vendler has argued, "If you make people promise to burn your manuscripts... they should," because "personal fidelity is more important than art."[192] If, however, we choose to read it despite James's *last* wishes, are we obliged to take into account his *later* ones? Were Dencombe a real author rather than a fictional one, his case would present similar problems. If the post-publication revisions marked on his copy of "The Middle Years" had survived (one suspects Doctor Hugh would have prevented this), should they be incorporated into later versions? This is a question that will recur in chapter five.

The tension between two kinds of final intention—which could also be distinguished as final intention at the level of the sentence, and final intention for the text as a whole—is evident in Percy Lubbock's 1917 publication of *The Middle Years*. In an understandable, although troubling, act of editorial intervention, he chose to end his text with an ellipsis. James's last mark was a period. The final page of the Houghton typescript is devoted to describing a visit to Lady Waterford's exhibition of paintings in London, and subsequently to her house in Northumberland. As so often in this text, James seems less interested in precise recall of particulars than in succumbing to what he variously terms the "flush," "the waiting array," or the "bristle" of old memories; as Virginia Woolf's review noted, the book is a "superb act of thanksgiving" for a vanished

[192] In a *New York Times* profile. "'If you make people promise to burn your manuscripts' — as Kafka and (by legend) Virgil did — 'they should,' Vendler insisted. 'I think the *Aeneid* should have been burned and Kafka's works should have been burned, because personal fidelity is more important than art'." Rachel Donadio, "Helen Vendler: The Closest Reader," *New York Times*, 10 Dec. 2006.

aristocratic world.[193] So he does not record conversation, individuals or even the details of paintings, but only that "'they' had indeed had their innings, and were still splendidly using for the purpose the very fag-end of the waning time." The next sentence is the final one in the typescript: James remembers that "later on a few days spent at a house in Northumberland did wonders to round off my view; the place... fairly bristled, it might be said, with coloured designs from her brush."[194] (599) This anecdote admittedly does not end with a closural flourish, but, in a text that twists very abruptly from one memory to the next, it seems plausible that the whole matter of Lady Waterford has been dealt with. Lubbock prints instead, "with coloured designs from her brush..." as if to suggest a dying hand trailing across the page. In fact, we know that James chose to stop working on *The Middle Years* in the winter of 1914 after rereading the typescript at least once. There is no logical reason to equate the incompletion of the project as a whole with fragmentation at the level of the sentence. By suggesting that the book was suddenly and accidentally abandoned, however, Lubbock is able to provide a subtle justification for his own decision to publish the text. The ellipsis implies that James would have finished the text if he had lived.

Although it is relatively easy to distinguish the "hands" of the three different people who worked on it—in type, black ink and red crayon—the *source* of individual changes is not always clear. For Bosanquet to be able to type the text correctly, she was reliant on James speaking audibly and clearly, and on being able to process his words

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[193] See Virginia Woolf, "The Old Order," *Times Literary Supplement*, London Thursday October 18, 1917, 497-8.

[194] For convenience's sake, I give references in parentheses to Frederick Dupee's widely available edition of *The Middle Years*, *Henry James: Autobiography*, 547-99. Dupee prints Lubbock's text unaltered, but without the preface.

"felicitously." Unsurprisingly, this process was imperfect, and many changes appear to be correcting mis-*hearings* rather than mis-typings or, most awkwardly of all, mis-meanings. When James reminisces about Victorian London, for example, he tells us that it was "sincere" where "the contemporary is skeptical" and illustrates this by reference to the French proverb "It's the tone that makes the music" (557-8). Lubbock prints "*c'est le ton qui fait la chanson,*" placing the phrase in italics to show that it is "as the French adage says." The bottom layer of the typescript, however, shows "c'est le temps qui fait le chanson." Apparently two layers of correction have taken place. To begin with, the word "temps" is crossed out with typewriter lines and the word "ton" is added above: presumably Theodora Bosanquet, being less familiar with French than James himself, or at least unused to James's own French accent, misheard "ton" as "temps" and was quickly corrected by the author. Later "la," the correctly gendered form of the article, was written above "le."

In other cases, however, it is hard to dissever mis-hearings from homophonous *revision*, a practice of which, as we have already seen, James was always fond. Another instance that could be interpreted as the confusion between similar sounds occurs when James is describing his trust in Mrs. Greville, who "knew no law but that of innocent and exquisite aberration." (582) Again, "aberration" has been added in type above an original erased word, "adoration." This could easily be the result of mishearing or mispronouncing, with the amanuensis choosing the easier and more obvious word above the more difficult one. And yet it could just as plausibly be the result of a genuine change of mind on James's part, one driven, no doubt, by the similarity in sound between the two words, just as the word "dived" in the *New York Edition* of "The Middle Years" was

derived from "lived" in the earlier versions. In this respect, there is a deep parallel between the literal speech act being performed at Lamb House—James dictating to his amanuensis—and the subsequent process of rereading and rewriting. The correction of a mis-hearing is materially indistinguishable from the correction of mis-typing or mis-meaning.

This process of correction turns out to have unexpected affinities with one of the most basic maxims of modern textual editing, *lectio difficilior praestat*, itself standardized as a procedure during the 1890s.[195] Presented with two alternative readings, the editor will tend to prefer the "more difficult," the principle being that the process of transmission leads to the replacement of obscure or complex lexical choices with simple ones. The same tendency can be observed—perhaps at an even faster rate—when dealing with aural transmission: hence the "telephone" or "pass it down" game. James also preferred linguistic surprise. While correcting dictation, he very often substituted a less common word (*ton*) for a more common one (*temps*), producing a second version which is more "difficult" than the first.[196] Throughout his writing career, his process of revision seemed to trend in the same direction; simple vocabulary items (*adoration*) are replaced with the complex (*aberration*), and very often a surprising periphrasis replaces some initially straightforward piece of syntax. In this text, for example, the process of reminiscence is originally described as "a quantity that divided itself somehow into the double line of its elements"; James then crossed out "line" by hand and wrote the much

[195] W. L. Lorimer discusses the "invention" of this principle. W. L. Lorimer, "Lectio Difficilor," *The Classical Review* 48.5 (1934): 171

[196] Modern linguistics has shown that error in speech increases with low target word frequency. See, for example, Levelt, Roelofs, and Meyer, "A theory of lexical access in speech production." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 22 (1999): 1-75. Is there an analogy between error in speech and perceived error in writing? If so, we might expect infrequent or rare usages to be inherently more "revisable" than simple ones.

more unusual "muster" above it. (550) "A perfect bower" becomes "the most embowered retreat"; "the evening" is changed to "the revelational evening"; "horrible" becomes "monstrous"; "implication," "intimation"; even "all wonderings" cannot be left alone, ending up as the jangling "all worryings and wonderings."

By contrast, Percy Lubbock's changes to the text often perform the function of normalizing and simplifying James's language. In later chapters I suggest that the difference between correction that simplifies and correction that complicates is fundamental, and often a good way to distinguish editorial from authorial marginalia. Take as an example one of the best known set-pieces from *The Middle Years*, James's description of his brief acquaintance with Tennyson.[197] From the beginning this seems to have been something of a disappointment: Tennyson wasn't as "pale and penetrating," as "fastidious" or as graceful as "the fond prefigurements of youthful piety" had imagined. (587) The base layer of the typescript runs:

> These were considerations of which I recall the pressure, at the same time that I fear I have no account of them to give after they have fairly faced the full demonstration that Tennyson was not Tennysonian.

Inserted above the original text is a correction in type. James seems immediately to have decided that "full demonstration" required another qualifying adjective, and picked the following: "the full, demonstrous demonstration that Tennyson was not Tennysonian."

"Demonstrous" is not a word recorded in any dictionary and it obviously puzzled Lubbock, who crossed it out in heavy red crayon, and replaced it with, "the full, the

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[197] For the critic mindful of dates, this passage is already something of an embarrassment; James's letters record that the meeting actually took place in 1878. This passage can be regarded as *already* as revision of the earlier description, "whenever I feel disposed to reflect that Tennyson is not personally Tennysonian, I summon up the image of Browning, and this has the effect of making me check my complaints." Letter to Charles Eliot Norton, November 17th, 1878. In Leon Edel ed., *Henry James Letters*, vol. 2, 1875-1883 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 194-8, 196.

monstrous demonstration that Tennyson was not Tennysonian." This might be another example of Theodora Bosanquet mishearing James's meaning—"the monstrous" could easily be confused with "de-monstrous." And yet Bosanquet was a meticulous grammarian, unlikely to choose a nonce word instead of the obvious one. James also chose not to make a correction by hand, although he did alter other material in the same passage. It seems more likely that this neologism was intended: despite not being defined in the dictionary, "demonstrous" does have some semantic load, combining rather wittily the notions both of demonstration and monstrosity. In this particular passage, it might be suggested that its function is, in fact, to play on the gap between the sign and its referent that the second phrase confirms: Tennyson is Tennyson, but he is not Tennysonian; a demonstration both points something out (*de-monstrare*) and reveals what is monstrous about it (*monstrum*, literally "an omen"). In either case, Lubbock's crayon change has the effect of preferring the *lectio facilior*.

In "The Middle Years," the lights "pricked" on the text reveal Dencombe's identity—the activity of correcting and revising is no more and no less than authorship itself. The marks and emendations on the 1914 typescript do not tell such a simple story. The material form of the marginalia does not provide a transparent window on the direction or intentionality of the change intended. Nor is the very ability to make changes any longer synonymous with what Foucault terms "the author function." Instead we might say that there are three participants in making and emending meaning, whose changes often tug in different directions. The passage beginning "To return at all across the years," which follows James's description of his first breakfast in Liverpool, provides an excellent example. Again James is concerned with the difficulty, perhaps even the

impossibility, of recovering lost time: this passage could stand in thematic metonymy for the text as a whole. In Lubbock's text, the paragraph begins:

> To return at all across the years to the gates of the paradise of the first larger initiations is to be ever so tempted to pass them, to push in again… In speaking of my earliest renewal of the vision of Europe, if I may give so grand a name to a scarce more than merely enlarged and uplifted gape, I have, I confess, truly to jerk myself over the ground, to wrench myself with violence from memories and images, stages and phases and branching arms, that catch and hold me as I pass them by. (551)

In the typescript, Lubbock's red crayon makes a series of changes that fortify readability and logical progression, marking off the beginning and end of the passage, and changing a past perfect "had" to a perfect "has," thereby increasing the sense that James is engaged with the present moment and hopeful for the future ("a seed… the harvest of which… has even yet not all been gathered"). Bosanquet's typewriter has also left certain marks, perhaps showing immediate changes of mind, or what she termed the process of revision "as he went along": "deed" is immediately altered to "seed"; an unnecessary "and" is removed. At other moments, the error remains to be corrected by the authorial hand, as when James corrects an infelicitous mishearing, replacing "is to me ever so tempted to pass them," with the predicate, "is to be ever so tempted." In this respect, the material form of revision—its look on the page—is once again non-identical with its provenance, aim or type.

Other changes seem to display genuine second thoughts, and these often trend in the direction of increased hesitancy and equivocation. Originally James had written "to return across the years… is to be," but he later added the negative adverbial modifier "at all," implying that the recovery of lost time may be futile or impossible. Indeed, throughout the passage language itself is on the verge of violent rupture, as James figures

the intellectual process of memory in bodily terms—to remember is to "jerk" and "wrench"; the ghosts of the past are described as the snagging branches of trees. Images of the body in pain seem to be something that James was revising towards. Originally, the typescript records only, "if I may give so grand a name to a matter," but James appears immediately to have corrected himself, scoring out "matter," and replacing it with the bizarre "scarce more than merely enlarged and uplifted gape." He also changed the agency in this sentence: no longer do the images "pass," in a mechanical and passive act of memory, but "I pass them by." The subjective version was added by hand. Why make such a small grammatical change? At one level, the language of struggle, capture and violence mimetically emphasizes the difficulty of James's project. *The Middle Years* is a theoretical meditation on the "hazards" and "traps" of revisiting the past, as well as an attempt at autobiography and, as Tony Tanner observes, there is often a helpless passivity about the attempt: "Certainly, his mode of remembering, searching for lost time, is the very reverse of aggressive or predatory; James does not give even the impression of rummaging around much."[198]

2.6 1914 and the End of Meliorism

To go a stage further, we might say that the very failure of language to *mean* is of a part with James's conviction in the early months of the War that "to take it all now for what the treacherous years were all the while really making for and meaning is too tragic for any words." The problem is not so much with autobiography *per se* but with *this* attempt to reach back into the nineteenth century from the vantage point of a dispiriting present. On October 8, 1914, as James was in the middle of dictating *The Middle Years*,

[198] Tony Tanner, *Henry James and the Art of Nonfiction* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 72.

he told Edmund Gosse that "I was struck dumb, like most of us all, ten weeks ago, and you will perhaps have noted that consistently dumb I have remained."[199] Literally this is untrue, but in the text's endlessly repeated echo chamber of gaping, "lapses and gaps," incapacity and failure, we can read a similar refusal to "make for and mean," to fit old words to a new situation. If *The Middle Years* is a retrospective attempt to conjure up the ghosts of the past ("a superb act of thanksgiving"), it also acknowledges that recent events have reconstituted history. Writing to William Roughead in September 1914, James referred to the outbreak of war as a historical puzzle—something akin to the tricky intentions concealed in Vereker's or Dencombe's work: "I never wanted to live on to see the collapse of so many fond faiths, which makes all the past, with this hideous card all the while up its sleeve, seem now a long treachery, an unthinkable humbug." In a letter from the previous month, he suggested that the war had unraveled the very web of history, providing a poignant *anti*-revisionary story of its own: "It seems to me to *undo* everything, everything that was ours, in the most horrible retroactive way—but I avert my face from the monstrous scene."[200]

Tennyson is not Tennysonian; what seemed to be "betterment" turned out to be deterioration. Even the period of his own youth remains hard for James to define. The first page of the text begins with a ring of Housman, prompted perhaps by the crowds of young men going off to the front: "youth is an army, the whole battle of our faculties and our freshnesses, our passions and our illusions, on a considerably reluctant march into the enemy's country, the country of the general lost freshness" (547). As soon as it is uttered,

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[199] Letter to Edmund Gosse, 8 Oct. 1914, from Lubbock's typescript transcription in Houghton library.

[200] Letter to Rhoda Broughton, August 1914, quoted in Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Master: 1901-1916*, 512.

however, this elaborate metaphor seems to fail, and it is replaced with a more static image. If youth isn't an army, then it is "a book in several volumes"—not, as we might expect, the first volume in the series, but the one which remains open. And yet the possibility of one volume remaining open is premised on another having already closed with a "clap of its covers": it is envisaged, perhaps, as the "middle" part of the (already old-fashioned) triple-decker format. The double metaphoric flourish is immediately troubling, for how can something be both an army and a book at the same time? In one sense, the metaphors cancel each other out by their dissonance; in another, they share a commonality of *aspect*. Both begin with an image of freshness, and end with that freshness already soured: a book is never read for the first time; the march into enemy country is a journey into already discovered ground. Similarly, it seems that meaning is never freshly possible, either because it can be deciphered only in "horrible" retrospect or because it is inherently unbearable.

A Whig narrative of history as progress translates, in terms of writing, to the belief that meaning is transparent and decipherable, and that it can be refined over time. The James of 1914, however, is staring at "the wreck of our belief that through the long years we had seen civilization grow and the worst become impossible."[201] In these circumstances, revision and correction become much more problematic acts. The metaphor of the book replaces the metaphor of the army, and yet it does not refine or improve it so much as cancel out any possible vivid image of what youth might be. As James began to abandon his meliorist belief that the world had ever been "gradually bettering," so he seems to have given up on the possibility of finishing his final text. He

[201] From letter to Rhoda Broughton, quoted above.

stopped writing in December 1914 to return to *The Sense of the Past*, a novel that had already been laid aside in 1900 after "intrinsic difficulties" had mastered its author, and which was again to prove impossible to complete.[202] He would undoubtedly have disapproved of Lubbock's posthumous editions. And yet Lubbock's text of *The Middle Years*, with all of its self-serving emphasis on ellipsis and incompletion, is actually consonant with the text's own aporia, its refusal to "make for and mean." By the principles of modern editorial science, Lubbock's addition of a final ellipsis is inexcusable interventionism. It can also be read, however, as a deeply appropriate reversion from narrative closure, fulfilling *The Middle Years*' thematic interest in "lapses and gaps" on a bibliographic level.

As the contemporary reviews indicate, the slightness and even the "imperfection" of James's last three texts were well received by reviewers such as Virginia Woolf. In a stroke of bitter irony, they also sold well, enabling Collins to issue reprints of the two novels only two months after the first edition.[203] That may in part be because Lubbock's editions look *modern* by the standards of 1917: they are slender and self-consciously provisional, not a single block of text, but a multi-layered mix of preface, text and notes. Like Eliot's 1922 book edition of *The Waste Land*—often understood as the exemplary act of modernist publishing—they flank an underweight text with a scholarly apparatus and notes, apparently leaving a good deal of interpretative work to the reader.[204] The

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[202] See the very long letter that James wrote in August 1900 to William Dean Howells on this subject. In Leon Edel ed., *Henry James: Letter* vol. 4, 1895-1916, 157-63.

[203] Indicated by the adverts for reprinted editions of *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past* that ran alongside reviews for *The Middle Years*, issued two and a half months after the two novels.

[204] See, for example, Lawrence Rainey's very detailed analysis of Eliot's decisions about the publishing format for *The Waste Land* in *Institutions of Modernism*.

monstrous gilt of *The New York Edition*, to which *The Sense of the Past* and *The Ivory Tower* were eventually added, is, by contrast, a powerful reminder of the size and uniformity of a previous era in literary publishing. As we have seen, the genetic history of "The Middle Years"—perfected by its author within the frame of the *New York Edition*—is an example of the textual closure that Dencombe desires and which he is denied. Ironically, the history of James's final text, published three months after *Prufrock and Other Observations*, and much toyed with by its editor, instantiates his predictions from the 1890s about the breakdown of relations between authors and their readers. In the struggle for textual and hermeneutic control—a game that James had once described as "'pull devil, pull tailor'... the hardest pull will doubtless produce the happiest result"—Percy Lubbock and Doctor Hugh have won a decided victory.[205]

[205] From James's criticism, on the relationship between the reporter and the reported. Quoted by Ian Hamilton, *Keepers of The Flame* (London: Hutchinson, 1992), 214.

Chapter Three

Virginia Woolf's Mausoleum Books

3.1 Introduction

If, as Foucault has argued, the author represents "the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning," then hi demise and absence will inevitably enable "the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction."[206] Often, works are published posthumously because they presented the writer with particular difficulties, being not only unfinished but also *unfinishable*: in this case, the genetic history will be one of multiple false starts, changes, and amendments. As *The Middle Years* illustrated, the death of the author can also facilitate certain types of editorial intervention and "free play" that would not be possible if the author remained alive to control the publication process.

Having considered revision and the problem of posthumous publication in chapter two, I now turn to address the relationship between revision and genre. Once again, I am interested in questions of completion, closure and finality. Posthumous texts present a peculiar example of textual openness, where no "final intention" can be clearly discerned. In this chapter I argue that the difficulty of achieving closure or finish in certain literary *genres* and *forms* also makes them liable to revision. The first claim is essentialist. Formal features, which could theoretically be found in texts from any period, make some texts more likely to be revised than others: these might include the temporal relationship between what Genette has distinguished as narrative text, story recounted, and narrated instance, the choice of metrical form and rhyme in poetry, and the narratorial perspective

[206] Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" *Book History Reader*, 230.

in fiction.[207] The second part of my argument is more precisely historical, building from the observation that modernist writing is fond of "the *expressive* qualities of weak closure," while retaining a strong intellectual commitment to totalizing structures and metanarrative.[208] The 1921 text of *The Waste Land*, which veers precipitously between chaos and foreclosure, digression and summation, is an example of this tension in practice; the *Drafts and Fragments* of the *Cantos*, a poem attempting to "include history," are another.[209] One of the paradoxical consequences of this ambivalent relationship to closure is instability of a genetic kind. It is relatively easy to know when one has "got" the last line of a Shakespearean sonnet, but how can one be sure that one has finished with *The Waste Land*? The modernist writer ends up writing the "last" page but then throwing it in the dustbin, trying again, failing again, hoping to fail better.

My method of substantiating these general claims will be practical and archivally based. I focus in particular on the relationship between the autobiography and diary, which I use as examples of "closed" and "open" form. Which is easer to conclude? Which is more likely to be revised? The answer is not intuitive. I also consider the relationship between revision of a single text and revision across a related series of texts. How far can the processes be considered analogous? My primary sources in this chapter will be a series of life writings by members of the Stephen family, beginning with Leslie Stephen's *Mausoleum Book* and ending with Virginia Woolf's final text, "A Sketch of the

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[207] Gérard Genette, "Discours du récit," *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 65-282.

[208] Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 237.

[209] The final volume of *Cantos* published in Pound's life was still tentatively titled, *Drafts and Fragments of Cantos CX-CXVII* (1969), despite Pound's frequent assertions of his poem's comprehensive scope and epic aims. "An epic is a poem including history", from "Make it New", in T. S. Eliot ed. *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions: 1954), 86.

Past." Both of these texts contain a mixture of diaristic and autobiographical elements and, taken together, provide a good example of how the same events can be narrated and renarrated in different forms over the course of a writing life. In both cases, the genetic history is also well recorded: the manuscript of *The Mausoleum Book* is housed in the British Library, and the various drafts relating to "A Sketch" have been preserved at the University of Sussex library. I end the chapter by offering one final example: Joyce's diaristic ending to his 1914 novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.*

3.2 The Stephen family and Life Writing

If every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way, then the Stephen family chose autobiography as its vehicle. When Virginia Woolf began "A Sketch of the Past" in 1939, looking back nostalgically at the "very communicative, literate, letter writing, visiting, articulate, late nineteenth century world" in which she had been born, she was writing at the end of a long and intimate family tradition.[210] For, as Alex Zwerdling explains, "the Stephens had written memoirs for generations and had made sure to preserve the family legacy for posterity." Virginia Woolf's great grandfather wrote a private document for the benefit of his children, *The Memoirs of Sir James Stephen* (published in 1954). His son, George Stephen, wrote "A Memoir of the late James Stephen," which, despite its title, is "really a disgruntled apologia for his own life and a final attempt to place himself in the distinguished tradition of his family."[211] The next generation produced still keener

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[210] Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind. 2nd ed. (London: Hogarth, 1985), 64-159, 64.

[211] Christopher Dahl considers a variety of Stephen family life-writings, concurring that Woolf's own multiple essays in autobiography can be read as revisions of that tradition. Christopher C. Dahl, "Virginia Woolf's *Moments of Being* and Autobiographical Tradition in the Stephen family," *Journal of Modern Literature* 10 (1983): 175-96, 177.

memoirists; Woolf's uncle, Sir Fitzjames Stephen wrote an autobiography of his early years, working "with a copy of his grandfather's memoirs and his father's diaries at hand."[212] Her father, Leslie Stephen, was, in effect, a professional biographer, serving as first editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography* from 1885-1891, and writing many of the entries within it. He also published the "official" biography of Sir Fitzjames Stephen, in 1895, and left behind, at his death, a private and unpublished memoir of his wife Julia. Irreverently nicknamed "The Mausoleum Book" by his children, this was published in 1977. This sometimes awkward memoir oscillates between retrospective memory and continuous diary, between enjoinders to keep it "absolutely confidential" and faint hopes of future publication, thereby openly encoding the difficulties of life writing.

Virginia Woolf was herself a passionate diarist and memoirist; Daniel Albright refers to the autobiographical impetus in her writing as an "abiding obsession," commenting in particular on her recovery of childhood experiences—her "lifelong intractable struggle with the infantile."[213] A few essential elements—the sound of the waves "breaking, one, two, one, two," on a Cornish beach, the "Victorian game of manners" played out in the cloistered rooms at Hyde Park Gate, illness and hallucination, and the beautiful, "invisible presence" of her dead mother—recur in different combinations throughout all of her novels. Many of her published essays and criticism contain strongly autobiographical elements, beginning in anecdote or a surprising circumstance, before reaching for more general claims. *A Room of One's Own*, for example, advances its argument indirectly, opening with Woolf's own experience of

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[212] Alex Zwerdling, "Mastering the Memoir: Woolf and the Family Legacy," *Modernism/modernity* 10.1 (2003): 165-188, 168.

[213] Daniel Albright, "Virginia Woolf as Autobiographer," *Kenyon Review* 6.1 (1984): 1-17, 1.

meals at two different Cambridge colleges. A luxurious lunch of "soles, sunk in a deep dish, over which the college cook had spread a counterpane of the whitest cream" leads to a "plain gravy soup" served at dinner at an all women's college, and the sensual experience of a single day slowly becomes a way of advancing a feminist project.[214] Many other essays take the problems and interests of life writing as their very subject. Woolf's De Quincey is an autobiographer, someone who "understood by autobiography the history not only of the external life but of the deeper and more hidden emotions."[215] An essay written for Christina Rossetti's centenary begins with a recent biography, which Woolf describes as offering "the past and all its inhabitants miraculously sealed as in a magic tank," for "the fascination of reading biographies is irresistible."[216]

When Virginia Woolf died in 1941, she also left behind her an enormous mass of more centrally autobiographical material, including twenty-six volumes of diaries and forty years worth of letters; memoirs written for and read aloud at the Bloomsbury "Memoir Club"; the 1907 text "Reminiscences," a description of the Stephen siblings' childhood written for Vanessa Bell's unborn son; and "A Sketch of the Past," which covers much of the same material as the 1907 text, and on which she had been working immediately before her death. In 1926, meditating on the function and future use of her—already voluminous—diary, she remarked, "But undoubtedly this diary is established, & I sometimes look at it & wonder what on earth will be the fate of it. It is to serve the

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[214] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Penguin, 1945), 12-19. First published in 1928, the essay began as a talk read to female undergraduates at Cambridge.

[215] Virginia Woolf, "De Quincey's Autobiography," *Collected Essays*, ed. Leonard Woolf, vol. 4 (London: Hogarth, 1967), 1-7, 4.

[216] "I Am Christina Rossetti," *Collected Essays*, vol. 4, 54-60, 54.

purpose of my memoirs. At 60 I am to sit down and write my life..."[217] Whether the incomplete "A Sketch of the Past," begun at the age of fifty-nine, was intended as further "rough material for that masterpiece" or as the work itself remains unclear. In some sense, however, *all* of Woolf's writings can be regarded as provisional notes and jottings for a "masterpiece" that never took shape. Aware of both the provisional and the personal nature of these writings, Woolf famously and poignantly enjoined Leonard in her suicide note, "Will you destroy all my papers."[218] Like many a literary executor, however, he ignored the request, and these texts have gradually been brought into print. Jeanne Schulkind's 1976 edition, *Moments of Being*, revised and added to in 1985, conveniently collects many of them.

If we take Woolf's autobiographical writings as a group, we can see Virginia Woolf, the eminent novelist of 1939, rewriting the "Reminiscences" of the neophyte writer Virginia Stephen, begun in 1907; both texts rewrite Leslie Stephen's memoirs, which are themselves stuffed full of other texts, including Julia Stephen's own correspondence.[219] Broadening the set, we might also say that "A Sketch of the Past" is revising the image of childhood presented in *To the Lighthouse*, which itself draws on Virginia Stephen's earliest writings, and on some of Leslie Stephen's own recorded

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[217] Diary entry for 8 Feb. 1926. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie, vol. 3, 1925-30 (London: Hogarth, 1977), 58.

[218] These appear to be the last words that Virginia Woolf ever wrote, scrawled horizontally up the side of the second of her two suicide notes to Leonard, dated 28 March 1941. The note is reprinted in facsimile in *Leave The Letters Till We're Dead: The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicholson, vol. 6 (London: Hogarth, 1980), 488.

[219] Alex Zwerdling has recently argued that we should read Woolf's life writings as "a deliberately fragmented ongoing project, a rich archive of self-exploration and self-disclosure and often of bafflement that Woolf collected and preserved even though she had no intention of publishing it all, either during her lifetime or in the future." Alex Zwerdling, "Mastering the Memoir: Woolf and the Family Legacy," 167.

memories.[220] The novel opens with James Ramsay sitting on the carpet, cutting out pictures from a catalogue, and hoping that the expedition to the lighthouse, "the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed," will take place tomorrow.[221] But it is not to be: "There wasn't the slightest possible chance that they could go to the Lighthouse tomorrow, Mr. Ramsay snapped out irascibly." The *Hyde Park Gate News*, a paper produced by Stephen children, had recorded the same incident in 1892 with matter of fact bluntness: "Master Adrian Stephen was much disappointed at not being allowed to go." Quentin Bell comments that here is "the *donné* of one of Virginia's most celebrated works."[222] Ten years earlier, Leslie Stephen had provided a slightly guilty account of his own domestic failures during the long summers at St. Ives, regretting after his wife's death "how bored I was with certain guests of ours—at St. Ives, for example, when some very good friends came to be our neighbors—and how I used to plunge away into my back den.... All this comes back to me—trifles and things which were not quite trifles—and prevents me from saying, as I would so gladly have said, that I never gave her anxiety or caused her needless annoyance"[223] (89).

These various forms of life writing—novels, memoirs, autobiography, diary—can be read as a revisionary series on a grand scale. Produced by members of the same

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[220] Christine Froula comments "Woolf's stories, diaries, letters, and memoirs document the rich autobiographical sources of *To the Lighthouse*...." suggesting that the central metaphor of life as a family voyage was also a Stephen family tradition. A letter from Julia to Leslie Stephen, rejecting his first marriage proposal, is an example: "I was only 24 when it all seemed a shipwreck, and I knew that I had to live on and on..." Christine Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde: War, Civilization, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 133.

[221] Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927; London: Harcourt Brace, 1981), 3.

[222] Quoted by Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, vol. 1, 1882-1912 (London: Hogarth, 1972), 32.

[223] Alan Bell ed., *Sir Leslie Stephen's Mausoleum Book* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977). Page references to Bell's edition will be given in parenthesis. If no reference is given, it is to be assumed that I am referring to a part of the British Library manuscript (BL MS 57922) not published in Bell's edition.

family, about family affairs, they also constitute a *textual* family at a genetic level, and each new text stems from the perceived failure or incompletion of its predecessor. In 1939, Woolf acknowledged as much when she asked herself "what my intention is in writing these continual diaries. Not publication. Revision? A memoir of my own life? Perhaps."[224]

Each new version both derives from and replaces the last, as a first draft engenders and is then replaced by a second. Although the different texts are separate and discrete, performing different speech acts, they display many of the same features as texts in a more conventionally defined textual family.[225] Not only do they cover many of the same incidents, they also share certain stylistic traits, including the use of the epistolary form, the conceit that the text is addressed to future generations rather than the present one, and a scrupulous attempt to minimize the role of the observer, presenting events from the third-person, omniscient perspective of the nineteenth-century novel. Christopher Dahl recognizes this inheritance when he argues that, in both autobiography and fiction, Woolf's "techniques as a writer were...directly influenced by her father and by the family tradition which he embodied."[226]

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[224] Diary entry for 17 Aug. 1938, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 5, 162.

[225] Hermione Lee borrows the language of textual editing when she comments that Woolf "does write several versions of her autobiography, one as a letter for Vanessa's children, some as talks for the Memoir Club, the last as the beginnings of a book which she intended to publish." Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 15-16.

[226] Christopher C. Dahl, "Virginia Woolf's *Moments of Being* and Autobiographical Tradition in the Stephen family," 180.

3.3 Autobiography and Diary in *The Mausoleum Book*

The oldest member of the textual family is *The Mausoleum Book*, which Leslie Stephen began in May 1895 with the aim of memorializing and elegizing his wife Julia, who had died "scarcely more than a fortnight" earlier (3). He finished this memoir by mid summer, but continued to add other materials—including a diary—to the large folio notebook until shortly before his own death in 1904. The text has some independent interest as "an exceptional—perhaps a unique—study of late Victorian grief (and agnostic grief, too)," but my focus will be more instrumental.[227] Its blend of genres, slow compositional process, and shift from autobiography to diary form, offer an excellent illustration of the relationship between closure and different types of life writing. The text can also be read as an antecedent or *ur*-version of Woolf's own writings, and covers much of the same material. Its final entry was, in fact, *written* by Virginia, who acted as her father's amanuensis in the last months of his life. In the British Library manuscript, there is a visually arresting shift in handwriting from Leslie's taut scrawl to his daughter's larger, more flowing—and much more familiar—script. The last words of the father's writing life therefore become, in a curiously literal model of writerly inheritance, the first words of the daughter's.

Formally, Leslie Stephen's text is neither biography nor autobiography nor diary—it is a letter, addressed by a grieving husband to all of Julia Stephen's children, "George Herbert, Stella, and Gerald de l'Etang Duckworth; and Vanessa, Julian Thoby, Adeline Virginia and Adrian Leslie Stephen." It was not intended to be read until after

[227] This description is from Alan Bell's introduction to *The Mausoleum Book*, x.

the author's own death, when they had reached adulthood.[228] The relative formality of the epistle form harkens back to eighteenth-century models, such as Chesterfield's tutelary *Letters to His Son*, and feels at times impersonal; it was, however, to be adopted by Virginia Woolf in the first of her own autobiographical writings, and can be regarded as a family mode. One of its effects as form is to minimize the role of the autobiographical subject, oscillating between second person invocation ("I am writing to you personally my beloved children") and third person descriptions of Julia's own life. The governing figure of speech is *praeteritio*: "I could give a history of some struggles through which I have had to pass," we are told on the second page, "but I have a certain sense of satisfaction in knowing that I shall take that knowledge with me to the grave. There was nothing unusual or remarkable about my inner life..." The reluctance to address personal concerns is typical of Victorian anxieties about the "wisdom, propriety, or usefulness of autobiography" and creates generic instability from the beginning—is this biography or autobiography?[229] Is the memoir about Leslie or Julia?

After Leslie's death in 1904, the "large green album prominently lettered PRIVATE" was passed down through various members of the Stephen family, before being published by Alan Bell in 1977. Therefore, although the *first* of the series of Stephen family autobiographies that I discuss, it was the *last* to be published—appearing in print one year exactly after Jeanne Schulkind published Woolf's "A Sketch of the Past" in the edition *Moments of Being*. This type of chronological displacement, whereby

[228] All, that is, with the exception of Laura, believed to be "mentally deficient." (44) Leslie Stephen's memoir dwells at some length on his treatment of Laura. Louise de Salvo is one of several modern critics who see Leslie Stephen's focus in *The Mausoleum Book* on Laura's case as an unhappy attempt at self-justification.

[229] Laura Marcus discusses nineteenth-century unease about autobiographical discourse, and the perception that it is an unstable genre in: *Auto/biographical discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 13ff.

the first written text is published last—the child becoming father to the man—is a problem germane to revisionary series in general, as evinced most famously by the 1926 publication of the 1805 *Prelude*, 76 years after Wordsworth's own "deathbed version." Certain hermeneutic problems are liable to arise from the confusion between order of composition and order of publication. We recognize that *The Mausoleum Book* inaugurates various modes in which Virginia Woolf was later to write, but the publication of the text was premised on readers being *already* familiar with her work. A similar situation applies to the 1921 text of *The Waste Land* and, in some cases, the early published versions of James's novels. The second text is premised ontologically on the first; the first is premised epistemologically on the second. That is to say, the later version can only be written after the earlier one has come into being, but the earlier one is only published and read because of readerly interest in the later version.

Further kinds of temporal inversion can also be seen within the *Mausoleum Book* itself, which contains a variety of different types of life writing, including the initial memoir, an appended list of dates with brief notes, and a diary kept from 1895 until 1903. The various materials classified as British Library MSS 57920-57922 are badly organized, consisting of a mixture of loose leaf papers and bound notebooks, and it is hard at first sight to understand in which order they should be read. This confusion is partly a result of poor conservation, but it also reflects the intrinsically palimpsestic nature of the text, which was copied, revised, stopped, restarted and emended over a ten year period. Even the text of the memoir—the first and longest entry in the folio notebook—is apparently not the original version. It is dated two and a half weeks after Julia's death, on 21 May 1895, but before the text begins we find a brief note dated two

months later, "July 1895." This was the month when Leslie Stephen began copying his original text into the large and expensive brown notebook, covered with gold flowers, that now makes up BL MS 57922. Written in a fluent, cursive hand, with very few corrections, this text opens:

> I am about to copy here a paper which I wrote last May. You will find the original in a manuscript box containing my correspondence with Julia. I shall probably make a few alterations, some of them in consequence of remarks that have occurred to me upon again looking through our letters. But unless any special reason occurs, I shall not think it worth while to mark any changes.[230] (3)

By telling us that there is no point in marking changes, Stephen acknowledges the *fact* of revision, while concealing all traces of its *process*. We know that this is a copy and therefore already finished—there is no possibility of failure—but the text presents itself, like the 1850 version of *The Prelude*, as a first performance, "I am about to."

A brief coda at the end symmetrically balances the prefatory note, linking the activities of remembering, rereading, and rewriting. After the rhetorical flourish of the letter's ending, "We will cling to each other," Leslie Stephen signs off. The coda that follows is dated one week after the prefatory note, and explains:

> I finish copying this on 11 July 1895. I have made a good many alterations, as I proceeded... I have altered a good many later passages, partly correcting slovenly phrases and repetitions, partly from a few letters, etc., which have since turned up, and partly adding a few thoughts which occurred to me as I read my manuscript over again. (97)

From the three dates given, we can deduce that it took Leslie Stephen about a week to "copy out" his original letter and, consequently, that about a sixth of the time devoted to the project was spent on copying rather than first draft composition. By this point, the memoir has been finished twice. It begins at the beginning and ends with Julia's death,

[230] I give parenthetical directions to the relevant pages in Bell's edition, for ease of reference.

"the last terrible time," when Leslie Stephen saw his wife "sinking quietly into the arms of death" (96-7): it is, apparently, complete. What remains to be said?

In fact, Stephen continued making additional entries in his *Mausoleum Book* for the next eight years, until his own death in 1903. Some of these entries provide additional information about places and dates, while others are corrections on the verso page, opposite the entry to which they refer. In 1895, for example, Stephen had noted that "I wish chiefly to say that I have no cause of regret for any of my pecuniary relations to Anny." Three years later, the *apologia* is written neatly on the verso: "In regard to the opposite statement, I have now (July 1898) a statement to make." Anny is preparing an edition of her father's work (her father was William Makepeace Thackeray) for publication and has offered Leslie Stephen a share of the proceeds, which he has accepted. "I don't know whether this was right: but—I did it."

The underlying belief—that it is theoretically possible to give the definitive, legalistic "statement" of events—can be understood historically, as an extreme version of Victorian positivism. The habit of *verso* correction should also serve, however, as an illustration of a more general truth, that it can be difficult or impossible to elide the present "I" from accounts of past time. All of the revisions made to the original manuscript concern Leslie Stephen's own actions and thoughts—not new facts about Julia's biography. As the text is reread and rewritten, it becomes ever more *auto*biographical. This is not entirely surprising. Autobiography is, after all, a genre that begins, as George Gusdorf has put it, as a second reading of life experience, a "final chance to win back what has been lost."[231] Its "avowed plan" may be to provide, like

[231] George Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," trans. James Olney, *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 28-48, 38.

history or biography, a simple account of past experience (perfective aspect), but its deepest intentions are always to justify the past to the present (perfect aspect).[232]

After the coda, Leslie Stephen also added a variety of new materials to the book. Having reached the present date of writing, July 1895, in his final note, he then reverted to the beginning of his life to list "some of the dates to which I have referred in the proceeding—partly because I like to fix them in my own mind, partly because, if you look at the letters, you may find them convenient" (97). The text's gradual tilt towards subjectivity is evident in the selection of events, which give a good deal of weight to relatively trivial incidents in Leslie's own life.[233] Indeed, the list of dates begins with Leslie Stephen's own birth, containing in note form all of the elements of the traditional late Victorian *Bildungsroman*, including birth, education, maturity, and the renunciation of faith:

> I was born 28 November 1832: to school at Brighton end of 1840; to Eton at Easter 1842... I went to Trinity Hall, Cambridge, in October 1850; B.A. January 1854; became fellow soon afterwards & tutor in 1855; resigned my tutorship in 1862 and left Cambridge at the end of 1864.

The dates take up four large folio pages, effectively repeating in a new format exactly the same material that has been already covered. Having reached the now of writing time by the end of the memoir, we return to 1832, and work our way back to the present. The notes end, in fact, with an entry that returns to Julia's death and the genesis of the book.

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[232] George Gusdorf makes a similar point when he argues that the puzzlement of the genre derives from the gap between "the avowed plan of autobiography which is simply to retrace the history of a life, and its deepest intentions, which are directed toward a kind of apologetics or theodicy of the individual being." "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," 39

[233] The note for 1882, for example, recounts: "25 January Adeline Virginia born," before continuing "At Easter, I went with Herbert Stephen to St. Ives."

This second set of last words could stand synecdochally for the book as a whole: "5 May—alas!"

Having written up to the present moment twice, Leslie Stephen was faced with a puzzle. On the one hand, the purpose of his project—viewed as retrospective memoir—seems complete: doubly so. What reason can there be for adding any new material? On the other hand, the prospect of terminating an autobiography is a dangerous and deadly one. Dencombe's unwillingness to surrender his novel to the reading public is one illustration of the relationship between writing and survival, finishing and death. When one is writing one's own life story, the difficulty is compounded. To come to the end of one's own life in narrative time implies that the life has ended in real time, or that it is shortly about to.

To write an autobiography involves pronouncing, albeit implicitly, a sentence that is "legitimately impossible as a performative utterance."[234] This is the sentence that Derrida found and was moved by in Barthes, and which Barthes unearthed in Edgar Allen Poe: "I am dead."[235] Paul de Man was pointing to the same paradox when he argued that "the dominant figure of epitaphic or autobiographical discourse is... prosopopoeia, the fiction of the-voice-from-beyond-the-grave."[236] For many nineteenth-century writers, strongly aware of the epitaphic or funerary associations of the genre, this theoretical observation would not have been surprising. Charles Darwin began his own autobiography in 1876 with the following words: "I have attempted to write the following

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[234] Jacques Derrida, "Roland Barthes," *The Work of Mourning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 31-67, 65.

[235] Derrida refers to Roland Barthes, "Analyse textuelle d'un conte d'Edgar Poe," *L'Aventure Sémiologique* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), 329-59.

[236] Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-Facement," *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 67-81, 77.

account of myself, as if I were a dead man in another world looking back at my own life."[237]

This fatal logic is one of the reasons, I suggest, why writers of autobiography are driven to keep revising and "keeping alive" their work. Had Leslie Stephen ended his work on 5 May, 1895, he would, in a sense, have been entombing himself (like the original manuscript) with his dead wife; this was the melancholy choice made by Rossetti.[238] Instead he chose to extend his text sporadically, both by revising the text of the memoir, and by moving from the aspectual completion desired by autobiography into the open form of diary. He made the first, apologetic, entry in November 1895: "I propose to make a few notes in this book of anything likely to interest you hereafter" (98). Many of the subsequent entries note mundane events and activities in the life of the Stephen family, including Thoby's successes at school, holidays in England and abroad, and various illnesses. Others remain close to the book's original purpose as an extended eulogy and obituary by cataloging the deaths of various people whom Leslie Stephen had known; at times, as Alan Bell has it, this section approaches "a mixture of a necrology with obituary notes."[239]

Like the main body of the text, this slowly accreting diary was corrected several times by the author as he reread his work. There is only one instance, however, of revision by extension, where additional material was written on the left-hand page of the

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[237] Frances Darwin ed., *Charles Darwin: His Life Told in an Autobiographical Chapter, and in a Selected Series of His Publisher's Letters* (London: John Murray, 1902), 5.

[238] Dante Rossetti buried his manuscript poems, including the long poem *Jenny*, in 1862 with his dead wife Jenny. He also suffered a change of mind, and dug them up again in 1869 to continue revising. See Jules Paul Segal, "Jenny: The Divided Sensibility of a Young and Thoughtful Man of the World," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 9.4 (Autumn 1969): 677-693, 677.

[239] See Alan Bell, *The Mausoleum Book*, 96.

folio. This is the entry relating to the death of Julia's daughter by her first marriage, Stella Duckworth. The need to "revise" the first reading of experience by adding a later note is another illustration of how hard it can be to stop writing about one's own life. This time, however, Stephen is revising a diary entry rather than an autobiography, frustrating readerly expectations of spontaneity, and thereby illustrating some of the differences between the two modes. I would like to dwell in some detail on the language and rhetorical figures of this addition, which were to be picked up by Virginia Woolf in her own accounts of Stella's death. After considering the reappearance and modification of various tropes of "not speaking" across the Stephen family series, I will return to the "revisability" of diary and autobiography at the end of this discussion.

3.4 Stella's Death: Writing the Impossible

The entry in *The Mausoleum Book* informing us of Stella's death is unusually long and contains a variety of disparate material. It begins on 26 June 1897, in Leslie Stephen's laconic and factual style: "Mrs. Oliphant died. I first met her at Grindelwald when we were staying there in the summer of 1875..." The previous entry, dated 10 April, had narrated the story of Stella's marriage, some of the writer's "selfish pangs" as he considered the loss of a daughter, her honeymoon abroad and her return in ill health. All seemed to be improving, however:

> Stella returned on Sunday 25 April from her wedding-trip. She was apparently quite well that day and on Monday. She was taken ill on Tuesday. The attack soon appeared to be peritonitis. On Thursday things looked very serious. That night, however, she improved: on Sunday the doctors admitted that she was really out of danger—and a terrible fear has been removed. (103)

The entry from June continues to note that "Stella... is still laid up. She has had two relapses," but once again is adamant that the danger is not serious, "The doctors, however, give good accounts of her now." The next line of the entry is written directly under the last, but entirely and terribly refutes it: "My darling Stella died early on the morning of 19 July 1897." The ironic juxtaposition of hope and disappointment is typical of the linear diary form, always written in the immediate present and without any of hindsight's benefits.

The entry ends with this announcement, and the diary is not picked up again until 24 September, when Leslie Stephen mentions in his blankly informative style that the family has come back from a holiday. The sole link to the emotional abyss opened in the previous entry comes, ironically, in the place name, for the family have been in "Painswick." Stella's death is mentioned only at second hand, as Leslie notes that her new husband, Jack Hills, has "offered, and I felt it right to accept his offer, to contribute to my expenses out of the income which he receives as Stella's heir" (104). Several discomfiting questions immediately present themselves. Why did Leslie Stephen not give the announcement of Stella's death—which occurred three weeks after the diary's head date—a new entry of its own? Is it because the item seems poignantly to cling to the previous discussion of her health? Is it because a one line entry would be too melodramatic? Why, moreover, in a book heavy with the gloom of the mausoleum, is Stella's death recorded so briefly? The same page on which her death is recorded, in one sentence, contains eleven sentences about the demise of the seventy-six year old Frederick Waymouth Gibbs, who lodged with the Stephens while Leslie was a child, and became "one of the few people whom I could trust absolutely." One answer would be that

Leslie Stephen was not particularly affected by the death of a step-daughter, from his wife's first marriage. This, in fact, is the explanation that Quentin Bell offered in his 1972 biography of Virginia Woolf, where Leslie was described as coming "very near the end of the funeral procession. He was of course afflicted, but his tread was elastic, his eyes were dry."[240] The other answer, which I pursue, is the one provided by Leslie Stephen himself, in the facing page note that he attached to this description three years later.

> I had not the heart to say more when I wrote the words above. I read this in 1900 and will just add that the most striking thing was the singular revelation of Stella's beautiful character, when after her mother's death she had to take care of me and again when she became engaged to Jack. It did not seem as if she really changed but as if she showed her true self more clearly and brightly. Everyone near to her noticed it. Alas! (104)

The facing page note has the effect of putting the first statement, "My darling Stella died early on the morning of July 1897," into quotation marks. It also breaks the frame of the diary, interpolating the year 1900 between July and September 1897. In this respect, the addition seems to transgress an essential feature of the form—its linear ordering, and its emotional spontaneity. What does it mean to update a form whose entire affect derives from the immediate evocation of a (now vanished) "now"? As an excuse for his original terseness, Leslie Stephen evokes the figure of *aporia*: he "had not the heart to say more" in 1897, and is only able to add the eulogistic, if imprecise, account of Stella's "beautiful character" after rereading his words three years later. The addition attempts to make reparation for his previous curtness, but is not entirely successful. Rather than veiling over the first inadequate response, it draws attention to it; with the logic of all supplements, it points to the original lack. Elsewhere, *The Mausoleum Book* is

[240] Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (London: Pimlico, 1996), 62.

fluent and sometimes prolix in its obituary notices. What is it about this death that stifles the writer's ability to find the right words?

Virginia Woolf's many accounts of the same event, in her contemporary diary entries, her 1907 memoir "Reminiscences" and final work, "A Sketch of the Past", also play with different figures of not speaking, not explaining, not comprehending. Something about Stella's death—perhaps its suddenness—silenced this "very communicative, literate, letter writing, visiting, articulate" family. It is "impossible to write of" and "incredible," much more difficult to narrate than Julia's death two years earlier. Coming so soon after this first tragedy and following directly from her own marriage, Stella's death is indigestible, the kind of event that would not fit comfortably into a realist novel. Virginia's first attempt to report the incident came in July 1897, when she entered the news into her diary with brevity resembling her father's:

> At 3 this morning, Georgie & Nessa came to me, & told me that Stella was dead—That is all we have thought of since; & it is impossible to write of.[241]

Translating thought into writing is the very purpose of the diary form, and, as a result, the semi-colon between "thought of since" and "& it is impossible" is powerfully disjunctive. The diary seems to have let its writer down. This impression is strengthened by the gap left against the next day's entry—the first day in 1897 which Virginia did not record. The blankness enacts the trope of incapacity visually, as a gap on the page.

When she sat down ten years later to write the first of her retrospective memoirs, Woolf found herself dwelling once again on the bewildering suddenness of Stella's death.

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[241] Virginia Woolf, *A Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals, 1897-1909*, ed. Mitchell Leaska (London: Hogarth, 1990), 115.

After describing Stella's marriage, and her pleasure in Vanessa's growing beauty ("She felt what a mother would have felt") the third section of "Reminiscences" ends:

> But once more she fell ill; again, almost in a moment, there was danger, and this time it did not pass away, but pressed on and on, till suddenly we knew that the worst had actually come to pass. Even now it seems incredible.[242]

As in the previous diary entry, the disordered syntax and punctuation, combined with multiple temporal references ("once more," "again," "in a moment," "this time," "till suddenly"), formally enact the frightening non-sequentiality of events. Before she had called the tragedy "impossible" to describe, while suggesting that it remained perfectly possible—even necessary—to consider it. Now Woolf reaches for another negative verbal adjective. Not only did Stella's death defy representation in 1897, but it remains "incredible," increasingly difficult to comprehend as an episode in Stephen family history.

A more formally innovative way of representing the same narrative impasse can be seen in the description of Prue's death in *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf's most autobiographical novel. As she redrafted the central "Time Passes" section, she hit upon the strategy of representing the central narrative events in parenthesis. The "main" body of the narrative tells the story of Mrs. McNab working to clean the disused house, and of the house's decay across different seasons. The life of the Ramsay family is presented tersely within square brackets, inverted and obscure like the white spaces on a photographic negative.

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[242] Virginia Woolf, "Reminiscences," *Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind, 25-59, 53.

> [Prue Ramsay, leaning on her father's arm, was given in marriage. What, people said, could have been more fitting? And, they added, how beautiful she looked!]"[243]

After a short interlude about summer weather, the ironic turn is utterly unexpected. As readers, we are inevitably as foolish and complacent as the unnamed hordes who believed that "everything had promised so well."

> "[Prue Ramsay died that summer in some illness connected with childbirth, which was indeed a tragedy, people said, everything, they said, had promised so well.] (205)

The troublesome use of parenthesis is reminiscent of both Leslie and Virginia's 1897 diary entries: important information is marginalized and sealed off, while mundane accounts of domestic life proliferate around it. The use of a series of indefinite pronouns here—"they," "some illness"—also creates epistemological instability, reminiscent of the uncertainty built into diary writing. The narrator of *Time Passes* seems to know as little about the illness "connected with childbirth" as Virginia Stephen had done in 1897.

The interest of the "Time Passes" section in relation to Woolf's earlier autobiographical writings is twofold. The novel as a whole postdates the 1897 diary and 1907 "Reminiscences," displaying a mature and formally innovative solution to an old narrative impasse. The published "Time Passes" section was, moreover, itself the result of substantial rewriting, and represents the *last* stage in a series of attempts to convey the same material fictionally. The manuscript of the novel, available in Susan Dick's facsimile edition, bears witness to Woolf's own intuition that the "Time Passes" section was "the most difficult abstract piece of writing," giving her "more trouble than all of the

[243] Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, (1927; London: Hogarth, 1974), 204-5.

rest of the book put together."[244] In the original draft, the only mention of the absent Ramsay family comes filtered through the distracted consciousness of Mrs. McNab, who thinks about the possibility that the house might be sold, and the war, and then adds:

> So Mrs. Ramsay was dead; & ~~youn~~ Mr. Andrew killed they said & Miss Prudence, who had married, she had died too, with her first ~~bady~~ baby they said. Everyone had lost someone in these years. Prices had gone up shamefully: they didn't come down either.[245]

When Woolf revised the "Time Passes" section in 1926 for independent publication in the French journal *Commerce*, the basic structure remained the same. The narrative was focalized through Mrs. McNab, and the Ramsay family deaths were mentioned only in passing, as part of a longer catalogue of war dead. The use of parentheses to separate off this information, drawing attention to the way in which personal and public tragedies are ironically juxtaposed, was one of the last revisions made to the finished novel. Only in the final version, moreover, is the ironic sequence of events fully felt: Prue's marriage is now narrated *just before* her death, rather than as an additional piece of information to be added after it.

In the *Lighthouse* manuscripts we see an overlap of two different kinds of revision: the repetition of tropes already used in earlier accounts of the same event, and revision across drafts of a single text. Despite finding an elegant fictional solution, however, Woolf was still unable to lay the incident to rest in her autobiographical writing. In "A Sketch of the Past", written at the end of Woolf's own life, she returned once more to her half-sister's death. The version printed by Jeanne Schulkind in the

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[244] The first remark is in a diary entry for 18 April 1926, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 3, 76. The second is quoted by James Haule from a letter of May 15, 1927, to Ottoline Morrell. James M. Haule, "'Le Temps passe' and the Original Typescript: An Early Version of the 'Time Passes' Section of *To the Lighthouse*," *Twentieth Century Literature* 29.3 (Fall 1983): 267-311, 269.

[245] Holograph draft of *To the Lighthouse*, ed. Susan Dick (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 176.

second edition of *Moments of Being* emphasizes the misinformation and "mismanagement" that led to an unnecessary tragedy.

> And directly she came back she was taken ill. It was appendicitis; she was going to have a baby. And that was mismanaged too; and so, after three months of intermittent illness, she died—at 24 Hyde Park Gate, on July 27th, 1897.[246]

Once again, Woolf considers silence as a therapeutic method, a necessary repression:

> I can remember the awkwardness with which Thoby avoided saying 'Stella' when a ship called *Stella* sank. (I remember that when Thoby died, that Adrian and I agreed to talk about him. 'There are so many people that are dead now,' we said.) But this silence was known to cover something.

That final indefinite noun points once again to the difficulty of speech—silence attempts to "cover something," but can do so only imperfectly. In choosing between speech and silence, or between avoiding speech and agreeing on it, Woolf points to the problem of "double telling" that, according to Cathy Caruth, is at the heart of traumatic narrative. The reiterated "I remember" leads to two alterative possibilities; the choice between them is "the oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival."[247]

Leslie Stephen "did not have the heart to say more" when he wrote in his *Mausoleum Book*, and his children avoided "saying 'Stella'," even when the referent was a ship rather than a person. This felt awkwardness of speech may be one of the reasons why both father and daughter returned to the incident, trying to rewrite and recuperate words that were originally inadequate. The Sussex manuscripts of "A Sketch of the Past"

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[246] Stella actually died on July 19, 1897. The version printed by Schulkind is a very rough draft, and would undoubtedly have been corrected before publication.

[247] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 8.

indicate once again that Stella's death presented its writer with compositional problems; as in *To the Lighthouse*, the passages relating to her are more heavily revised than most of the surrounding material. Woolf tells us that she began thinking, once again, of Stella "in a very jerky disconnected way" during a broken night of sleep on a travel crossing (106). Then the narration itself breaks off, to be resumed a month later:

> 19 July, 1939
> I was forced to break off again and rather suspect that these breaks will be the end of this memoir. I was thinking about Stella, as I crossed the Channel a month ago. I have not given her a thought since. The past only comes back when the present runs so smoothly that it is like the sliding surface of a deep river. Then one sees through the surface to the depth. (109)

After this entry there appears to be an even more substantial disjunction, and the next diary entry is dated a full year later, in June 1940. After some detail about Stella's engagement and marriage, comes, once again, the announcement of her death:

> And directly she came back she was taken ill. It was appendicitis; she was going to have a baby. And that was mismanaged too; and so, after three months of intermittent illness, she died—at 24 Hyde Park Gate, on July 27th, 1897.

Woolf implies that the reason for the year-long gap between entries is lack of attention on her part; compared to her other projects, "A Sketch" is unimportant. In fact, she tells us, she only picked up the memoir again by chance, after pulling it out from the trash to which it had been consigned.

> I have just found this sheaf of notes, thrown away into my waste-paper basket. I had been tidying up; and had cast all my life of Roger into that large basket, and with it, these sheets too. (111)

The manuscript evidence belies this claim. Jeanne Schulkind's published text is based on one manuscript at Sussex (A.5d) and a manuscript at the British Library (BL 61973),

which represents "a much improved and reworked revision" of the earlier text.[248] Before Woolf wrote the version of events in A.5d, however, she made notes and worked on a rough first draft of twenty-one pages. This early version constitutes the A.5c manuscript at Sussex. It illustrates that, despite Woolf's self-consciously casual tone, she actually tried very hard to get this "sketch" right, producing as much draft material as for her major phase novels. Although the description of Stella's death is dated "1940," in the final version, the draft is dated "19 July 1939." Accordingly, the break between entries is not so much a truthful reporting of writing time, as an indication that the genesis and composition of this "sketch" was more professional, and more painful, than Woolf was willing to admit.

The A.5d version of "19th July 1939" ends with Stella's refusal of Jack, but the earlier version continues past this point, detailing the couple's eventual engagement, and Woolf's own adolescent belief that they offered a "standard of love" by which to judge all others. After this, the A.5c manuscript devolves into note form. The neat handwriting, running from one side of the page to the other, becomes harder to read, with many crossings out, restricted to the center of the page like a list.

> Anecdotes of old Buzzy.
> One –when Susan Lushington was at Corby.
> Oh yes. I feel I was with [?]
> Your friend – husband…
> I feel I am sitting on a tripod and foretelling the future.
> Here Mrs H. grinned.
> Jack looked glum.
> Russian toffee
> & his Sh-ean sonnet.

Much of this material was eventually worked into the memoir. The entry for 1940, for example, tells us that Jack's father, known as Buzzy, gave the Stephen children "Russian

[248] Jeanne Schulkind, Editor's Note, *Moments of Being*, 69-71, 70.

toffee up at Corby. Buzzy had once written a sonnet that had been taken for Shakespeare's." The acknowledged aim is that of filling in Stella's background:

> These jottings must now converge.
> They fill in S's background. Here she hands like a pale rose
> against that queer still brick wall.
> Brot to return then to 1896...

There is more of Virginia herself in this version than the final one, including a description of her first mental breakdown in 1896, which was associated with a total loss of interest in writing. "The desire left me: which I have had all my life, with that two years break. Never wrote a story or essay; never wished to. Perhaps the excitement was too great – the distraction of that racing pulse." There are also more reflections on the hazards of autobiographical writing, including the problem of "point of view," and the question of how to reconcile the experiences of body and mind. ("So I lived the 2 years between my mother's death and Stella's in a state of physical distress exclusion[?] How again separate the body and the mind?") As it continues, the text becomes more and more badly written, with words cascading down the center of the page and multiple crossings out and underlinings. Nothing is said about the process of Virginia's recovery from her first breakdown, and the manuscript ends with a curious shift towards the impersonal, considering the relationship of her mother's family to history ("They could not foretell 1917, let alone Hitler.") and ending with witty descriptions of various distant relatives under the sub-headings, "The Crofts" and "The Vaughns."

Stella is undoubtedly the central figure in the scene, referred to in the unspecified third person as "she." And yet, when the manuscript peters out we are still in 1896, the year in which Virginia broke down unable to write, and the year before her half-sister's death. Once again, her death seems to be a compositional blocking point—a place

journeyed towards but not quite reached. We cannot be certain how long Woolf spent drafting and working on this entry, but we do know that it was not until the following year that she found herself able to proceed past the aphasia of 1896 (one of this text's many odd symmetries between past and present) and on to 1897. In the final version, she selected a writing style which—like that of "Time Passes"—is highly elliptical. She says nothing at all about her own breakdown, replacing this painful material from the past with a more abstract, or transferred, focus on the text's own tendency to "break off." The final version moves very sharply from an extended description of Jack Hills and his mother, to a two sentence announcement of Stella's wedding, and then the very brief announcement of her death. This strategy of interchanging background and foreground, with emphasis placed on trivial detail about distant relations and on the writing process itself, rather than on the main event, is reminiscent both of the parenthetical narrative of "Time Passes" and perhaps of Leslie Stephen's "heartless" lack of focus in *The Mausoleum Book.*

How does one narrate something that seems illogical, out of sequence, meaningless? Towards the end of "A Sketch," Woolf described the chaos of Stephen family life in the years 1895-7 using one of Leslie Stephen's—and Mr. Ramsay's—favourite words. The two deaths were "unnecessary blunders; those two lashes of the random unheeding, unthinking flail that brutally and pointlessly killed the two people who should have made those years normal and natural, if not 'happy'" (150). And yet autobiography is a genre that must keep trying to find explanations, weaving a coherent narrative out of events that lack the cleanness of a fictional plot. The tension between narration and unnarratability led both Leslie Stephen and his daughter to return to and

revise their initially unsatisfactory depictions, producing two different kinds of rewriting. The additions to *The Mausoleum Book* and the various draft versions of *To the Lighthouse* and "A Sketch of the Past" update and correct a single text; Woolf's series of autobiographical texts form a series spread out over thirty-five years. As she worked on her final memoir, we know that she also returned to her father's writings, rereading *The Mausoleum Book* and some family letters. A diary entry from December 1940 notes "How beautiful they were, those old people—I mean father & mother—how simple, how clear, how untroubled. I have been dipping into old letters & fathers memoirs."[249]

The first conclusion that we can draw from these repeated narrations is this: the two kinds of revision—revision of a single text, and revision across an extended series—resemble and enhance each other. Versions of the same text have inevitable narrative and thematic similarities, but so too do the life writings of family members, bound inevitably to record the same characters and "incredible" events. In this respect, we see a popular nineteenth-century metaphor for textual process strangely literalized. The Lachmannian stemma was developed in the late nineteenth century as a method for modeling the relationship between different extant versions of a text.[250] It proceeds by constructing a "family tree" of surviving versions, with the aim of discovering their genealogical relationship. In this case, we can depict the British Library manuscript as the last branch on the tree, evolving out of the earlier A.5d, which itself evolved from the rough draft A.5c. At the same time, one could also draw up a more inclusive stemma, displaying "A

[249] Diary entry for 22 Dec. 1940, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 5, 345.

[250] In an article from 1930, William Shepard gives a useful summary of the history of textual criticism in the nineteenth century and up to his own day, explaining that in Lachmann's work on the New Testament and Classics he "sought to establish as a general principle the classification of families of manuscripts by means of 'common errors'." William P. Shepard, "Recent Theories of Textual Criticism," *Modern Philology* 28.2 (1930): 129-141, 130.

Sketch" as an evolution of "Reminiscences," itself a descendant of its epistolary forbear, *The Mausoleum Book*. In this respect, Lachmann's genealogical model of textual change—a heuristic device for establishing the relationship between texts from different period—looks *visually* very much like the more familiar branches of the Stephen family tree. Stella's death is a particularly clear example of both processes of evolution at work. We have seen that the trope of "speaking/not speaking" exceeds the stuttering equivocations of a single text: it is, to update the biological metaphor, a piece of textual DNA replicated across *all* of the versions.

The kind of narrative impasse presented by Stella's death can also be understood as a model for revision as a compositional method or speech act. The event is both rewritten and repeatedly dwelled on as a source of writing difficulty, creating a loop of desire and failure, just as revision loops between trying to say something and admitting that previous attempts have been unsatisfactory. To put it another way, it is *through* the medium of writing that Woolf confesses Stella's death is "impossible to write of." Revising a text means insisting, in a similarly paradoxical fashion, that it is not equal to itself: the writer attempts to make a work (*The American*, say) "make for and mean," while insisting that, as it stands, the same work falls short of meaningfulness. There is an oscillation between trying and failing, a paradoxical attempt to *both* speak *and* not speak.

Samuel Beckett's work is perhaps the richest and most relentless examination of these aporetic paradoxes that we have; his speakers are always trying (and failing) to stop speaking, often playing with the same kinds of negative verbal adjective that we have see the Stephens using. So the lines from *Worstward Ho*, "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better," which are usually read as an *ethical* admission of

failure could equally well be understood as the motto of the revising writer, trying, failing, restarting and failing better.[251] A line such as "I had not the heart to say more" simultaneously acknowledges the failure of a text to convey meaning while trying to remedy the problem and "fail better." It also points to some of the particular kinds of revisionary surplus likely in autobiographical writing, where the failure of a past self to deal adequately with events becomes a part of the continued story. We have already seen how Leslie Stephen's *Mausoleum Book* evolves from a tightly eulogistic memoir of his dead wife to a more sprawling diary, added to at random over an eight year period. The emotions felt on 21 May 1895, when Leslie Stephen began recording them, succeed to those of July 1895 (the date of copying), and are then updated more or less in present time until the final entry. The difficulty of the text, and the source of its frequent tonal instability, is the conflict between the two modes. Stephen is always aspiring to the retrospective closure of autobiography, and yet his text always seems to dissolve into the hesitancy and immediacy of diary.

The book's final words provide a particularly poignant and clear example of the tendency of life writing to elude closure, no matter how hard the writer tries to force it. Having already ended and restarted his book several times, Leslie Stephen finally finishes by bidding farewell to his children: "It comforts me to think that you are all so fond of each other that when I am gone you will be the better able to do without me." The attempt at closure is undercut, however, by the fact that this entry is written materially in Virginia Stephen's handwriting. Taken as Leslie Stephen's last words, this final sentence is mawkish in a conventionally Victorian way, begging the response "Oh no... We'll be much worse off without you." Knowing that these words were written by Virginia,

[251] Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, 7.

however, creates the immediate possibility of an ironic reading. Perhaps Leslie Stephen's children *will* be better off without that awkward character. In 1928, Woolf noted in her diary: "Father's birthday. He would have been 96, 96, yes, today; & could have been 96, like other people one has known; but mercifully was not. His life would have entirely ended mine. What would have happened? No writing, no books;—inconceivable."[252]

3.5 Autobiography, Diary, and the Problem of Finish

Is there any way to escape the pressure of continuously updating? How can one finish writing about one's own life? Literary history offers many other examples of autobiographies that could not be satisfactorily ended. Wordsworth's *Prelude*, perhaps the most heavily revised text in the English canon, is also an inaugural example of a revised retrospective autobiography, displaying, as Stephen Gill has it, the poet's "compulsion to reuse his earlier poetry and to remould it in such a way that it becomes congruent with his current perception of himself or with his current flow of thought."[253] Walt Whitman offers another example of a self-portraitist reluctant to conclude; his *Leaves of Grass* was revised and expanded over thirty-seven years in eight editions.[254] In their study of memory in literature, Singer and Salovey suggest that Whitman's compulsive revisions reflect a general human impetus: "so do we all add, delete, and alter

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[252] Diary entry for 28 Nov. 1928, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 3, 208. Woolf goes on to note that "I used to think of him & mother daily; but writing The Lighthouse, laid them in my mind." As "A Sketch of the Past" shows this was, at best, a temporary reprieve.

[253] Stephen Gill, "'Affinities Preserved': Poetic Self-Reference in Wordsworth," *Studies In Romanticism* 24.4 (Winter 1985): 531-49, 537.

[254] Maud Ellmann poses the central question in her essay "The Name and the Scar." She is comparing Joyce to Wordsworth: "what is it about self-portraiture... which makes them so reluctant to conclude?" *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: A Casebook*, ed. Mark Wollaeger (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 143-181, 154.

our collection of self-defining memories until we reach a final edition brought on only by our own death."[255] Henry James abandoned the third volume of his autobiography, *The Middle Years*, amid increasing skepticism about the very possibility of "making for and meaning."

All forms of life writing are difficult to conclude, but I want to end by suggesting that autobiography—a controlled and retrospective set of "self-defining memories"—is more difficult to finish than straightforward diary. This is not an intuitive point. Indeed, Philippe Lejeune has recently argued for the *opposite* claim. In his 2001 piece, "How Do Diaries End?" he suggested that diarists lack models and rituals for closure, quoting Andre Gide's ambivalent last words in support of his claim:

> No! I cannot admit that with the end of this notebook, everything will be over; that it will be done. Maybe I will want to still add something more. Add I don't know what. Just add. Maybe. At the last minute, add still something more...[256]

He concludes that autobiography and diary exist in an inverse relationship, where autobiography is always turned towards the past and finishable, and where diary is turned towards the future and never finishable. "It is as diary that autobiography is unfinishable. Likewise, it is as autobiography that the diary can be 'finished.' All autobiography is finishable. The proof is that 'how to' handbooks devote entire chapters to the rituals of closure."[257]

Lejeune writes as if "finishing" were limited to finding the right "last words," but this is not in fact the case. Wordsworth's problem with *The Prelude* was not his inability

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[255] Jefferson A. Singer and Peter Salovey, *The Remembered Self: Emotion and Memory in Personality* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 200.

[256] Philippe Lejeune, "How Do Diaries End?" *Biography* 24.1 (2001): 99-112, 101.

[257] Philippe Lejeune, "How Do Diaries End?" 103.

to write a sufficiently resounding last line, but his sense that the text *as a whole* was an unsatisfactory record of his current thoughts about past time. In fact, the long final sentence of *The Prelude*, beginning "Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak," was not much changed between the 1805 and 1850 texts.[258] The *Oxford English Dictionary* supports the notion that finishing is not limited to reaching the last page of a text, defining the verb not only as "to come to the end of," but also "to go through the last period of stage of," "to perfect finally or in detail," and "to put the final and completing touches to a thing."[259] Very often different types of finishing are poorly aligned. As we have seen, it was the *middle* section of *To the Lighthouse*, "Time Passes," which was the last to be achieved in its current form. Henry James wrote *Finis* at the end of the first edition of *The American*, but the book was not in his view truly finished until 1908, after he had revised it for the *New York Edition*. We might, in fact, say that *The American* was finished multiple times. To begin with, James had to add enough material to reach the end of the plot, separating Newman and Madame de Cintré, and destroying the piece of paper that encodes the Bellegardes' secret.[260] Later, he finished the text again, working on proofs of the 1883 Macmillan edition which had been pasted up onto large sheets with a blank border.[261] This second finishing involved making the relationship with Valentin more intimate, and altering characters' habitual speech patterns and gestures. To begin

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[258] I am using Ernest de Selincourt's parallel text edition, which shows three minor changes in 11 lines; this is a less than average amount of variation between versions. William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: Growth of a Poet's Mind*, 506-7.

[259] "finish, v." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 19 May 2008 <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezp1.harvard.edu/cgi/entry/50084997>.

[260] James told a disappointed William Dean Howells "In a word Mme de Cintré doesn't marry Newman, and I couldn't possible have made her do it." Letter, 24 Oct. 1876, *Henry James Selected Letters*, ed. Leon Edel (Cambridge: Belknap, Harvard University Press, 1987), 136-7, 137.

[261] Philip Horne gives a more detailed account of this method. See *Henry James and Revision*, 150.

with, he finished the text by extending it; later, in 1908, he finished it again by correcting what was already there.

The possibility of finishing a text by correction only emerges if it has already been finished by extension; and this is the source of a profound paradox. The fact that autobiography *can* be finished, as Lejeune argues, means that it also *can't* be finished. The genre begins as a "second reading" of life experience, but that second reading creates space for a third, and a fourth, and so on, until one enters the revisionary regression that Dencombe feared. It is a form that both aspires to and inspires closure. Paul de Man makes this claim in different forms in his seminal essay, "Autobiography as Defacement," arguing that writers of (and on) autobiography "are obsessed by the need to move from cognition to resolution and action," and yet simultaneously that "the interest of autobiography... is that it reveals in a striking way the impossibility of closure and of totalization."[262] Leslie Stephen's *Mausoleum Book* provides an almost absurd example of the point; he managed to come to the end of his memoir multiple times, and yet after each ending found himself compelled to reopen the book, reread, revise. Even the final pages, which begin as diary, do not escape the retrospective eye of the autobiographer. Leslie Stephen is always justifying his past self to his present one, and to an envisaged future audience: "I had not the heart to say more" modulates into "I will just add that." True diary, by contrast, depends as a genre on the sense of intimacy, periodicity and openness. The idea of polished "finish," either through writing a final entry, or through revising and correcting earlier ones, is alien to the genre's attractions. Even the notion of rereading a diary—that mildest of metaphors for revision—is somewhat awkward; this is the source

[262] Paul de Man, "Autobiography as Defacement," 71.

of humour in Gwendolen Fairfax's quip: "I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train."[263]

The other side of this coin is that unfinished diaries, which give the impression of having been suddenly abandoned, present no problems for the reader, but unfinished autobiographies, which fail to reach a narrative peak or resolution, are always disappointing. This form of disappointment was familiar to Virginia Woolf "as a great memoir reader" and, in fact, provided much of the substance of her discussion when she reviewed *The Middle Years* for the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1917.[264] She begins by considering the distinction between texts that stop abruptly and those which reach an aesthetically satisfying close: "It is more fitting" to say that James's memoirs "break off than that they come to an end, for although we are aware that we shall hear his voice no more, there is no hint of exhaustion or of leave taking." For a writer who couldn't bear, as Woolf goes on to explain, to hear the phrase "completed work" ("his work would end only with his life") this seems to be an inevitable result, and Woolf does not consider the legal and ethical ramifications of posthumous publication. She is keenly aware, however, of the poignancy of work left incomplete at death, telling us that "what we have seems to be but the prelude to what we are to have, but a crumb, as he says, of a banquet now forever withheld."[265] The incompletion of the whole is also equated to the occasionally fragmentary form of individual paragraphs. Woolf imagines that the reader will pause at the end of each paragraph, "while in imagination the next great wave of the wonderful

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[263] Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays*, ed. Peter Raby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 288.

[264] Woolf describes herself as "a great memoir reader" in "A Sketch," 72.

[265] Virginia Woolf, "The Old Order," *Times Literary Supplement*, Thurs. 18 Oct. 1917, 497-8, 497.

voice curves into fullness." By focusing so heavily on the reader's active participation in producing meaning, Woolf's review is somewhat unJamesian even as it attempts the task of eulogy. For Henry James, as we have seen, insisted that the "finest fullest intention of the lot" was determinable only by a text's author.

3.6 Strategic Diarists

The alternative to these problems—the poignancy of breaking off, failure to represent a life's events in full, the threat of misprision—is simple: not to attempt finishing. And this, I suggest, was the choice that Woolf made in her own final text. She manages to elude the problems of revision by continually emphasizing that the text is fragmentary, partial and incomplete, and by choosing a narrative form that cannot, even in principle, reach conclusion. In this respect, her form is an inverse version of her father's, evading closure, certainty and an objective reading of past time as strongly as Leslie Stephen had sought it. Her autobiography becomes diary, as his diary had turned into autobiography.

The opening of "A Sketch" raises the difficulty of memoir writing ("In the first place, the enormous number of things I can remember; in the second, the number of different ways in which memoirs can be written") only to dismiss it. The reason given is not that the problems aren't real, but that they will be too time consuming to resolve: "But if I begin to go through them and to analyse them and their merits and faults, the mornings—I cannot take more than two or three at most—will be gone." Elsewhere the work is presented as "respite" from Woolf's more serious labours; not worth the bother of fact checking ("I could settle the date by seeing when I wrote *To the Lighthouse*, but am

too casual here to bother to do it"); and materially of no regard ("I have just found this sheaf of notes, thrown away into my waste-paper basket" (111). Yet the Sussex manuscripts, which show evidence of substantial reworking, disprove the idea that this "sketch" was written hurriedly.

"A Sketch" appears to have begun its life as a retrospective memoir, but, during the process of writing it, Woolf decided to move towards diary format. The primary ordering device is to structure a loosely chronological account of the past through entries dated in the present, explaining (as we saw above) how some facet of the present moment leads back to a particular period in the past.[266] The time of year is often the same in present and past moment, with May 1939 leading back to May 1895, and July 1940 providing a window through which to view July 1897. Individual entries, ranging in length between about five and fifteen pages, are entered underneath heading dates, like entries in a journal. So the text opens, "Two days ago—Sunday 16th April 1939 to be precise—Nessa said that if I did not start writing my memoirs I should soon be too old." Ten pages on Woolf's earliest childhood memories follow, ending with the description of an "immensely old" woman with a hairy chin whom the adult Virginia remembers with particular clarity. The next entry opens "2nd May... I write the date because I think I have discovered a possible form for these notes. That is, to make them include the present—at least enough of the present to serve as a platform to stand upon" (83-4). Where Leslie Stephen was uncomfortable and hesitant about introducing himself and the present moment of writing time into memoir, Woolf is an unabashed advocate of subjectivity.

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[266] In his discussion of "A Sketch, " Michael Sheringham argues that finding "the appropriate balance between the claims of the past and those of the present" is a matter of autobiographical fidelity. How can one be true to two selves at once? Michael Sheringham, "Autobiographical (In)fidelity: Virginia Woolf's 'A Sketch of the Past'," *Imaginaires: Revue du Centre de Recherche sur l'Imaginaire dans les Littératures de Langue Anglaise* (Imaginaires) 1996: 109-18, 115.

She might, in fact, have been thinking of her father's work when she identified the "failure" of most memoirs as the tendency to "leave out the person to whom things happened" (73).

The 2 May entry ends with the narration of Julia's death. The young Virginia watches Dr. Seton walk out of the house and up the street, and "the pige ns floating and settling" with a sense of strange calm. Again the text breaks off, to be resumed two weeks later as "respite" from real work—"the drudgery of making a coherent life of Roger." From here the diary structure settles into a stable pattern. New entries usually begin with a few words about the present, before picking up the loosely chronological story of Virginia's childhood. After finishing the biography of Roger Fry, Woolf began the last of her novels—*Between the Acts*—and in the final entries this novel, combined with the increasing privations of war, constitute the dispiriting present. Although much of its material is tragic, including two deaths, sexual abuse at the hands of her half-brother, and an ambivalent relationship with "that strange character," her father, Woolf seems increasingly to lean on "A Sketch" as a joyful form of escapism. For example: "I continue (22 September 1940) on this wet day—we think of weather now as it affects invasions, as it affects raids, not as weather that we like or dislike privately—I continue, for I am at a twist in my novel, to fill in another page" (139).

The combination of the diary format with Woolf's self-consciously casual style seems to imply that there is no underlying structure or governing purpose to this memoir. Unlike the "professional" biography on which she was working simultaneously, "convey[ing] Roger from one end of life to the other,"[267] this narrative is fragmentary,

[267] Later in "A Sketch" Virginia was to wonder why describing Thoby in her room at Hyde Park Gate should prove so difficult to a professional biographer. "Why do I shirk the task, not so very hard to a

subjective and willingly digressive.[268] There is a strong emphasis on describing "moments of being" rather than life as a linear narrative (hence the title of Schulkind's volume). Woolf is also interested in "what I call in my private shorthand—'non being'," defined as a "cotton wool" substance of sensory impressions that leave no particular "dint" on the subject and which could never be recorded in a standard third person biography. "One walks, eats, sees things, deals with what has to be done; the broken vacuum cleaner; ordering dinner; writing orders to Mabel..." (79) The relatively chaotic selection of signal moments from the past (playing cricket at St. Ives, the colour of the dome at Paddington station) combined with the apparently serendipitous relationship to present time (hours snatched from more pressing concerns) cannot, however, be taken at face value.[269]

The manuscript evidence shows clearly that the current text of "A Sketch" is the result of several revisionary passes, and that the "diaristic frame" is a constructed fiction rather than a sincere reporting of writing time. The entry for June 1940, for example, which discusses Stella and Jack's engagement and Stella's death after two months of marriage, was—as we have seen—begun in draft form in 1939. Woolf's "real" diary, which she continued to keep while working on "A Sketch," should also lead us to question her fictional dating. Only one of the dates recorded in "A Sketch" has a corresponding entry in Woolf's actual diary, but there are several instances where entries

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professional—have I not conveyed Roger from one end of life to the other?—like myself, of wafting this boy from the boat to my bed sitting room at Hyde Park Gate?" 149.

[268] After describing some of her first memories, for example, Woolf happily expands: "this leads to a digression, which perhaps may explain a little of my own psychology; even of other people's."

[269] In her edition, Jeanne Schulkind suggests that "had this memoir been completed, it would undoubtedly have been considerably revised and extended." Only more recently have scholars begun to consider the possibility that the text's fragmentation may be partly intentional.

in the diary proper fail to concord with the version of events given in "A Sketch."[270] Given the length of some of the entries, the possibility that they could be written in a single day is also doubtful. Georgia Johnston concurs with this skeptical view in a discussion of the relationship between *Roger Fry* and "A Sketch," suggesting that Roger Fry's own aesthetic theories influenced the artificial method of "scene making" that Woolf selects. She argues: "This 'diary approach' would raise few questions if in fact the frame reflected actual writing moments. Because it was deliberately added in revision, however, the frame not only raises questions of content, but also draws attention to issues of aesthetics, and accounts in particular for the many references to the *Roger Fry* biography-in-progress."[271] Phyllis McCord concurs: "Careful study of the drafts shows that its tentative form, its quasi-journal appearance and pretense of being only notes or raw material for art, is actually deliberate and permanent."[272]

The choice of narrative structure allows for an entirely arbitrary relationship between present and past time, and in this respect it differs from both the forceful present tense of the diary and the stable retrospective offered by autobiography. After Woolf announced her discovery of the diary form "for these notes," she explained "I have no energy at the moment to spend upon the horrid labour that it needs to make an orderly work of art; where one thing follows another and all are swept into a whole" (84). "A Sketch" is accordingly described as a kind of *anti*-work, produced without any of the

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[270] The diary entry for 15 Nov. 1940, notes that "I plunged into the past this morning; wrote about father; & then we walked in top boots & trousers through the flood." *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 5, 338-9.

[271] Georgia Johnston, "Virginia Woolf Revising Roger Fry Into the Frames of 'A Sketch of the Past,'" *Biography* 20.3 (1997): 284-301, 284. The phrase "diary approach" is borrowed from Gail Griffin's article "Braving the Mirror: Virginia Woolf as Autobiographer," *Biography* 4.2 (1981): 108-18.

[272] Phyllis McCord, "'Little Corks That Mark a Sunken Net': Virginia Woolf's 'Sketch of the Past' as a Fictional Memoir," *Modern Language Studies*, 16.3 (1986): 247-254, 252.

constraints of completion and totality that the real art work might demand: "Perhaps one day, relieved from making works of art, I will try to compose this." At the same time, the manuscript history of "A Sketch" illustrates a far more carefully planned and premeditated work than Woolf's self-consciously casual tone suggests. Its aesthetic of purposive provisionality might be compared to Ezra Pound's various *Drafts* and *Fragments* of the *Cantos*. Their "draftliness," we might say, is more an aesthetic aim than a particularly accurate factual description of their textual history: it is an acknowledgment of the essential impossibility and futility of the Cantos' original aim—to be "a poem containing history." The important point is this: giving up on the promise of a final version ("the finest fullest intention of the lot") is liberating, allowing the writer to keep on writing in the face of extreme difficulty.

For now I would like to end this discussion of revision, autobiography, and diary by showing how the argument of this chapter might extend to other modernist texts. Many of the best known novels of the early twentieth century have strongly autobiographical elements—I am thinking of works such as Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, E. M. Forster's *Longest Journey*, D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, and Marcel Proust's interminably extended *À la recherche du temps perdu*. In fact, as Avrom Fleishman has reminded us, the form is almost the normative one for novels at this period: "during the years in which *A Portrait* was taking shape, other major novelists were charting the direction of their careers in autobiographical novels we scarcely think of as personal stories because they have become paradigmatic of modern fiction and its attendant forms of self-consciousness."[273]

[273] Avrom Fleishman, *Figures of Autobiography: The Language of Self-writing in Victorian and Modern England*, 391.

All of the examples I mention also had long and complex compositional histories, passing through many drafts before reaching their final versions.

There are some differences between writing "straight" autobiography and writing it disguised in the form of a third person *Bildungsroman*, which I do not intend to dwell on in detail. I would like to suggest, however, that the autobiographical provenance of these novels is a compelling explanation for the revisionary difficulty they caused their authors. To use Woolf's terms, how much of the memoir writer should find its way into the memoir? How can one retain tight focus on the primary subject while also producing other characters that are real and sympathetic? Once again, how does the autobiographical novelist know where to end? Is there *any* material that can be excluded? James Joyce's 1914 novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* makes a particularly good counterpoint to the texts discussed in this chapter because, like "A Sketch of the Past" it contains a shift of form from retrospective autobiography to prospective diary.

In the final version of the text, the majority of the narrative is in the third person past tense of nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman*, but focalized through Stephen's own maturing sense impressions and speech patterns. The opening lines are told in the babble of baby talk ("Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road..."); the end of the third person narrative is written in the slightly mannered, poetic voice of the precocious adolescent ("The soft beauty of the Latin word touched with an enchanting touch the dark of the evening, with a touch fainter and more persuading than the touch of music of a woman's hand.").[274] The third person narrative

[274] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. Chester G. Anderson (New York: Penguin, reprinted 1985), 7 and 244.

then concludes with an argument between Stephen and Cranly reported mostly in direct speech, and containing Stephen's defiant *nego*:

> —Look here, Cranly, he said. You have asked me what I would do and what I would not do. I will tell you what I will do and what I will not do. I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call I my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile and cunning.[275]

This passage is one of the best known in Joyce and is often *mis*remembered as the end of the novel, but, in fact, there are another six pages to run. These final pages are written in the form of a diary, begun by Stephen on 20 March ("Long talk with Cranly"), and ending just over a month later on 27 April, "Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead." And, after this final diary entry, we have the last words of the book: "Dublin 1904—Trieste 1914."[276]

Readers have been generally puzzled by this sudden, and brief, use of a different form. Why end a *Bildungsroman* with a series of diary entries? Is Joyce using Stephen's own words to condemn him, making clear that despite the bold announcements ("Away! Away") he will never leave Ireland? Or does the formal shift reflect Stephen's assumption of his own fate, and his growing sense of purpose as an artist? Is the ending a success? One of the earliest criticisms of the novel—Edward Garnett's reader's report from 1916—did not think so, arguing that "At the end of the book there is a complete falling to bits; the pieces of writing and the thoughts are all in pieces and they fall like

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[275] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 246-7.

[276] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 253. Ulysses ends with a similar signature: "Trieste-Zürich-Paris, 1914-1921."

damp ineffective rockets."[277] More recently, Michael Levenson has noted that Stephen's diary "has had the rare distinction of being a virtually unannotated specimen within the Joycean oeuvre," creating a strange effect of un-ending, where "a novel on the point of reaching its end suddenly alters to a form that only uneasily accommodates an end."[278]

Levenson's discussion of the diary raises some of the same theoretical questions about iteration, finality, and revision that we have been discussing here. According to his reading, Stephen's self-contradictory entries create a revisionary back-and-forth motion which is at odds with the smooth narrative curve promised by a *Bildungsroman*. After identifying the "competing" pull of these two narrative possibilities—analogous to the pull we saw between finishing and continuing, retrospect and prospect, in *The Mausoleum Book*—Levenson then argues for an ironic reading of the novel's close. Many of the incidents noted by Stephen in his diary reverberate back to the novel's opening: his mother is "putting [his] new secondhand clothes in order," just as she had put the oilsheet on his bed in the opening pages; repeated references to "E—C—" parallel the boyhood fantasy of marrying "Eileen Vance"; the poet Dante Alighieri succeeds the argumentative Dante of the opening. For Levenson these events can be read as a highly artificial, and "elegantly disguised," chiasmus which works *against* the promise of the diary to provide "an unambiguous march into the future."[279] In so doing, it leaves Stephen—the would-be artist, expressing his spirit in "unfettered freedom"—with his hands very tightly bound.

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[277] Edward Garnett, reader's report for Duckworth, "*Dubliners" and "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man": A Casebook*, ed. Morris Beja (London: Macmillan, 1973), 74-5, 75.

[278] Michael Levenson, "Stephen's Diary in Joyce's Portrait—The Shape of Life," *English Literary History* 52.4 (Winter 1985): 1017-1035, 1017 and 1019.

[279] Michael Levenson, "Stephen's Diary in Joyce's Portrait—The Shape of Life," 1031.

But where does this leave Joyce? In his discussion of Proust's *Recherche*, Gerard Genette suggests that each incident can produce an endless discussion "between a reading of the novel as fiction and a reading of the same novel as autobiography. We should perhaps remain within this *whirligig*."[280] Applying this reading strategy to *Portrait* means asking not only what the diary says about Stephen (the fictional reading), but also why Joyce has chosen to end an autobiographical novel in diary form. The *Bildungsroman* as lightly veiled autobiography is a very familiar early twentieth-century genre; choosing to write a first-person diary through the eyes of another person is a much more unusual, and more performative, generic choice. The answer may be found, I suggest, by considering the final words of the novel, which reincorporate the author into the frame, giving us Joyce's compositional signature rather than Stephen's sign off to his diary: "Dublin 1904—Trieste 1914." Like the dates in *The Mausoleum Book*, these geographical and temporal markers signal the boundaries of writing time: they point self-reflexively to Joyce's own genetic process. Stephen's diary runs for only just over a month, and when the book ends he is still, as Levenson emphasizes, rooted firmly on Dublin soil. As a whole, however, the novel is less provincial than its protagonist: it has taken ten full years to write, and a journey across Europe from Dublin in the West to Trieste in the East. The idea of the ten year novel had been on Joyce's mind for some time. Richard Ellmann's biography explains that (like the dates chosen to mark writing time in "A Sketch") this temporal signature is not entirely accurate: the book was not in fact finished

[280] Quoted by Paul de Man, "Autobiography as Defacement," 69-70.

until 1915, but Joyce "wished to appear more strictly faithful to his old promise of writing a novel in ten years."[281]

The passage of time and distance of geography says something about how far the writer of this text has traveled. But it also points to the composition of *Portrait* itself—a process which was interminably protracted and painful. The earliest texts that Joyce produced in the "Portrait series" were a short narrative essay from 1904, titled "A Portrait of the Artist," and a series of epiphanies ("the most delicate and evanescent of moments"), forty of which survive, and eleven of which were incorporated into the final novel.[282] After that, Joyce began work on a thousand page novel entitled *Stephen Hero*, which he abandoned in 1906, "stalled by its own inner contradictions... it was neither a novel, nor an autobiography, nor a spiritual or social meditation."[283] About a third of this manuscript also survives, paralleling the narrative of the closing part of *Portrait* (Stephen's university days), but with many interesting differences of narrative emphasis. The earlier version is more long-winded and closer to the realist conventions of nineteenth-century fiction, spending much more time on Stephen's family, economic and educational background, and on various forms of social and political argument. Suzanne Nalbantian sees the earlier text as reminiscent of Victorian "crisis autobiography," concerned with "chronicling the youth's rebellion against the Catholic religion and his

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[281] Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 365.

[282] The eleven recycled epiphanies are usefully accessible in Anderson's annotated edition with notes, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 267. The relevant epiphanies for this discussion are on 270 and 271.

[283] Hugh Kenner, "The Portrait in Perspective," *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: A Casebook*, 27-59, 30.

domestic life."[284] Although it treats much of the same material, it is hard to identify verbal repetition across the two texts, and *Portrait* has to be regarded as a full-scale rewriting project. Compared to the practice of most modern novelists, as well as Victorian writers who were producing work for immediate publication in magazine serials, it is an incredibly wasteful and time-consuming way to work. Henry James was a fervent reviser of texts already published, but he never spent anything like as long as this producing a first publishable version. Within his own period, however, Joyce's laborious practice is far from unique. D. H. Lawrence provides one point of comparison: he produced four separate drafts on the way to *Sons and Lovers*, the second of which survives. It has recently been published by Helen Baron as a separate text titled *Paul Morel*, and once again displays very little verbal overlap with the final novel.[285]

By the time, then, that Joyce wrote the last words of Stephen's diary, he was not only concluding a six page diary and a three hundred page novel, but a ten-year project of autobiographical writing in different modes. Having abandoned almost all of the writing in *Stephen Hero*, he was in fact to return, in the final pages of the final text, to some of his very earliest materials. The young would-be writer Stephen is made to speak in the words of the young would-be writer Joyce, and three of the most lyrical passages in his diary turn out to be straight reprints from Joyce's notebook of epiphanies. These include the entry for 25 March, morning, which narrates a dream "A long curving gallery. From the floors ascend pillars of dark vapours"; 10 April, "Faintly under the heavy night, through the silence of the city which has turned from dreams to dreamless sleep," and 16

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[284] Suzanne Nalbantian, *Aesthetic Autobiography: From Life to Art in Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Anaïs Nin* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 115-6.

[285] Helen Baron ed., *Paul Morel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Baron's introduction lays out the textual history.

April, "The spell of arms and voices: the white arms of roads, their promise of close embraces and the black arms of tall ships that stand against the moon, their tale of distant nations."[286] This last epiphany follows on from Stephen's desperate, slightly hollow cry "Away! Away!" The irony, according to Levenson's reading, would be in the contrast between Stephen's dream of "soaring away into the future" and the fact that he is physically constrained in Dublin, in his parents' house, as his mother puts his "new secondhand clothes" in order.

And yet there is another layer of irony in this passage between the "new" and the "secondhand," between the text's ending and its genesis. It took ten years after first writing down these epiphanies to find a home for them in the completed version of *Portrait*, ventriloquizing lyrical fragments through the diary of a fictional character. At the same time, Joyce was also only able to complete the novel which had aspired, in its *Stephen Hero* days, to extreme length, variety and completeness, by writing in the most fragmentary and temporally unstable of forms. The ten-year writing project ends by reverting to its beginning. Once again, a text's genetic construction turns out to be surprisingly deconstructive: finishing is made possible only by not finishing, and, once again, the "terminal" project of autobiography cedes to the openness of diary. After reading a range of life writings, we have seen that autobiography is a mode of writing prone to creating textual surplus, and multiple versions are often produced out of an uneasy relationship between subject and object, then and now. The writer wants to continue reinterpreting the past in the light of the present, but also to provide a truthful, objective, and "fixed" account of the past. The way out of the bind, for both Joyce and Woolf, is to switch to the openness of diary form, superimposing an artificial present onto

[286] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 249, 251 and 252.

an original concern with past time. Stephen's diary, like Woolf's constructed diary in "A Sketch", is consciously provisional, as if acknowledging that this last piece of the *Portrait* series is only one final branch on a very complex genetic stemma. The writing and thought might be "all in pieces," but we can understand those pieces as a gesture to all of the other, interminably extended and multiple, partially surviving and partly destroyed, "pieces" which the "complete" autobiographical project produced.

Chapter Four

Textual Waste and *The Waste Land*

4.1 Thematic and Genetic Waste

The landscape of *The Waste Land* is scattered with remains—a corpse buried underground, cast-off clothes, dishes from breakfast—just as its lines are formally constituted from remnants—a stanza form inherited from Dryden, a snatch of a popular song. According to a story begun by Eliot himself, the 1922 text was also wrested *from* waste paper when Ezra Pound put the long and amorphous first draft "through the sieve," thereby turning a "jumble of good and bad passages into a poem."[287]

This chapter explores the relationship between *The Waste Land*'s obsession with waste and its genesis *as* waste. The short 1922 text was produced out of the longer 1921 text by a process of massive, and sometimes aleatory, excision. I argue that this form of textual revision is a distinctively modernist one, that it stems out of the early aesthetics of Imagism, and that its primary goal was linguistic efficiency. I also suggest that, contrary to a long history of critical consensus, Pound's method of textual subtraction was uniquely ill-suited to Eliot's poem. Excision is a way of removing waste from a textual corpus, but *The Waste Land* is ultimately hospitable to remaindered material: it is reluctant to define waste as simple surplus or void, evacuated of value.[288] For, unlike the agricultural land of Northern France, which seemed in the immediate aftermath of the

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[287] Eliot made this claim in 1938, in the essay "On a Recent Piece of Criticism," *Purpose*, April-June 1938. See Helen Gardner, "*The Waste Land*: Paris 1922," *Eliot in His Time*, ed. A. Walton Litz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 67-94, 77.

[288] Sophie Gee has discussed the "volatile" quality of waste, arguing that "waste maintains a paradoxical affinity with abundance, with the valuable plenitude to which it is always a shadow." Sophie Gee, "Waste and Restoration: The Politics of Discarding from 'Paradise Lost' to the 'Dunciad,'" Diss. Harvard University, 2002, 6.

1914-18 war to have been made "a desert and worse than a desert," Eliot's is not a purely ruined landscape.[289] There is always the possibility of regeneration and cyclical growth, as lilacs are bred from the dead land (2), "branches grow/ Out of this stony rubbish" (19), and a buried corpse, "planted last year," begins to sprout with vegetable life (71-2).[290]

Since its first publication, the poem's textual corpus has also been prone to sprouting; its afterlife has been one of slowly accreting expansion. Pound might have figured the process of excision which he applied to the long first draft as a desperate last attempt at natural birth (a "caesarean Operation"), but history, with its many cunning passages, has restored most of what he hid from view.[291] The poem was published in its shortest version in *The Criterion* in October 1922. Two months later it reappeared in book form, with a series of notes added to make up some of the length lost during Pound's excisive editing: Eliot was later to term them "bogus scholarship."[292] During Eliot's own lifetime the long first draft of the poem was believed lost, but the "mystery of the missing manuscript" was solved in 1968, and it was published in facsimile form in 1971.[293] More recently, the boundaries of the facsimile edition have been challenged by the discovery of even more discarded sheets, including an early version of the Fresca passage among Vivien Eliot's papers. John Haffenden has argued that "these neglected

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[289] Georges Lechartier, "The Program and Cost of Post-War Reconstruction in France," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science in the City of New York* 12.1 (July 1926): 312-15, 312.

[290] References are to line numbers in the 1922 text, unless I am specifically discussing the facsimile drafts, in which case I give page numbers and line numbers.

[291] The quotation is from Pound's dedicatory verse, "SAGE HOMME," appended to a letter to Eliot written in December 1921. Ezra Pound, *Letters 1907-1941*, ed. D. D. Paige (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 233-35, 234. The first American edition capitalizes both words in "Caesarean Operation," *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, ed. D. D. Paige (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950), 169-70, 170.

[292] T. S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957), 109–10.

[293] See Ezra Pound's preface, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, ed. Valerie Eliot (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971), vii.

leaves... need to be instated alongside the bulk of the Berg drafts in any future edition of the *Facsimile*."[294]

If Wordsworth's *Prelude* can be described as a "self-corrupting" poem, critics have represented *The Waste Land* as an efficiently "self-purging" one.[295] Cecelia Tichi sums up the consensus concisely: "Eliot's editorial cohort, Ezra Pound, cut the 'waste' from *The Waste Land*."[296] According to the conventional narrative, a long and unwieldy first draft, full of unnecessary excrescence, redundancy and bad poetry, was transformed through Pound and Eliot's collaborative revisions into a tight and economical final version. "No one will deny," Richard Ellmann argued, shortly after the facsimile was published, "that it is weaker throughout than the final version. Pound comes off very well indeed."[297] Figuring the first draft as a hysterical female patient, Wayne Koestenbaum has claimed that "the manuscript of *The Waste Land* embodied a desire for Pound's curative arrival."[298] For Marjorie Perloff, "Pound's excisions and revisions made Eliot's

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[294] John Haffenden, "Vivien Eliot and *The Waste Land*: The Forgotten Fragments," *P. N. Review* 175, 33.5 (May-June 2007): 18-23, 23. The original manuscript of *The Waste Land* is in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library.

[295] The 1805 edition of *The Prelude* was first published in 1926. Its editor, Ernest de Selincourt, argued that between this version and the 1850 version a "youthful, radical, freethinking, and highly innovative" young Wordsworth had been lost under "later excrescences of a manner less pure," *Wordsworth: The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind*, 2nd ed., ix. This argument was made again by Geoffrey Hartman who notes that "There is something peculiar in the way his text corrupts itself: the freshness of earlier versions is dimmed by scruples and qualifications, by revisions that usually overlay rather than deepen insight." See Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), xvii. The term "self-corrupting" is then used by Cynthia Chase and others as a summary of Hartman's position. See Cynthia Chase, "The Accidents of Disfiguration," *Decomposing Figures: Rhetorical Readings in the Romantic Tradition* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 13-31, 21.

[296] Cecelia Tichi, *Shifting Gears: Technology, Literature, Culture in Modernist America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 71. Tichi also suggests that "The poem itself offers no alternative world and no possibility of redemption, not even implicitly"; I argue for the opposite claim.

[297] Richard Ellmann, "The First *Waste Land*," *Eliot in His Time*, 51-66, 63.

[298] Wayne Koestenbaum, "The Waste Land: T. S. Eliot's and Ezra Pound's Collaboration on Hysteria," *Twentieth Century Literature* 34.2 (1988): 113-39, 115.

central themes and symbols more prominent than they would otherwise have been."[299] Critics who have written about the poem's thematic use of waste have also been seeking redemption. Just as the text attempts to rid itself of excess, so, Maud Ellmann claims, the poem clutters itself with surplus only in order to remove it: "A ceremonial purgation, it inventories all the 'stony rubbish' it strives to exorcise."[300]

Implicit in these arguments are two questionable beliefs about the teleology of textual process. Perloff and Koestenbaum not only assume that the first draft was striving from the beginning to become the final version (a fallacy of causation), but also that the 1922 text was always present and easily perceptible within it (a fallacy of embodiment). In 1931, Herbert Butterfield criticised Whig historians for "studying the past with reference to the present," being "interested in the agency rather than in the process," confusing series of events with lines of causation, and misunderstanding the length and complexity of "the process of mutation which produced the present."[301] The same criticisms can be levelled against a textual meliorism that represents Pound and Eliot's chaotic, hasty, and sometimes confused work on the drafts as orderly, predictable, and even predestined. As late as January 1922, Eliot was writing, "Cher maître: Criticisms accepted so far as understood," before going on to ask, "Perhaps better omit Phlebas also???"[302] The three question marks point to Eliot's lack of faith in his own judgment.

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[299] Marjorie Perloff, *Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 173.

[300] Maud Ellmann, *The Poetics of Impersonality: T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 93.

[301] Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951). First American edition.

[302] Letter from T. S. Eliot to Ezra Pound, January 1922, *Letters 1907-1941*, 236.

They also serve as a reminder that the consequences of editing are neither predictable nor inevitable, particularly when the process is conducted collaboratively, by two men with different literary sensibilities. Shortly before the first publication of *The Waste Land*, Pound claimed that Eliot's poem would serve as "justification of the 'movement,' of our modern experiment, since 1900."[303] But whose justification, and whose movement, was it?

When critics praise *The Waste Land* as a poem that "exorcises" or "purges" its own waste, either thematically or genetically, they are also indirectly subscribing to a modernist aesthetic legacy—"economy in art is always beauty," "good writing is writing that is perfectly controlled."[304] To deal with the problem of waste, Pound formulated a style of revision that I term radical excision; Hemingway's iceberg principle, and Marianne Moore's belief that "anything is improved by omissions" are statements of the same creed.[305] After creating a first draft of relatively conventional length, the writer prunes and cuts, removing fillers, adjectives, adverbs, and long-winded syntax to produce a final text that is charged and fragmentary. Pound himself compared the process to mining: "If a man owned a mine in South Africa he would know that his labourers dug up a good deal of mud and an occasional jewel, looking rather like the mud about it."[306]

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[303] Ezra Pound, letter to Dr. Felix Shelling, 8 July, 1922. Quoted by Lawrence Rainey, *Revisiting The Waste Land* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 74.

[304] The first quotation is from Henry James, preface to "The Altar of the Dead," in the *New York Edition*, reprinted in *The Art of the Novel* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1984), 257. The second is from Ezra Pound, "The Serious Artist, IV," *New Freewoman* 1.11 (15 Nov., 1913): 213–14.

[305] Marianne Moore made this claim in a 1961 letter. Quoted by Andrew J. Kappel, "Complete with Omissions: The Text of Marianne Moore's *Complete Poems*" *Representing Modernist Texts: Editing as Interpretation*, ed. George Bornstein (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 125-56, 127.

[306] From Ezra Pound's *Selected Prose*, 1911, quoted by Daniel Albright, *Quantum Poetics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 134-35.

Once the process of excision was completed, Pound had no residual interest in a poem's early drafts. And yet it is not always so easy to discard of large amounts of text—or mud. "In an ideal world," Michael Thompson has argued, "an object would reach zero value and zero expected life-span at the same instant, and then disappear into dust. But, in reality, it usually does not do this; it just continues to exist in a timeless and valueless limbo where, at some later date it has the chance of being discovered."[307] This is precisely the state in which the drafts of *The Waste Land* languished for almost fifty years. Eventually, they were re-discovered, frustrating the logic of Thompson's ideal world. It is not only the material presence of the 1921 draft, however, that undoes the possibility that rubbish might "disappear into dust"; the poem itself, in both the long draft version *and* the final 1922 text, has a curiously hospitable attitude to material residues (as might be expected from the author of "The Triumph of Bullshit"), a delight in limbic states of "in between."[308]

Within the disfigured landscape of *The Waste Land*, objects always remain available subjects for transformation and metamorphosis and, therefore, never reach the true end of their lifespan. Rubbish may be absent, but it never disappears. In this regard, Maud Ellmann's claim that "The poem teems with urban waste, butt-ends of the city's days and ways" is subtly erroneous.[309] She cites the list, "empty bottles, sandwich papers,/ Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends," as evidence, but Eliot chose to precede these items with a lugubrious "no":

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[307] Michael Thompson, *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 9-10.

[308] See Christopher Ricks ed., *Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909-1917* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), 307.

[309] Maud Ellmann, *The Poetics of Impersonality: T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound*, 93.

> The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
> Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends,
> Or other testimony of summer nights... (176-79)

In fact, simple litter is the one kind of rubbish with which *The Waste Land* is *not* particularly concerned. Rather than purging its "stony rubbish," the poem prefers to switch modes, hesitantly revising decay into the vegetable growth of roots and branches (19). Accordingly, material objects are not simply reminders of a single occasion in the past ("testimony of summer nights"), but pointers to both past and future time, considered simultaneously. Madame Sosostris plucks a drowned sailor from her "wicked pack of cards," but the dead man's eyes have been replaced by shining pearls (48). The speaker interrogates Stetson about a committed murder, but leaves open the macabre possibility that a dead man might become a new source of life: "That corpse you planted last year in your garden,/ Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?" (71-72).

In all of these cases, waste is a disruptive and fertile border category rather than a terminal state, in which use-value and expected lifespan converge on zero. In fact, by providing a link to both a remembered past and an imagined future, detritus and cast-offs may have more value than other objects because they offer an escape from the sterility of the present. A living body is turned into a buried corpse, but that corpse sprouts with new life; Philomel is "rudely forced" (100) by Tereus but, transformed into a nightingale, is able to fill the desert land with "inviolable voice." "What The Thunder Said" extends the strategy of using a linguistic turn or pun to figure a physical metamorphosis. As "forced" became "inviolable," so "He who was living is now dead/ We who were living are now dying" (328-9).

At the core of the 1922 text of *The Waste Land* is a misalignment between thematic content and the archaeological traces of the poem's genetic history. If Pound *did* cut the waste out of *The Waste Land*, we might say that he was ignoring the lessons of the poem itself, applying a method of editing designed to promote extreme verbal efficiency to a poem that mournfully wallows in its own mess. Suzanne Raitt and Tim Armstrong have recently argued that Pound's early poetics of Imagism, with its focus on hardness, precision and "direct treatment of the 'thing,'" can be understood in the context of a culture "in which efficiency, economy, and the elimination of waste were increasingly heralded as industrial and social ideals."[310] This cultural fixation on economy was in part a product of the massive "wastage" of the Great War. Anyone who has heard a recording of Pound reading "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" will remember the tremulous emphasis (and archaic pronunciation) with which he intones: "Daring as never before, wastage as never before./ Young blood and high blood,/ fair cheeks, and fine bodies."[311] Behind it we can hear some of the anger that led to the formation of an "Anti-Waste League" in England in 1920 and, the following year, to the parliamentary election of a candidate running on an "Anti-Waste" manifesto.[312]

The debate about efficiency in post-war Britain was, however, slightly more nuanced than Armstrong and Raitt suggest. For every Arnold White, who claimed that

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[310] See Suzanne Raitt, "The Rhetoric of Efficiency in Early Modernism," 835. Tim Armstrong considers revision in both James and Eliot in relation to Horace Fletcher's prescriptions for an efficient body. Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 42-74.

[311] Ezra Pound, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," *Selected Poems* 1908-1959 (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 98-112, 100.

[312] Andrew McDonald provides a useful summary of the various anti-waste campaigns in the UK. Andrew McDonald, "The Geddes Committee and the Formulation of Public Expenditure Policy," *The Historical Journal* 32.3 (1989): 643-674.

efficiency was "the basis, and possibly the reason, of all moral law," there were skeptics who argued either that efficiency was theoretically desirable but impractical, or else that it was impossible to define.[313] In some cases, social theorists drew attention to the difficulty of separating real from apparent waste or, as Frederick Talbot had it, potentially productive waste from pure "rubbish."[314] The transformative logic of *The Waste Land*, which allows objects to move easily between being classified as waste (a buried corpse) and non-waste (the living man, the new life sprouting from his body), has more in common with these anti-binary thinkers, reclaimed in recent years as early proponents of recycling. "We glibly dismiss waste as rubbish... In so doing we essay to flout a fundamental law of Nature—the indestructibility of matter."[315] Henry Spooner made a related point when he insisted on the importance of waste time, emphasizing that waste can define both process and product: "there is no form of waste more economically important than the waste of time; and probably there is no waste that is so lightly regarded."[316] Efficiency can only be increased, after all, if the cost of the saving is less than the value of the redeemed material.

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[313] Raitt quotes from Arnold White's right-wing tract, *Efficiency and Empire*. Suzanne Raitt, "The Rhetoric of Efficiency in Early Modernism," 837.

[314] F. A. Talbot, *Millions from Waste* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1920). Pierre Desrochers discusses the importance of these early environmentalists in "Learning from History or from Nature or Both? Recycling Networks and their Metaphors in Early Industrialization," *Progress in Industrial Ecology – An International Journal*, 2.1 (2005): 19-34.

[315] F. A. Talbot, *Millions from Waste*, 12.

[316] Henry Spooner, *Wealth from Waste* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1918), 3-4.

4.2 Imagism and Excision

This is a lesson that Pound was not much interested in learning. From the beginning, his struggle to excise waste from finished poems entailed a convoluted and time-consuming emphasis on revision and editing. The foundational story of Imagism is, in fact, a story *about* editing. On an afternoon in 1912, Ezra Pound and H. D. were discussing her poetry in the British Museum tea room. Suddenly Pound took out his pencil and excised most of her poem "Hermes of the Ways." H. D. later recalled that he "scratched 'H. D. Imagiste'... at the bottom of a typed sheet, now slashed with his creative pencil, 'Cut this out, shorten this line.'"[317] Shortly afterwards, he sent it off to Harriet Monroe at *Poetry* magazine with a note that explained, "It is in the laconic speech of the Imagistes... Objective—no slither—direct—no excess of adjectives. etc."[318]

However seriously we take imagism as an aesthetic program—it has been called the first *avant-garde* in English writing, the first "anti *avant-garde*," and a "red herring"—this story illustrates that, from the very beginning, it united three disparate things.[319] A Callimachean preference for short texts over long ones was married to an observational insistence on exactitude and directness. In turn, a particular writing method was prescribed for achieving these aims—deletion. "Excess of adjectives" may be allowed in the first draft, but surplus material must be winnowed before the final version.

H. D.'s poem appeared in the January 1913 issue of *Poetry*. The March issue of the magazine was almost entirely devoted to the new movement, containing Pound's own

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[317] H. D., *End to Torment* (New York: New Directions, 1979), 40.

[318] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 174.

[319] See Hugh Kenner on the reception of Imagism, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound* (New York: Millwood, 1947), 58.

poem "In a Station of the Metro," widely regarded as Imagism's enabling text, as well as his article "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," and a definitional piece by F. S. Flint, "Imagisme," which was produced after conversation with Pound. Flint's article included the following succinct statement of the movement's aesthetic aims:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing," whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of the metronome.[320]

Pound's "Don'ts" insisted that these rules were not to be regarded as "dogma" ("never consider anything as dogma") but as the useful profit of "long contemplation." In his own article he reinforced many of Flint's points, with a particular emphasis once again on the balance between length and brevity, complexity and immediacy. He begins by defining an image as something that can be communicated at lightning speed, but which is nevertheless "complex." "An 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." Like a .zip file, the Imagist poem allows for maximally efficient transfer of material between writer and reader. The poet reduces an experience or emotion to a single "image," and the reader unlocks the image in turn to reactivate the plenitude of original experience.

There is no *a priori* reason to tie an aesthetic emphasis on brevity to a particular writing protocol. Callimachus is known for emphasizing metrical facility and craftsmanship, but he did not, as far as we know, make any other suggestions about how to achieve "slenderness" (*leptotes*) in verse. It is important to realize that for Pound, however, Imagism was *always* tied to a particular compositional method, and that this method was premised on revision. In an ideal world, there seems to be no reason why the

[320] F.S. Flint, "Imagisme," *Poetry*, March 1913: 198-200.

poet should not produce an imagistic poem at once; in practice, Pound suggests, the condensed art work will always be produced by writing at more conventional length and then deleting matter. The description he offered of the composition of his own poem, "In a Station of the Metro," provides a straightforward account.

In an article on Vorticism published in 1914, Pound explained that the poem's apparent spontaneity had been won only after great labour. The germ of the idea occurred in 1911:

> Three years ago in Paris I got out of a "metro" train at La Concorde, and saw suddenly a beautiful face, and then another and another, and then a beautiful child's face, and then another beautiful woman, and I tried all that day to find words for what this had meant to me, and I could not find any words that seemed to me worthy, or as lovely as that sudden emotion.[321]

However, Pound was not immediately able to transform this perception into a satisfying form. To begin with, he tells us, he wrote a thirty-line poem, but destroyed it because it was a "work of second intensity." He continues: "Six months later I made a poem half that length; a year later I made the following hokku-like sentence: The apparition of these faces in the crowd:/ Petals, on a wet, black bough."

The final version of Pound's haiku is one verb short of a complete sentence. It suggests a variety of poignant and lyrical connections between faces in the crowd and petals on a tree, but lacks both a definitive copula and a spatial or temporal location.[322] What is the force of the deictic "these"? Who is speaking? In the early long version of the poem, it is likely that these questions were answered, with the crowd specified as Parisian and the observer as an outsider emerging from a metro train. The condensed final version

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[321] Ezra Pound, "Vorticism," *The Fortnightly Review*, 1 September, 1914.

[322] Hugh Kenner observes that Imagism often produced parataxis. "'In a Station of the Metro' is not formally a sentence; its structure is typographic and metric." Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 186-7.

is indeterminate. Revision has worked rhetorically as a form of ellipsis, omitting the logical stages of normal syntax and creating what Daniel Albright has described as a "deleted picture": "stern modes of omission hope to create a feeling of pregnancy of meaning."[323] The only link between the urban world of line one and the Japanese garden imagery of line two is a sense of fleeting temporality: faces appear but are then blurred with others in a crowd; petals bloom briefly on a bough, but are likely to wither under the rain that has dampened it. Beneath the two-part metrical structure of the haiku is a four-part logical structure, where each line introduces a beautiful image ("the apparition of these faces," "petals") and then gestures to the fadeout ("in the crowd," "on a wet, black bough"). The subtlety and delicacy of this configuration is, according to Pound's account, the result of an intensifying process which allows the writer to separate the valuable from the dross, the jewel from the mud.

4.3 Excision beyond Imagism

Imagism itself was short-lived as a poetic movement; by 1914, Pound had already abandoned the use of the term, merging some of his original concepts with the new language of the "vortex," "the point of maximum energy."[324] The practice of excision that it spawned was, however, to play a longer and more substantial role within literary modernism. The production of a new, fragmentary, text by deleting parts of an already complete whole is a distinctively modernist form of rewriting, a type of "creative destruction" unfamiliar before the early twentieth century. Writers as different as Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Marianne Moore, and James Joyce were to adopt variations

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[323] Daniel Albright, *Quantum Poetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 136.

[324] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 191.

of the practice, producing final versions of texts which were cut from longer first drafts. Graphically, the practice can be represented as a series of lines striking out words and phrases, rather than the *caret* of extension, or the verbal equivalence of substitution. Rhetorically, excision functions as a form of ellipsis, omitting bits of syntactic "glue" and background information that would be necessary in more conventional narrative. Part of the practice's attraction, in fact, must have been that it tends inevitably to produce syntactic and semantic fracture—effects in concert with the central aesthetic tenets of modernism itself. If modernist form can be summed up as a "cluster of stylistic practices" including "simultaneity, juxtaposition, montage and 'fragmentation... paradox, ambiguity and uncertainty," then what better way to achieve a modernist "effect" than by following a writing protocol that *inevitably* leads to simultaneity, parataxis and fragmentation?[325] Like Imagism itself, excision emphasizes the visual or "phanoepoeic" snapshot above discursive argument and conventional narrative.

As a method equally useful for revision and for editing, excision was also well suited to the collaborative environment in which many modernist works were produced. Pound developed the strategy "Cut this out, shorten this line" for dealing with H. D.'s early poetry, but he was soon to apply the same advice to his own work, to Eliot's unruly draft of *The Waste Land,* and even to his practice of translation. His 1917 poem, "Homage to Sextus Propertius," may be the first of Pound's attempts at the elusive Imagist long poem, but it can also be understood as an exercise in abbreviation, whereby an extremely long poem (Propertius' four books of elegies) is slashed to produce a

[325] Marianne DeKoven, *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 6. This definition is quoted by Susan Stanford Friedman as "parataxis" 6 in "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/ Modernity/ Modernism," *Modernism/modernity* 8.3 (2001): 493-513, 496.

moderately long one. Rather than following the traditional, linear model of translation, Pound selected a series of short scenes from Propertius' text and spliced them together to produce a consciously discontinuous version, which sacrifices fidelity and cohesion for imagistic vividness and musical cadencing. Rather than beginning at the beginning, Pound's poem opens with an abbreviated version of the programmatic elegies that begin Propertius' *third* book. "We have kept our erasers in order" may not be accurate as a translation of *exactus tenui pumice versus eat*, but it is a fine and self-reflexive summary of Pound's own practice of textual erasure.[326]

Ernest Hemingway's 1926 novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, provides a useful way to understand the play between deleting one's own work and deleting someone else's. Two major American poets had worked in 1921 and 1922 to produce the definitive postwar *European* poem, tallying London, Vienna, Jerusalem, Athens, and Alexandria in its catalogue of "unreal cities." Four years later, two major American novelists—Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald—performed a similar act of textual condensation on the long first draft of Hemingway's novel of expatriate life in Paris and Spain.

A Moveable Feast, Hemingway's posthumously published account of his early life in Paris, provides a formulation of literary efficiency that sounds remarkably Poundian. After describing the beauty of Paris in the winter, Hemingway reflects on his early attempts to find disciplined writing habits. On days when he was starting a new story and feeling uninspired, he "would stand and look out over the roofs of Paris," and give himself the following advice:

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[326] Pound is translating Propertius 3.1.8.

> Do not worry. You have always written before and you will write now. All you have to do is to write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know.[327]

If, however, this maxim proved hard to follow, Hemingway adds that he also had a method of revision in place:

> If I started to write elaborately, or like someone introducing or presenting something, I found that I could cut that scrollwork or ornament out and throw it away and start with the first true simple declarative sentence I had written.

Like Pound's advice to the emergent Imagist poet, Hemingway's self-strictures focus on deleting discursive and argumentative material in favour of "direct treatment of the thing." The simple is preferred to the ornamental, the declarative sentence to the rhetoric of "someone introducing or presenting something." In a 1958 interview with the *Paris Review*, he had conveyed the same point, this time using the suggestive metaphor of the iceberg:

> If it is any use to know it, I always try to write on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven eighths of it under water for every part that shows. Anything you know you can eliminate and it only strengthens your iceberg. It is the part that doesn't show.[328]

Here it is suggested that "eliminated" excess material—presumably of a factual or discursive kind ("anything you know")—has an uncanny recurrent presence in the final artwork. Rather than being annihilated, excised material remains underwater; it may not be "on show," but has an important supporting function. "The omitted part would strengthen the story," Hemingway reiterated, "and make people feel something more than they understood." Dana Dragunoiu has argued that the iceberg principle allows more rapid conduit between writer and reader, promoting feeling over intellectual mastery, and

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[327] Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (New York: Scribner's, 1964), 12.

[328] George Plimpton, "An Interview with Ernest Hemingway," 29.

aiming to signal "something inexpressible but ultimately more 'real' than the linguistic system of signification can accommodate."[329]

The "iceberg principle" has proved an attractive way for Hemingway scholars to explain how the meager surfaces of Hemingway's "crisp and unpretentious" prose can produce complex affective responses.[330] Teachers of writing pedagogy have also picked up the phrase, recommending that students improve the clarity of their writing by cutting out excess and bluster. When one starts to consider the principle more carefully, however, it becomes apparent that there will be difficulties in following it. Even if one did *know* an entire story before beginning to write it, how would one select the one eighth that should be left poking out above the water? What principles of selectivity would be required? Despite the statements of his later years, it seems that Hemingway himself also found omission easier to preach than to practice. The history of *The Sun Also Rises* was one abbreviation, but also of equivocation: Hemingway was not always sure where to cut, and the surviving manuscript (now at the Hemingway library in Boston) shows a series of false starts and reversals.

In *A Moveable Feast*, Hemingway claimed that he wrote the first draft of *The Sun Also Rises* very fast in late 1925, before retiring to an Austrian ski resort to edit it.

> Schruns was a good place to work. I know because I did the most difficult job of rewriting I have ever done there in the winter of 1925 and 1926, when I had to take the first draft of *The Sun Also Rises* which I had written in one sprint of six weeks, and make it into a novel.[331]

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[329] See Dana Dragunoiu, "Hemingway's Debt to Stendahl's *Armance* in *The Sun Also Rises*," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 46.4 (2000): 868-892, 889.

[330] Linda Wagner-Martin ed., *A Historical Guide to Ernest Hemingway* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.

[331] Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*, 202.

Rather than revising "as he went along," Hemingway allowed "the momentum of writing to push him to completion in two months with little current revising."[332] His description of the process confirms the disjunction between a fast, even automatic, initial flow of creation, and a subsequent and more painful process of critical revision.

The bluntest proof that Hemingway's revisions were predominantly excisions is provided by comparing the length of the first draft with the published novel. The original manuscript of *The Sun Also Rises*, preserved at the Kennedy Library in Boston (JFK 193 and 194), runs to just over 83,000 words, on 32 loose sheets, and in 7 draft notebooks. The final text, which was first published in 1926, is about 15% shorter. Although there are, inevitably, differences of punctuation and orthography between the first draft and final edition, as well some more substantive changes to individual scenes, and to the book's epigraph, the *primary* editorial decisions have been ones not of substitution, but deletion. Frederic Svoboda's detailed study of Hemingway's work at Schruns, which aims to track "the steps he followed in reshaping the form," lists several of the major shifts of emphasis. As he revised, Svoboda claims, Hemingway moved towards "delicacy and restraint" and away from "literal transcription of reality," ruminations on "narrative method and reliability," travelogue; and "overly sentimental dialogue."[333]

There are three major features of the original draft which Hemingway submerged as he edited for the final text: these include direct information about characters' pasts, reflections on methodology and narratorial reliability, and social satire. At the end of the 1926 text, for example, Jake receives two telegrams from Brett containing the same

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[332] Matthew J. Bruccoli, *Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises: A Facsimile Edition* (Detroit: Omnigraphics, 1990), vi.

[333] Frederic Svoboda, *Hemingway And The Sun Also Rises: The Crafting of a Style* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1983), 4, 9, 31, and 44-45.

message: "COULD YOU COME HOME HOTEL MONTANA MADRID AM RATHER IN TROUBLE BRETT."[334] His response is dispassionate; he enquires about train times, takes out his fountain pen, promises 'ARRIVING SUD EXPRESS' and signs off 'LOVE JAKE'. After writing the telegram, he allows himself a brief and faintly bitter reflection, "That seemed to handle it. That was it," before heading off for lunch. The original version had been much more explicit about the particular brand of Jake's suffering, and the awkward load of his conventional sign-off, "Love Jake." In tune with the imagist imperative "show, don't tell," Hemingway removes Jake's attempt at rationalization and replaces it with crisp action.

> There was nothing else to say. ~~I put the~~ What else was there to say? I printed LOVE JAKE and handed the concierge the wine. There I was, doing it again. Why not let it alone. I knew there was not any use trying to let it alone. I felt perfectly bad about it. I had certainly acted like anything but a man... ~~I was not a man anyway. Oh stop that stuff. There was not going to be any of that stuff.~~[335]

Not only is Jake more self-analytic in this version, he is also more explicit about the emasculating nature of his war wound than at any point in the published version of *The Sun Also Rises*. In the first draft, Hemingway seems to have been trying to emphasize the tension between Jake's febrile emotional state and his desire for repression through the see-saw of internal monologue: as soon as he pronounces "I was not a man anyway," he silences himself, "Oh stop that stuff." In the final version, hesitant and self-reflective monologue is replaced with inconsistent behaviour from which we must draw our own conclusions.

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[334] Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926; London: Arrow, 1994), 211.

[335] Manuscript of *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway Library, 6.41.

By the end of January, Hemingway had finished at Schruns. On 24 April, after returning to Paris and having his novel professionally typed, he sent the "completely rewritten and cut manuscript" to Scribner's for publication.[336] By this point, the novel had been pruned and intensified after the approved imagist model, and the original opening (set *in medias res* at the fiesta) had been cut. Following his own (deleted) instruction in the manuscript, "To understand this situation in Pamplona you have to understand Paris," Hemingway reincorporated the long description of Mike and Brett into a Parisian context.[337] Before publication, however, the novel underwent another round of excisions. While he was still writing, Hemingway was reluctant to pass his manuscript around, but after finishing the revisions he finally showed it to F. Scott Fitzgerald, who had been hankering for a glimpse since the previous Fall. In June, he received a brutal ten page letter. Fitzgerald's critique reads like an augmentation of Hemingway's own revisionary principles, advocating further cuts of discursive and argumentative material. By comparing Hemingway's problems to his own, Fitzgerald's letter also makes clear that the desire for brevity ("direct treatment of the thing") is a *shared* literary aesthetic:

> I find in you the same tendency to envelope or (and as it usually turns out) to *embalm* in mere wordiness an anecdote or joke that casually appealed to you that I find in myself in trying to preserve a piece of "fine writing."[338]

Besides finding the tone "snobbish," Fitzgerald objected to the "feeling of condescending casuallness," to "sneers, superiorities and nose-thumbings-at-nothing," to elements of narrative self-consciousness, to travelogue ("this is in all guide books"), and to things that he found trite, old-fashioned, or already done. His criticism of the phrase "beautifully

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[336] Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*, 184.

[337] Manuscript of *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway Library, 194.1.9.

[338] Fitzgerald's letter is quoted by Bruccoli, x-xii.

engraved shares" is reminiscent of Pound's distaste for "the closed carriage at four." Fitzgerald added in parenthesis, "Beautifully engraved 1886 irony"; four years earlier, Pound had written "1880" in a large round bracket on Eliot's manuscript.

Fitzgerald's main suggestion was that Hemingway discard his (already reworked) opening, cutting wholesale.

> From here Or rather from p. 30 I began to like the novel but Ernest I can't tell you the sense of disappointment that beginning with its elephantine facetiousness gave me. Please do what you can about it in proof. Its 7500 words—you could reduce it to 5000. And my advice is not to do it by mere pareing but to take out the worst of the *scenes*.

A few days later, Hemingway wrote to his editor, Maxwell Perkins, to authorise the cut.

> I believe that, in the proofs, I will start the book at what is now page 16 in the Mss. There is nothing in those first sixteen pages that does not come out, or is explained, or re-stated in the rest of the book—or is unnecessary to state. I think it will move much faster from the start that way. Scott agrees with me.[339]

The mild duplicity of "Scott agrees with me" shows Hemingway attempting to regain editorial control, turning editorial criticism *back* into self-directed revision. As if playing a game of one-upmanship, Hemingway also went further than Fitzgerald had suggested, not "pareing" merely, nor "taking out the worst of the scenes" but removing sixteen pages in their entirety. The next fourteen pages he left alone. For William Balassi this is an indication that he was trying "to save face or to retain his sense of authorial control over the text." [340] And yet the choice to delete and then retain may also point to excision's essential logic. In the end, cutting (or keeping) something in its entirety is

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[339] Letter quoted by William Balassi, "The Trail to *The Sun Also Rises*: The First Week of Writing," *Hemingway: Essays of Reassessment*, ed. Frank Scafella (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 33-51, 34.

[340] William Balassi, "The Trail to *The Sun Also Rises*: The First Week of Writing," 34.

always easier than attempting to "pare" a text down, and then retroactively to cover for gaps and losses.

After the loss of fourteen pages, the novel began not only *in medias res* but also, as Balassi argues, "in the middle of the text," with the words "Robert Cohn was once middleweight boxing champion of Princeton." He remains optimistic, nevertheless, about readers' ability to infer what has been removed, "Without the opening scene in Pamplona, readers have to sense the importance of lines that have lost their context, to sense more than they know, which is often possible because the text still resonates with the significance of the opening material even though the story itself is no longer there."[341] This is a deeply appealing aesthetic possibility, akin to the argument that a partially destroyed or aged painting "still resonates with the significance" of the lost original, suggesting outlines and shapes that are no longer clearly discernable. It is also a restatement of Hemingway's own "iceberg principle," which assumes that authorial knowledge ("anything you know") can be translated into readerly affect (it only strengthens your iceberg"). Unfortunately, both versions of this claim are also subject to the critiques already levelled against textual Whiggery. Like Marjorie Perloff's argument that Pound's excisions "made Eliot's central themes and symbols more prominent than they would otherwise have been," it implies that textual process is progress and that first drafts are striving to become final versions. The iceberg principle goes a stage further by attaching to a fallacy of causation a problem of embodiment: it assumes that the final version is not only *better* than the first draft, but that it also *embodies* the first draft within it. But how exactly does a text "resonate with the significance" of an absence? What type of thing is that resonance? Is it a fact that can be known ("Jake Barnes is Catholic") or an

[341] William Balassi, "The Trail to *The Sun Also Rises*: The First Week of Writing," 48.

imprecise feeling (a sense of "the Quarter state of mind") or is it a self-producing sense of aesthetic fracture (there is more to be known than we can know)?

What if some of Hemingway's omissions were not buried under the surface but merely omitted? Hershel Parker is one of the few literary critics to have considered this possibility, which allows that editing and revision may not always be meliorative. Discussing his own confusion over whether Jake is or is not a Catholic, he argues "The loss of the opening, and the failure to revise thoroughly to *cover* for that loss, caused the confusion."[342] The "iceberg principle" also fails to account for genuine changes of mind. In the first draft of *The Sun Also Rises*, we were told that Robert Cohn was "the hero" of the tale, that he had written "a skilfully and neatly done" novel, and that he had lived for two years with a woman "who lived on gossip and so he had lived in an atmosphere of abortions, doubts, and incidents confirming these doubts." These descriptions are not only omitted from the final text but are also, more problematically, inconsistent with it: the Cohn of the final version is not the hero, his novel is not such a success, and his relationship with Frances is presented more conventionally. If texts are corrected as well as revised, should we assume that final texts only "resonate with the significance" of certain, correct, parts of the earlier version? That would deal with the problem of self-contradiction, but it would require that different parts of abandoned drafts have different ontologies: some would be merely refuse; others would be resonant ghosts.

4.4 Modernism and Waste Paper

The organic metaphor of the half submerged iceberg is seductive but, in the end, it lacks rigour as a way of explaining a *textual* condition. Language does not behave like

[342] Hershel Parker, "Fiction and the Manuscripts," *Hemingway: Essays of Reassessment*, 17-33, 22.

frozen water, or the marble from which a sculpture is defiantly wrested. Hemingway's metaphor for the condensed final draft assumes both that earlier versions are tidily tucked away from sight (underwater), and that they continue to inform the final text (as a supporting bedrock). But neither of these claims is exactly true. The problem of factual inconsistency and discontinuity highlighted by Hershel Parker is, I suggest, an *inevitable* result of revision premised on excision. Texts are not made up of minute identical pieces (water droplets or atoms of marble); they are complex and interdependent syntactic structures. Removing part of a sentence or a narrative will have inevitable consequences for the whole, and, without entertaining a kind of magical thinking, it is unclear how the removed part could be said to have continued existence within a final version. Pound and Hemingway speak as if excision is an act of scaling a text down to a smaller size, while leaving its shape and structure essentially intact. In fact, I would suggest, excision will always function as a form of hermeneutic torsion; at the very least, it will alter a text's points of emphasis and structural shape while, in more extreme cases, it can function as a strong form of misprision and radically alter meaning.

On the other hand—and this is a crucial proviso—it is often not the case that the removed part is *actually* invisible or missing. Perloff's hypothetical conditional ("would otherwise have been") and Balassi's concessive "even though the text is no longer there" assume that the original drafts of *The Waste Land* and *The Sun Also Rises* are lost. In writers' representation of their own practice, whether they are talking about images or icebergs, the same words recur—"deletion," "elimination," "destruction." From the perspective of the book historian, however, these claims are far from truthful. Hemingway might have been an excisive reviser, but he was also, as Susan Beegel has

shown, a compulsive hoarder. He worked in a room crammed full of tourist memorabilia, keepsakes and books, but was "principally a saver of paper itself," including papers, manuscripts, pamphlets and lists.[343] After his death, his widow donated more than 19,500 pages of manuscript (over 3,000 of which were unpublished) to the Hemingway library. The same situation has held true in the case of many other modernist texts: in fact, Pound's thirty-line version of "In a Station of the Metro" has the rare distinction of being one of the few works described as "destroyed" which has actually remained so.

It has proved more common for early drafts which authors claimed they had abandoned or thrown out to resurface. Virginia Woolf left a suicide note, "Will you destroy all my papers," which Leonard ignored. The result was the publication not only of her final novel, *Between The Acts*, which she had intended to destroy, and of the late memoir "Moments of Being," but also of the draft forms of many earlier works, and volume after volume of diaries and letters. In 1982, Louise DeSalvo edited an early version of *The Voyage Out* (completed in draft form as early as 1912) for publication as *Melymbrosia*. In 1977, Mitchell Leaska brought out *The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of The Years*, a transcription of six essays and their accompanying fictional extracts written in 1932.[344] In 1933, Woolf decided to rework this material into purely fictional form, and gradually incorporated it into the draft of the novel *The Years* (1937).

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[343] Susan F. Beegel, *Hemingway's Craft of Omission: Four Manuscript Examples* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 1. Beegel's argument is informed by George Plimpton's observation of Hemingway's workplace in his 1958 interview for the *Paris Review*.

[344] Leaska argues that the political and feminist urgency of *The Pargiters* was lost as Woolf revised the novel-essay into a more conventional novel. The idea for the book came in January, 1931: "I have this moment, while having my bath, conceived an entire new book—a sequel to *A Room of One's Own*—about the sexual life of women." By early 1933, she had abandoned this "novel of fact" and begun work on *The Years*. Virginia Woolf, *The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of The Years*, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (London: Hogarth, 1977). See Leaska's Introduction, vii-xxiv, for details of the textual history.

In 1911, James Joyce threw either *Stephen Hero* or an early version of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* into the fire: as he told Harriet Shaw Weaver, "the original 'original' I tore up and threw into the stove about eight years ago in a fit of rage on account of the trouble over *Dubliners*."[345] The manuscript was, however, rescued "by the family fire brigade." *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* began serial publication in 1914, and the surviving portions of *Stephen Hero* were published in 1941 by Theodore Spencer. Many of the modernist texts figured as destroyed or lost—both by their authors, and by the subsequent critical tradition—are, in fact, fully and materially present. There is, accordingly, no need to try to intuit the first draft, or the directionality of composition, from the final version; we can lay all the available texts side by side and compare them. Just as the modern textual critic "actually possesses the 'lost originals' which the classical critic is forced to hypothesize," so the genetic critic of modernism possesses manuscript first drafts and authorial papers that pre twentieth-century scholars can only imagine.[346]

The Waste Land manuscript was also believed lost for the majority of the twentieth-century. Retaining no sentimental attachment to a poem he considered as "a thing of the past," Eliot freely donated it to John Quinn in 1922. "I should like to present you the MSS of the Waste Land, if you would care to have it—when I say MSS, I mean that it is partly MSS and partly typescript, with Ezra's and my alterations scrawled all

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[345] Jeri Johnson, "Composition and Publication History," *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce, ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), xli.

[346] Jerome McGann explains "Because this textual critic actually possesses the 'lost originals' which the classical critic is forced to hypothesize, his concept of an ideal text reveals itself to be—paradoxically—a pure abstraction, whereas the classical critic's ideal text remains, if 'lost,' historically actual." Jerome McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, 57.

over it."[347] After Quinn's death in 1934 the manuscript was thought to be lost. In 1958, it was secretly acquired by Dr. John D. Gordan for the New York Public Library, for the sum of $18,000.[348] It was not until after John Gordan's own death in 1968 that the existence of the manuscript was made public; three years later, Valerie Eliot published a facsimile of the original drafts from a microfilm copy which the library donated to her.[349] In the introduction to this text, Valerie Eliot suggests that her husband had never been much concerned by the manuscript's disappearance. Ezra Pound's preface tells a slightly different story, punning on different types of waste—*Waste Land*, waste paper, and waste time—and affectionately alluding to Eliot's own penchant for detective fiction. "The occultation of 'The Waste Land' manuscript (years of waste time, exasperating to its author) is pure Henry James. The 'mystery of the missing manuscript' is now solved."[350]

The survival of these long early versions, in flagrant contradiction of authorial intention, is, to an extent, serendipitous. But it can also be explained by institutional and cultural factors, including the development of a mature market for rare books, the establishment of English literature as a university discipline, and the fetish-value placed

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[347] Letter 19 July 1922, quoted in Valerie Eliot's introduction to *The Waste Land: A Facsimile*, xxiii.

[348] This figure represents the sum paid by the library for *both* the manuscript of *The Waste Land* and the material in the 76 page loose leave notebook which was edited by Christopher Ricks for *The Inventions of the March Hare*. Harry Gilroy, "Library Is Holding MS. Of Eliot's 'Waste Land'," *The New York Times*, Friday 25 Oct. 1968.

[349] From a conversation with the curator at the Berg Collection, I have gathered that Dr Gordan had personal reasons for wishing to keep the acquisition and existence of the manuscript a secret. He had tried to inform T. S. Eliot of the manuscript's survival in person on a visit to London in 1958 but was unsuccessful in arranging a meeting with him. Valerie Eliot's introduction also explains that Eliot missed the opportunity to on a "matter of business" in 1958, suggesting that this meeting would have involved a discussion of the extant manuscript.

[350] Ezra Pound, preface to *The Waste Land: A Facsimile*, vii. In the 1959 *Paris Review* interview, when asked "Does the manuscript of the original, uncut *Waste Land* exist?" Eliot replied "Don't ask me. That's one of the things I don't know. It's an unsolved mystery," "The Art of Poetry I: T. S. Eliot," Interview in *The Paris Review* 21 (1959), 47-70, 53.

on original manuscripts in an age of mechanical reproduction. Over the course of the twentieth century, the demand for writers' papers—not only drafts, but letters, diaries, rough jottings and juvenilia—increased dramatically. Writers might have regarded their own waste papers as abject, but their self-valuation was increasingly at odds with the price that the market was willing to pay. Unsurprisingly, it was often their relatives, executors or friends who saw the wisdom of holding on to, or at least failing to destroy, work that was not destined to reach publication. In recent years, their work has been carried on by archivists and textual scholars, who have both preserved the surviving original drafts and edited them for publication and dissemination. On the library shelves, *Stephen Hero* takes its place besides *Portrait*; *Melymbrosia* and *The Pargiters* shadow *The Voyage Out* and *The Years*; *Paul Morel* sits beside *Sons and Lovers*.

In these unequal pairings, one can observe a tug of war between different textual world views. On the one side are the destroyers—the modernists themselves, and the literary critics who have praised the fragmentary, economical aesthetics of their final products; on the other are the preservers—the editors, family members and collectors who gathered up their abandoned drafts, and the textual critics and archivists who have made them public. The first group winnowed down both literary texts and the literary canon, but the second group can be understood as reversing their behaviour, expanding the modernist canon by reinserting its abject and expurgated "waste" back onto the library shelves. Christopher Ricks's much admired *Inventions of the March Hare*, which includes multiple versions of Eliot's earliest work, is thicker than Eliot's *Collected Poems*. Hemingway's posthumously published texts, which include *Islands In The*

Stream and *The Garden of Eden*, as well as *A Moveable Feast*, take up more pages than everything he published in his lifetime.

The expansion of the—extremely limited—canon of high modernist literature by the republication of excluded, abject and early draft versions provides a curious parallel to a more general tendency in the new modernist studies. According to one of its practitioners, this revisionist moment "had a number of goals, but canon expansion has been its most central."[351] Since the canon wars of the 1980s, scholars have redrawn the boundaries of modernism more democratically: the Harlem Renaissance is now taught alongside courses on Joyce and Faulkner; Langston Hughes has earned his place beside T. S. Eliot. To date, however, this expansive tendency has not extended to drafts and revisions: students may read *To the Lighthouse* alongside work by Rebecca West or Mary Butts, but they are very unlikely to read the drafts of "Time Passes." Why is this so? In the final two parts of this chapter, I will be suggesting that the pleasures and difficulties of an expanded modernist canon apply with particular urgency to the long early versions of our most canonical texts. The arguments for why we should read this material—the illumination it sheds on past cultural practice, as well as its independent interest or beauty—mirror the arguments that are advanced in literary studies in support of an expanded canon. Both are arguments with a political edge, allied to the reclamation of subaltern experience in history. There are more interesting things to say about the 1921 *Waste Land* than that "it is weaker throughout that the final version," just as there are more interesting things to say about Langston Hughes than "he is a worse poet than T. S. Eliot." Judgment, as Eliot himself averred, is incomplete without elucidation:

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[351] Seth Moglen, "Modernism and the Black Diaspora: Langston Hughes and the Broken Cubes of Picasso," *Callaloo* (2002): 1189-1205, 1190.

> The dogmatic critic, who lays down a rule, who affirms a value, has left his labour incomplete. Such statements may often be justifiable as a saving of time; but in matters of great importance the critic must not coerce, and he must not make judgments of worse and better. He must simply elucidate...[352]

4.5 Eliot's Accretive Composition

Unlike Pound or Hemingway, James or Moore, Eliot was never an advocate of efficiency in art. In fact, it is a curious anomaly of literary history that his best-known poem is also the most famous product of modernist excision. The many disavowals of *The Waste Land* that he issued after 1922 might be understood, in part, as a gesture towards this fact. He had never wanted to produce a poem which was "the justification of the 'movement,' of our modern experiment," if that movement was premised on economy of phrase and fragmentation of form. Eliot's contemporary prose indicates that, from the beginning, his critical preferences were for completion, form, structure, control, and classicism; his favourite poets were Dante and Virgil, and he inveighed against the "crankiness and eccentricity" of writers outside "the Latin tradition," by which he meant, primarily, Blake and the Romantics.[353]

In its first draft, *The Waste Land* was conceived in a symmetrical four-part structure. The two central sections, "The Fire Sermon" and "Death by Water," were not only of almost identical length, but were each subdivided into two parts, producing a chiastic arrangement: the eighteenth-century London of the Fresca passage shifts into the twentieth-century world of the typist's bedsit, and then a contemporary sea voyage off the North American coast fades out into the timelessness of Phlebas' death. "The Burial of

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[352] T. S. Eliot, "The Perfect Critic," reprinted in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1928), 1-16, 11.

[353] See especially the essay on "Blake," *The Sacred Wood*, 2nd ed., 151-58.

The Dead" was also originally paired with "A Game of Chess" (titled "In the Cage"), as the two halves of an opening section entitled "He Do the Police in Different Voices." This is a structure that facilitates balance and juxtaposition between the particular and the universal, the present and the past, providing a simultaneous rather than a sequential account of history.[354] When Pound edited, he removed "excess" from the draft by undoing Eliot's balancing act. His five-part structure is unevenly weighted, and the relationship among the sections of the poem is abstruse. Like the reader of "In a Station of the Metro," the reader of the 1922 text must do all the grammatical work, supplying the syntactic relationships between separate contexts and clusters of images.

By cutting the original opening and the long description of a sea voyage, Pound also removed all traces of America from *The Waste Land*, opening Eliot to the charge of having become an un- or anti-American poet. William Carlos Williams remarked bitterly that the poem's publication "struck like a sardonic bullet," and that "Eliot returned us to the classroom just at the moment when I felt that we were on the point of an escape to matters much closer to the essence of a new art form itself — rooted in the locality which should give it fruit."[355]

Originally, however, Eliot had balanced reference to a European literary tradition with colloquial American dialect, interlayering present and past time, the particular and the general. "April is the cruelest month," was preceded, as the first line of the second part of "The Burial of the Dead," by "First we had a couple of feelers down at old Tom's place" (4: 1-2). Phlebas' death followed the description of a shipwreck off the Atlantic

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[354] Marshall McLuhan argues that Eliot's four-part structure draws on the traditions of scriptural exegesis, "Pound, Eliot and the Rhetoric of *The Waste Land*," *New Literary History* 10.3 (1979): 557-80, 562.

[355] William Carlos Williams, *The Autobiography of Williams Carlos Williams* (New York: Random House, 1951), 174.

coast. The inattentive sailors ignore the signs of a brewing storm, thinking only of "home and dollars and the pleasant violin/ At Marm Brown's joint, and the girls and gin" (64:49-50). After the understated last line of this section, "there is no more noise now," we have to assume that the voyage will only end with the crew's death. In this context, a snatch of dialect "Where's a cocktail shaker, Ben," (68:80) becomes an ironic and macabre joke, as the ice cubes used to blend a drink (a glamorous image in 1922) become the limitless "cracked" ice on which the ship has begun to break up.

Eliot was not a proponent of economy nor, as either a writer or as an editor, did he ever make much use of excision as a strategy for improving an earlier draft. When he described what "critical labour," performed after the heat of first composition, might involve, he invoked a wide range of activities. The long list of participles—reminiscent of the syntactic structure with which *The Waste Land* itself begins—lists the generative modes of "combining" and "constructing" first.

> Probably, indeed, the larger part of the labour of an author in composing his work is critical labour; the labour of sifting, combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, testing: this frightful toil is as much critical as creative.[356]

As an editor of other people's work, Eliot put these beliefs successfully into practice. As Andrew Kappel has shown, his 1935 edition of Marianne Moore's *Selected Poems* is an "elaborate and brilliant" rearrangement of her earlier work, which revises our sense of Moore's oeuvre as a whole by moving the poems out of chronological order.[357] It remains faithful, however, to the full range of Moore's poetic vision, allowing an even-handed balance between long, meditative, free-verse poems and short, elaborate syllabics.

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[356] T. S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism" (1923), 23-34, 30.

[357] Andrew J. Kappel, "Complete with Omissions: The Text of Marianne Moore's *Complete Poems*," 132.

When it came to his own poetry, Eliot's touch was less sure. He was "wishful to finish" *The Waste Land* in 1921, but uncertain how to do so.[358] In later years, he talked of his delivery of the poem to Pound as a form of abandonment, "I placed before him the manuscript of a sprawling chaotic poem called *The Waste Land* which left his hands reduced to about half its size, in the form in which it appears in print."[359] Throughout his writing life, he tended either to get things right the first time, to abandon them, or to give them to someone else; as he composed *Four Quartets*, he was as reliant on John Hayward's meticulous and detailed letters of criticism as he had been on Pound's more crudely expressed opinions about *The Waste Land*.[360] Despite success as an editor at Faber, he was also a curiously sloppy proofreader of his own work. In 1923, he explained to Virginia Woolf, his proofreading was so "abominable" that the Hogarth edition of *The Waste Land* contained several errors, including "under London Bridge" for "over London Bridge," and "coloured dolphin" for "carvèd dolphin." His response was to go into the booksellers, Jones and Evans, and correct the mistakes by hand.[361]

When Eliot did revise or edit, his changes tended to be small-scale reconfigurations or reorderings: alone among the major modernists, he never completely rewrote or reconceptualized a text. In an interview with Donald Hall in 1959, he explained that his compositional process was one of slowly accumulating possibilities,

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[358] Letter to John Quinn, 9 May 1921, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), 18.

[359] T. S. Eliot, "Ezra Pound," *Poetry Chicago*, September 1946. Quoted by Helen Gardner, "*The Waste Land: Paris 1922*," *Eliot in His Time*, 68-69.

[360] Helen Gardner provides more details in *The Composition of Four Quartets* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

[361] Unpublished letter to Virginia Woolf, dated "Friday" 1923, in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library.

patiently building up lines and sketches until a whole began to take shape. A few lines "that had to be cut out of *Murder in the Cathdedral*" became the seedbed for "Burnt Norton," just as some of the poems published as "Minor Poems" functioned as "the preliminary sketches" for major works. "Ash Wednesday" and "The Hollow Men" both "originated out of separate poems," which were only later considered as a potential sequence: "That's one way in which my mind does seem to have worked throughout the years poetically—doing things separately and then seeing the possibility of fusing them together, altering them, and making a kind of whole of them.[362]

He followed exactly this process of gathering together or "shoring up" shorter poetic fragments as he composed *The Waste Land.* The facsimile edition published by Valerie Eliot consists of materials written over a period of about seven years, some of which Eliot circulated as individual poems before reconceiving them as parts of a larger whole. In 1966, Conrad Aiken recollected that he had got to know parts of the final poem, such as "A woman drew her long black hair out tight," as "poems or part-poems, in themselves," before seeing them "inserted into *The Waste Land* as into a mosaic."[363] Early unpublished poems containing lines that were later to turn up in *The Waste Land* include "The Death of Saint Narcissus," and "The Death of the Duchess."[364] Eliot also originally intended to use "Gerontion," which *had* been published, as a "prelude in book or pamphlet form" to the published text of *The Waste Land.* But Pound was not convinced that there was any connection between the two texts. In a letter from January

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[362] "The Art of Poetry I: T. S. Eliot," Interview in *The Paris Review*, 58.

[363] Quoted by Valerie Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile*, 130.

[364] James E. Miller, *T. S. Eliot: The Making of an American Poet, 1888-1922* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 366.

1922 he was firm to the point of dogma: "I do *not* advise printing 'Gerontion' as preface. One don't [*sic*] miss it *at* all as the thing now stands. To be more lucid still, let me say that I advise you NOT to print 'Gerontion' as prelude."[365]

The revisions that Eliot did make to *The Waste Land* manuscript are local stylistic modifications, aimed at selecting the exact word, reordering lines, or making direct speech more realistic. In the original version of "The Fire Sermon," for example, he described Fresca stepping ashore like "a Venus Anadyomene":

> She gave the turf her intellectual patronage.
> She reigns no less distinguished spheres,
> Minerva in a crowd of boxing peers. (28:7-9)[366]

As he revised, Eliot altered "reigns" firstly to "dominates," then to "governs," and finally to "But F. rules" (where "F." presumably stands for "Fresca"); he also played around with the modifier "no less," changing it to the almost equivalent "even more." The manuscript page, which is neatly written but tightly spaced, looks very cramped at this point, with multiple thick crossings-out, and a large bubble drawn around the final two lines. Most of Eliot's other revisions are also substitutions, often of a minimal kind, "Glaucon" for "Ademantus" (30:120), "perhaps" for "else" (32:157), "observant" for "observing" (30:111). The minimal substitutions that cover the surface of the manuscript offer a certain kind of archaeological insight into Eliot's compositional process. They can also be read as a genetic *figure* for *The Waste Land*'s thematic logic of replacement. "Terrible" melts into "unreal" (8:114), "Glaucon" into "Ademantus," "Polish" into

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[365] Letter, Jan. 1922, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, 237. Eliot's letter, beginning "Cher maître" and asking whether he *should* use "Gerontion" is printed on the previous page.

[366] When beginning to discuss a passage from the facsimile edition *not* in the final poem, I give the page number and then line numbers. I use the verso page number, which is the facsimile reproduction; Valerie Eliot's typed version is on the recto. In subsequent discussion I give only the line number.

"perished" into "endless" (74:49). So, too, Tiresias is "the most important personage in the poem," because he unites its peculiar transformations and meltings. The notes explain:

> Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias.[367]

There are one or two places in the manuscript where Pound suggested minor changes of this kind. By and large, however, Pound's alterations (which are represented by red ink on Valerie Eliot's recto pages) are large-scale deletions. Where Eliot's revisions are cluttered and fussy, often involving bubbles, asterisks or scribbles, Pound's revisions have a cleanness and confidence of line and are, in fact, very often diagonal lines drawn through an entire passage. However highly we value the *result* of Pound's work on *The Waste Land*, it is clear that it cannot be regarded as a continuation of a process that Eliot had already begun. If anything, it made Eliot's poem less rather than more "characteristically Eliotian," involving the imposition of an aesthetic of fracture, brevity, and economy onto a poem which, in the first draft, was just as interested in "sifting, combining, constructing."[368]

The most thorough example of this transformative logic, where surface "melts" into depth, life into death, occurs in the fourth section of the poem, "Death by Water." Phlebas may be "a fortnight dead" (312), but his body refuses to sink to the bottom of the ocean; instead, he exists in limbo, both rising and falling, and still capable of some kind

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[367] Note to line 218, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile*, 148.

[368] Helen Gardner argues that Pound "shows his genius as a critic in the applause he gives—'Echt,' 'OK'—to the most characteristically Eliotian lines and passages." Helen Gardner, "*The Waste Land*: Paris 1922," 76.

of consciousness—enough at least to remark "the stages of his age and youth." Elsewhere in the poem, the drowned sailor appears face upwards: "Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!" (48,125). Not only is this image yet another example of positive metamorphosis—the eye sockets of a drowned man are not grotesquely disfigured but have hardened to beauty—but it is itself a stolen gem. In rendering Phlebas to us, Eliot is alluding to Shakespeare and, behind Shakespeare, to some of the epitaphic conventions of the Palatine anthology. Curiously, he is also engaged in one the rarest of all acts of literary theft—namely self-translation.

He had first introduced Phlebas in his 1918 French poem, "Dans le Restaurant."[369] Appended to a waiter's "off-colour tale of an early sexual experience," the seven-line lyrical fragment begins "Phlébas, le Phénicien, pendant quinze jours noyé."[370] In 1921, Pound made his own attempt at translating it, replacing Eliot's calm iambics with strong stresses reminiscent of the meter of *The Seafarer*. At the same time, it is a deeply literal translation. Material is rearranged ("un bel homme, de haute taille," for example, is brought up to the beginning) but nothing significant is altered.[371] Eliot's own version, by contrast, is transformative. Phlebas' misadventure is no longer presented as narrative; it has become an object of imperative reflection, in the tradition of *sta viator*. More importantly, a static model of surface (life) and underwater (death) has been replaced by the dynamic and unpredictable "whirlpool." A whirlpool is a site both of destruction and

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[369] T. S. Eliot, "Dans le Restaurant," in *Poems* 1920, and in *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1963), 44-44.

[370] James Longenbach discusses the earlier poem in some detail in "*Ara Vos Prec*: Eliot's Negotiation of Satire and Suffering," in Ronald Bush ed., *T. S. Eliot: The Modernist in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 41-67, 52.

[371] The lines are quoted by A. Walton Litz, "Strange Meetings: Eliot, Pound and Laforgue," *Omnium Gatherum: Essays for Richard Ellmann*, eds. Susan Dick et al. (Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: C. Smythe, 1989), 146-53, 150.

absorption, confusion and reconfiguration: under definition 1b (fig.) the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites "Drowned in the whirlepoole of obliuion" (1555), but also "The Whirl-pool of Poetry suck'd me in, and I fell a Rhiming" (1704).[372] This fluid and generative image is very different from the rigid structure of the iceberg or the hardness of a diamond mine. It is also a much more appropriate metaphor for *The Waste Land*'s own habit of blending its multiple sources into "rich and strange" new configurations.

When the facsimile was first published, Hugh Kenner made the acute observation that Pound's prosodic preference was for "the strong line... the end-stopped pentameter coincident with a closed syntactic member."[373] This is not the only form that survives in the final poem, but it may be regarded as its dominant mode—the form of "Under the brown fog of a winter dawn," of all of "A Game of Chess" except for the sections of dialogue, and of all of "The Fire Sermon" apart from the lyrical interlude "The river sweats." "What the Thunder Said" is also composed around the basic grid of the pentameter, but with more incantatory anaphora across lines and less end-stopping. The 1921 draft shows no such preference; it is a chaotic, but virtuoso, experimentation with a much wider range of metrical forms. Most notable are Eliot's repeated attempts to write in eighteenth-century modes, including the Popian rhyming couplets of the Fresca passage, and the elegiac quatrains in which the typist and "young man carbuncular" had originally cavorted. Hugh Kenner was, once again, the first to comment on Eliot's fondness for this "uncommon stanza, recognizable to most modern ears because Gray used it in his elegy," noting that Dryden was also fascinated by its "leisurely

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[372] "whirlpool,[2]" *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 10 Sept. 2007 <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezp2.harvard.edu/cgi/entry/50284662>.

[373] Hugh Kenner, 'The Urban Apocalypse', *Eliot in His Time*, 32.

authority."[374] In particular, it is the form of "Annus Mirabilis"—a poem which is deeply relevant to *The Waste Land*, not only because it "elaborate[s] a sustained analogy between modern London and ancient Rome," but because of its sustained thematic preoccupation with rubbish and refuse, with London as a modern "waste land."

In the typescript, the passage beginning "At the violet hour," (31.121) and ending "And puts a record on the gramophone" (35.188) consists of sixty eight lines of verse, or seventeen quatrains. In the final poem, the same events are told in forty two lines: in a pattern with which we are becoming familiar, Pound simply deleted about a third of the passage, commenting "verse not interesting enough as verse to warrant so much of it." He deleted four entire quatrains, including the description of the typist's "bright kimono... purchased in Oxford Street," (137-8) and all of the more scabrous descriptions of her lover, including "His hair is thick with grease, and thick with scurf" (150). If Pound had restricted his excisions to complete quatrains, the metrical structure of the passage would have remained unchanged. However he also deleted individual lines and pairs of lines, creating a peculiar and uneven metrical effect: the final version of "The Fire Sermon" has echoes of the inherited elegiac form in which it was originally constructed—an eighteenth century *feel*—but it is not set out in quatrains, and the rhyming is variable. Some intact quatrain structures remain ("Out of the window perilously spread" to "Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays"), but at other points lines are run up each other to produce couplets. In the final poem, for example, we find:

> I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs,
> Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest,
> I too awaited the expected guest. (228-30)

[374] Hugh Kenner, "The Urban Apocalypse," 29. Kenner suggests that Eliot's understanding of Dryden's project and prosody was strongly influenced by his reading of Mark Van Doren's book *John Dryden*, which he reviewed for the *TLS* in May 1921.

The suddenness of the couplet is a direct result of an excision. Against the third line of the quatrain, Pound wrote "Too easy." Originally it had run:

> I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs,
> Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest,
> Knowing the manner of these crawling bugs,
> I too awaited the expected guest. (141-4)

At other points, omission leads to the collapse, rather than the intensification, of a rhyming structure. The "waits" of line 216, which compares the "human engine" to a "taxi throbbing waiting," had originally been picked up by the rhyming pair "gates," and by reference away from the present moment to the mysterious double gates of *Odyssey* XIX.

> At the violet hour, the hour when eyes and back and hand
> Turn upward from the desk, the human engine waits—
> Like a taxi throbbing waiting at a stand—
> To spring to pleasure through the horn or ivory gates. (121-4)

4.6 Fresca and Literary Excrement

In the 1921 draft, there is one other extended passage that pays homage to the eighteenth century. Originally "The Fire Sermon" had opened with seventy lines of rhyming couplets narrating the morning toilet of a young woman called Fresca (23.1-72). Like Phlebas, she had made a previous outing in *Ara Vos Prec*, as one of the mysterious and displaced characters mentioned by Gerontion: "De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel, whirled/ Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear/ In fractured atoms." In the *Waste Land* draft she reappeared as a "white-armed" lady of leisure, inhabiting a temporally fractured, materially teeming, world that includes elements of both eighteenth and twentieth-century life. But Ezra Pound put a series of nine diagonal lines through her

existence, explaining that "if you mean this as a burlesque, you had better suppress it, for you cannot parody Pope unless you can write better verse than Pope—and you can't."[375] One of the gashes through the lines runs so deep that the ink has bled onto the other side of the paper.

Critics have tended to agree with Pound about two things: these couplets are "Popish," and they are bad. In one of the first essays to appear after the publication of the facsimile, Richard Ellmann argued that "To this shrewd advice we are indebted for the disappearance of such lines as: 'The white-armed Fresca blinks, and yawns, and gapes…'"[376] Hugh Kenner claimed that "at the root of its troubles lay Eliot's deficient grasp of Pope."[377] Subsequent critics have also dismissed the lines as of little interest, describing them as poorly-crafted, confused, out of key with the rest of the poem, obscene, illiberal, and, most recently, as "rancorous sub-Popian misogyny."[378] Distaste for these lines has been so strong that there has been little attempt to consider their excremental content in earnest. By dismissing these lines *as* waste, critics—beginning with Pound himself—have accordingly missed the ways in which they address the problem *of* waste. It is this play between a thematics of abjection and excess and a genetic process focused on removing excess that I consider in the closing pages of this chapter.

Pound couched his criticism of the Fresca passage in metrical terms, but he also used the word "suppress." In a later part of "The Fire Sermon," he wrote "probaly [*sic*]

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[375] Valerie Eliot, Editorial Notes, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts*, 127.

[376] Richard Ellmann, "The First *Waste Land*," 53.

[377] Hugh Kenner, "The Urban Apocalypse," 34.

[378] Comments from Peter Howarth, rev. of *Revisiting The Waste Land* by Lawrence Rainey, *Modern Philology* 104 (2006): 280-5.

over the mark" against the description of the young man carbuncular stopping "to urinate, and spit" (46:180) after his perfunctory assault. Was he objecting to Eliot's excremental content as much as to his apparent failure of form? Set in a woman's dressing room, and grimly focused on the interplay between nature and artifice, French perfume and "the good old hearty female stench" (22:41) the Fresca passage is, in many respects, closer in sensibility to Swift than to Pope. In particular it is reminiscent of poems such as "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed," and "The Lady's Dressing Room," which, as Tita Chico has argued, satirize the female body as a "site and producer of excrement" to manage anxieties about female sexuality and women's potential for independence.[379] Often the women in Swift's poems are partially dismembered or deconstructed; in the privacy of their own dressing rooms, they take off "plumpers," "bolsters," false eyebrows, and crystal eyes, revealing the *essential* disorder and ugliness of the female body.

During the seventy-line passage, Fresca consumes a tea tray of "soothing chocolate, or stimulating tea," passes a "needful stool," eats a boiled egg, has a hot bath, and uses French perfume to "disguise the good old hearty female stench." And yet she is not only a Swiftian body. The complexity and precision of her physical appetites is matched by equally defined types of literary and intellectual consumption:

> Leaving the bubbling beverage to cool,
> Fresca slips softly to the needful stool,
> Where the pathetic tale of Richardson
> Eases her labour till the deed is done. (22:11-14)

The mock-heroic bathos of this passage lies in the contrast between Fresca's actual act and its weighty, abstract description as a form of "labour." But the play between literary

[379] Tita Chico, "Privacy and Speculation in Early Eighteenth-century Britain," *Cultural Critique* 52 (2002): 40-60, 41.

"ease" and her half-rhymed utterly material "deed" also frames a more substantial question about the correct ways to read and write. For Fresca, literature appears to have purely laxative qualities. What could be a more fungible use for a book than bathroom reading? At the same time, her choice of text is somewhat surprising. Richardson's novels are not only extremely long (Valerie Eliot's notes suggest that this is *Clarissa*—the longest of them all), and therefore ill-suited to reading in distracted bursts, they are also avowedly didactic, aimed at "improving" their readers who, like Fresca herself, were primarily young, leisured, and female.[380]

In the first draft, Fresca read Richardson alongside his contemporary, Gibbon:

> Then slipping back between the conscious sheets,
> Explores a page of Gibbon as she eats. (15-16)

When Eliot revised the passage, he provided one of his (frequent) single-phrase substitutions: "Gibbon" was replaced with "The Daily Mirror," Lord Harmsworth's middle-market newspaper, first published in 1896. Richardson *and* Gibbon pin Fresca firmly in the smart eighteenth-century world conjured by Eliot's meter. Adding *The Daily Mirror* to the mix complicates matters, creating a kaleidoscopic blur between present and past time. In the next verse paragraph, Fresca makes herself fully, and even aggressively, modern by telling a correspondent "I have a clever book by Giraudoux." The avant-garde French writer, whose novel *Suzanne et le Pacifique* appeared in 1921, may be contemporaneous with *The Daily Mirror*, but he stands on the opposite side of the great divide between highbrow and lowbrow. What sort of person would read all four of these texts in one day?

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[380] Valerie Eliot notes "'The pathetic tale' may have been his novel *Clarissa Harlow*," 127.

Some explanation is provided on the subsequent typescript page, when we discover that Fresca "was baptized in a soapy sea/ Of Symonds—Walter Pater—Vernon Lee" (56-57) and then alternately "bemused" by the Scandinavians, and "thrilled" by the Russians. Victorian aestheticism, Russian novels and the drama of Ibsen were the formative staples of many modernist writers, including Eliot himself. By 1921, however, Eliot had started to disavow the kind of broad, chaotic, and unstructured reading which Fresca enjoys. His contemporary prose displays a repeated and almost obsessive concern with putting literature *in order*. In fact, his 1919 essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," could have been written as a corrective prescription for Fresca herself. Where she confuses present and past writing, Eliot advocates acquisition of "the historical sense"; where she uses Richardson to ease the "labour" of defecation, Eliot claims labour as necessary and beneficent, "Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour."[381] Fresca garners critical notice for writing in a style "quite her own," but Eliot argues that "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone." She consumes literature like tea, chocolate, and eggs, but for Eliot—in another bizarre metaphor of digestion—the past must never be reduced to a privately formed "lump, an indiscriminate bolus."

The Fresca passage can be read as a programmatic argument against feminine tendencies in literature—wide but chaotic reading, eclecticism, hysteria—focussed through the Swiftian site of a woman's private dressing room. By this line of thought, it becomes a rhetorical and explicit statement of the purpose that Joyce saw Eliot enacting more subtly, when he claimed that *The Waste Land* had "ended the idea of poetry for

[381] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), *Selected Essays*, 13-22, 14.

ladies."[382] At the same time, this discarded passage is itself subject to some of the critiques that it marshals: it is heavily laden with literary borrowings and pastiche, with baroque adjectives, and with rhetorical tricks like the inserted letter and the sudden apostrophe ("Fresca! in other time or place..." [42]). As verse, the writing is not so much sub-Popian as too-Popian; the couplets are so prosodically regular that they become mechanical. There is a tremendous amount of wit in the choice of rhymes, but it is wit of a brittle and satirical kind rather than the synthetic intelligence that Eliot found in Marvell ("a recognition, implicit in the expression of every experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible").[383] "The egg's well-rounded dome" is picked up by amusing off-rhyme, "till the letters come"; "I must make an end" by the (typographically indicated) sign-off "your friend." One couplet begins with the word "women" and ends with its obscene alternative, "trull."

> But Women ~~grown~~ intellectual grow dull
> And lose the mother wit of natural trull. (54-55)

Another way to read Fresca—the only writer in *The Waste Land*—is as Eliot's double, the alternately amusing and nightmarish incarnation of his own (worst) literary sympathies, interests, and habits. As a "hypocrite auteur," she both resembles and appals her creator, moving all too rapidly from the "soapy sea" of her reading to a natural and facile act of creation. Having devoured the "scribbled contents" of her letters she immediately uses her "practic'd powers" (20) to produce one of her own and, after reading poetry (and failing to fall asleep), "scribbles verse of such a gloomy tone/ That cautious critics say, her style is quite her own" (65-66). This method of literary

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[382] See Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 510.

[383] T. S. Eliot, "Andrew Marvell" (1921), *Selected Essays*, 292-304, 303.

production is, undoubtedly, the exact opposite of the "labour" that Eliot spent so much time commending. Fresca's writing is messy, unmeditated, and playful, rather than ordered, considered, and serious: it is undertaken for no particular purpose except self-gratification. And yet Fresca's bad writing habits may also be a much more accurate representation of Eliot's own creative process than anything in his prose strictures. In later life, he tried to correct critics who had done him the honour of reading *The Waste Land* "as an important bit of social criticism," insisting that any such meaning had only been retrospectively imported: "To me, it was only a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life: it is just a piece of rhythmic grumbling."[384]

When Pound compared writing to digging through mud for a diamond, he was assuming that the diamond was always already present in the mess. But Eliot seems to have realized that—at least in his own case—the dirt was actually producing the pearl. This is the import of one of the couplets that Pound crossed out most energetically. His perfectly neat zig-zag line cancels out Eliot's whimsical—and wonderfully messy—question, as if to stop us from even entertaining a dangerous idea.[385]

> From ~~For~~ such chaotic misch-masch potpourri
> What are we to expect but poetry? (60-61)

This is, depending on your perspective, either a remarkably reasonable or a remarkably unreasonable double rhyme. Enacting the transition from chaos to order, it binds the august word "poetry" ("something made," from Greek) to the hodgepodge "potpourri"

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[384] This remark is used by Valerie Eliot as an epigraph, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile*, 1.

[385] On the carbon copy of the typescript. See *The Waste Land: A Facsimile*, 40.

("a dish of mixed meats," from the French *pourrir*, to rot).[386] After the heavy consonant clusters of the first line, the second is elegantly understressed. As a rhetorical question it works perfectly, and yet its answer is also surprising: Eliot is not claiming that verse is an occasional product of chaos, but that the poetry and the "potpourri"—or the waste and *The Waste Land*—are inevitably and inseparably paired.

[386] "pot-pourri, n.[1]" *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 10 Sept. 2007 <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezp2.harvard.edu/cgi/entry/50185492>.

Chapter Five

"Poetry Makes Nothing Happen"

5.1 Auden the Virtuoso

From the beginning of his career, the name of W. H. Auden was synonymous with poetic facility. Reviewing *The Orators* in 1932, Graham Greene commented: "Mr. Auden's virtuosity is amazing. He uses the whole language without self-consciousness."[387] More recent critics have concurred, noting his "astonishing technical mastery," "effortless lyricism," and "famous metrical virtuosity."[388] For Paul Hendon, his "was a Shakespearean gift, not just in its magnitude but in its unsettling—and unsettling especially to its possessor—characteristic of making anything said sound truer than true."[389]

Auden possessed an equally virtuoso, although less often remarked, gift for revision. Unlike Pound, who repeatedly excised material in draft form to produce compressed and supercharged aesthetic effects, and unlike James, whose revisions are primarily substitutions in search of a "final form," Auden was never wedded to any one primary mode of revision. At different points in his career, he made effective use of substitution, excision, and extension, and he revised with equal energy both before and after initial publication. In the preface to *The Golden Bowl*, Henry James speaks

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[387] Graham Greene, "Three Poets," *Oxford Magazine*, 10 Nov. 1932. Reprinted in John Haffenden, *W. H. Auden: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1997), 114-5, 114.

[388] The first two appraisals were made by Roger Kimball, "The Permanent Auden," *The New Criterion*, 17.9 (May 1999); the second is from Alan Jacobs, *What Became of Wystan* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1998), 101.

[389] Paul Hendon, *The Poetry of W. H. Auden: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2000), 169.

eloquently about his own anxieties over post-publication revision, worrying whether there might be some truth behind the injunction, "Hands off altogether on the nurse's part!"[390] Auden was occasionally subject to similar qualms, arguing in his elegy for W. B. Yeats that poetry must inevitably survive "In the valley of its making where executives/ Would never want to tamper."[391]

In practice, however, he was very much (to borrow one of his own phrases) a "born nurse," who treated his published volumes as extensions of his messy manuscript notebooks, and as private rather than public repositories of meaning.[392] By 1965, when he sat down to pen the foreword to his *Collected Shorter Poems*, he seems to have become comfortable with his own habitual "tampering." Defending the act of revision as a matter "of principle," he approvingly cites Valéry's dictum, "A poem is never finished; only abandoned."[393] The poems within the volume, like those in his 1945 *Collected Poetry* and 1958 *Selected Poetry*, were selectively winnowed out of his individual volumes, and, in many cases, verbally altered. When he was compiling the 1945 *Collected Poetry*, the only copy of *In This Island* that he could get hold of was in the Swarthmore college library.[394] Like Dencombe, whose pencil "pricks a dozen lights" on the published copy of his novel,

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[390] Henry James, preface to *The Golden Bowl*, xv.

[391] Unless otherwise specified, references to Auden's poems are to Edward Mendelson ed. *Collected Poems* (New York: Random House, 1976). "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," 197-8, 197.

[392] "The friends of the born nurse/ Are always getting worse." These lines occur in the first of Auden's several groups of "Shorts," *Collected Poems*, 55.

[393] This preface is reprinted as one of two "Author's Forewords," in *Collected Poems*, 15-16, 16.

[394] *On This Island* (1936) was the title given to the American edition of *Look, Stranger!* Auden preferred this title, and was to complain that his British publisher, Faber and Faber, had chosen a title without properly consulting him. The two titles suggest surprisingly different relationships between the poet and the British homeland he was about to leave; indeed, the British title might be thought more proleptically accurate than the later American version. In 2005, the British poet Clare Pollard riffed on Auden's first title for her third collection, *Look, Clare, Look!* (Tarset: Bloodaxe, 2005).

Auden set about the process of revising his work for republication by marking up the printed book. Today, the disfigured copy has become one of the library's prize possessions, and a central feature of the electronic exhibit W. H. Auden at Swarthmore."[395] Against poem XIV, which begins with urgent fellow-feeling ("Brothers who when the sirens roar"), he made the pencil comment: "Oh God, what rubbish." On the other side of the page comes the editorial or authorial command: "Omit. (WHA)".[396]

Many of Auden's actual manuscript notebooks have also been preserved; the largest single collection is in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library. In their pages, we can see him searching, sometimes laboriously, for the right cadence or the *mot juste*; between early and late published versions of his poems he again made local alterations, turning "the necessary murder" into "the fact of murder," in "Spain, 1937," and "Cold, impossible, ahead" to "Clear, unscaleable, ahead" in "Twelve Songs, VI".[397] Auden has not received much attention from genetic critics, but he is in a sense the perfect genetic object of study: it is impossible to read his poetic canon without being aware of its diachronic construction, its "three-dimensional poetics."[398] He revised both published and unpublished poems in similar fashions, and, in that sense, is also challenging to rigid notions of the difference between "texte" and "avant-texte." By contrast, Eliot and Pound revised substantially and laboriously in manuscript, but made

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[395] "W. H. Auden at Swarthmore," 20 Apr. 2008 <http://www.swarthmore.edu/ library/auden/index.html>.

[396] An image of the page is scanned as a .jpg file, as an example of "Auden's use and abuse of library books," 20 Apr. 2008 <http://www.swarthmore.edu/library/auden/library3.html>.

[397] In the Harvard college library copy of the 1937 pamphlet "Spain," a reader has written in the revisions, citing "Collected Poems, 1945." W. H. Auden, *Spain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), 11. The title "Autumn Song" was added for the 1958 *Selected Poetry*. The revision was made between that edition and the 1966 *Collected*, along with several others.

[398] See Laurent Jenny, "Genetic Criticism and its Myths," *Yale French Studies* 89 (1996): 9-25.

almost no changes—not even corrections—to poems that had already appeared in print.[399]

Both before and after publication, Auden also made a remarkable *range* of revisions to his work: he moved passages across stanzas, between poems and plays, reordered collections, titled and retitled poems, excised stanzas, and drew material from disparate sources together into a whole. Most famously, he also deleted or suppressed some poems, including "Spain, 1937" and "September 1, 1939," in their entirety, after first trying unsatisfactorily to emend them. These poems now occupy curious cultural and textual ground, being simultaneously among Auden's best-known work, and absent from his *Collected Poems*.

Stephen Burt and Nicholas Jenkins have written at length about the uneasy contemporary status of the poem "September 1, 1939," which was "endlessly quoted and reprinted" after 9/11, appearing "weirdly prescient" to some commentators, and offering the comfort of "something akin to religious ritual to others."[400] Many of those who printed or commented on Auden's words were "aware of the poem's troubled history"; a letter writer to the *Times Literary Supplement* (writing in response to the "Letter From New York") called the poem "a meretricious piece of work" that "despite its seductive cadences" should be "consigned to the scrapheap."[401] This critical judgment was, of

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[399] Christopher Ricks has shown that Eliot made more substantial changes to his prose writings before permitting them to be republished. Christopher Ricks, *Decisions and Revisions in T. S. Eliot* (British Library, 2004). The book is a reworked version of Ricks's Panizzi lectures, given under the title "T. S. Eliot's Revisions After Publication" in 2002.

[400] See Stephen Burt, "'September 1, 1939' Revisited, or, Poetry, Politics, and the Idea of the Public," *American Literary History* 15.3 (Fall 2003): 533-559 and Nicholas Jenkins, "Either *Or* or *And*: An Enigmatic Moment in the History of 'September 1, 1939'," *Yale Review* 90.3 (July, 2002): 22-39.

[401] Peter Steinfels, "Beliefs; After Sept. 11, a 62-year-old poem by Auden drew new attention. Not all of it was favorable," *New York Times*, December 1, 2001.

course, Auden's own. After publishing the poem in his 1940 volume *Another Time*, his opinion of it steadily worsened, and he refused to allow it to be republished in collected volumes of his works. When he was asked for permission to include "September 1, 1939" and "Spain 1937" in a 1964 anthology, *Poetry of the Thirties*, he agreed, but only on one condition: the editor must make it clear that "Mr. W. H. Auden considers [these poems] to be trash which he is ashamed to have written."[402]

Readers today tend to take Auden's statements at face value, assuming that Auden retracted the poem only after the passage of time and careful reconsideration, and that he did so for reasons which were ethical rather than formal. The true situation is more complicated. Before the poem was first printed, in *The New Republic* in October 1939, Auden had already tinkered with his draft substantially.[403] The typescript that he sent to the magazine contains two stanzas that had been heavily crossed out, but which are still legible (beginning "No promises can stay/ The ruling of the court"), as well as a cancelled dedication to Thomas Mann. The series of changes that Auden made to Americanize the poem, turning "odour" to "odor," "offence" to "offense", and "defenceless" to "defenseless," may seem more trivial, but they reflect an early anxiety about reception; by domesticating the spelling, he presents his work as self-consciously cosmopolitan, rather than the work of a British writer abroad.

Auden's posthumous executor and editor, Edward Mendelson, has both promulgated and defended Auden's own opinions about his work. In his editorial preface to the *Collected Poems*, he justifies his own decision to omit "the poems Auden

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[402] See Robin Skelton, *Poetry of the Thirties* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).

[403] The typescript that Auden sent to the magazine is in the Berg Collection.

published in his earlier years but finally discarded" first by reference to the traditional doctrine of authorial final intention, and then on grounds of taste:

> This edition includes all the poems that W. H. Auden wished to preserve, in a text that represents his final revisions... Fortunately, obligation and judgement are agreed in requiring that this first posthumous collected edition conform to its author's wishes to the extent that they can be determined.[404]

Besides his practical work as an editor, Mendelson has also written several critical essays exploring Auden's revisionary motivations. If, as Paul Hendon argues, there was something "unsettling" about Auden's rhetorical ability to make "anything said sound truer than true," then his use of revision can be understood as a necessary corrective, a sober method of self-disenchantment. Auden himself often spoke of revision in terms of shame and atonement, explaining in his 1966 foreword that "some poems which I wrote and, unfortunately, published, I have thrown out because they were dishonest, or bad-mannered, or boring."[405]

As Auden grew older, he seemed to see a basic tension between the virtuoso and the veridical, in both his own work and that of others. In 1964, he wrote a letter to Stephen Spender dismissing Yeats, who had "become for me a symbol of my own devil of unauthenticity... false emotions, inflated rhetoric, empty sonorities... His [poems] make me whore after lies."[406] For Mendelson, this dialectic between "empty sonorities" and plain-spoken truthfulness lies at the heart of Auden's behavior as a reviser. In an essay entitled "Revision and Power," he argues that revision functioned, in fact, as a form

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[404] Edward Mendelson, Editor's Preface, *Collected Poems* 11-15, 11.

[405] Reprinted in *Collected Poems*, 15.

[406] See Stan Smith, "Persuasions to Rejoice: Auden's Oedipal Dialogues with W. B. Yeats," *W. H. Auden: 'The Language of Leaning and the Language of Love': Uncollected Writings, New Interpretations*, ed. Katharine Bucknell and Nicholas Jenkins (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 155–63, 155.

of *negative* dialectic for Auden: "Auden understood that revision was an act of power over his own text, and he therefore revised his texts in ways that renounced the kind of power he employed in revising."[407] The only way to prevent the reader "whoring after lies" was to strip the text bare of its most basic visual and musical pleasures: "when he revised his early drafts into publishable form and, later, when he revised his published works for new editions, he repeatedly rejected his most *compelling* metaphors, and called attention to his own artifice."[408]

This elegant argument—Prospero using a rod to break his rod—leaves several questions unanswered. The logical problem it creates is one of regression, for is the compelling rejection of "*compelling* metaphors" not, in itself, a form of compulsion? Mendelson's reliance on Auden's own self-defence is also troubling. T. S. Eliot once said that his own criticism was "a by-product of my private poetry-workshop," and hence intrinsically partial, limited, and self-referential, "What has no relation to the poet's own work, or what is antipathetic to him, is outside of his competence."[409] In *The Dyer's Hand*, Auden made much the same point, "I am always interested in hearing what a poet has to say about the nature of poetry, although I do not take it too seriously. As objective statements, his definitions are never accurate, never complete and always one-sided. Not one would stand up under a rigorous analysis."[410] Some of Auden's critics have tried to argue that this piece of "sophisticated modesty" does not, and is not intended to, apply in

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[407] Edward Mendelson, "Revision and Power: The Example of W. H. Auden," *Yale French Studies* 89 (1996): 103-112, 103.

[408] Edward Mendelson, "Revision and Power: The Example of W. H. Auden," 104-5.

[409] T. S. Eliot, "The Frontiers of Criticism," in *On Poetry and Poets* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1957), 113-31, 117.

[410] W. H. Auden, "Making, Knowing, Judging," in *The Dyer's Hand* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 31-60, 52.

his own case, but this seems to me to miss the point.[411] Auden is explicitly warning us that, no matter how *interesting* his statements are, we should not expect them to be complete or rigorous. It is a warning that we ignore at our peril.

Auden's attitude towards revision was clearly formed by his own practice, and is often frankly self-defensive. By reiterating the terms of Auden's own judgments, and by insisting on their rigour and consistency, Mendelson privileges late Auden over early Auden, and authorial choice over readerly affect. Like Auden himself, he assumes that personal and authorial identity is stable enough over time for the "late" writer not only to be the best guide to, but also the sole possessor of, textual meaning. Similar struggles recur in the case of all post-publication revisers, but it is worth remembering that in most cases "late style" does not win out. Most students and critics work with the first, rather than the last, book publication of Henry James's novels; and many readers of Wordsworth would agree with de Selincourt that the 1850 *Prelude* overwrites the spontaneity of youth with later "excrescences of a manner less pure."[412] Auden's case may appear simpler—he chose to suppress "September 1, 1939" entirely rather than rewriting it—but it is not fundamentally different. Instead of choosing between two different versions of a poem, we have the choice between a poem and a blank page. In that case, might most readers not prefer something to nothing? Why should authorial choice be privileged over the desire of readers, particularly in the case of a poem capable of performing a public, consolatory function that its author could not have imagined? In

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[411] Erica Riggs argues that Auden's statements about poetry, shaped under an iterative procedure of self-correction, do in fact reward "rigorous analysis." Erica Riggs, "W. H. Auden as Serio-Comic Critic", *Twentieth Century Literature* 37.2 (1991): 207-224, 207.

[412] Most modern editions of Henry James's novels use the first book edition text, rather than the revised *New York Edition* text. As Philip Horne argues, when discussing the results of his revisions, "the criteria for judgement of his success, if we don't simply allow his latest self to dictate them, are challengingly relative." Philip Horne, *Henry James and Revision*, 46.

"Dichtung und Wahrheit" (1959), Auden recognized that his own interests as a writer and reader were sometimes divergent, but without privileging either one. The second section, tersely marked off by the Roman numeral, states:

> Of any poem written by someone else, my first demand is that it be good (who wrote it is of secondary importance); of any poem written by myself, my first demand is that it be genuine, recognizable, like my handwriting, as having been written, for better or worse, by me. (When it comes to his own poems, a poet's preferences and those of his readers often overlap but seldom coincide.)[413]

As the Swarthmore copy of *In This Island* makes clear, revision is a textual act that blurs hard and fast distinctions between author and reader. The note on the left side of the page, "Oh God, what rubbish" is the depreciatory value-judgment exercised by Auden in his reader-function, while the imperative on the right, "Omit. (WHA)," shows the reader turning back into, and reassuming the authority of, the writer. The dialectic play between the left and right side of the page is reminiscent of the relationship between Dencombe and Doctor Hugh or, more specifically, between Doctor Hugh's clean reading text, and Dencombe's marked-up author's copy. The reader of Auden may find another parallel in the eerie and tense dialogue between "reader" and "rider" in his own 1931 poem, "Five Songs V."[414] The first line opens provocatively, "'O where are you going?' said reader to rider," and then leaves the question hanging for two stanzas, as alternative open-ended dialogues are imagined between "fearer" and "farer" and "horror" and "hearer."[415] In the final stanza, the question is first answered, "'Out of this house'—said reader to rider," and then acted upon, "As he left them there, as he left them there." The

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[413] W. H. Auden, "Dichtung und Wahrheit," *Collected Poems* 491-499, 491.

[414] "Five Songs," V, *Collected Poems*, 60.

[415] Originally Auden had written "says" instead of "said," and "does" instead of "did": an indication that this scenario is envisaged as repeated and general.

sonic similarity of "rider" and "writer" is hard to ignore, although perhaps not entirely conscious. Read as a commentary on relations between readers and writers, this nightmarish little dialogue seems curiously predictive: the writer rides (or writes) off, leaving the reader in silence, and alone in the house.

The textual and ethical problems produced by the retraction of work that has already been published and read are, I believe, more substantial than Mendelson credits. His "fortunately" ("Fortunately, obligation and judgement are agreed") has a slightly peremptory glibness: it finds resolution very quickly to a complicated problem. What if a reader judges the absent "Spain, 1937" to be Auden's "finest political poem"?[416] Jerome McGann's and George Bornstein's recent work has advocated the value of "version theory" for readers of modernism, suggesting that the best way to approach texts published in alternate forms is to embrace their multiplicity. For Bornstein, recent version theory "offers a richer account of [texts] as processes rather than mere products of inscription," allowing us to distinguish "current material texts from earlier existent or future possible ones."[417] It may be far-fetched to suggest that Mendelson's mass-market edition could reflect the range of Auden's revisions in any substantial way, but it is important to realize that his final intentionalism has certain inevitable consequences: it effaces publication history, and consequently our sense of Auden as a poet who transformed over time; and it forces readers who are interested in textual process to look elsewhere. Whether or not we agree with Frank Gloversmith that Auden's revisions

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[416] In the entry for W. H. Auden in *Makers of Modern Culture* ed. Justin Wintle (London: Routledge, 2002), Janet Montefiore states "In the event, he took no active part in the war, but wrote his finest political poem, 'Spain, 1937'," 21-24, 23.

[417] George Bornstein, *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3, 4.

actually damaged "the integrity of the work... the outcome is to remove the oeuvre from the realm of the social, the political, and the historical," readers of many different kinds still seek access to the earlier versions of his work.[418] Mendelson's own *English Auden* was an invaluable companion to the *Collected Poems*, providing the texts of poems which Auden subsequently retracted, but it is no longer in print. For most readers, "September 1, 1939" is now available only as an e-text.

Mendelson's commitment to final intention is presented as a matter of editorial theory, but it is also a simple reflection of his taste. Readers of Auden may be divided in their opinion of the value of "early" and "late" style, but few would deny that there is a difference, even a "mystifying gap" between the two. In his influential piece "What's Become of Wystan?" Philip Larkin was in no doubt about which poet he preferred: the first was "full of energetic unliterary knock-about and unique lucidity of phrase," the second "too verbose to be memorable and too intellectual to be moving," "unserious" in attitude, with an uncomfortable "lisping archness" of manner.[419] Larkin did not address Auden's revisions, but we can assume that he would have taken a dim attitude towards the prospect of the old poet rewriting the younger. Mendelson, by contrast, is an advocate for late style. Adam Kirsch sums up the position concisely, "For the other camp—which includes Mr. Mendelson—Early Auden is still a genius, but Later Auden is an even bigger genius," before suggesting that there are personal investments at stake, "It's appropriate that Mr. Mendelson should defend the Later Auden, since it was the Later Auden who in 1972 plucked him from the ranks of academia to be his literary executor.

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[418] Quoted by Sean C. Grass, "W. H. Auden, from Spain to Oxford," *South Atlantic Review* 66.1 (2001): 84-101, 85.

[419] Philip Larkin, "What's Become of Wystan?" *Spectator*, 15 July 1960: 104-5.

Mr. Mendelson, now a professor at Columbia University, is still best known for his work with Auden's literary remains."[420]

My aim in this chapter is to be unpartisan; I am less interested in defending Auden's "first thoughts" or "last thoughts," than in the convoluted way in which he moved between them, and the sometimes puzzling ideas he put forward in self-defence. Many of his theories about the rights and wrongs of revision have enjoyed remarkable success, influencing academics working in other fields and, to a certain degree, popular understandings of the revision process. When Steven James recently attempted to defend Robert Lowell's "ethical" practice of post-publication revision, the best parallel he could find was Auden: "In reversing prior verbal commitments, Auden made decisions explicitly in the interests of reinforcing sincerity of expression, of doing greater justice to first intentions than he felt he had previously managed to achieve. Lowell, like Auden, came to distrust mere rhetorical effectiveness as a means to an end, and the progress of both poets' careers may be judged as a means of accepting an increasing burden of guilt for their past words and deeds."[421] In his study of Romantic revision, Zachary Leader also refers to Auden as a model for a certain kind of revision. Taking his cue from Edward Mendelson, he suggests that Auden should be allied with Wordsworth and against Byron, as a poet "who cared passionately about consistency."[422] "The poems that Auden rejected or altered," he continues, "were ones that misrepresented original meanings and intentions."

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[420] Adam Kirsch, "Auden's N.Y. Households, From Slum to Sublime" (review of Edward Mendelson's *The Later Auden*), *The New York Observer*, 2 May, 1999.

[421] Steven James, "Revision as Redress: Robert Lowell's Manuscripts," *Essays in Criticism*, 46.1 (1996): 28-51, 46.

[422] Zachary Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authorship*, 14.

Mendelson's commitment to the later Auden produces a dyadic model of revision, in which the older, wiser poet corrects and emends the sins of the younger, replacing political urgency with Horatian quietude, and riddling obscurity with a graceful plain style. In this chapter, I will be arguing for a more continuous reading of Auden's revisions. David Bromwich points the way in a largely favourable view of Mendelson's *Collected Poems*: "Auden's literary executor, Edward Mendelson, wisely cautions us to regard Auden's final change of dress as indeed final. It is. But a few intractable spirits ought to remain on the scene to ask if this was not after all another disguise."[423]

5.2 The Mooring of Starting Out

From the beginning, Auden's poetry was born under the sign of revision; it was—or had been—always already revised. Unlike T. S. Eliot, his poetic career was not inaugurated by a single, startlingly new performance. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" was a sudden departure for English poetry, but it was also a departure for Eliot. Rereading his early poems in *The Inventions of the March Hare* is a reminder of this: that famous opening line, "Let us go then, you and I," on page twenty-eight of the notebook, is all the more remarkable after the constricted, colloquial Laforguian lines that precede it. Auden developed more like his own imagined novelist who "Must struggle out of his boyish gift and learn/ How to be plain and awkward..."[424] The line of development in Auden's notebooks is less easy to trace; his best known poems mingle with, and often

[423] David Bromwich, "The Making of the Auden Canon," in *Skeptical Music: Essays on Modern Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 132-142, 132.

[424] "The Novelist," *Collected Poems*, 147.

precede, work that was never published, and later poems sometimes return to and reuse earlier ones in surprising ways.

From the beginning of his career, Auden was also a habitual post-publication reviser. His early readers recognized this propensity to self-alteration, and sometimes called him out on it. In his 1936 review of *Look Stranger!*, Alex Glendinning found to his surprise that "One poem appeared in 1933 with the title 'A Communist To Others': but in the present untitled version the word 'comrade' has been altered to 'brothers'; and in another poem, which first appeared at the same time, 'communist orator' has been altered to 'political orator'."[425] Unlike Auden's later critics, Glendinning did not read the removal of references to communism as of particular ideological significance; his tone is one of gentle puzzlement: "In considering the book as a whole, we are not hampered by such problems of belief or political allegiance as seemed to complicate the work of the younger poets a few years ago."

In the case of Henry James or T. S. Eliot, it is usually possible to compare a revised text with "the original version." Because Auden assumed the mantle of revision from the beginning, it is much less simple to compare later versions with earlier ones: in a sense, there is *no* original version of any Auden poem. Covered and effaced by later layers of revision, the beginning of his canon—his poetic origin—is also obscure. Which is his first adult poem? The *Collected Poems* gives the opening spot to the poem beginning "From the very first coming down/ Into a new valley with a frown."
It is tempting to read this poem programmatically; its primacy seems appropriate because it is inscribed. Here are all the essential elements of early Auden: a northern English

[425] Alex Glendinning, "Mr. Auden's Problems in Poetry," rev. of *Look, Stranger! Times Literary Supplement*, Saturday 28 Nov. 1936, 991.

landscape filled with sheep-pens but also a "solitary truck"; suspicion and disenchantment about the prospect of romantic love, combined with an intense desire for it ("love's worn circuit re-begun"); a sense of alienation ("different love"), possibly linked to homosexuality; and anxiety about the performative function of speech, or the relationship between saying and meaning ("Always afraid to say more than it meant"). In its form, too, the poem can be read as self-consciously "Audenesque." Rhymed tetrameter couplets are not an easy form to work in—the danger is that they sound facile or rattling—but Auden makes some unusual and successful plays with caesuras, line breaks, and the alternation of multi-syllabic and single syllable words:

> Shall see, shall pass, as we have seen
> The swallow on the tile, spring's green
> Preliminary shiver, passed
> A solitary truck, the last
> Of shunting in the Autumn.

James Fenton, who is both an erudite and perceptive critic of Auden, makes a common mistake when he refers in passing to "The Letter" as "the earliest of Auden's published lyrics."[426] In fact, it was only in 1966, at the end of his writing life, that Auden decided he would like to begin his oeuvre here. In his first book, *Poems* (1928), it was the eleventh poem and in *Poems* (1930) it was fifth. In the 1927-9 notebook it came even later, on the nineteenth (recto) page, and after thirteen other poems.[427] In manuscript, the poem is written out cleanly and fluently, with only one correction *currente calamo*, and three retrospective changes. Spring's "giggle" is changed to a "shiver," and "A solitary waggon" is replaced with the more brutal, industrial image of "A solitary truck." The

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[426] James Fenton, "Auden At Home," *New York Review of Books* 47.7, 27 April, 2000.

[427] This notebook, which belongs to the Berg Collection, has been published in facsimile, with an introduction by Nicholas Jenkins, *W. H. Auden: Poems 1927-1929*, ed. Patrick Lawlor (Harcourt Brace, New York Public Library, 1989), 57-8.

only other change occurs in the first line of the second stanza, where Auden had originally written "Teeth are not locked nor fingers numb," before changing it to "Nor speech is not," and then "Nor speech is close." By making this alteration, Auden turns the literal image of a set mouth into a more general, and metaphoric, reference to the failure of speech. In making the change, he was perhaps anticipating the last two lines of the poem: "That never was more reticent,/ Always afraid to say more than it meant."

The poem's history—that is, its non-primacy or development from origins—becomes even more complicated when we realize that the last two lines were themselves recycled. The 1927-9 notebook does not reveal their archaeology, but, as Patrick Lawlor notes, they "revise the final lines of a poem, dated August 1927, 'We knowing the family history,'."[428] There "never more reticent" referred to a failure of intimacy among family members, and the couplet concluded a poem written in a more irregular meter: "The story was never more reticent/ Always afraid to say more than it meant."[429]

5.3 Modes of Revision

The complicated genetic prehistory of "The Letter," the poem which many readers unthinkingly take to be Auden's first, illustrates a general textual truth about his poems: before this one, "Was the one and that one/ A family/ And history."[430] Behind the public façade of the posthumous *Collected Poems* lies a vast hinterland of individual volumes and pamphlets, beginning with *Poems* (1928), privately published by Stephen

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[428] *W. H. Auden: Poems 1927-1929*, 133.

[429] Cited in *W. H. Auden: Juvenilia, Poems 1922-1928*, ed. Katherine Bucknell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 217.

[430] "The Letter," *Collected Poems*, 39.

Spender, and continuing (to name only the most important) with *Poems* (1930), *The Orators* (1932), *Look Stranger!* (1936), *Spain* (1937), *Another Time* (1940), and *The Double Man* (1941). Moreover, most of his "new" volumes in the 1930s were not entirely composed of new work, but contained revised and reiterated versions of the poems in previous books. *Poems* (1930), for example, is a reworked version of the privately published *Poems* (1928), which omits eleven of the poems in the first volume.

And behind these volumes are Auden's notebooks, preserved in several American and British libraries, now also published in a variety of formats, including facsimile (for the notebook *Poems 1927-1929*), edited collections (such as Mendelson's *English Auden* and Bucknell's *Juvenilia*), and stand-alone formats, such as literary magazines and newspapers. Before the posthumous publication of the 1976 *Collected Poems*, Auden had also published several selected or collected editions of his work, including *Collected Poetry* (1945), *Selected Poetry* (1958), and *Collected Shorter Poems 1927-1957* (1966). He claimed that the motivation behind the first *Collected* edition was simply the desire to see his work back in print. "I hate to behave with the traditional petulant vanity of the author, but I *should* like people to be able to get hold of my work."[431]

Even if Auden had made no substantive verbal changes to his work (and he made plenty, as we will see), this continual process of reselecting and reordering his work had a revisionary *effect*. This form of revision by reordering is unique to lyric poetry. To the extent that any collection of poems is read as a collection, rather than a mere grab-bag of greatest hits, changing the order of contents alters the context or interpretive field around

[431] In a letter to Random House from 1943, proposing the *Collected Poetry*. Quoted by Humphrey Carpenter, *W. H. Auden: A Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 329-30.

any single poem.[432] In the first edition of *Poems* (1930), for example, the twelfth poem was the somberly mysterious "We made all possible preparations," which looks back with hindsight at a disaster that was apparently unexpected, but whose precise nature remains obscure ("For never serious misgiving/ Occurred to anyone").[433] That this disaster has something to do with the First World War—the great event of the twentieth century in 1928, and the one that Auden's generation had conspicuously missed out on—seems obvious from the imagery of militarism, victory, and dividing up territory and, more personally, from the serio-comic guilt of the final stanza:

> And for ourselves there is left remaining
> Our honour at last,
> And a reasonable chance of retaining
> Our faculties to the last.[434]

This poem was originally followed by "Bones wrenched, weak whimper," which Edward Mendelson dates "June 1927," the earliest poem in *The English Auden.*[435] The change in both tone and form is conspicuous; the haunting plainness and colloquialism of "We made all possible preparations" cedes to a baroque riff on the rhythms of Anglo-Saxon poetry, and the imagery of Renaissance tragedy. Many of the lines in this poem divide into two halves, like the lines in Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, with repeated and strong stresses falling on certain sounds ("Though body stir to sweat, or, squat as idol,

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[432] Peter Nohrnberg makes the argument for the whole collection as interpretive context, *The Book the Poet Makes: Collection and Re-Collection in W. B. Yeats's The Tower and Robert Lowell's Life Studies* (Cambridge: Department of English and American Language and Literature, distributed by Harvard University Press, 1994).

[433] W. H. Auden, *Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1930).

[434] Samuel Hynes argues that "the sense of an opportunity lost, of a test that one had failed without ever having taken it, is expressed in the memories of the time, and is an important factor in the collective consciousness of the whole generation of young men who came of age between the wars," *The Auden Generation* (London: Bodley Head, 1976), 21.

[435] *The English Auden*, 21. Not in *Collected Poems*.

brood"). At the same time, the interior world of "unwashed jewels" and a "glass floor," combined with the (again obscure) thematic of infidelity and deceit, is reminiscent of revenge tragedy passed through the prism of Eliot's "A Game of Chess." Formally, "lids wrinkled, first dazzle known" comprises the complete second half of an alliterative line, but behind it I think we can hear *The Duchess of Malfi*, "Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young."

In the second edition of *Poems* (1930), Auden replaced this poem with one that he had written three years later, "What's in your mind, my dove, my coney."[436] Instead of heavy stresses and long lines, this poem circles to its object—the harsh imperative of the final line ("Strike for the heart and have me there")—in a series of graceful arabesques. The language is colloquial, the addresses intimate, and the stress rhythms are very light: this is the well-loved, lyrical Auden of "Stop All The Clocks." In fact, when Auden came to look over his poems once more, he gathered this poem up with four others, making it the first of "Five Songs."

What motivates the replacement? Was Auden tired of his earliest work by 1933, and looking to substitute something in his most recent manner for the old Oxford-influenced syllabics? The two poems could not be more different—they stand at opposite ends of Auden's stylistic spectrum. Sandwiched between the cryptic "We made all possible preparations" and "Sentries against inner and outer," another poem which makes metaphoric use of the language of military strategy, both alternatives might be thought to provide escapist access away from the present moment. And yet the way in which this effect is achieved is very different. "Bones wrenched" locates us in a thickly textured, historical past, where the relationship between the dreaming speaker ("I want") and

[436] *The English Auden*, 56; again omitted from *Collected Poems*.

"you" is obscure. Its replacement moves inwards, studiedly ignoring the world outside by focusing close-up on the face of a sleeping lover (the more famous "Lullaby" achieves a similar effect).

The seven poems substituted out of the second edition of *Poems* did not reappear in any subsequent volume published during Auden's life-time. Between *Poems* (1933) and the *Collected Poetry* (1945), two more were lost, "It's no use raising a shout" (numbered IX) and "Get there if you can" (XX).[437] A similar pattern can be observed when looking at Auden's later collections: for the 1945 *Collected Poetry*, he excluded six poems in *On This Island*, portions of "Journal of an Airman," first printed in *The Orators*, and three poems from *Another Time*. In most cases, once Auden had struck out a poem with his terse "Omit. (WHA)" it did not return in any future book publication. On a large scale, then, we can describe the basic pattern of his revision across volumes as excisive at the level of the poem. Of the poems that he retained, he made minor alterations (usually of punctuation) in almost every case, and more significant verbal revisions to between 10% and 20% of the poems. But this is only a very broad-brush picture. There are four poems from *Another Time* which he chose to exclude in 1945, but which then worked their way *back* into the canon for the 1958 *Selected Poetry*, and which retain their place in Mendelson's posthumous edition: these include the darkly brilliant sonnet on A. E. Housman, and the popular song, "O Tell Me the Truth About Love." In other cases, Auden excised gradually rather than suddenly. Although he eventually came to feel profound distaste for "September 1, 1939,"—"the most dishonest poem I have ever

[437] Joseph Beach provides an appendix listing "Poems of Auden Not Reprinted in *Collected Poetry*," (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957), 295-298, 296.

written"—he did retain most of it for the 1945 *Collected*.[438] The only change he made was to omit in its entirety the stanza containing the line "We must love one another or die"; it seems as if the malignancy, in Auden's mind, began in this stanza, and only subsequently grew outwards to taint the poem as a whole.

Auden's reordering of his work during the 1930s was substantial, but it can be difficult to pin down the precise effect of, or motivation for, individual changes. For the 1945 *Collected Poetry*, he undertook a more consciously retrospective act of reassessment, producing a volume which surprised its first readers: indeed, the motivation behind the arrangement sometimes seems to be "épater le lecteur." For anyone who had followed his career across the book and magazine publications of 1930s, the 1945 *Collected Poetry* would have been disconcerting. Instead of organizing poems chronologically, or by the name of the volume in which they were originally published, Auden chose a system of stunning randomness. The first section of the book, "Poems," is arranged by alphabetical sequencing of first lines, beginning (happily enough) with "About suffering they were never wrong/ The Old Masters," and ending with "Young Men late in the night/ Toss on their beds." This arrangement throws the poems out of the chronological order in which they were written or first published, and also precludes us from reading the *Collected Poetry* as a collection, in which poems are ordered in sequence or according to some principle of artistic design. The volume is also difficult to navigate. Auden's earlier volumes had presented their contents in numbered order, but without titles. Here, instead of providing a list of first lines, the table of contents is arranged by title—and yet these titles had been created only *for* the collected edition. So

[438] Auden makes this value judgment in a 1967 letter to Naomi Mirchison. Quoted by Humphrey Carpenter, *W. H. Auden: A Biography*, 416.

the sonnet, "Just as his dream foretold," describing a surreal dream sequence, now appears under the arch mantle, "Nobody Understands Me," while "This lunar beauty/ Has no history" is now, and obscurely, titled "Pur."[439] In later editions, these titles were to change again; the *Collected Shorter Poems* (1950) substitutes "more serious titles for some of those in the 1945 collection which had been unusually flippant."[440]

The complexity and visibility of the reformatting has the effect of calling attention away from Auden's more subtle changes. And yet he made tiny, meticulous changes of punctuation to almost every poem, and verbal alterations to at least ten of the poems first published in *Poems* 1930 and *Poems* 1933.[441] In some cases, these verbal changes were simply the corrections of error, so the line "To accept the cusions from/ Women against martyrdom," which has been printed in both 1930 and 1933, was changed to "To accept the cushions." Other small but repeated changes included replacing definite with indefinite articles (and occasionally vice versa), changing hyphenation and capitalization (e.g. "goodbye" to "good-bye," "God" to "god," "O love" to "O Love"), and abandoning some archaic or UK-only verbal forms (e.g. "he say" to "he says," "vext" to "vexed"). Auden's changes to punctuation occur primarily at the line end, and are usually in favour of replacing a stronger stop with a weaker one; perhaps the most frequent change of all is the replacement of a colon with a comma.

In 1957 and 1965, when he was asked to produce new "selected" or "collected" editions, Auden made a further series of minor revisions. He explained that the

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[439] W. H. Auden, *Collected Poetry* (New York: Random House, 1945), 72 and 134-5.

[440] Humphrey Carpenter, *W. H. Auden: A Biography*, 365-6.

[441] For the quantitative data, I am relying on Y. S. Yamada's list of variations between Auden's first book publications and all successive publications. Y. S. Yamada, "W. H. Auden's Revising Process IX," Faculty of Education, Iowa State University, 1987. Accessed online, 21 Apr. 2008 < http://ir.iwate-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10140/1460/1/erar-v47n2p1-13.pdf>.

motivation was often aural: "Re-reading my poems, I find that in the nineteen-thirties I fell into some very slovenly verbal habits. The definite article is always a headache to any poet writing in English, but my addiction to German usages became a disease... I also find that my ear will no longer tolerate rhyming a voiced *S* with an unvoiced."[442] The fussiness with which Auden developed and then applied these formal rules is evidence of the precision with which he reread his published work: it indicates that he revised for purely aesthetic reasons, as well as ethical ones. Was there ever any contradiction between the two? Mendelson finds himself not entirely able to approve of this change, aimed at removing the voiced "s" from a rhyming pair:

> Abandoned by his general and his lice,
> Under a padded quilt he closed his eyes. (1938)
> /Under a padded quilt he turned to ice. (1966)

He comments that "the new version corrected the rhyme but sacrificed the plain truth that Auden always demanded when he wrote about the art of poetry."[443]

Besides these small-scale tamperings, Auden's *Collected* volumes also contained more imaginative and surprising verbal rethinkings. There is the occasional homophonous revision, of the kind that James made in *The Middle Years*, so "They clung like birds to the long expresses that lurch" became the less obvious "They clung like burrs."[444] In poetry written in traditional forms, it is not surprising that revisions at line ends would involve the replacement of one rhyming word with another, but Auden also made changes to the middle of lines, and to poems not in traditional metres, that appear to

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[442] W. H. Auden, "Author's Foreword," 1965, reprinted in *Collected Poems*, 16.

[443] Edward Mendelson, *The Later Auden*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 477.

[444] Revision to "Spain, 1937," made between the poem's first publication as "Spain," and its book publication in 1940.

have been triggered by unexpected similarities of sound. These revisions, like James's homophonous changes, can be read as metaphoric rather than metonymic; they also point to the gap between editing and self-editing, for no editor would think of them. To give only a few examples, "peace-time occupations" was altered to its almost rhyme "boys' imaginations"; "The jets in both the dormitories are out" became "The lights of near-by families are out"; and "parting easily who were never joined" was clarified into "parting easily two that were never joined."[445]

There are also some revisions which seem to be self-reflexively aware of their status *as* revisions, where the new phrase incorporates the doubt that necessitated it. In the 1933 Christmas poem, "Through the Looking Glass," Auden brooded on the difficulty of returning home to his parents' house. No longer a child, and not yet quite an adult, his sexuality was the obvious problem: he would never be able to embrace the "you" of the poem "in a great bed at midnight." In the first published version of the poem, he complains that he no longer securely possesses the home he had once had:

> As I, their author, stand between these dreams,
> Son of a nurse and doctor, loaned a room...[446]

By the 1945 *Collected Poetry*, "home" has taken on a metaphoric, or metapoetic, meaning:

> As I their author, stand between these dreams
> Unable to choose either for a home...[447]

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[445] The first change was made to the poem (finally) titled "Never Stronger," and took place between 1930 and 1933. The second change was made to the poem "The Secret Agent," and occurred between the 1950 *Selected* and 1966 *Collected Shorter Poems*.

[446] *The English Auden*, 144-6, 145.

[447] "Through the Looking Glass," *Collected Poems*, 107-8, 107.

5.4 Politics, the 1930s, and Poetic Dishonesty

A high proportion of Auden's poems underwent verbal revisions of one kind or another between their first publication and the 1966 *Collected Shorter Poems*. There are a few poems, however, in which the verbal alterations were more sustained, and which cannot be explained only on formal grounds. Most critics who have written about Auden and revision have focused on this kind of post-publication revision, made to poems with a political and social content, and for apparently ethical purposes. I want to suggest that these "ethical" revisions are in fact continuous with his revisionary practice from the late 1920s and 1930s, and that they are more puzzling and less unidirectional than Mendelson suggests. Given that "September 1, 1939" has been discussed at length in recent years by Stephen Burt and Nicholas Jenkins, I have chosen two other examples, the visionary lyric, "Out on the lawn I lie in bed," and "Spain, 1937." The first might be regarded as an example of successful revision; after omitting some stanzas and altering a few words, Auden was happy to retain the final version of "A Summer Night" in his 1966 *Collected*. "Spain," as he himself explained, presented greater problems. After trying to revise it several times in the late 1930s and early 1940s, he eventually gave up on the poem, consigning it—like "September 1, 1939"—to the dustbin.

The "intricate, considerate" lyric, "Out on the lawn I lie in bed," was written in June 1933.[448] After first publication in the BBC magazine *The Listener* as "Summer Night" in 1934, it appeared, without a title, as the second of the poems in the 1936

[448] The appraisal is John Lucas's, in "Auden's politics: power, authority and the individual" *The Cambridge Companion to W. H. Auden*, ed. Stan Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 151-64, 158.

collection, *Look Stranger!*[449] Between first book publication, and the 1945 *Collected*, Auden made substantial alterations—and ones which cannot be explained as rejections "of his most *compelling* metaphors." The mystical moonlight vision begins in a bucolic but realistic English present; the speaker is lying on the lawn, sleeping under the stars, after spending a "calm evening" talking with his colleagues. We are told that the "day's activity" is over, but it also seems to have been unexhausting: this is a modern *locus amoenus*, a world of "leisured drives through a land of farms," bathing, tanning, and "picnics in the English sun." To begin with, the space of the poem is organized vertically. Lying flat on his back, the speaker's feet point upwards "to the rising moon," as he observes the calm and windless night sky. But as the poem develops, this upwards line of vision gradually opens out into a panorama, and a horizontal, and more frightening, set of aspects are unveiled. The moon's panoptic survey replaces the speaker's individual gaze, and it opens up to include all Europe.

> Now North and South and East and West
> Those I love lie down to rest;
> The moon looks down on them all...

In the next stanza the moon "climbs the European sky," noticing churches and power stations, as well as "gardens where we feel secure." In 1933, Auden continued:

> Into the galleries she peers,
> And blankly as an orphan stares
> Upon the marvelous pictures.

When he revised the poem in 1945, he turned an image of impassive innocence into something more malevolent, replacing the word "orphan" with "butcher." If the first version of the poem suggests that nature is merely indifferent to, or incapable of

[449] John Lucas also argues that this poem is particularly important because it remains "unpanicked in its response to forces that by the time of the poem's composition in June 1933 were all too obviously emergent." John Lucas, "Auden's politics: power, authority and the individual," 158.

understanding, the varieties of human relations, the second (written at the very end of the Second World War) implies that its "blankness" is intrinsically malevolent.

In the following stanzas, the two viewpoints in the poem are reconciled, as the speaker begins to equate the moon's propensity "to notice nothing here" with his own, more culpable or willful ignorance. Secure in the English landscape, he begins to berate first himself and then a collective "we" for ignorance of what is taking place in Europe. Not only do the speaker and his colleagues "not care to know/ Where Poland draws her Eastern bow," but violence abroad seems to be the very condition of their serenity:

> Nor ask what doubtful act allows
> Our freedom in this English house
> Our picnics in the sun.

The three subsequent stanzas in the 1933 version of the poem develop the critique. Auden's bucolic paradise has now become a kind of trap: its "creepered wall" hides "the gathering multitudes outside" from the speaker and his friends, and, reciprocally, it conceals "from their wretchedness/ Our metaphysical distress/ Our kindness to ten persons." The irony here is bitter. The poem began by laying its store in personal relations and intimacy, showing us first a group of colleagues in a ring and then, more delicately, the prospect of reciprocal dyadic love ("eyes in which I learn/ That I am glad to look, return/ My glances every day"). With the image of the creepered wall, hiding and concealing east and west, Auden sternly rejects the premise with which he began. Collegial conversations are reduced to "kindness to ten persons," and the pleasant, traditionally agonizing beginnings of romantic love ("and with a sigh endure/ The tyrannies of love") seem trivial besides the genuine suffering of "hunger" and "wretchedness." The philosophical adjective seals the point: what, after all, is

"metaphysical distress" except a faint oxymoron? T. S. Eliot made similarly self-deflating use of the word at the end of "Whispers of Immortality": "But our lot crawls between dry ribs/ To keep our metaphysics warm."[450]

In 1945, this stanza was excised, together with the following two, which predict the futility of action and the incipient demise of the world "we loved"—the world of Oxford, parliament, Cambridge, and the English landscape ("Though we would gladly give/ The Oxford colleges, Big Ben,/ And all the birds in Wicken Fen,/ It has no wish to live"). Auden also altered the first line of the next stanza, changing the placidly prognostic "Soon through the dykes of our content/ The crumpling flood will force a rent..." to the more urgent and rhetorical "Soon, soon, through dykes of our content." In the closing lines of the poem, he again made a couple of small changes. The disturbing image of a child's dead parents speaking through him became, in 1945:

> As through a child's rash happy cries
> The drowned parental voices rise
> In unlamenting song

This is a slightly more convoluted version than the original, "The drowned voice of his parents rise." And, in the final stanza, the subjunctive "may," became the more commanding "let" in "After discharges of alarm/ All unpredicted let them calm."

The changes that Auden made between 1936 and 1945 are subtle but not insignificant. The original version of the poem is remarkably delicate in its combination of disparate generic elements, which include pastoral, the skeleton-outline of a love poem, prophecy, and stringent self-criticism. The 1945 version, titled "A Summer Night 1933" is rather less so. By drawing our attention to the date of the poem's composition, Auden emphasizes its prophetic *success*, and by deleting the three stanzas beginning with

[450] T. S. Eliot, "Whispers of Immortality," *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, 45-46, 46.

"The creepered wall" he erases its most complex moment of self-irony and doubt. In revision, the originally calm prediction, "Soon through," is replaced with a piece of rather rhetorical self-congratulation, "Soon soon," and the "orphan" moon by a more baroque and peculiar image of the "butcher." Taken together, these changes do not *renounce* poetry as a "means of compulsion," so much as embrace it. The title of the poem creates the frame by which we are to interpret it; and it becomes difficult to avoid the suspicion that—by pointing to the original date of composition—Auden is congratulating himself on his foresight.

"Spain 1937" was also dated retrospectively. Auden published the first version of the poem under the title "Spain" as a Faber and Faber pamphlet in 1937.[451] The material form of the small book seems designed to emphasize the political urgency of the poem; cheaply produced, and with bright red paper covers, the volume looks like the political messages it describes: "To-day the expending of powers/ On the flat ephemeral pamphlet and the boring meeting." The unusual bibliographic form makes it clear that poem and subject are intimately entwined. "Spain" was not, in its first publication, simply *about* the civil war in Spain; it was also an attempt to contribute, both rhetorically and financially, to the success of the Republican cause. A note on the flyleaf indicates that royalties from the sale of the sixteen page pamphlet were to be given away, thereby inscribing the poem within a political and economic, rather than purely aesthetic sphere. "All of the author's royalties from the sale of this poem go to *Medical Aid for Spain.*" In other words, by buying Auden's pamphlet, the reader would be contributing directly to the far-left British

[451] W. H. Auden, *Spain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937). The original pamphlet was printed in an edition of 2913 copies.

organizations working to provide medical aid; as Jim Fyrth has shown, many of the Republican activists in Britain in the 1930s were members of the communist party.[452]

Eventually Auden was to delete the poem entirely from his canon, pronouncing himself disgusted with its closing lines, and his own determinist recourse to a capitalized "History." He had originally written

> We are left alone with our day, and the time is short, and
> History to the defeated
> May say Alas but cannot help nor pardon.

In his preface to the *Collected Shorter Poems*, he sternly dismissed these resounding closing lines, "To say this is to equate goodness with success. It would have been bad enough if I had ever held this wicked doctrine, but that I should have stated it because it sounded to me rhetorically effective is quite inexcusable."[453]

In the case of "September 1, 1939," Auden identified the moral canker of the poem quickly; by 1945, he had already removed the stanza containing the lines "We must love one another or die." The case of "Spain" is in some ways more interesting because the revisionary history is more complex. For his 1940 collection, *Another Time*, he reworked the poem substantially at both the level of the individual word and the stanza, but he left the closing lines more or less intact (changing only the slightly stiff "nor" to the more contemporary and colloquial "or"). This revised version of the poem was then reprinted without further alterations in the 1945 *Collected Poetry*.

Mendelson argues that Auden's process of revision was devoted to the diminution of his own verbal powers, but, like "A Summer Night," "Spain 1937" became *more*

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[452] Jim Fyrth, "The Aid Spain Movement in Britain, 1936-39," *History Workshop Journal* 35.1 (1993) 153-164.

[453] Reprinted, *Collected Poems*, 15-16.

rather than less rhetorically effective as it was revised. "What's your proposal? To build the just city?" becomes more ironically *engagé* when capitalized, and "the Mover" is more sinister (because more deterministic) than "the mover." Auden also boosted the rhetorical effect of the central triad of temporal adverbs. By deleting stanzas that did not begin "Yesterday," "Today," or "Tomorrow," he made his political message more disjunctive, balancing the specificity of a brief historical present against the vast and uncertain swathe of future time ("tomorrow is all the future"). In the first version of the poem, the stanza beginning "To-morrow the rediscovery or romantic love," had been followed by a stanza that did not echo the initial refrain. In revision, Auden deleted his slightly negative depiction of mass public action, "The beautiful roar of the chorus under the dome," and "the sudden forest of hands," and moved straight to the next stanza, "Tomorrow, for the young, the poets exploding like bombs." The effect is similar to the revision in "A Summer Night," where "soon through" becomes the more insistent "soon soon."

5.5 Performative Revision

Auden's revisions to "Spain, 1937" have traditionally been read as a successful exercise in purgation. According to Edward Mendelson, the original poem was damaged by "Auden's reckless similes, his shifts into self-deceiving ventriloquism, his 'preacher's loose immodest tone'." By first revising, and then deleting it, he "cleansed his work of its lies and inauthenticities."[454] In his recent essay on "September 1, 1939," Stephen Burt makes the same move, grouping together Auden's original motivation, and subsequent retraction, as two sides of the same coin: "Together with 'Spain,' 'September 1, 1939'—

[454] *The English Auden*, 202, 206.

and Auden's own later reaction against both poems—can illuminate both the attractions of, and the troubles with, ways of reading that ask or expect poetry to speak on behalf of a large group of people (a 'public' in one sense) or to address the concerns of the day's headline news ('public' concerns in another sense)."[455] His parenthetic addition, "and Auden's own later reactions," slips easily and almost unnoticed into the main clause, and yet its claim is a strong one: it suggests that *both* the original act of composition and publication, *and* the subsequent revisions, are the same kind of speech act. The illocutionary and perlocutionary force of Auden's work is, accordingly, emphasized above its locutionary content.

Instead of reading Auden's acts of revision as inevitably successful performances, I want to suggest that they should be understood as anxious, and sometimes muddled, attempts to manage the performative function of poetry. Another way to put this point would be to argue that both Mendelson and Burt put too much store in the "felicity" of Auden's speech acts. That "Spain" is a political poem of some kind has never been in doubt, but Mendelson overstates the transparency of its message, in either its original or revised form. Auden's contemporaries were more confused. Stephen Spender read it as "the best poetic statement in English of the Republican cause," but also argued that the poem was successful because its position was a posture, "an exercise in entering a point of view not his own."[456] Cecil Day Lewis thought the poem was an exploration of individual ethical responsibility rather than a piece of political propaganda, but Cyril Connolly judged it a failure because it was too polemical ("the Marxist theory of history

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[455] Stephen Burt, "'September 1, 1939' Revisited, or, Poetry, Politics, and the Idea of the Public," 535.

[456] John Haffenden provides these judgments by Auden's contemporaries in the introduction to his Critical Heritage volume. John Haffenden, "Introduction," *W. H. Auden: The Critical Heritage*, 28-29.

does not go very happily into verse"). As if in response to this critique, Auden was subsequently to doctor Connolly's copy of his pamphlet; in the fifties, he crossed out the last two lines of his poem, and wrote "This is a lie" in the margin. George Orwell was perhaps the sternest critic of Auden's political commitments, arguing that his espousal of the Republican cause was ignorant and complacent, premised on his own "soft-boiled emancipated middle class" liberalism. Orwell expressed particular distaste for the phrase "conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder": it could only have been written, he said, "by a person to whom murder was at most a word... Mr. Auden's brand of amoralism is only possible if you are the kind of person who is always somewhere else when the trigger is pulled."[457]

As a political poem, and potentially as propaganda, the meaning of "Spain" was debated from the beginning. Through revising and then republishing it several times, Auden complicated the situation still further. By the time that he decided to omit it entirely, he was not objecting to a single, clear line of argument, uttered at a particular moment in the past, and now recanted ("this is a lie"), so much as rejecting an iterative series of speech acts, made over a period of almost ten years, and after various types of critique had been leveled against the poem. "This is a lie" is a powerful self-indictment, but it also downplays the complexity of Auden's response to his own poem. If a poet's opinions "are never accurate, never complete and always one-sided," then might the recantation not be as questionable, and as self-consciously performative, as the original poem, or its subsequent and modified republications? In fact, is it possible for revision ever to work as a clean, cathartic act of self-correction? In his lecture "The Poet and the

[457] Orwell criticized Auden in the essay "Inside the Whale," written in 1939 and published in 1949. John Haffenden cites the relevant passages, *W. H. Auden: The Critical Heritage*, 29.

City" (published as the third part of *The Dyer's Hand*), Auden was more hesitant than his critics have been. There revision is presented as an act of violent "liquidation," for "in the process of arriving at the finished work, the artist has continually to employ violence."[458] He also suggests that aesthetic and political standards of judgment are essentially incommensurable. Even in theory, it is impossible to imagine a poem "which was really like a political democracy," because it would be "formless, windy, banal and utterly boring."

Mendelson reads Auden's acts of revision as acts of humility, "Auden understood that revision was an act of power over his own text, and he therefore revised his texts in ways that renounced the kind of power he employed in revising." And yet his sustained belief in the power of poetry *over* the reader is also an assertion of authorial control. Given that plenty of Auden's contemporaries, including Cyril Connolly himself, had already seen that the argument of "Spain" was flawed, why did they need to be reminded—"this is a lie"? There is something curiously paternalistic about they way in which Auden insisted on interpreting and editing his own work for his readers. An ungenerous interpretation might interpret these behaviors as controlling or narcissistic. One might also argue, however, that Auden was anxious about the rhetorical effect of his writing because he was an unusually sensitive, labile, and affected reader. The play between Auden's habits of reading and his habits of writing is never clearer than in the series of contradictory statements he made about Yeats. In 1939, he argued against Yeats's ideas *as* ideas. In a series of witty barbs he summed up an intellectual disappointment that many other readers have felt:

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[458] W. H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*, 85.

> In 1900 he believed in fairies; that was bad enough; but in 1930 we are confronted with the pitiful, the deplorable spectacle of a grown man occupied with the mumbo-jumbo of magic and the nonsense of India. Whether he seriously believed such stuff to be true, or merely thought it pretty, or imagined it would impress the public is immaterial. The plain fact remains that he made it the centre of his work.[459]

Twenty-five years later, however, Auden was still complaining that Yeats's poems were pernicious as well as silly—"he has become for me a symbol of my own devil of unauthenticity.... His [poems] make me whore after lies."[460]

Auden's *Partisan Review* piece about Yeats was written concurrently with the more famous, but equally ambivalent, retrospective, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats." After revision, the poem became slightly more laudatory, but in its original form it was as much an official pardon as an elegy: time, Auden claims, will eventually forgive the recently dead poet "for writing well," because time "worships language and forgives/ Everyone by whom it lives."[461] In both versions, however, the poem is centrally concerned with the performative use or misuse of poetry. It opens with a series of repeated, and surprisingly bodily, images of the transference of meaning from writer to reader: by dying Yeats did not abandon, but "became his admirers."[462] But Auden is not thinking of an entirely traditional form of poetic immortality. Yeats does not survive merely as words, inscribed in a book or on bronze monuments, but viscerally, as "The words of a dead man/ Are modified in the guts of the living." In its simultaneous commitment to, and disavowal of, rhetorical devices, the poem provides a kind of

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[459] W. H. Auden, "The Public v. the Late Mr William Butler Yeats," *Partisan Review* 6.3 (Spring 1939).

[460] See Stan Smith, "Persuasions to Rejoice: Auden's Oedipal Dialogues with W. B. Yeats," 155.

[461] *The English Auden*, 241-3, 242-3.

[462] "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," *Collected Poems*, 197-8, 197. The original version is printed in *The English Auden*, 241-3.

microcosmic survey of Auden's anxieties about poetry's purpose and his own role as poet.

In the second section of the poem, we are told baldly that poetry is without ethical or political consequences, or, in fact, consequences of any kind. Yeats might have been "hurt into poetry" by "mad Ireland," but his poems have not themselves wrought any changes on the world that he described:

> Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still,
> For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
> In the valley of its making where executives
> Would never want to tamper, flows on south
> From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs...

Poetry's inability to effect social change is coupled with the idea that it stays "in the valley of its making," in a Dencombe-like idyll where authors have full control, and readers are not permitted to trespass.

The claim that poetry *does nothing*, is obviously inconsistent with Auden's distaste for the compulsive power of Yeats's own work. It is also curiously at odds with the actual reception history of the poem. Composed in early 1939, shortly after Auden arrived in America, it became a calling-card for Auden *as* an American poet: it is a personal, as well as an elegiac, act of valediction to European poetry. Dorothy Farman has shown that the poem also had a significant impact on Auden's own life.[463] He chose to read it aloud on April 6, 1939, at an evening organized by the League of American Writers in New York. The next day Chester Kallman, who had been among the admiring listeners, decided to come and visit Auden at his apartment: the rest is biographical history.

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[463] See Dorothy J. Farman, *Auden in Love* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985).

Working against its own grain, Auden's poem is also highly aware of the power of poetry to abandon its source, enter the communications circuit, and produce specific affective responses in readers. The poem begins in the neutral third-person retrospective, but opens out into many kinds of linguistic action other than saying. Towards the end of the first section comes the inscribed we, "What instruments we have agree," and this in turn is followed by an address to Yeats, a propsopoeic turn ("Earth receive an honoured guest"), and finally another, more general, address to all poets. In its final lines, the poem repudiates its initial claim, asking the poet to make something quite specific happen: "With your unconstraining voice/ still persuade us to rejoice."

In "New Year Letter," written the following year, Auden returned to the question of poetry's effectiveness. Once again, there is a tug between the poem's rhetorical performance—it is written as a Horatian epistle, and addressed to a particular reader—and its distaste for poetry *as* performance. According to Edward Mendelson, its first readers were unable to appreciate the way in which "the conservative order of its syntax and metre struggled to restrain the anarchic whirlwind of its ideas."[464] Auden begins by arguing that art and life both struggle to "set in order" and create syntheses, but then makes the rhetorical turn:

> Art in intention is mimesis
> But, realized, the resemblance ceases;
> Art is not life and cannot be
> A midwife to society...[465]

The couplet is famous, much quoted and, in its recycling of a Socratic metaphor, wise. Within the witty bounds of the tetrameter form, Auden sums up the aesthetic argument of

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[464] Edward Mendelson, *The Later Auden*, 100.

[465] "New Year Letter," *Collected Poems*, 161-193, 162.

Plato's *Republic*: art can never truly represent the real world, because it is inaccurately mimetic, nor can it produce the social or educational benefits of other discourses. (Socrates, whose mother was a midwife, claims that his particular brand of dialectic philosophy works as intellectual midwifery, rather than sophistic rhetorical persuasion.)

These two lines are often quoted independently, as if they represented Auden's final opinion about the relationship between art and society. Stephen Burt cites the couplet to support the argument that Auden's relationship to his audience changed in the early 1940s, as he turned away from "the poet's potentially public 'voice'"; Malcolm Yorke quotes it after telling us that Auden had decided "that poetry has no influence on events after all."[466] And yet, there is another line to come. Auden had actually written:

> Art is not life and cannot be
> A midwife to society,
> For art is a *fait accompli*.

Is it? The triplet is both deflationary and rhetorical: this is perhaps an essential feature of the form.[467] Closure is achieved, and wittily, with the monosyllabic/polysyllabic rhyme on "be" and "society." To say anything further seems superfluous, and the final line accordingly comes across as a gratuitous riff, a bravura display of skill. The rhyme on "society" and "accompli" would be awkward even if one was sure exactly how "accompli" should be pronounced. In fact, there is a slightly nerve-wracking need to decide. When reading it out loud, one's natural desire is to elongate the final syllable into a long /:ī/, thereby emphasizing the rhyme with the previous two lines. This has the effect of Anglicizing the slightly tired French phrase, producing a serio-comic tone.

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[466] Stephen Burt, "'September 1, 1939' Revisited, or, Poetry, Politics, and the Idea of the Public," 541. Malcolm Yorke, *The Spirit of Place: Nine Neo-Romantic Artists and their Times* (London: Constable, 1988), 160.

[467] See Conrad A. Balliet, "The History and Rhetoric of the Triplet," *PMLA* 80.5 (1965), 528-34.

In sense, as well as its egregiously supplementary rhyme, the final line also detracts from the precision of what has been said. What does it mean to think of art as a "fait accompli," an already done deed? Auden's anti-instrumental theory of poetry appears to play down the role and significance of the author: poets might keep speaking, but they can't make anything happen. At the same time, most of his statements about revision concern themselves, somewhat inconsistently, with the potentially troubling effects that poetry can have on unsuspecting readers. In this final line, Auden changes tack, resituating art in "the valley of its making." If, as the dictionary puts it, a "fait accompli" is "an action which is completed (and irreversible) before affected parties learn of its having been undertaken," then this is a sly definition.[468] What exactly does it imply about the power relation between an author and his "affected parties" or readers? Might it in fact be considered a rather accurate description of Auden's own tendency towards post-publication revision?

5.6 Revision and the Supplement

The final, usually forgotten, line of this triplet is a supplement in both Rousseau's and Derrida's sense: it is "an inessential extra added to something complete in itself," but it is also produced *by* some perceptible lack in the original couplet, by some need to perpetuate the "be/ society" rhyme a third time.[469] This use of supplementation to

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[468] "fait-accompli", *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 20 Apr. 2008 <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezp2.harvard.edu/cgi/entry/50081808>.

[469] This is Jonathan Culler's usefully concise summary of both Rousseau's and Derrida's use of the term. Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 103.

underscore and yet also score out the seriousness of an original claim can be read metonymically, as a model for Auden's whole practice of revision.

To consider Auden's revisions from the beginning to the end, from manuscript notebook to the 1966 *Collected Shorter Poems*, is to observe a remarkably consistent practice—or a practice that is, at least, consistent in its inconsistency. Auden was always a poet who revised his work, unlike, say, Pound, who revised less in old age than in youth. When given the opportunity to explain *why* he revised, he was also garrulous about his intentions, unlike, say, Eliot who tended to imply that he had no continued access to past states of mind and to a creative process that had been finished. In November 1922, only a month after his poem had appeared in the *Criterion*, Eliot remarked "As for *The Waste Land*, that is a thing of the past so far as I am concerned and I am now feeling toward a new form and style."[470] Auden, by contrast, was a poet who never really let any of his poems go, no matter how formally finished, or widely quoted and anthologized they were. In the introduction to his *Collected Shorter Poems* in 1966, he gave the final word on revision to Valéry, "A poem is never finished; only abandoned," but as far as his own canon was concerned, the dictum might be more appropriately reversed: "A poem is never abandoned; only finished."

One of my aims in this chapter has been to counteract the idea that Auden's theories about revision are an accurate description of his own practice, or even the beginnings of a general theory of revision. In fact, they are often conflicted and self-contradictory, even across a short time period or within a few lines of prose. He spoke of revision almost exclusively in performative terms, as a way of altering what a poem might *do*, and yet most of his own alterations cannot be explained in this way. The shift

[470] See Michael Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, 206.

from "birds" to "burs" is pure sonic play, while the rearrangement and retitling of poems for collected editions is more decorative than logical or rhetorical—a kind of poetic flower arranging. Auden's intensely lyrical gift, combined with his subtle and grumpy sensitivity to sound effects ("my ear will no longer tolerate"), means that his revisions often have a private, internal quality, as if they are produced by language itself. In their playful lack of purposiveness, their endless and bewildering variety, they might be regarded as postmodern, for, if "il n'y a pas de hors-texte," then textual change is inevitably self-producing.[471]

Some of the other writers considered in this study also made occasional free, metaphoric revisions; James's homophonous slide between aurally related pairs might be one example, and Eliot's minimal substitutions another. But in the other cases I have presented, this form of revision has been the exception rather than the rule. In the case of James, Woolf, Pound, and Eliot, there are also discernible general revisionary patterns at work. In Woolf's repeated recycling of the same autobiographical material, we can see a therapeutic working through of repressed and traumatic memories; each new version in the series lets in a little more light on "those two lashes of the random unheeding, unthinking flail."[472] In the case of Pound, Eliot, and Hemingway, repeated acts of excision become a way to achieve a particular aesthetic effect, as a charged fragment is won from its morass of surrounding context. It is harder to see Auden's revisions as positive iterations, even at the level of an individual poem. Alterations are made, and then unmade, poems are removed from the canon and then reinserted back into it.

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[471] "There is nothing outside the text," or "there is no outside-text." Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 158.

[472] Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," 150.

By arguing that Auden's revisions are iterable, rather than iterative, I do not mean to imply that his own interest in revision as an ethical and political act was disingenuous. He returned on many occasions, and in many guises, to poetry's potentially dangerous effects: "his [poems] make me whore after lies"; "trash is the inevitable result whenever a person tries to do for himself or for others by the writing of poetry what can only be done in some other way, by action, or study, or prayer"; "a dishonest poem is one which expresses, no matter how well, feelings or beliefs which its author never felt or entertained."[473] Mendelson assumes that this recurrent concern with poetry's social function reflects Auden's distaste for his own persuasive powers, but I would like to end by suggesting that his anxiety was of a simpler kind.

Auden's poetic career began at Oxford in the mid 1920s ("I'm going to be a poet," he told Neville Coghill) and ended in 1973, eight years after the death of T.S. Eliot.[474] Because of his political activism in the 1930s, and his departure for the United States on the eve of World War Two, he is often considered to be a uniquely or primarily social poet. Edward Mendelson has repeatedly stressed that where Pound, Eliot, and Yeats were "vatic" poets, Auden was a "civil" poet; the latter category write "in service to their audience," rather than from a positional of psychological isolation and political withdrawal.[475] He has also repeatedly drawn our attention to Auden's ability to "make a fighting demagogic speech and have the audience roaring," and the self-revulsion that

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[473] For the second quotation see W. H. Auden, *Forewords and Afterwords*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Random House, 1973), 225.

[474] David Horan tells the story of this possibly apocryphal, but certainly well-known, exchange. David Horan, *Oxford: A Cultural and Literary Companion* (Oxford: Signal, 1999), 23.

[475] See Lucy McDiarmid's review of Mendelson's *English Auden* for a useful characterization and critique of his position, *Contemporary Literature*, 24.1 (1983): 94-96.

inevitably followed.[476] In his insistence on the political and ethical urgency of Auden's post-publication revisions, he perpetuates that idea that Auden remained a socially committed and important poet, and by dividing his work into two halves—*The English Auden* and *Later Auden*—he makes sure that Auden's most political period retains centre stage.

But this is not the only way to narrate the arc of Auden's career. The sixty year period from 1920 to 1980 was also marked by the marginalization and diminution of poetry as a form, by the decline of a large and literate reading public, and by a dissevering of the aesthetic and political spheres. The death of Robert Lowell is often chosen as an important end-date in American poetry, after which "it has declined into a minor art, subsidised principally by universities."[477] In Britain, the situation has, if anything, been more depressing: contemporary writing is variously alleged to be parochial, derivative, anti-intellectual and over-intellectual, formally restricted, formally artless, too politically correct, too "performancy," short on ambition, and long on the techniques of the creative writing workshop. In 2000, Peter Barry wrote a whole book to expound the "simple thesis," "that contemporary poetry is in trouble."[478]

Auden was not exempt from the decline in poetry's status, profitability, and claims to cultural centrality. He made his name almost overnight, as the most dazzling member of the second modernist generation, and his reputation then suffered a gradual

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[476] From a letter to Mrs A. E. Dodds, written in July 1939. Cited by Edward Mendelson, "'We Are Changed by What We Change': The Power Politics of Auden's Revisions," *The Romanic Review* 86.3 (1995): 527-35, 529.

[477] *The Economist*, 8 July 1995, 82.

[478] Peter Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry and the City* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 6. For a good summary of the criticisms leveled against contemporary British poetry, see James Acheson and Romana Huk eds., *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press), 1996.

decline. His books were increasingly less well-reviewed over time and, until Mendelson began the attempt to rehabilitate "later Auden," most critics and readers agreed with Larkin: here was an enormously talented and precocious English social poet gone to seed in the United States. Instead of understanding Auden's post-publication revisions as simple, stringent, and correct acts of ethical repentance, I want to end by suggesting that they allowed him to navigate a more complex journey between past and present, England and America.

By rewriting his old work, he was both re-living it, in Dencombe's sense, and re-presenting it: at a psychological level, Auden's compulsive, but peculiarly goalless revisions, can be understood as an attempt to recover not so much his own past, as the possibility of a public readership *in* the past. By rereading and re-judging his own work, Auden was compensating for the lack of the reader that he wanted: he was, increasingly, forced to become his own ideal reader. In this sense, revision is an intrinsically supplementary activity: "The supplement has not only the power of *procuring* an absent presence through its image, procuring it for is through the proxy (*procuration*) of the sign; it holds it at a distance and masters it."[479] The gap or lack between a desired reader and the actual reader—a gap into which the revising author inserts himself—can inevitably be figured erotically. Auden showed himself aware of this when he spoke about the difference between a beautiful and receptive ideal audience, and a myopic and pimply actual readership:

> The ideal audience the poet imagines consists of the beautiful who go to bed with him, the powerful who invite him to dinner and tell him secrets of state, and his fellow-poets. The actual audience he gets consists of

[479] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 155.

> myopic schoolteachers, pimply young men who eat in cafeterias, and his fellow-poets. This means in effect he writes for his fellow-poets.[480]

Forty years earlier, Henry James had found the same solution, substituting a rereading of his own work for the readings of others. In the preface to *The Golden Bowl*, he describes his earlier, nineteenth-century self as someone else, and then as someone whom his "docile" present self might befriend. "As the historian of the matter sees and speaks, so my intelligence of it, as a reader, meets him halfway, passive, receptive, appreciative, often even grateful; unconscious, quite blissfully, of any bar to intercourse, any disparity of sense between us."[481]

By describing his own motivations for revision, and by drawing attention so happily to the mendacity of his earlier work, Auden was also engaging in a curious form of self-promotion. After all, isn't "this is a lie," written on a copy of a book handed to a friend ten years earlier, simply another way of urging, "reread this poem"? The two lines that Auden cites from "Spain, 1937" in the foreword to his 1966 *Collected Shorter Poems* are somewhat obscure outside their original context. But who would not want to reread the original poem after learning that the doctrine they espouse is "wicked," and was stated "simply because it sounded to be rhetorically effective"? Even when revision appears to be a form of disowning, it is always also an act of textual reappropriation. And, by tampering with his poems until the very end, Auden made sure that he never strayed too far from "the valley of their making."

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[480] W. H. Auden, "Squares and Oblongs," in *Poets at Work* ed. Charles D. Abbott (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948), 176.

[481] Henry James, preface, *The Golden Bowl*, xiii.

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