

## Introduction

With the advent of Gothicism and Romanticism in the late eighteenth century, “fictional” narrative in England becomes marked by a variety of “doubling” devices, structural as well as thematic, that subvert or challenge the idea of textual “authority.” The emergence of self-questioning narrative is clearly related to a discursive shift, particularly as concerns ideas about “authorship,” that engenders what is broadly termed literary modernism. The Autumn 1998 senior seminar was devoted to exploring this phenomenon. We began by discussing four primary texts published within a six-year period: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), Charles Robert Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), Thomas De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821-22), and James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). Interspersed with these readings were critical frameworks drawn from Frank Kermode’s *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (1966), Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg’s *The Nature of Narrative* (1968), and Mikhail Bakhtin’s *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981). What all of us discovered through such study, I think, is a pattern of recursive layering inseparable from the post-Romantic representation of subjectivity.

For their final projects students were asked to address how issues of subversion, *dédoublement*, and authority are compounded in any prose narrative(s), broadly defined, of the last two centuries. This anthology of their collaborative work begins with Jason C. Royal’s essay on the “intertextual skip” from John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* via *Frankenstein* to Anne Rice’s *Interview with a Vampire* because it casts the widest net. A similar kind of proleptic or framing approach is evident in the next contribution by Anna L. McKamey, which finds in the Vedanticism of Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself” an emphasis on blurring “boundaries of meaning” that anticipates deconstructionist thought.

Five essays then offer analyses of individual texts that involve related (proto)modernist concerns. Like Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer*, suggests Charity Brooks, Robert Louis Stevenson’s novel titled *The Master of Ballantrae*, usually overlooked in favor of the better-known *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, elaborates a web of oppositional doubling that causes purposeful confusion in narrative authority. Psychological “splitting” gives way to cultural refraction as Amy Cason traces Lily Bart’s duplicate identity of a “public” versus “private” self in Edith Wharton’s *The House of Mirth*, which critiques turn-of-the-century gender codes. Such sundering is also Lacy Rachell McDaniel’s focus in examining the intricate con-

volution of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," where the possibility of a unified self is sabotaged by the narrator's entrapment and victimization. Balancing this feminist study, Jamie Turner's comparison of Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Sharer* and *Heart of Darkness* draws on Jungian psychology to demonstrate how the "shadow" archetype operates differently in two celebrated "male" novellas. Finally, Stephen Robinson's discussion of Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* takes us into the terrain of existential absurdity via Valentine Michael Smith's extraterrestrial perspective on our notions of a teleologically ordered world.

To all these seminar participants I am grateful for often stimulating discussions while together we adjusted to the challenges of both our specific field of study, which at times could lapse into the nebulous, and a new semester-based calendar. I also wish to thank them for their collective patience with this anthology's belated publication. Circumstances did not permit all the production values, such as facing-page graphics, that we had originally planned, but the heart and pith of our work should be evident in what follows.

Dr. Robert Snyder

# Skipping an Intertextual Stone on Literary Waters: A Comparison of *Paradise Lost*, *Frankenstein*, and *Interview with a Vampire*

Jason C. Royal

All things are in a constant state of becoming. One can stand back and see the history of evolution in just about any area: art, music, and science all have influences that shape their present condition. In literature this concept is known as intertextuality—the influence that texts exert upon one another. Analogous to skipping stones upon water, intertextuality involves literary elements such as the doubling of character and structure that can be found in several texts. One author casts into motion an idea, and subsequent authors propel the idea further. John Milton cast his own stone upon the literary waters in his epic poem *Paradise Lost*, specifically the idea of creator versus created in his attempt to justify the ways of God to man. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the intertextual skip between *Paradise Lost* and Anne Rice's *Interview with a Vampire*, perpetuates the conflict between creator and created but adds a new dimension: fictional authority that arises through internal monologue. All three texts revolve around the relationship between the creator and the created, but each reveals a distinct spin on the concept.

Intertextuality makes structural doubling and literary inventiveness possible. Authors often use ideas of their precursors in order to “open up new possibilities for their successors, but they begin, inevitably, within a tradition” (Scholes and Kellogg 4). Written during the seventeenth century and styled after epic poetry, *Paradise Lost* incorporates elements of the traditional Greek epic. According to John M. Steadman, *Paradise Lost* “represents the accommodation of a temptation ordeal to an ideal of epic form abstracted from classical heroic poetry” (121). This structure puts obvious limitations upon the way in which the story unfolds. Milton tries to instill a Christian ideology in his readers; he wants to justify the ways of God to man—to reason out something that is beyond human reason or comprehension. This work allows the reader to experience action only through the unseen narrator and the external actions of the characters themselves. Mikhail Bakhtin writes that Greek style could not depict “a mute internal life, a mute grief, mute thought.” A character's internal life “could exist only if manifested externally in audible or visible form” (134). While this style does not take away from promoting Milton's ideology, it does take away from Milton's ability to achieve total narrative authority.

*Frankenstein* and *Interview with a Vampire* are narratives by definition.

In order to be classified as a narrative, a work must have “the presence of a story and a storyteller” (Scholes and Kellogg 4). *Interview with a Vampire* is narrated by Luis, a vampire created by Lestat, who wishes to tell his story to a young writer. *Frankenstein* is also narrated but by several different narrators. One can clearly see the evolution of narrative complexity. Beginning with Milton, the narrator was not omniscient, a fact that detracts from Milton’s fictional authority. By the time that Shelley writes her tale, multiple narrators are used to lend credibility to the text. *Interview with a Vampire* continues expanding this narrative complexity by adding the element of a questioning and interested audience to the story. The expansion of narrative intricacy allows for a greater level of credibility.

A preliminary summary of *Interview with a Vampire* may be helpful, since it is probably the least familiar of the three primary texts. A character named Luis narrates the entire story by Rice. Plagued by guilt over his brother’s suicide, for which he feels responsible, Luis no longer desires to live. After observing Luis’s remorse, the vampire Lestat grants him the gift of immortality. Luis’s body goes through the process of death; he is then reborn as a vampire. Lestat thus becomes the father figure and creator of Luis in his new existence. Struggling with his loss of humanity and his rebirth as a monster, Luis tries to retain his former morality. Unable to kill without conscience as Lestat does, he begins to hate his progenitor and rebel against him.

Lestat, in turn, fears being lonely as his hold over Luis weakens. In an attempt to keep Luis’s loyalty, Lestat creates Claudia, a vampire child who represents an Eve figure. Meant to fill the void that Luis feels because of his loss of meaningful human contact, she influences him to destroy Lestat. Claudia and Luis trick Lestat into drinking the blood of a dead child, thereby weakening his powers, after which they slash his throat, leave him for dead in a swamp, and migrate to Europe in search of others like themselves. There they discover a coven of vampires and reach out to them for answers to their “Undead” existence. Armand, the coven’s leader, tells Luis that child vampires like Claudia are forbidden. When she is destroyed by Armand’s followers, Luis takes revenge by burning down their encampment. A hundred years later Luis again meets Lestat, who is now afraid of the modern world and living in a shack. Luis achieves some closure with his vampiric father and leaves him in impoverished solitude.

The story returns to Luis’s completing his narrative to a boy with a tape recorder. When the boy pleads to become a vampire, Luis refuses and attacks him, ranting about the repercussions of such a monstrous existence. Upon awakening the next morning, the boy listens to the tape, deduces the whereabouts of Lestat, and goes off in search of him to become a vampire.

As can be seen from this brief précis, Rice’s novel is clearly influenced by the narrative style of *Frankenstein* while grappling with distant themes of *Paradise Lost*. The structural doubling of these texts is unmistakable, but

Milton's epic lacks the human element that animates *Frankenstein* and *Interview with a Vampire*. The author of *Paradise Lost* portrays the human struggle as a black-and-white contest between good and evil, but human existence is much more complex than that. Thus, while *Paradise Lost* is an impressive story, it is not realistic or believable. Through a comparison of key characters in *Frankenstein* and *Interview with a Vampire* in relation to *Paradise Lost*, it will become clear that the battle for fictional authority is won by the post-Miltonic narrative.

*Paradise Lost*, as just noted, draws a clear distinction between good and evil. The reader knows going into the poem who the evil character is and who the good one is. Satan may seem charismatic, yet he is anything but good. While his speeches may be clever, it is his declared design to take everything good and pervert it to the hell that rages within him. Numerous critics have portrayed Satan as the "Romantic hero," but the poem does not allow for that interpretation (Russell 175). Satan himself proclaims that he is intent upon destroying humankind. He thus figures as the archetypal betrayer, and God as the provider of happiness and paradise. Satan reiterates his hatred for Adam and Eve when he says:

League with you I seek,  
And mutual amity so strait, so close,  
That I with you must dwell, or you with me  
Henceforth; my dwelling haply may not please  
Like this fair Paradise, your sense, yet such  
Accept your Maker's work; he gave it me,  
Which I as freely give; Hell shall unfold,  
To entertain you two, her widest Gates,  
And send forth all her Kings; there will be room,  
Not like these narrow limits, to receive  
Your numerous offspring. (4.375-85)

Defiant and ruthless Satan manifestly is, but not heroic. The diabolical destroyer, he plots humankind's destruction without remorse. Milton draws the line right down the middle: God is good; Satan is evil.

The moral framework in *Frankenstein* and *Interview with a Vampire* is not as definable as in *Paradise Lost*. The characters Victor, Luis, and Lestat are plastic, displaying different degrees of good and evil. Evil, according to Jeffrey Burton Russell, can be divided into three categories: "(1) metaphysical evil, the lack of perfection inherent in any created world; (2) natural evil, the suffering that comes from 'acts of nature' such as cancers or tornadoes; (3) moral evil, the deliberate willingness to inflict suffering" (18). The characters in Shelley and Rice's novels fit into the categories of metaphysical and moral evil. They still have the capacity for acts of goodness and are at war with the monstrous sides of themselves. Shelley's monster and Rice's vampires fall into the category of metaphysical evil. They are flawed at creation to have tendencies toward moral evil. This pattern du-

plicates human experience more accurately than the ideal existence set forth in Milton's poem.

Satan, ironically, does not suffer from metaphysical evil: he is created perfect and has no reason to rebel. God creates paradise and is portrayed as being the ultimate good. Disobeying God is the only immoral choice that can be made in heaven. It is such disobedience, as in Satan's case, that creates evil. The Son reiterates this when he proclaims:

. . . him who disobeys  
Mee disobeys, breaks union, and that day  
Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls  
Into utter darkness, deep engulft, his place  
Ordain'd without redemption, without end. (5.611-15)

The lines are drawn: God is the ultimate good; disobedience is damnation for eternity. This is not within the realm of immediate human experience, since to be created perfect without sin has been unknown since prelapsarian Adam. Moreover, rational logic does not apply to the character of Satan in *Paradise Lost* who, despite his earlier existence as Lucifer, develops an intense hatred for God the Father and wars against heaven. Such a narrative sets forth a mythopoeic ideal but does not constitute a believable story.

In contrast, Luis in Rice's *Interview with a Vampire* is a Satan figure but simultaneously also Adam. He navigates through each role successfully, suspending the reader's judgement, because he is metaphysically evil yet struggles with moral evil. Luis resembles Satan because he is monstrous in his appearance. He is a creature of darkness like Satan who by nature is compelled to destroy mankind. Luis is created imperfect. Unlike Satan, he kills out of necessity and is constantly tormented by his actions as a vampire. Luis despises death, proclaiming that "I never laugh at death, no matter how often and regularly I am the cause of it" (16). Such complexity is what makes his character plastic; he is not locked into the role of either Satan or Adam but is a hybrid of the two. Milton's Satan, on the other hand, is not allowed this flexibility: he is proud of his deeds and returns to hell to hear applause for unleashing sin and death upon the world. Milton cannot write Satan as a remorseful character who deserves sympathy; he can only write Satan into the diabolical role that biblical ideology gives him.

Luis also plays the role of Adam because of his dependency upon Lestat. A father-son role is established, with Lestat teaching Luis how to survive as a vampire. Lestat, however, is not the ideal father figure. He uses Luis for financial gain as well as companionship; he only promises tidbits of knowledge along the way whenever he feels his control weakening. Luis resembles Adam in the sense that he desires to learn from his creator, yet he is unable to because of their strained relationship. Much like Shelley's monster, Luis feels an underlying contempt for his creator, as when he

states: “I realized that I was [Lestat’s] complete superior and I had been sadly cheated in having him for a teacher. He must guide me through the necessary lessons, and I must tolerate in him a frame of mind which was blasphemous to life itself” (31). Shelley’s monster experiences the same situation in having Victor for a father. The theme of the unhappy, imperfect Adam is reiterated, and it is this state that compels both creatures to rebel against their creators.

In *Frankenstein* Victor, like Lestat, uses his “son” as a means to an end—to conquer death. After the conquest Victor abandons his creation and leaves him isolated in a chaotic world. The monster falls into the category of metaphysical evil in being horribly disfigured, and his abandonment at birth sets him on the path of the diabolical Satan figure. His metaphysical flaws give him a greater tendency to commit morally evil acts. The monster himself acknowledges the injustice done to him by Victor:

[Adam] had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with and acquire knowledge from beings of superior nature: but I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me. (126)

In this statement Frankenstein’s progeny recognizes that he is metaphysically flawed. His imperfect relationship with his father and his flawed creation are what prompt his subsequent deeds.

Both *Interview with a Vampire* and *Frankenstein* are written in the Romantic style. While it is generally thought that such authors glamorized the figure of Satan, “the [R]omantic Satan was not always positive; he could also be evil, symbolizing isolation, unhappiness, hardness of heart, lack of love, insensitivity, ugliness, and sarcasm” (Russell 175). This is the kind of role that Luis and the monster represent. Their Satanic dimension is not heroic but rather pitiful. Though the reader does not demonize either character, their evil actions are not viewed as heroic. Luis and the monster both destroy life out of loneliness and desperation, reacting to their metaphysically evil existence. These imperfect conditions combined with the lack of father figures make them sympathetic and pitiful creatures, not versions of the grandly diabolical Satan who deserves the hell that awaits him.

*Paradise Lost*, when viewed from a logical perspective, is literally unbelievable. Milton is compelled by his epic stance to present Satan as incapable of sympathy and undeserving of forgiveness. Satan burns with an all-consuming desire for revenge, his sole purpose being to destroy God’s creation. Is this rational for a former archangel infinitely intelligent and created perfect? Why should Lucifer, one of the most favored of heaven’s host, hate happiness and choose eternal damnation? It simply strains credulity. On the other hand, Luis and the monster are Satanic because of

isolation, loneliness, and the angry emotions resulting from those conditions. None of these factors is at work when Satan makes the evil decision to destroy humanity. His irrational hatred for God and humanity make for a psychologically unconvincing tale, one that *Frankenstein* and *Interview with a Vampire* revise and interpret more credibly.

Shelley and Rice thus borrow from Milton “an intellectual system of the universe which seem[ed] at the time satisfactory” (Kermode 128), but they rewrite his text to give it a tragic human spin. Both novelists also depict the father figures as sowing their own destruction in that Victor and Lestat are destroyed by their creations. God has been replaced by imperfect individuals, and accordingly their creations are destructive and bring about their ultimate ruin. At the same time, the reader does not feel sympathy for Victor or Lestat when they are destroyed. Sympathy instead is reserved for the creations that are forced to lead lives of social exile and damnation. Milton’s epic is incapable of this kind of dynamic. The text does not generate sympathy for Satan or justify his actions against God. Here again we see that Milton’s only credibility comes from the biblical story he is attempting to tell. His characters have no genuine depth, and because of his epic framework Milton is unable to make the characters real or tangible.

Shelley and Rice, on the other hand, have no problem with authenticating their characters. In *Frankenstein* the reader is compelled to feel sympathy for the monster even though he has killed women and children. By way of contrast, Milton cannot permit the reader to feel anything but loathing toward Satan in order to support the Christian doctrine that inspires his work. Rice also effectively generates sympathy for her character of Luis, who is not demonized because he is a vampire. Both Shelley and Rice thus achieve a level of credibility that simply is not allowed to exist in Milton’s poem.

The human element within *Frankenstein* and *Interview with a Vampire* also makes the narratives more believable. The monster and Luis exist in the fallen world, which is our own, and they are understandable because their human attributes parallel the reader’s. Loneliness and isolation are often reasons why individuals lash out at the world; moreover, we all understand the psychological consequences of social ostracism. It is these emotions that create empathy. Neither Shelley’s monster nor Rice’s Luis is evil by nature; they are rather *metaphysically* evil. Their corrupted state perpetuates the choices each makes when bent on revenge and murder. In effect, moral evil perpetuates the circumstances for succumbing to moral evil.

Milton’s intertextual link to many other literary works is unmistakable. Shelley’s narrative is heavily influenced by *Paradise Lost*, as is Rice’s novel by both Milton and Shelley. These later authors develop and extend the central conception of *Paradise Lost* in different directions, addressing among other questions why Lucifer rebels against God if he is created perfect and free of sin. The monster and Luis answer this question by narrat-

ing their tales and giving heartfelt accounts of the choices that put them on the path of evil. It is through their credible narratives that we as readers attain keen insight into their minds and motives as characters. This is not possible or evident in Milton's poem, which simply does not portray a rational chain of events that brought about the downfall of mankind. *Frankenstein* and *Interview with a Vampire* easily win in the battle for fictional authority, but these stories might not have been possible were it not for the vision of one blind man in the seventeenth century.

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## East Meets West in Walt Whitman's Bed: Casting "Song of Myself" in Vedantic Light

Anna L. McKamey

Although a relationship between "Song of Myself" and Vedantic thought was suspected by Walt Whitman's contemporaries, the deconstructionist movement in literary criticism opened the door for serious study of the poem's Vedanticism. As early as 1897, William Norman Guthrie noted that Whitman's "Vedantic views are at times expressed with such originality and energy" that missing the connection between "Song" and Vedanticism would be difficult (qtd. in Chari vii). Whitman himself hints at the connection between "Song of Myself" and Vedantic thought when he claims that the thoughts expressed in the poem "are not original with me" (355). A critical reader, however, must acknowledge that, though Vedanticism can be a useful tool for understanding the poem, it is not the only way to interpret "Song." Using the Vedantic principles of Brahman, Atman, and Maya as tools for excavating meaning from Whitman's "Song of Myself," one finds that the text not only questions fictional authority but also critiques literary doubling.

The goals of deconstruction, a school of literary criticism that arose as a reaction against constructing strict boundaries for meaning, move contrary to "the certainties of structuralism" (Guerin 255). According to the deconstructionist school of thought, texts tend to blur boundaries of meaning rather than to establish intent. M. H. Abrams describes a deconstructionist reading as one that "sets out to show that conflicting forces within the text itself inevitably dissipate the seeming definiteness of its structure and meanings into an indefinite array of multiplex, incompatible, and undecidable possibilities" (225). Deconstructionists opened the door to reading "Song of Myself" not as a poem of finite wisdom contained in words but as a poem of infinite truth that is made apparent only by acknowledging the existence of discontinuity within the text itself. Though Whitman could know nothing of the deconstructionist movement, evidence of his sympathetic outlook can be found in "Song of Myself": "Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself, / (I am large, I contain multitudes)" (1324-26). Whitman acknowledges that truth is so multifaceted that it cannot be confined to linear thought.

This spectrum of meaning is mirrored in deconstructionist thought because deconstruction

... views texts as subversively undermining an apparent or surface mean-

ing, and it denies any final explication or statement of meaning as it questions the presence of any objective structure or content in a text. Instead of discovering one ultimate meaning for the text, as formalism seems to promise, deconstruction describes the text as always in a dynamic state of change, furnishing only provisional meanings. All texts are thus open-ended constructs, and sign and signification are only arbitrary relationships. Meaning can only point to infinite other meanings. (Guerin 255)

Jacques Derrida, the French philosopher who originated deconstruction, was intrigued with the discrepancies that Western traditions of thought created. Derrida's main concern was that Western thought is propelled by establishing meaning, but that attempt to set boundaries actually stifles meaning by limiting its possibilities (Abrams 226). Though Western thought smothers the vitality of meaning, Eastern thought perpetuates the endless possibilities of truth.

Whitman did not fold himself into the confines of Western thinking: "The real Whitman was a mystic, a poet of cosmic consciousness and life-force in all of nature" (Miller 48). Further substantiation can be found in Karl Shapiro's belief that Whitman "is the one mystical writer of any consequence America has produced; the most original religious thinker we have; the poet of the greatest achievement" (36). Though many critics have acknowledged Whitman's mystic persona, too many find fault with his poetry because of a perceived lack of tension or drama. Unfortunately, readers who are unacquainted with basic Vedantic principles feel that Whitman is overly satisfied with the status quo, but those readers who can identify the Vedanticism of Whitman's works understand why he can be so accepting of the way things are. By exploring and explaining the world from a cosmic viewpoint, Whitman "not only swallowed the universe like a cake but transmuted the ideal into the real with a prodigious facility." Without understanding how Whitman's poetry, especially "Song of Myself," relates to Vedantic thought, one might believe that Whitman "perpetuates the worst kind of make-believe"; therefore, it is important to be familiar with the Vedantic principles present in Whitman's writings, especially "Song of Myself" (Chari 5).

The poem allies itself with Vedantic writings as a mirror image of the philosophies set forth in the Vedas. "Song of Myself" closely approximates the wisdom passed down through the Vedas as the American replica of Eastern religious thought. In fact, one could say that it doubles Vedantic thought. To initiate an understanding of Whitman's mysticism, one must first have at least a partial insight into three basic concepts of the Vedantic world view: Brahman, Atman, and Maya.

Brahman, the Sanskrit word for Absolute, refers to that intangible part of the universe that is self-existent and eternal (Rayapati 18). The Brahman cannot be interpreted with the five human senses; therefore, the Brahman usually remains unseen and not understood. In fact, human senses

undermine one's ability to understand the Brahman. It designates a metaphysical world that pervades the physical world in which humans exist. The opening lines of "Song of Myself" boast Whitman's assertion of the Brahman: "I celebrate myself, and sing myself / And what I assume you shall assume, / For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you" (1-3). Whitman has breached this Brahman state; he knows the absolute truth. Whitman conceptualizes how everyone's soul is "just as immortal and fathomless as [him]self, / (They do not know how immortal, but I know)" (137-38). Whitman invites his readers to join him in universal knowledge, for it allows Whitman to see beyond the pettiness of the "drama" of this world and to glimpse the peace that awaits in the Brahman. Though Whitman has been criticized for his complacent viewpoint, the poet, Vedantically speaking, cannot be concerned with the tensions of physical existence, for he knows that tension will decay.

The Vedantic term for the physical realm—what we can see and touch—is Maya. Vedantic thought "recognizes two planes of existence, or rather two standards of evaluation, the one relative, the other absolute, the one phenomenal, and the other metaphysical" (Chari 141). Unlike the everlasting Brahman, the Maya is only a temporary existence, a phase, an existence full of terminal affairs that obscure one's view of the Brahman. Although the Brahman and the Maya exist in the same space, only the Brahman is enduring and eternal.

Whitman, aware of the absolute truth, is justifiably comfortable with the status quo. In "Song of Myself" he escapes the demarcated Maya and enters the consummate Brahman. Because he knows of the truth that awaits after this world ends, Whitman can accept the circumstances of this world without question. The poet has "heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the beginning and the end, / But [he does] not talk of the beginning or the end" (38-39). Though many philosophers revel in discussing "the beginning and the end" of time, Whitman prefers to use the terminal present to illuminate the endless future.

Frank Kermode explores this phenomenon of apocalyptic obsession in *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. Kermode contends that "basically one has to think of an ordered series of events which ends . . . in a final Sabbath. The events derive their significance from a unitary system, not from their correspondence with events in other cycles" (5). "Song of Myself" describes a series of events that ends, the Maya, but the truth that exists in the Brahman never ends. This sense of a never-ending realm allows Whitman to accept the status quo, but only by escaping this world can Whitman gain the insight he needs to embrace this world and its inequalities. He thus writes:

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at the crowded heaven,  
And I said to my spirit *When we become the enfolders of those orbs, and the  
pleasure and knowledge of every thing in them, shall we be fill'd and satis-*

*fied then?*

And my spirit said *No, we but level that lift to pass and continue beyond.* (1220-22)

Whitman must project himself “past the End, so as to see the structure whole, a thing we cannot do from our spot of time in the middle” (Kermode 8). Whitman projects himself “past the End” by attaining Brahman-level thinking. He believes that “there is really no death, / And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it, / And ceas’d the moment life appear’d. / All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses, / And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier” (127-30). This projection allows Whitman to put the fragments of meaning experienced in the “real world” into perspective and find the infinite truth.

Whitman’s reconciliation of fragmentary meaning to infinite truth also relates back to deconstruction. As Steven Lynn notes, “deconstruction is not so much a way to obliterate the meaning of a text, as it is a way to multiply meaning infinitely” (90). Whitman’s sense of an ending allows him to see past the here and now into inexhaustible possibilities. Not discounting the importance of what others assume as reality, Whitman uses fragmentary images of day-to-day life to help his readers escape the limited constructs of Western thought and find meaning deconstructively. Whitman anticipates such an outlook when he writes:

There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage,  
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their surfaces, were this  
moment reduced back to a pallid float,  
It would not avail in the long run,  
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,  
And surely go as much farther, and then farther and farther. (1190-93)

Finding new ways to make meaning comes only by challenging established frameworks for construing meaning. In his own way Whitman describes forging new meaning “farther, and then farther,” by breaking down the old structure of meaning.

To see the truth, to attain Brahman, Whitman must escape time and space, a phenomenon that Mikhail Bakhtin discusses in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. According to Bakhtin, a “chronotope” refers to “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (84). As Whitman says, “I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-wash’d babe, and am not contain’d between my hat and boots” (133). Whitman does not exist only as a part of the Maya. He is also outside of space and time amid the Brahman. Whitman cannot be found between his “hat and boots”—that is to say, he is not the body that carries his soul, but something greater, or what Vedantic scholars refer to as the Atman. The poet is a dynamic being who “sees time and space as symbols of his dynamism” (Chari 97). Whitman speaks of his

ability to move through space and time when he writes:

Space and Time! Now I see it is true, what I guess'd at,  
 What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass,  
 .....  
 My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-gaps,  
 I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents,  
 I am afoot with my vision. (710-11, 714-16)

Removed from the confines of a strict chronotopic relationship, Whitman is able to find everlasting life and everlasting truth.

Chronotopic escape can be compared to the deconstructionist's desire to break down and move beyond conventional boundaries. Deconstruction, as well as chronotope theory, "is therefore particularly valuable because of its power to open up a text that we may have seen as limited or closed" (Lynn 79). By getting outside of traditional time/space relationships, Whitman finds truth. By tearing down the signifier/signified relationship, deconstructionists also find the infinite possibilities of truth. Whitman invites his readers to "See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that, / Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that" (1196-97). To find truth by deconstructing reality, one must find a way to transcend the boundaries drawn by metaphysical assumptions.

The body belongs to the Maya and is therefore finite; however, one must discover a way to escape the Maya to achieve an infinite existence. Whitman addresses this challenge in "Song of Myself." Each person has a soul, or inner self, which in Vedantic thought is Atman. Whitman's narrative poem can be read as the song of his Atman's journey, for even though the physical body is restricted to the Maya, the Atman has the ability to transcend the physical world into the Brahman and last forever. Whitman thus showcases the importance of the self: "I have said that the soul is not more than the body, / And I have said that the body is not more than the soul, / And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is" (1269-71). Though closely linked to the concepts of Brahman and Maya, "Song of Myself" concerns itself most fervently with the complexities of the Atman.

Whitman's exploration of the Atman, or self, leads him to transcend the physical world into a world of absolute truth. He finds this truth by deconstructing the traditional boundaries set by Western thought. When comparing Whitman's understanding of the self to Vedantic concepts, one can see the philosophic coherence of "Song of Myself." According to Vedantic idealism, the self is ever-changing. The self grows and becomes one with the Brahman, thus gaining insight to absolute truth. The self then reunites with the Maya in order to share the truth with those who are trapped in the Maya in hopes of freeing their souls. This cycle of expansion and recession is necessary for Vedantic spiritual growth, and it is evident in "Song of Myself." Whitman, through his Atman, moves "forward

then and now and forever, / Gathering and showing more always and with velocity, / Infinite and omnigenous, and the like of these among them, / Not too exclusive toward the reachers of my remembrances” (696-99).

By reading “Song of Myself” Vedantically, one also discovers an implicit critique of the literary technique of doubling. A common device for many authors, doubling can be used to set opposites against each other in order to understand the nature of each of the opposites more fully. The most basic paradigm that authors explore through doubling is the constant battle between good and evil. In Vedantic thought good and evil exist only in the Maya; they are therefore finite. Because both good and evil are limited to this world and not part of the absolute truth, Whitman finds it quite bothersome that authors must spend so much time and energy explaining an opposition that does not really matter. He realizes that “the pleasures of heaven are with [him] and the pains of hell are with [him]” (423). Neither good nor evil will triumph at the end of time. Whitman has stepped out of time to recognize that the truth will prevail over all—and that truth cannot be defined by the Maya’s polarities of good and evil.

In a larger sense, then, it can be said that “Song of Myself” doubles both Vedantic and deconstructionist thought while it critiques doubling at the same time. Whitman’s use of this affirmation/disputation technique is his strongest tie to deconstruction. A focal point of the Derridean “hermeneutics of suspicion” is to find oppositions in meaning and play them off against each other, much as Whitman does with good and evil. He deals with such concepts the way that deconstructionists deal with language. Because “the relationship between words and things is arbitrary[,] . . . it can therefore be unmade. Deconstruction reveals the arbitrariness of language most strikingly by exposing the contradictions in a discourse, thereby showing how a text undermines itself” (Lynn 79). Even by contradicting himself, Whitman has made his text more believable, especially to a Vedantic or deconstructionist reader.

Deconstruction, though now somewhat passé as a school of criticism, made possible a Vedantic reading of Whitman’s “Song of Myself.” The poem unmistakably incorporates Vedantic thought, as is evidenced by its references to Maya, Brahman, and Atman. It is not surprising that Whitman was influenced by Eastern philosophy. More of a surprise, however, are the similarities between “Song of Myself,” Vedantic thought, and deconstruction. Whitman and Vedanticism both predate the emergence of deconstruction, yet no direct evidence exists to show the influence that either one of them had on the deconstructionist movement. Perhaps this connection can be explained by recognizing that deconstruction reacts against the Western obsession with structure, or perhaps one could argue that there is more than just some truth to what Whitman, the Vedas, and deconstruction seek to disclose. Whatever the reason, a clear parallel exists between the Vedantic mysticism expressed by Whitman and the goals of the deconstructionist movement. Having “pried through the strata” of

Maya, Brahman, and Atman (399), Whitman deconstructs conventional Western truth to realize the infinite possibilities that await us all when we cease to limit our thinking to the here and now.

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## Doubling and Narrative Authority in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae*

Charity Brooks

In the nineteenth century many narratives were written around the theme of doubling. When paired with the theme of doubling, narrative authority becomes questionable because of the many instabilities of duality. For example, two novels that capture the essence of both subjects are Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Maturin's novel expresses what Robert Kiely calls "the irresolvable duality of the human spirit" through the main character, Melmoth, who represents the possibility of evil in every man (218). Because he sells his soul to the Devil for a longer life and tempts other men, Melmoth becomes a supernatural character outside of time. Unlike Maturin's protagonist, Jekyll and Hyde are more familiar figures. Stevenson's novel deals with a man who splits his good and evil natures in two by means of "modern" science. Dr. Jekyll's two halves fight for supremacy, ending in his death. In each novel narrative authority becomes compromised because of the paradox of the natural versus the unnatural. The dual natures and the possibility of evil in these tales are easily understood by readers. However, the narrative authority seems to be weakened by the sense of otherworldliness that the characters portray. The possibility of the story line's verisimilitude is very limited.

I want to focus on another tale that has similarities to and differences from the two earlier mentioned: Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae*. The work is narrated by Ephraim Mackellar, the Land Steward of Durrisddeer, who tells the story of two brothers, James and Henry Durie before the Restoration. The Duries are Scottish nobles who must choose to support either "bonnie" Charles's or rigid Oliver Cromwell's faction. James and Henry debate over who should ride to join the Prince in France and who should stay home to support the household and remain compliant to Cromwell. Henry, the younger of the two, wishes to go out into the world to find his own fortune. The argument is ended by a coin toss that James wins, after which he departs for adventure.

Because of the type of person Henry is, he remains at home to care for his aging father and keep up the family lands. He tends to do what is morally right and in the best interests of his family. Unfortunately, because Henry spends money cautiously and is reticent concerning his not-so-good brother, he ends up with a bad reputation. James, on the other hand, is the

favorite of the family and the countryside. However, he hides his true nature. James flaunts his birthright, cheats, steals, lies, murders, becomes a pirate, and, because of these activities, is referred to as the devil incarnate.

The story of *The Master of Ballantrae* continues with the internal and external struggles of both brothers. A cyclical conflict goes on as to which is the "Master." Henry is denied the opportunity to become his own man because James usurps his chance. After James leaves and is assumed dead, Henry usurps James's title, inheritance, and wife-to-be in the form of Alison Graeme, a wealthy ward of the family. Each brother has some desire to be the other. When James reappears, the argument between the two reaches a climax; they fight, and James disappears again. The cycle occurs three times before the last battle of wills begins. Henry follows James into the barren wilderness of wintry New York where the latter is hunting for treasure. James is reported murdered by the thugs in his party, but Henry disbelieves the rumor and desires to see the grave. Upon Henry's reaching the site, Secundra Dass, James's servant, appears fervently trying to revive the Master. As James's eyes flutter open, Henry swoons and dies followed closely by his brother. The two are buried in the frozen wilderness in the same grave.

Throughout the tale the two brothers' relationship moves from simple sibling rivalry to a much more complex unity. Robert Rogers describes this kind of rivalry in a chapter on "The Opposing Self":

Doubles may be thought of as unstable psychological entities analogous to certain chemical elements which are not found in nature except in combination with other elements. Still more indicative of the instability of these psychic components is the disaster the division between them precipitates in the more common case of the tragic or negative ending. (84-85)

The passage certainly seems to describe the relationship of Henry and James. James becomes not only a physical representation of the devil but also Henry's internal, or mental, representation of his evil side. As the fighting progresses, James and Henry become obsessed with one another, gradually becoming the same person. "As long as Ballantrae [James] lives, his brother can find no peace in life and he cannot die," says Kiely in his book *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Fiction of Adventure*. "They share one existence" (225). Their simultaneous deaths and burial, then, are inevitable because as two parts of a whole one cannot live or die without the other.

Apparently, then, the whole narrative is about the ongoing battle between the two brothers, the one good-hearted and the other malicious and, seemingly, supernatural. The duality appears in the cycles of the rise and fall of their good and evil natures. However, Edwin M. Eigner disagrees with the idea that *The Master of Ballantrae* has anything to do with good and evil:

So many critics have seen this romance as another of Stevenson's good[-]

versus[-]evil allegories. Unfortunately, such an analysis will not take us very far into the meaning of the work. Henry Durie . . . is even less of a St. George figure than were . . . [Stevenson's] other protagonists. (173-74)

Eigner believes that Henry is good but not good enough. Another critic, Joseph J. Egan, views James and not Henry as the good brother. He states that, because James embodies all of the charming and adventurous characteristics of the age in which the novel is set, he is therefore good. I disagree with both arguments. In this paper I propose to show Henry as the good brother who is explicitly compared to faithful biblical characters. I also propose to show Henry as a type of Christ figure who is contrasted with his brother, "the Devil." Therefore, in the typical style of Stevenson, *The Master of Ballantrae* is indeed a good-versus-evil allegory. The characterizations of Henry and James, furthermore, show narrative subversion through each one's internal struggles. Fictional authority is questionable for many reasons: the constant doubling, the supernatural element, and the believability of the story itself.

James and Henry are portrayed as doubles in the typical Stevenson fashion—good and evil, as with Jekyll and Hyde. The dual, and opposing, nature of good and evil encompasses all elements of the narrative in a battle for control over the identity of who is "Master." All the novel's characters are biased toward one brother or the other because of the magnitude of the opposition. Therefore, similar to Maturin's tale and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the story cannot be told objectively, especially by Mackellar, the narrator, who openly favors Henry. The lack of objectivity and the fact that the reader is receiving the tale via third- or, even, fourth-hand report complicate the narrative authority of the text—not because of the questionable realism of the tale, but because of the credibility of the narrator and other characters.

Another complexity appears in the brothers' conflict. On the surface Henry and James are competing for the title of Lord Durrisdere and the lands that go with it. Internally Henry is battling his older brother for self-identity. These two battles show the opposing duality of the brothers. The main image throughout the novel that emphasizes the duality is the image of the coin toss. This event begins the battle as well as provides an image for the link between Henry and James. James says later in the novel, "It began between us when we span a coin in the hall of Durrisdere" (166). Henry says of his brother, "He is bound upon my back to all eternity" (118), as if they are two sides of the same coin. C. F. Keppler gives another view of their battle for identity:

It is not this *identification* with each other that counts, but the gradually strengthening suggestion of their *identity* with each other, identity in separateness, as though each while remaining on his own side of the creek that runs between them were simultaneously reaching across it, not just with calculating shrewdness or awakened conscience but with a part of his being. (91)

Read in the context of the story, this passage describes the connection and doubling of the two brothers. They are one but remain separate.

By portraying Henry and James as human brothers involved in typical sibling rivalry, Stevenson makes relating to these characters easier. The relationship created between reader and story helps one to make a gradual cognitive transition from human to otherworldly characterizations. Whereas Melmoth the Wanderer is extremely otherworldly from the outset, the brothers Durrisdeer seem “down to earth” even though Henry is shown as a Christ figure and James as the Devil. Similarly, the story of Christ is more believable because he was human. The believability strengthens the narrative authority of the text.

The opposing differences between the brothers disclose their ties with the forces of Good and Evil: Henry is good, James evil. For example, Henry sacrifices everything for the good of his family, beginning with his independence. As mentioned earlier, Henry battles his brother for his individuality. When James leaves in the beginning, Henry’s ability to find himself is denied him. He must take over what his brother has left behind. Henry, as the younger of the two, should have had the option to go his own way; instead, he works hard to keep the family holdings from going to ruin and the family from going bankrupt. He marries his cousin, Alison Graeme, for the money to keep his aging father and Alison, who until the point of the marriage has been a ward of the boys’ father, in a warm house. He sacrifices his choice of wife and love for his family. Henry also loses his good name because of his tightness with money. Henry eventually flees Durrisdeer and his battle with James, sacrificing his home to be rid of his brother. He finally sacrifices his all—his sanity and his life.

On the other hand, James does not sacrifice anything. At one point he states, “I have always done exactly as I felt inclined” (36). Instead of doing his duty, he robs his family blind; he uses what little money they have for his own sport; he keeps sending to Henry for money. Henry, knowing that it all rightfully belongs to his older brother, cannot refuse. So, while Henry is trying his best to support his family, James is having an adventure, ignoring the welfare of his family. James, unlike Henry, keeps his good name through money, influential friends, and the mythology and gossip that take shape concerning him. After all, he is out fighting the good fight, or at least the countryside believes so. After his death the myths grow. Henry has to deal with being “haunted” by the stories involving his brother’s memory. Upon his return from death, James even goes so far as to call Henry Jacob: “Ah! Jacob,” says the Master. “So here is Esau back” (74). James not only taunts Henry with stealing his birthright but also with stealing his wife, after which Henry flees to New York for his family’s sake. James then pursues Henry, only to lead him into the wilderness after treasure. This pursuit leads to the brothers’ deaths. As James revives once again, Henry is frightened so badly by the supposed supernatural powers of his brother that he dies instantly. James dies at the same moment, and the two are buried in the

same grave.

Though Henry is never openly compared to Christ, he is paralleled to various biblical characters who were known for their faith and perseverance, such as Jacob, Abel, and Job. Jacob receives his brother's birthright because he is more capable of handling the responsibility; Abel is faithful to God but sacrifices his life to his brother's jealousy; Job refuses the temptation to deny God even though he loses everything. James, though, is bluntly referred to as the Devil many times over. For example, Mackellar says of James: "He had all the gravity and something of the splendour of Satan in the *Paradise Lost*" (139). James is further described as "not mortal" by Henry (166). He appears to be dead and, miraculously, is resurrected three times. Eigner refers to "the 'INCUBUS' James Durie, who is called the devil on nearly every other page" (178). The reactions of Mackellar to the two men seem to substantiate such references. Clearly devoted to Henry, whom he almost worships and calls "Lord," Mackellar stands by Henry to the bitter end and even sees fit to record the story. His attitude toward James is exactly the opposite: he hates him with a passion. However, there are times when even he is tempted by James's charms. James says to Mackellar at the last of these moments, "I never yet failed to charm a person when I wanted; even you. . . . Judge by this little interlude how dangerous I am" (169).

As a result of the different forms of doubling within the novel, confusion arises in its narrative authority. The external and internal conflicts, the encompassing battle of good versus evil, and the biased loyalties of minor characters all shroud the story's verisimilitude in ambiguity. Believability and the appearance of truth are what give a narrative its authority. If a reader can relate to a tale, then it is more likely to have an effect.

External conflicts in *The Master of Ballantrae* cause confusion in narrative authority. A reader can easily understand sibling rivalry, but when the rivalry goes beyond the usual level of altercation the understanding lessens. For instance, James and Henry have many fights within the story; however, these fights always end in death for James. Mysteriously he dies, disappears, and resurrects to torture his brother three times. The first time might be understandable as a Gothic device to show the severity of the duel, but iterations of this pattern prompt incredulity and a questioning of reality. Therefore, narrative authority becomes ambiguous because the usual boundaries of sibling rivalry have been overstepped.

Internal conflicts cause similar confusion. "The uncanny double is clearly an independent and visible cleavage of the ego (shadow, reflection)," states psychologist Otto Rank. In other words, Henry's desire to be James causes him to project his evil characteristics and personal fears onto James, who similarly displaces the characteristics and fears he dislikes onto Henry. Henry sees James as evil and destructive, while James views Henry as weak and uninteresting. Since the reader does not actually know what the brothers are thinking, only that they are exact opposites, he or she makes

assumptions about their individual reality and autonomy. Assumptions are not facts, though, and the reader is left with no clear answer once again. Narrative authority becomes questionable because the characters' actions and motives are questionable. Whereas Eigner believes that Henry follows James into the wilderness to murder him, I believe that Henry follows because he must keep an eye on his brother at all times to keep what is left of his sanity. Because the reader is not given the exact reason, the motives become obscure and provocative.

Adding the "divine" to the characters of James and Henry creates further problems with narrative authority. First, if they are representative of good and evil, then they take on a supernaturalness similar to Melmoth. James and Henry transcend time and, therefore, are indefinite as characters. This supernatural quality challenges expectations of verisimilitude and undermines narrative authority. Second, all characters within the novel are portrayed as being either good or evil. Therefore, all are biased toward one brother or the other, as stated earlier. Eigner speaks of the Chevalier de Burke and Ephraim Mackellar as having these biases. Burke attends James because he is interesting, exciting, and charming. James is all that a young gentleman should be, with the devil's cunning as well. Mackellar is the "faithful servant" who reveres Henry for his Protestant honesty and long-suffering. All other characters seem to have similar biases. Some even change their bias mid-story, such as Alison Graeme, who is at first infatuated with James but who falls in love with Henry for the same reasons that Mackellar loves him. Through these biases all characters become associated with either good or evil. Such moral polarization is important because it involves and implicates the reader, who must make a decision to support one side or the other. This decision is difficult because the reader is influenced by Mackellar's unreliable narration. His influence may cause conflict in the reading and, in turn, the novel's narrative authority.

As stated earlier, the idea of realism enforces narrative authority. Some elements of *The Master of Ballantrae* appear realistic, such as the idea of sibling rivalry, yet the lack of objectivity and the suggestion of divinity conflict with the reader's ability to identify with either James or Henry. The conflict creates ambiguity in the narrative through Mackellar's biased report and confusion regarding the natural/supernatural characteristics of James and Henry.

Combining knowledge of the external and internal battles going on between and within James and Henry, we can interpret these figures as two parts of a schizoid whole, which in turn represents the ultimate duality of good and evil. If this is true and James represents the Devil, then Henry *à la* Christ must be good enough to balance James's evil. Admittedly the idea of good and evil's coexistence within a person is complex, which is why the brothers' relationship is shown through so many forms of doubling. The parallel *dédoublement* of every character in the novel is important because, through others such as Mackellar and Alison Graeme, the reader is shown

a mirroring of the brothers' battles going on mentally and morally within "regular" people. Kiely states that Stevenson had particular interest in these battles within himself: "In *The Master of Ballantrae*, as in nearly everything else he wrote, Stevenson is thinking of himself" (204). Stevenson's use of layered doubles shows the complexity of life and the choices made in each individual's battle with good and evil. The confusion of narrative authority is part of the search for a personal or spiritual authority, for in life one must find one's own authority. This search is shown in the novel through Henry's mental battle with James. Stevenson uses all of these elements to make the story believable and mimic reality (see Kermode 127-52). In this sense, therefore, *The Master of Ballantrae* is a typical Stevenson allegory of good and evil.

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# The Doubled Heroine in *The House of Mirth*: Will the Real Lily Bart Please Stand Up?

Amy Cason

The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart  
of fools is in the house of mirth.

—Ecclesiastes 7:4

Edith Wharton's widely successful novel *The House of Mirth* is a powerful denunciation of the self-indulgent, capitalistic, and patriarchal culture that it mirrors. However, the novel is more than a scathing satire of moral and emotional corruption because it contains "something more than brilliant satire, and that something more is the complexity and poignancy of its heroine, Lily Bart" (Wolff, "Introduction" ix). Each person in *The House of Mirth* is convinced that he or she knows who the "real" Lily Bart is. Lily's double is not a physical duplicate but a duplicate identity. There exists the "public" Lily, who is consumed by the vocation of finding a rich husband and arranging a comfortable life for herself; but there also exists the "private" Lily, who is tired of the effort it takes to create her outward persona and who desires only personal freedom. Carol Baker Sapora states that through the doubled character of Lily Bart, Wharton "explores the restrictions of gender that defeated women in her society" (376). I will explore the two Lily Barts and the ways in which Wharton's doubling technique serves as a condemnation of a culture that values women only as beautiful objects. I also will examine the fictional authority of *The House of Mirth* in relation to the similarities between Lily Bart's life and Wharton's own life.

The novel takes place in New York during the early 1900s and centers around the leisure class, those "certain people [who] had time in which to pursue activities that conferred geniality" (Montgomery 6). The notion of a leisure class derived from European practices and perceptions. Moreover, in American society women were, as Maud Cooke explains, "our only leisure class" because "it is women who create society . . . and it is largely to women with their leisure, and their tact, that we must look to create and sustain the social fabric" (qtd. in Montgomery 7). Women functioned as society's watchdogs by carefully overseeing the access that newcomers had to society. Becoming part of the "in" crowd included taking part in an elaborate code of etiquette and events in the social calendar. It was the mother's responsibility to be sure that her children were well versed in so-

cial conventions in order to ensure their upward social mobility. Maureen E. Montgomery states that “more attention was paid to training daughters in the codes of gentility than sons, and one possible reason for this, but not the only one, was the importance given to women as social arbiters and the value that was thus placed on their knowledge of etiquette” (41). Consequently, a woman had a great deal more at stake than a man did in regard to appearances and manners. Men, however, had much more freedom than their female counterparts; as Cynthia Wolff Griffin points out, “[Men had] power and choices and forms of safety that women [did] not” (“Lily Bart and Masquerade” 274). This freedom is reflected in *The House of Mirth* when Lily bemoans Selden’s ability to do as he pleases: “A girl must, a man may if he chooses” (12). The subject in question is marriage, but Lily’s statement encompasses much more: a girl *must* marry, attend social functions, dress to perfection, and watch her every move, thought, and deed with mindful scrutiny, whereas a man may engage in such activities *if* he chooses.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in New York, Art Nouveau was the rage, and the emphasis on women in art was their capacity to be decorative. Painter Peter Van Degen pronounced, “The great thing in a man’s portrait is to catch the likeness—we all know that; but with a woman’s it’s different—a woman’s picture has got to be pleasing. Who wants it about if it isn’t?” (qtd. in Wolff, “Lily Bart and the Beautiful Death” 18). Van Degen’s assessment is echoed in another of Lily’s statements to Selden: “Who wants a dingy woman? We are expected to be pretty and well-dressed till we drop” (12). Art Nouveau was meant to reflect reality but achieved a type of “impressionism” rather than “naturalism” through the use of curves. As Reginald Abbot explains, “In Art Nouveau, leaves curl as they do not in nature; billowing hair, like Lily Bart’s, defies gravity; bodies appear weightless” (74). The female of the Art Nouveau period had an impossible standard to meet, for “real female bodies were being corseted into an artificial expression of the Art Nouveau line: the S-curve,” which forced a woman’s chest forward and thrust her hips back, thus giving her a “kangaroo stance” (Abbot 75). This particular appearance was adopted by all high-society ladies, including Lily Bart. In addition, leisure-class women acquired many Art Nouveau accessories, setting them off from their working-class counterparts. For example, twice in the novel Lily carries a gold-mesh purse, a popular Art Nouveau accessory. Lily’s watch and jewels are also signs of Art Nouveau influence.

The stresses placed upon Lily Bart as a woman born into the leisure class of the Art Nouveau period force her to create two identities. Lily cannot simply go about in society presenting herself as she truly is; she must divide herself into a “public” self and a “private” self. To an extent Lily is performing the same action that most people perform on a day-to-day basis. Everyone has a public persona that he or she adopts in order to get along with everyone and secure a safe place in society. However, the fun-

damental difference is that for Lily Bart her public persona must be guarded extremely carefully; if she makes a mistake, it will cost her a great deal more than it would cost the average modern reader should he or she make a social blunder. For Lily, the protection of the public persona and all it entails is the protection of her life itself.

The "public" Lily is objectified by her physical beauty and her relative worth to her upper-class New York friends. Lily Bart is not a rich woman, although she has been raised all her life to pretend that she is wealthy. Lily has become accustomed to a certain way of living; unfortunately, Lily often lives beyond her means. In order to be accepted by the "best" crowd, she must spend as much money as they do with total abandon. Lily spends and watches her meager resources dwindle, but she comforts herself by the illusion that she is sure to marry a rich man and inherit her miserly aunt's fortune upon the old woman's death. Lily is already working against the clock with regard to marriage because she is twenty-nine, so she must acquire a wealthy man as quickly as possible. Lily has her eye set on Percy Gryce, an uninteresting but rich man who will no doubt ask her for her hand as long as she plays her cards right. Getting married is literally like going on a hunt for Lily. She is the bait, and she uses all her best features to accentuate herself such as jewels, clothes, and more practical things such as being able to pour tea on a moving train without spilling it. Lily displays how beautiful and useful she could be for Percy Gryce, and never once does love enter into the equation. They both can offer each other something: Percy can offer Lily money and social standing; Lily can offer Percy heirs, a companion to pour his tea on moving trains, and an outlet for his wealth. Throughout "public" Lily's courting of Mr. Gryce, "private" Lily cannot help but reflect on the irony that she must submit to his boring conversations, "all on the bare chance that he might ultimately decide to do her the honour of boring her for life" (25). This is the point at which the two dimensions of Lily collide. "Public" Lily wants wealth, beautiful surroundings, and lavish friends, while "private" Lily hates the price that must be paid and would much rather live the life she is accustomed to without having to marry solely for riches and worry about every move she makes in order to remain beyond the scrutiny of her "friends." Lily realizes that in order to survive in her world she must suppress her private feelings and do what her society expects her to do.

Lily's rebellious private nature continues to assert itself with or without "public" Lily's assent. Realistically, Lily knows that she must pursue Percy Gryce if she wishes to have wealth and social standing at her command. Practicality aside, Lily has a much better match in Lawrence Selden, who comes closest of anyone in the novel to realizing who the "real" Lily Bart is. Lily and Selden can talk about almost anything, including women's lot in society. Lily bemoans the fact that Selden can have his own private apartment and live as he chooses, while the only women who can choose to do the same thing are governesses and widows, not "poor, miserable, marriage-

able girls" like herself (7). The only woman in Lily's circle who is single and self-sufficient is Selden's cousin, Gerty Farish, a woman Lily shrugs off with the explanation that she is not marriageable and therefore has little choice. Selden understands that Lily is playing a game when she talks about getting married, and he understands that Lily presents herself as society wants her to be, not as she herself truly is.

There are three basic ways in which Lily's dual selves are rendered in the novel. These include the use of the mirror as a way to reflect back a reassuringly acceptable "self," the effect of other people's gaze upon Lily, and the pivotal *tableau vivant* scene.

Lily Bart's insecure identity is rendered within the novel by her need to find a "mirror" that will reflect back a reassuringly acceptable "self." In the introduction to *The House of Mirth*, Wolff states that this mirror can be "either a literal mirror or some audience whose response to her defines and confirms 'Lily Bart'" (xviii). An example of Lily's search for the "perfect" Lily Bart takes place after an evening of bridge at Bellomont. Lily has retired to her room and is looking at her reflection in the mirror. She is frightened by what she sees—"two little lines around her mouth, faint flaws in the smooth curve of the cheek"—and proceeds to rationalize her wrinkles with excuses such as, "It is only because I am tired and have such odious things to think about" (28). Gloria Erlich submits that Lily "cannot resist her mirrored image, whether it be to admire it or to study it for signs of aging. She also seeks her reflection in the good and bad, flattering or warped, mirrors of other people's perceptions. Her identity diminishes to the insubstantiality of a reflected image" (71). The "public" Lily makes every effort to show herself at her best. Every little wrinkle and blemish must be cured or explained away. Any time her aging appearance shows signs of its former youthfulness, it is an accomplishment: "No lines were visible this morning, or else the glass was at a happier angle" (58). Gerty Farish is the only person besides Selden to see the "real" Lily Bart. After her near rape Lily confides in Gerty about what she sees when she looks into the mirror: "Can you imagine looking into your glass some morning and seeing a disfigurement—some hideous change that has come to you while you slept? Well, I seem to myself like that—I can't bear to see myself in my own thoughts" (164).

Other people's gazes serve to exemplify the need for Lily to split her identity. What other people see and think about when they look at Lily is most important to her social prospects. Obviously Lily is an incredibly beautiful woman, a fact that becomes clear from how Selden views her: "He had a confused sense that she must have cost a great deal to make, that a great many dull and ugly people must, in some mysterious way, have been sacrificed to produce her" (5). Erlich agrees in saying that "Lily makes herself into an exquisite visual object, the Perfect Lady always displayed to advantage" (70). Lily effectively divides herself into subject and object in order to manipulate the impression she makes on men. Lily

knows exactly what type of woman Percy Gryce wants to marry; therefore, she sets out to become that type of woman. Lily is fully aware that Mr. Gryce will most appreciate a beautiful woman who does not drink, smoke, or gamble, and who will attend church with him every Sunday. Therefore, Lily presents herself as being exactly what Mr. Gryce wants, even though she does not fit his preferences at all. Selden is a much more equitable match for Lily in terms of personality, but he is not rich, and Lily must marry a rich man. Since he is not a marriage prospect, Lily feels much more comfortable around him than she does around Gryce. Even while she is with Selden, Lily sometimes puts on her facade. For example, after Lily and Selden climb the hill during their walk together, Selden collapses on the ground and relaxes while Lily, "though her attitude [is] as calm as his, . . . [is] throbbing inwardly with a rush of thoughts." Lily suddenly becomes acutely aware of her separate identities:

There were in her at the moment two beings, one drawing deep breaths of freedom and exhilaration, the other gasping for air in a little black prisonhouse of fears. But gradually the captive's gasps grew fainter, or the other paid less heed to them: the horizon expanded, the air grew stronger, and the free spirit quivered for flight. (64)

The "captive" is the Lily who seeks to imprison herself in a loveless marriage to Gryce, whereas the "free spirit" is Lily's private self. After this realization of her two selves, Lily feels safe to converse freely with Selden about practically anything, including her ulterior motives for taking a walk with him rather than attending church with Mr. Gryce as she had promised.

Various other men gaze upon Lily throughout the novel, including social aspirant Sim Rosedale and the lecherous Gus Trenor. When Rosedale catches Lily coming out of the Benedick Hotel, he looks her over "with interest and approval" before he even says hello (14). Later in the novel, when Rosedale asks Lily to marry him, he makes it very clear that Lily's beauty and poise are the chief attractions for him: "What I want is a woman who'll hold her head higher the more diamonds I put on it. And when I looked at you the other night at the Brys', in that plain white dress, looking as if you had a crown on, I said to myself: 'By gad, if she had one she'd wear it as if it grew on her'" (176). Gus Trenor also seeks Lily's attention and habitually addresses her in very familiar terms: "By Jove, Lily, you do look a stunner!" (91). During the near-rape scene, Gus refers to Lily's body and what he feels she owes him in very vulgar terms: "Hang it, the man who pays for the dinner is generally allowed to have a seat at table" (145). In her role as "public" Lily, she is forced alternately to placate, scorn, and cajole Gus in order to get herself out of the situation.

Lily also concerns herself with the female gaze, because, as stated earlier, women were then the founders and primary upkeepers of leisure-class society. Lily's mother is the first woman to gaze upon Lily's beauty: "She

studied it with a kind of passion, as though it were some weapon she had slowly fashioned for her vengeance." Mrs. Bart views Lily's beauty as the key to their renewed social and economic success after the death of Lily's father. Through her mother Lily understands that "beauty is only the raw material of conquest, and that to convert it into success other arts are required" (34).

The women most in control of Lily's social climb are Bertha Dorset, Judy Trenor, and Lily's Aunt Peniston. Because Bertha Dorset is at the top of the leisure class, everyone wishes to get in her good graces. Unfortunately for Lily, Bertha is jealous of her because Selden loves Lily, and Bertha and Selden are ex-lovers. Aunt Peniston accepts Lily into her home after Lily's mother dies, and she makes sure that Lily has nice clothes and a little money. However, Aunt Peniston has a very strict moral code, so when Lily asks for money to repay a gambling debt, Aunt Peniston refuses to help her. Judy Trenor is Lily's best friend and Gus Trenor's wife. Of all the people Lily knows, Judy Trenor ranks as the woman who is "least likely to 'go back' on her" (41). Unfortunately for Lily, Judy *does* go back on her due to the rumors about Lily's accepting money from Gus Trenor.

Bertha Dorset gazes upon Lily many times throughout the novel. When Lily disrupts Selden and Bertha's conversation at Bellomont, Bertha gazes on Lily with "frank displeasure" (59). Much later in the novel, when Bertha is constructing a lie about why she arrived at the yacht so late, she examines Lily "between lowered lids" (207). When Bertha makes a surprise announcement that Lily may not stay on the yacht, she causes the whole crowd to gaze upon Lily with "a startled look" (218). Through the use of her gaze, Bertha expresses her hate for Lily and isolates her from the other members of society. Without Bertha's support, Lily's integration into society is nearly impossible.

Aunt Peniston supports and stands up for Lily until Lily asks her for money to repay her gambling debts. Lily actually needs the money to repay Gus Trenor for what he "invested" for her, but she believes that, if her aunt will not help her with a gambling debt, she certainly will not help her repay money that should have never been accepted in the first place. Throughout the scene where Lily asks her aunt for money, Mrs. Peniston's gaze causes Lily to blush and feel fear. When Lily informs her aunt of the debt, her aunt's face "cloud[s] perceptibly" (170). At first Mrs. Peniston is under the impression that Lily owes one thousand dollars to her dressmaker, until Lily tells her that the debts she owes are "different—not like tradesmen's bills," and the look she gives Lily makes her "almost afraid to continue" (172). Aunt Peniston refuses to help Lily pay her "gambling debt" and uses her gaze to make Lily feel dishonored.

At first Judy Trenor gazes favorably on Lily. In their first scene together Judy exclaims, "Good gracious, Lily, how handsome you are" and embraces her (45-46). After Judy learns that Lily passed on her obligation to attend church with Gryce in order to take a walk with Selden, Judy admonishes

her “with the eye of a physician who has given up the case” and chastises her for missing her chance to endear herself to Mr. Gryce. However, as time goes by and Gus Trenor begins seeing more of Lily than Judy Trenor does, Judy begins to regard Lily coldly. When Judy accidentally runs into Lily in a restaurant, she pretends to be thrilled to see her while her greetings include “neither enquiries as to her future nor the expression of a definite wish to see her again,” which Lily at once understands to mean that Judy no longer wishes to be acquainted with her. Lily also understands that “where Judy Trenor [leads], all the world [will] follow,” and Lily feels like a “cast-away who has signaled in vain to fleeing sails” (229).

Another female who frequently gazes on Lily is the char-woman. Lily first meets her upon leaving Selden's apartment, and she finds the char-woman's gaze intensely personal: “Lily felt herself flushing under the look. What did the creature suppose? Could one never do the simplest, the most harmless thing, without subjecting one's self to some odious conjecture?” (14). Lily encounters her again on the stairs in Mrs. Peniston's house, and once again she examines Lily “with the same unflinching curiosity” she had shown on the steps of the Benedick (99). Then the char-woman comes to Lily with letters she got from Selden's waste basket, love letters that the woman assumes were written by Lily. The woman wants Lily to buy them, or else she will use them to cause Lily great embarrassment. In actuality the letters are from Bertha Dorset, and Lily is practical enough to see that they could be of some use to her in the future. She barter with the char-woman over the price of the letters, and the entire time the woman scrutinizes Lily carefully for any signs of hesitation or embarrassment. The char-woman's gaze serves to remind “public” Lily of how tenuous her social standing is and how easy it is even for someone of a lower social class to look down upon her.

Undoubtedly the most striking point in the novel is the *tableau vivant* scene in which Lily consciously displays her public self as a “jewel” or “rare work of art in a pure, timeless realm” (Schulman 13). Lily chooses the painting *Mrs. Lloyd* over Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's *Cleopatra* because the former has a simpler style that Lily feels will emphasize her “unassisted beauty” and express her public self at its best. During the *tableau vivant* scene Selden is positive that he is the only person in the room who sees the “real” Lily Bart up on the stage, but, as Sapora points out, “the only self that appears in that scene is the pure representation of Lily's beautiful surface, the double she herself has created.” Ultimately what Lily does in the *tableau vivant* is to pick a painting that does not subdue *public* Lily's personality; the private Lily is nowhere to be found in the scene. Lily thinks that she is in control of what her audience is viewing; in reality she is “silent and on display,” thereby “open to interpretation by her audience but unable to respond to or control their reactions” (Sapora 384). Whereas Lily believes that the note of approval called forth by the *tableau vivant* signifies people's acceptance of her, in actuality the approval is for whatever interpretation

the individual viewer makes of “public” Lily.

Sapora argues that Lily’s silence during the *tableau vivant* scene is representative of Wharton’s own view on denying women the access to language. Sapora states, “Lily’s representation of *Mrs. Lloyd* speaks in the only way women in this society were allowed to speak—or, perhaps more accurately, in the only way they were listened to—through their appearance” (385). In her book *A Backward Glance*, Wharton herself states that a frivolous society like Lily’s “can acquire dramatic significance only through what its frivolity destroys. Its tragic implication lies in its power of debasing people and ideals” (207). The silencing of women’s voices is certainly a debasement, and Lily, standing on display for her society to pass judgment on, has undoubtedly been silenced.

Ironically, even though Selden knows her very well, he misses the mark entirely in his analysis of Lily’s *tableau*. The impression Selden receives from Lily’s display is that her beauty has successfully “detached from all that cheapened and vulgarized it” (135). However, the *tableau* seems to be the instance in which Lily’s beauty is *most* cheapened and vulgarized. She is on display like a prize cattle on the auction block, and all the men grumble over her price. After the *tableau* scene Gus Trenor decides that he has paid her price by investing money for her, and he wishes to be paid in full. When Lily visits the Trenor house, she is under the impression that she is going to see Judy, but Judy is still away at Bellomont, and Lily finds herself alone with Gus Trenor. Gus implies that Lily is going to pay back her debt to him with her body, but she manages to talk her way out of the situation and run to the safety of Gerty Farish’s house. After the near-rape scene with Gus, Lily’s private self seems to assert itself more.

Lily’s hidden, private self causes her a great deal of discomfort whenever she is alone, so she avoids the solitude that would force her into a dialogue with herself. For example, she looks around on the train for a conversational companion in order to “get away from herself” (17). Later, after an unsuccessful night at bridge, she lingers on the stairway at Bellomont because she feels “no desire for self-communion” (24). Lily fears her private self because it fills her with dissatisfaction over her life, her friends, and her suitors. Her private self recognizes that everything Lily does is a farce designed to gain her the material and social status she desires. In effect, her society serves to make her into a mere beautiful object, and naturally people wish to buy the beautiful object. Lily’s marriage would not be a marriage of love but a marriage of purchase. Lily has been raised to see herself as something rare and expensive to be bought by a wealthy man, so that she in turn can have the money she needs to buy the beautiful objects she desires. In the beginning of the novel Lily accepts this notion of herself as an object to be purchased, but later “private” Lily cannot accept herself in this light. “Private” Lily is the force behind “public” Lily’s lack of attention to Percy Gryce and her abhorrence of Sim Rosedale, even though both men can offer Lily all the money, clothes, and

jewelry she desires. However, although “private” Lily cannot accept herself as someone else’s purchase, she also cannot break out of the mold she was raised to fit. Lily Bart dies because her private self cannot tolerate being viewed only as a beautiful thing for some rich man to acquire, but her private self also cannot consent to being surrounded by the “dinginess” of lower-class living arrangements. Lily Bart’s death represents Wharton’s condemnation of the frivolous New York society they both grew up in, a society that gives women little chance for “selfhood” outside of beauty, money, and materialism.

The accounts of Wharton’s life suggest that she, like Lily, experienced an unstable and insecure sense of her own identity. Even as a child Edith was highly imaginative. She would play “make up,” a game in which she made up stories for hours on end. Painfully shy around her peers, she would insist that her mother entertain the children who were meant to be Edith’s playmates; absolutely nothing was allowed to stand in the way of “making up.” Her father quietly admired his daughter’s curiosity, but her mother was horrified. Lucretia Jones strongly resembles Lily Bart’s mother in respect to her desire for money and social standing. For Lucretia the only acceptable artistic outlet for a female was the cultivation and presentation of her own body. Wharton states that in her society “there was an almost pagan worship of physical beauty” (*Backward Glance* 46). The cultivation of the mind was low on the list of priorities. Wharton had suffered from illnesses throughout childhood, and her parents were determined that she not be “taught anything that required a mental effort” (*Backward Glance* 47). Nonetheless, Wharton continued to devour every book she could get her hands on until her mother decreed that she could “never read a novel without first asking her permission”; then, when she asked permission, her mother invariably denied it to her (*Backward Glance* 65). Therefore, Wharton read the only books still permitted to her, the classics, over and over again.

Wharton began to write at a very early age. Since her family did not think that paper was a necessary purchase, Wharton begged scraps from parcel wrappings in order to write. At age eleven she brought her first manuscript to her mother for approval. Her mother got no further than the first two lines before she made an icy comment, thereby crushing the girl’s literary spirit for a long time. Years later, when Edith finally began to write again, she managed to divide her life into two distinct areas: the personal and the creative. Grace Kellogg makes the interesting note that none of Wharton’s friends or family ever saw her in the act of writing; Edith wrote in the mornings, but when she left her bedroom around noon “there were no signs upon her of her private occupation, no tousled hair, inky fingers, moods, distracted looks. She was perfectly turned out, unruffled, ready for her household, her garden, her husband, their guests” (xiii). Although at that point in her life everyone knew that she was a successful writer, Wharton apparently still felt the need to hide that part of her iden-

tity from others. Like her character Lily Bart, she could not present her true self in public, instead creating a “public” and “private” self in an attempt to satisfy both herself and her society.

The portrayal of New York society in *The House of Mirth* is documented by Wharton herself, validating the novel’s fictional authority. In *A Backward Glance* Wharton discusses how her instinct as a storyteller taught her to “use the material nearest to hand, and most familiarly my own”; therefore, she chose “fashionable New York” as her subject. Wharton says about New York: “There it was before me, in all its flatness and futility, asking to be dealt with as the theme most available to my hand, since I had been steeped in it from infancy” (206-07). Wharton thus created characters and events that could have existed based on her own experiences and her desire to critique the New York of her time. In fact, there is some speculation that Lily Bart is an alter ego for Wharton since the two seem to have so much in common. Both have a strong sense of beauty, both have different “selves” they present to the world, and both are products of New York’s leisure-class society. However, in the introduction to *The House of Mirth* Wolff asserts that “Lily Bart is by no means an alter ego for Edith Wharton” despite their similarities (xviii). I tend to agree with Wolff because Lily does not survive while Wharton obviously did. Lily does not possess Wharton’s strength. In a way this novel seems cathartic for Wharton. Wolff states that “In many ways, Lily Bart’s death [is] a kind of farewell on Wharton’s part. Wharton share[s] some of Lily’s weaknesses, and what the ‘problem-solving’ process of composing this novel [teaches] its author [is] that these weaknesses [are] not viable” (xxvi). Wharton’s own success as a writer proves that women of her time period were capable of being more than just beautiful objects, a fact that Lily Bart never fully realizes.

Wharton’s use of doubling makes *The House of Mirth* a “portrait of a living woman struggling to be both beautiful and self-reliant” (Sapora 390). The novel is also a critique of a society in which such a woman cannot exist. In Lily’s world a woman cannot be more than a beautiful object unless she was never beautiful to begin with. Women such as Gerty Farish or the char-woman were never beautiful; therefore, they learn early on the trades that will sustain them. For a beautiful woman like Lily Bart, the only trade is “beautiful object.” She is never taught to be anything else, so when she fails at being an object, she cannot survive as anything else. It is the frivolousness of Lily Bart’s society that causes her to split into two selves, and it is to the frivolousness of society that Lily Bart must finally be sacrificed.

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## Layers of an Insanity Text: Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"

Lacy Rachell McDaniel

"The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is a text of layered themes, with each layer becoming more complex and intricate. In general this text can be broken down into three layers: a blatant theme, a latent theme, and a subverted theme. The blatant theme is that of the path of insanity for one woman; the latent theme involves feminist issues; and the subverted theme is the idea of doubling. Gilman manages to combine all of these themes into a story that appears completely unified, and she does so in the seemingly innocuous style of a sentimental work. However, upon close inspection the authority of this story is questioned by its very form as well as by the subverted theme of doubling.

Before any of the aforementioned themes can be discussed, the meaning of the term "sentimental" must be examined. Sentimental works have been seen as analogous to romantic texts; therefore, many traits of the romantically styled novel may be used to describe a sentimental work. R. F. Brissenden, who makes such a connection between the romantic and the sentimental in *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade*, observes that "alienation, withdrawal, retreat and the rediscovery of the self in isolation strike us as peculiarly the romantic syndrome" (67). All of these traits may be seen in "The Yellow Wallpaper." The narrator is isolated, and therefore alienated, from her friends and even from her child, as a result of the "cure" her physician-husband prescribes. As her madness increases, the narrator withdraws from contact with both Jennie, her sister-in-law and maid, and John, her husband. The narrator stays in her bedroom more and more as she falls deeper into insanity, which can be seen as a retreat of sorts. And the rediscovery of the self in isolation can be seen through the narrator's discovery of the woman in the wallpaper because, as will be discussed later, the woman in the wallpaper is a double for the narrator. Given these patterns, "The Yellow Wallpaper" is clearly a sentimental text.

Although alienation, withdrawal, retreat, and the rediscovery of the self seem like serious topics, Brissenden's use of the term "romantic syndrome" denotes the way in which the sentimental novel itself trivializes such events, at least at the surface level. Another description of the sentimental text defines the subgenre as non-threatening to the status quo, suggesting that it is typical for sentimental novels to have "the appeal to tears, the exploi-

tation of an obviously pathetic situation, the imitation of other writers—the patently second-hand and manufactured quality of the whole thing” (Brissenden 295). Due to the controversial themes of “The Yellow Wallpaper,” especially the latent and subverted themes, Gilman would need to disguise her story as “innocent” in some manner in order to ensure as little opposition to her story as possible.

The blatant theme of the text is the insanity of a woman. The plot of the story gives the reader this information. At several points the narrator tries to tell John that she is starting to become mad. In her biography of Gilman, Mary A. Hill states that “the protagonist begins to creep and crawl within her madness” (151); she also describes the narrator as “an ‘hysterical woman,’ overprotected by a loving husband” (150). Both of these statements show that the story focuses around the idea of insanity. Explaining her purpose in creating “The Yellow Wallpaper,” Gilman claims that the two primary objectives dealt with the issue of insanity (20). The first of these purposes was to use Gilman’s own “brush” with insanity as inspiration for her work and, in turn, to use her work to save her from insanity. The other objective was to save other women from being driven mad in the same way in which she was nearly driven past the limits of sanity.

The course of action that endangered Gilman’s sanity is the “rest cure” developed by S. Weir Mitchell, an acknowledged nerve specialist for women. In this treatment the patient was confined to bed for six to eight weeks, during which time she was not allowed to “sit-up, sew, feed herself, read, or write.” Throughout this regimen the woman was to be kept in seclusion from “familiar surroundings and family” while adapting to a new diet that included large amounts of milk. In addition to these components, the rest cure also prescribed massage and electricity to combat the deterioration of the patient’s muscles often caused by the required bed-rest (Golden 46). In Gilman’s account she was “to ‘have but two hours’ intellectual life a day,’ and never to touch pen, brush, or pencil again” for the rest of her life (20).

Within the story itself several statements show the importance that sanity, or the lack thereof, plays in “The Yellow Wallpaper.” Near the beginning the narrator remarks that it is “getting to be a great effort for me to think straight.” A few paragraphs later she gives the reader further insight to her diminished mental state by admitting to hallucinations. The narrator then introduces the character, if indeed character is an appropriate title, of the imagined woman in the wallpaper. Though at this point the narrator is still partly in control of her mental processes and merely says that “it [the shape in the wallpaper] is like a woman,” the narrator is far enough removed from the realm of sanity to be convinced that a figure is moving behind the wallpaper pattern. As the story progresses, the narrator’s hallucinations become more and more vivid until she finally believes that she *is* the woman in the wallpaper. The story begins with an apparently sane narrator and ends once she has become completely immersed within her

insanity and hallucinations. Because there is virtually no action in the story other than the narrator's increasing engulfment in dementia, her insanity is clearly the basis of the plot and the blatant theme of the story.

The latent theme addresses manifestly feminist issues. One of the more obvious is the reduction of women to children. John, the narrator's husband, several times refers to her as a "blessed little goose" (6) and "little girl" (11). Even the narrator makes comments in which she equates herself with children. When she says "No wonder the children hated [the nursery]! I should hate it myself" (5), she puts herself on the same level as children by giving herself the same sentiments, likes, and dislikes that she imagines they would have had while in the nursery. Moreover, some of the narrator's descriptions of herself make her appear like a child or even an infant. One such description is that she seems to "cry at nothing, and cry most of the time" (9). The locations within the story also show women being "placed" as children. Ann J. Lane notes this connection in observing that the narrator "move[s] to 'the nursery at the top of the house,' a literal acting out of the infantilizing process" (125). The fact that the narrator is required to stay in a room designed for children shows that her husband regards her as a child. Lorelee MacPike also recognizes "the fact that the narrator's prison-room is a nursery indicates her status in society. The woman is legally a child; socially, economically, and philosophically she must be led by an adult—her husband; and therefore the nursery is an appropriate place to house her." The narrator perpetuates these adult-child roles by asking her husband's permission to move into a different room in the house. The few attempts that she does make to escape her role as a child are negated by John. The narrator wants to write; she considers this her work. However, work would give her the chance to be independent, placing her within the world of adults. John, wanting to protect the narrator's status as child and consequently his control over her, uses the rest cure to forbid her from working. MacPike comments that "just as only [the narrator's] work can transport her out of the world of childhood, so too can it alone free her from her dependence upon her husband in particular, and the male-created world in general" (137).

A second feminist issue raised in "The Yellow Wallpaper" is the constraints placed on women at the time in which the story was written. The wallpaper symbolizes these constraints. At one point the narrator says that there are two patterns in the wallpaper, an outer pattern and one behind that pattern. She then asserts her certainty that the outer pattern is one of bars and that either a woman or many women are shaking the bars in an effort to get out. This description can easily be seen as suggestive of women's entrapment. MacPike agrees with this interpretation, saying that the narrator "creeps behind her restricted life" and that "the wallpaper becomes at once the symbol of her confinement and of her freedom" (139). Other scholars have made the same connection. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, for example, say that the wallpaper is as "ancient, smolder-

ing, 'unclean' as the oppressive structures of the society in which [the narrator] finds herself" (90). The narrator's struggle with the woman in the wallpaper has also been described as symbolizing her "eagerness to fight for and with other imprisoned women" (Hill 151). The wallpaper can even be seen as hinting at the destructiveness of societal constraints on women. At one point the wallpaper is described as appearing to have "a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck" (17), showing how society "strangles" and spiritually kills the women it imprisons. Later in the story this point is made clearer when the narrator says that the women within the wallpaper "get through, and then the pattern strangles them off" (15).

The subverted theme of doubling may be seen through many images. The gardens around the house are doubled with the narrator, but the house itself and its location are doubled with John. He is also doubled with the pattern of the wallpaper; however, the wallpaper itself is paralleled with the narrator, as is the woman within the wallpaper. The narrator is also doubled with Gilman.

The gardens symbolize the narrator in several different ways. Her reaction to the gardens is the first sign that a connection exists. The narrator exclaims about the beauty of the gardens due to all of their gates, walls, and hedges. This same description pertains to the narrator, who would have been considered a striking example of womanhood for her time because of all the "cultivated" restrictions of society that she follows. Moreover, the broken greenhouse is a wonderful metaphor for the narrator's spirit and imagination, and the colors of the garden further the symbolic connection with her. Though no specific colors are mentioned, it may be assumed that, like most gardens with many hedges, its primary colors are green, from the foliage, and blue, from the sky. It has been said that "blue and green are associated with calm, security, and peace" (Sharpe 55), which are the elements that the narrator longs for in the story.

John is doubled with the house for several reasons, the first being that both he and the house entrap and isolate the narrator. The house described in the story has bars on the windows (at least in the narrator's room) and a gate at the top of the stairs; it is also far distant from the main road. John isolates the narrator, first by taking her away from her own home and then by refusing to allow her to have any company over to his house. The desire for escape, as Lane notes, begins with the narrator's choice of rooms in the house: "Her preference was for a room leading out, an escape, and a room without space for her loving, adoring John"—in contrast with the nursery where "the bed is nailed down, and there are bars on the window" (125). Here a connection between the desire to escape the house and a desire to escape John is obvious, implying that the narrator's husband figures as a double for the house.

The pattern of the wallpaper reinforces the idea of entrapment. The reader is told that part of the pattern "becomes bars . . . and the woman

behind it is as plain as can be" (13). The passage could also describe the relationship between the narrator and John, the latter of whom provides the rules of behavior, like bars, behind which the narrator is trapped. Her state of mental ruin, because she does not want to submit to her husband's rules, is similar to the idea that the wallpaper pattern "strangles" the women behind it: "They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off." The narrator tries to escape her husband's rules through her writing but is immured by the rest cure to which she is subjected. She knows that she needs intellectual stimulation to overcome her depression, yet activities that provide this stimulation are forbidden to her.

While the wallpaper's pattern is doubled with John, its color is correlated with the narrator. One such connection pertains to her maturity level. Studying the preference of patients on the Rorschach ink-blot test, Marguerite Emery writes that "almost without exception, [those] who had regressed to or had failed to progress beyond a markedly infantile level, chose yellow." The narrator's reduction to the status of a child has already been discussed in relation to feminist issues; therefore, the significance of her violent reaction to the color yellow is in keeping with this observation. Also noted by Emery is the fact that her aforementioned observation was especially true for schizophrenics (qtd. in Birren 160). Realizing that the symptoms of schizophrenia include paranoia, multiple personality, and belief in the existence of people that only the afflicted can see or hear, we can identify all of these behaviors in the narrator. She thinks, for example, that John's sister is somehow trying to steal the wallpaper, showing paranoia; she is convinced by the end of the story that she has become the woman in the wallpaper, showing a form of multiple personality; and she harbors the delusion that the figure in the wallpaper is a real person, showing the last of the listed symptoms. Faced with such overwhelming evidence, one can hardly doubt that the color of the wallpaper indicates the narrator's unstable mental condition.

Arguably the most significant instance of doubling in Gilman's story is that of the narrator and the woman in the wallpaper. Neither is given a name, and both are largely confined within the house. The woman in the wallpaper is seen behind the bars of the wallpaper and can only "creep" around when she is out of the wallpaper. Similarly, the narrator is restricted to the house both physically, by the bars on the nursery window and the iron gate at the top of the stairs (keeping her on the top floor of the house), and figuratively, by John's insistence that she is not "well" enough to go out unless he can supervise and control her movements. By the end of the text a more explicit doubling of the two characters is made. The narrator "becomes" the woman in the wallpaper; therefore, the two women are, literally, two aspects of the same person. Hillel Schwartz's image of *Doppelgängers* as "monsters with two heads and two bodies [that] compete side by side and go mad" (81) provides further proof that the two women are doubles. The narrator and the woman in the wallpaper are both trying

to escape from their strangling restrictions, in a way competing against each other, and because of this competition the narrator goes mad. Even Gilbert and Gubar, in their influential work titled *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, note this pattern: “Eventually it becomes obvious to both reader and narrator that the figure creeping through and behind the wallpaper is both the narrator and the narrator’s double” (91).

The narrator is also doubled with the author of the text. As has already been remarked, Gilman drew for inspiration on her experiences of being on the rest cure while writing “The Yellow Wallpaper.” Gilman and the narrator were also married to men who were similar not only in profession but also in personality, as is evident from how they treated their wives. Lane thus remarks: “[The narrator] tells us that John ‘is very careful and loving and hardly lets me stir without special direction’—language remarkably similar to that which Charlotte Stetson [Gilman’s name during her first marriage] used to describe Walter [Gilman’s first husband]” (125-26). A later description by Lane links Gilman to the idea of the narrator’s being reduced to a child. She refers to “Charlotte Stetson’s description of her collapse . . . ‘holding a rag doll and weeping, sitting on the floor, being a baby’” (131). In addition, Gilman and the narrator are doubled by virtue of their roles in relation to the text. Gilman as the author is the person actually “writing” the work; however, the narrator, because the text is composed in the form of a secret diary, is also “writing” the text. Both women are claiming complete authorship of the text. The idea that the narrator is a double for Gilman thus cannot be dismissed.

This same authorial doubling, however, contributes to the story’s lack of narrative authority. If both women claim complete authorship of the text, then neither can be trusted to give a completely accurate relation of events. Another element that puts the authority of the work into question is the idea that the narrator goes insane in the text. If the narrator is insane, as has clearly been shown to be the case, the reader cannot accept what she presents as a wholly true and reliable account of the events that transpire during the story’s fictional present. After all, if the narrator is lapsing into insanity and losing touch with reality, how is it possible for her to tell the reader what is actually occurring?

The necessity of the sentimental mode, as defined by Brissenden, can be seen through an analysis of the three layered themes of “The Yellow Wallpaper.” Because her overt subject of a woman’s induced insanity was controversial, Gilman needed some technique within her story to buffer its reception. This she achieved through an adroit use of the sentimental mode to mask the subverted themes of feminism and doubling. Gilman’s story thus appeared non-threatening to the status quo of the late nineteenth century, ostensibly akin in style and content to accepted literature of the time, all the while addressing issues that resonate deeply with readers today.

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## Shadowy Doubles and Fictional Authority in Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Sharer* and *Heart of Darkness*

Jamie Turner

Joseph Conrad's narratives *The Secret Sharer* and *Heart of Darkness* present the issue of doubling through the characters' descriptive tales of symbolic journeys into the unconscious. According to Gloria L. Young, these tales illuminate Carl Gustav Jung's later psychoanalytic theories of the Collective Unconscious and the archetypal image of the shadow (588). Through the use of character doubling, elements of conflict between the representations of persona and shadow or "the dark side of our [human] nature" resonate within each text (Jung 73). Conrad's representation of the human psyche increases the fictional authority—the narrational presentation of events as factual—of Marlow's and the captain's tales, while at the same time diminishing the credibility, or trustworthiness, of the captain's account. Also, the choice of narration for both novellas and the doubling of characters lend themselves to fictional authority in the texts. Each narrator, the captain and Marlow, presents himself as an authority on the accounts of their journeys. Within the confines of a fictional narrative both Marlow, relating the events to his companions, and the captain, relating the events directly to the reader, present their stories as truth. However, it is not the case that both narrators are sufficiently able to present themselves as credible conveyers of the "truth."

Conrad's use of character doubling has compelled many critics to explicate its psychological significance. According to Joyce Wexler, "Doubling can be achieved by duplication as well as division, but both processes are types of projection and undermine the presence of Leggatt as a distinct person. To deny the separateness of the characters diminishes the climactic moment of visionary union" (602). Joan E. Steiner, however, believes that "Conrad combines doubling by duplication and doubling by division in his representation of Leggatt and also places greater emphasis on the psychological than on the allegorical aspects of Leggatt's relationship with the captain" (174). The presence of doubling in both narratives does, in fact, appear in personified form as one aspect of an internal struggle within both the captain and Marlow.

Within *Heart of Darkness* the doubling relationship between Marlow and Kurtz, although ambiguous in nature, stems from their opposing representations of societal values and norms. According to Joyce Carol Oates, "Marlow, for all his condescension, represents a degree of humanity not

found in other Caucasian Europeans who are intent upon wresting from black Africa all they can get" (10). As Marlow draws nearer to his confrontation with Kurtz, the nature of the doubling begins to transform; in Oates's words, it is "mysterious, subtle and ever-shifting in its meanings" (12). This shift occurs as Marlow apparently realizes the polarity of their doubling in which he later finds himself "lumped along with Kurtz" (*HD* 79). Marlow discovers that he is able to admire Kurtz because "He had something to say. He said it. Since I had peeped over the edge myself, I understand better the meaning of his stare," an admission that implies a bond within this doubling relationship (*HD* 87).

Unlike that of Marlow and Kurtz, the doubling relationship between the captain and Leggatt is explicitly presented throughout the text, as is evident from the captain's references to "my double," "my second self," and "my shadow." Oates states that this relationship is "superficial and far too underscored" (12). However, the ambiguity of the captain's description of Leggatt's characteristics suggests a far greater significance to this doubling relationship than may appear on the surface. From a psychological perspective several important factors arise concerning the doubling between the captain and Leggatt. Wexler contends that "the captain does not project the double as an aspect of himself; instead, he views the other as his double so that he can introject him" (602). However, we will see that the opposite of Wexler's argument tends to be the case.

The doubling relationships for both Marlow and the captain become far more significant when understood through a Jungian interpretation; however, in order to establish the existence of what Jung termed the unconscious "shadow," it is important first to indicate the imagery and symbols that suggest the journey into the unconscious. The most evident and abundant example is the water imagery. Water, although often a symbol of life or a return to the womb, is also an archetypal image of the unconscious. The frame narrator in *Heart of Darkness* provides the first image of water: "The Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway" (17). The narrator's description of the Thames's opening to an "interminable waterway" exemplifies the vastness of the unconscious mind. In addition to the framing narrative, Marlow divulges the watery experience of his African journey, which involved "one river especially, a mighty big river,—resembling a snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea" (22). According to many psychoanalytic theorists, to be submerged in water is to be submerged in one's unconscious. Both Marlow and the captain appear to be on the brink of discovering their unconscious; however, their ships signify the walls of their conscious world preventing them from being fully submerged. The captain's double, Leggatt, presents himself as emerging from the depths of the sea; moreover, similar to Marlow's metaphor of the snake with its "head in the sea," the captain's unconscious double, Leggatt, "was complete but for the head" (*SS* 23). Both narratives possess this same imagery, suggesting that Marlow and the captain

are connected to forms that are partially submerged and that will lead them to their unconscious. Both men also appear to be progressing toward similar discoveries.

Throughout *Heart of Darkness* it is apparent that Marlow's journey is, in fact, a journey in search of wholeness within himself. Early in the narrative Marlow provides his companions with images that suggest his unconscious search for unity. He states that "I felt as though, instead of going to the centre of a continent, I were about to set off for the centre of the earth" (27). His use of the word "earth" represents the archetypal image of a circle or sphere, which is a "symbol of the self" that "expresses the totality of the psyche in all its aspects, including the relationship between man and the whole of nature" (Jung 266). For Marlow, Africa becomes a symbol of the unconscious self that he is slowly moving toward—that is, away from the layers of his outward persona as represented by the ivory stations. As Marlow travels further into the Congo, he expresses that "the earth seemed unearthly" (51), a description indicating that as he advances toward his unconscious he consciously recognizes the strangeness and foreignness of advancing archetypes. This strangeness exhibits a dreamlike quality; according to Jung, "as a general rule, the unconscious aspect of any event is revealed to us in dreams, where it appears not as a rational thought but as a symbolic image" (4). Marlow, indeed, admits to his companions that his journey "came in the shape of an unrestful and noisy dream, remembered with wonder amongst the overwhelming realities of this strange world of plants, and water, and silence" (49).

As in Marlow's narrative, the captain in *The Secret Sharer* also expresses his feeling of being in a place that is foreign to him. He states that "what I felt most was my being a stranger to the ship, and if all truth be told, I was a stranger to myself" (19). In addition to the captain's awareness of his alien surroundings, he expresses a dreamlike state of mind. While on board the ship he states, "She floated at the starting point of a long journey, very still in an immense stillness. . . . At that moment I was alone on her decks. There was not a sound in her—and around us nothing moved" (18). This motionless atmosphere, common in many dreams, indicates a bizarre unearthliness to his surroundings and is suggestive of his unconscious mind.

During Marlow and the captain's journey into the unconscious, they come in contact with their doubles, which are their archetypal shadows. Jung uses the term "shadow" for "this unconscious part of the personality because it actually often appears in dreams in a personified form" (174). Throughout Marlow's tale Kurtz remains a mysterious character until their first confrontation, which discloses the primitive or atavistic aspects of Marlow:

For a man like Kurtz, who had no restraint, the wilderness claimed him, "found him out." It had caressed him, "got into his veins, consumed his flesh. . . ." He was lost. Split from his civilized personality . . . [.] he be-

came an insatiable shadow “of splendid appearances, of frightful realities.” (Young 585)

This characterization of Kurtz’s “split from his civilized personality” is, in essence, the definition of the archetypal image of the shadow who is separated from or ignored by the persona. Once Marlow reaches his destination, he refers to Kurtz as his shadow. He states that “I was anxious to deal with this shadow by myself,” and shortly after he discloses that “it was written I should be loyal to the nightmare of my choice” (*HD* 81). Marlow’s use of the word “nightmare” in reference to Kurtz supports the idea of a shadow image since it is, in fact, the side of ourselves that we wish to suppress. For Marlow to be in contact with his darker side, the presentation would most likely be in the form of a nightmare, since the shadow usually manifests itself through dreams.

Unlike Marlow, the captain in *The Secret Sharer* is not prepared to meet his shadow. Upon discovering Leggatt, the captain, although he immediately acknowledges the doubling relationship, does not admit that he confronts an aspect of his own dark side. The captain “pronounces his double ‘no homicidal ruffian,’ yet he recognizes Leggatt’s ‘guilt’” (Steiner 178). However, it is evident that Leggatt embodies a primordial double since he violently murders a shipmate and states that he “had him by the throat, and went on shaking him like a rat” (*SS* 27). The captain, although he repeatedly refers to Leggatt as “my double,” cannot convey, even through imagery and symbolism, the primitive nature of his own shadow, while its existence is clear to the reader. Leggatt, in essence, is comparable to Marlow’s description of the character Fresleven who “thought himself wronged somehow in the bargain [involving two black hens], so he went ashore and started to hammer the chief of the village with a stick” (*HD* 23). Although Marlow may be perceived as sympathetic toward Fresleven’s behavior, he does not ignore its vile nature as does the captain concerning Leggatt’s crime. Gloria R. Dussinger also argues that Leggatt is an aspect of the captain’s unconscious: “Leggatt’s coming from the sea (primal element) at night (the time of dreams), his wearing a sleeping suit (garment of the unconscious), his concealment, and his customary position near the bed-place all reinforce the psychological import of the story” (601). Dussinger later suggests that Conrad, although perhaps unintentionally, wants the reader to view Leggatt as an aspect of the captain:

It is apparent that Leggatt has no conscious identity aboard the captain’s ship; his psychological status equals that of the unborn. Conrad tells us this by never allowing the captain to use Leggatt’s name, for the individual name is the sign of personality. The man who was Leggatt elsewhere becomes aboard ship merely an element of the captain’s psyche. (602)

By the same token, no one refers to the captain by his name, a fact that

adds to the link between his double as the archetypal shadow. The captain's psyche is similarly equal to "that of the unborn," just as Leggatt's true doubling purpose (as the archetypal shadow) remains unborn to the captain. It is the captain's denial that becomes one of the problematic factors in regards to his credibility and that subsequently hinders his fictional authority.

In order fully to determine the narrators' respective degree of authority, it is necessary to establish their credibility. In *Heart of Darkness* Marlow's credibility is established early in the text. His audience—the Accountant, the Director of Companies, the Lawyer, and the frame narrator—apparently know Marlow extremely well. The last-mentioned of these auditors implies their companionship in stating, "[Marlow's] remark did not seem at all surprising. It was just like Marlow" (20). The frame narrator not only knows Marlow well enough to generalize his characteristics, but he also feels as though his story is worthy of retelling. Another example of the establishment of trust arises from the description of the Director of Companies, a former captain who "to a seaman is trustworthiness personified," and we soon discover that Marlow is the captain during his adventures (17). As Marlow begins his narrative he immediately states, "I don't want to bother you much with what happened to me personally," an introduction that according to the narrator shows "the weakness of many tellers of tales who seem so often unaware of what their audience would best like to hear" (20). In essence, Marlow is recounting an experience as accurately as he can without intending to alter any aspect for the sake of showmanship. As Marlow proceeds with his narrative, Conrad seemingly attempts to undermine his credibility through his use of interminable paradoxes, such as his description that "the earth seemed unearthly" (51), his contrasts between light and dark, and his detestation of Kurtz along with his admiration of him as "a remarkable man" (87). However, Marlow's penchant for ambiguity reinforces his credibility from a Jungian perspective since his inconsistencies reflect his transformation from egotism toward an integration of the unconscious. He is unable to make a clear distinction as he leaves the familiar and heads into the unfamiliar and bizarre.

As in *Heart of Darkness*, the issue of the narrator's credibility in *The Secret Sharer* is established early in the text; however, unlike Marlow, the captain represents the opposite of trustworthiness. This narrator's choice of words and his overt generalizations render his perspective invalid. After establishing that he is a newcomer to the ship, he states, "It must be said too, that I knew very little of my officers" (19). According to Robert D. Wyatt, "The first inconsistency is revealed in the narrator's admission of ignorance about his officers and crew." In the captain's later referring to the chief mate's "usual ejaculations," Wyatt goes on to note, "the word 'usual' seems particularly inappropriate due to the brief acquaintance" (15). In addition to these and other inconsistencies in the captain's descriptions, his relationship with Leggatt begins to lose credibility. The captain readily sees him-

self in Leggatt; however, he admits that “I was somewhat a stranger to myself” (19). It seems improbable that a character who is so unfamiliar with himself and all that is around him is capable of seeing himself in anything, much less the murderer Leggatt. The captain’s inconsistencies as well as his unfamiliarity with himself prevent him from uniting with his shadow and, therefore, from relaying his tale with credibility.

Through character doubling and the archetypal image of the shadow, both Marlow and the captain appear to present themselves as authoritative narrators. The presence of the *Doppelgänger* offers dual images, which in essence provide two points of view regarding the same story. The contrast between the doubles allows some room for reader objectivity in order to distance oneself from the narrator’s subjectivity. This distancing seems more accessible in *The Secret Sharer* than in *Heart of Darkness* since the captain is more explicit in his acknowledgment of the doubling than Marlow. However, we must remember that the captain does not admit the negative characteristics of Leggatt, an omission that leads to the inevitable conclusion of the story: the captain releases his shadow, Leggatt, back into his unconscious, the sea, without unifying it with his persona. The captain’s inability to unite with his shadow, based on his superficiality, diminishes his credibility and leaves the reader with a sense of dissatisfaction concerning the captain’s final choices.

Marlow, on the other hand, leaves his unconscious unified with his shadow. He literally “carrie[s] Kurtz into the pilothouse,” indicating Marlow’s intentional desire to remain linked with his nightmare (*HD* 84). Marlow also describes his meeting with Kurtz as an illuminating experience:

It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me—and into my thoughts. It was sombre enough too—and pitiful—not extraordinary in any way—not very clear either. No, not very clear, and yet it seemed to throw a kind of light. (*HD* 23)

Marlow’s sense of illumination stems from his unconscious union with his shadow. As Marlow’s tale draws to an end, he is not only united with his shadow but also changed by him forever. Remembering Kurtz, Marlow states that “he had one devoted friend at least, and he had conquered one soul in the world that was neither rudimentary nor tainted with self-seeking” (*HD* 67). This conquering, which in essence is the shadow’s integration with the ego, also requires that Marlow readjust his behavior upon his return to civilization; he recalls that “I found myself back in the city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other” (*HD* 88). Marlow’s union with his dark side enables a transformation to occur within his unconscious that increases his awareness of the plight of society. Through Marlow’s unification with his shadow the contrasting doubles, or dual perspectives, merge, and the reader is able to embrace a sense of purpose for the seemingly impenetrable ambiguity

that has permeated Marlow's authoritative narrative.

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## **An Outside View of the Inside Man: Doubling and Existential Absurdity in Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land***

Stephen Robinson

Man has always desired to explore and know the unknown. The twentieth century has narrowed that desire to outer space, and we have tried to think about what life would be like on another planet or in another universe. People now turn to the sky, wondering what new things are out there. They ask, "How much different is life on other planets from life on earth?" Robert Heinlein's fiction fits the time. "In Heinlein's future history of space travel," observes Leon Stover, "it is the Americans who lead the way by re-playing the adventure of Columbus and the voyage of the pilgrims" (25). Heinlein uses this age of discovery to produce a masterpiece titled *Stranger in a Strange Land*, which sets the stage for an honest look at life on Earth from the perspective of a person who has lived on Mars since birth. To frame his critique of humanity, Heinlein doubles himself with the main character in the novel. He further extends the boundaries of doubling by linking two characters in the novel, Valentine Michael Smith and Jubal Harshaw. These two characters make up one character; in a sense they make up the two halves of Heinlein in this novel.

The narrative focuses on an expedition to the wastelands of Mars that runs into trouble. Ultimately, all of the explorers from Earth die on Mars except for an infant child, who is raised by Martians. Twenty-five years later humans make another trip to Mars, this time successfully, and bring Valentine Michael Smith back to Earth. The government tries to keep him hidden for testing, but Jill Boardman and Jubal Harshaw rescue him, and Harshaw makes an attempt to help Smith adapt to life on Earth. George Edgard Slusser explains that Smith's "response to the insanities of modern civilization is a strange, new religious movement, in which the first step for adherents is learning to 'grok' the Martian way" (18). Heinlein's neologism "grok" suggests something more than just rational understanding; it implies a deep intuitive connection with a concept, thing, or person. Smith has trouble "groking" life in the United States. Eventually, after gaining a following, he is discovered by the authorities and killed.

Through Smith's eyes we see the world from an alien viewpoint. This extraterrestrial perspective establishes authority for the protagonist of Heinlein's novel and provides him with a safe vantage point from which to express opinions about human life and the future. Many authors attempt to critique their world, but they often fail because people will not listen to

one of their own. Heinlein overrides this problem in *Stranger in a Strange Land* by using an innocent outsider, innocent because he has never lived on Earth, to critique life.

Smith is completely ignorant of life on Earth. Having spent his first twenty-five years of life on Mars, he has been raised to think and act like a Martian. His thought processes are totally unshaped by human experience. This traveler from another planet thus possesses an omniscient authority regarding what he witnesses of human ways and interaction. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg remark:

The point of view in a given novel controls the reader's impression of everything else. We do not perceive a novel with our eyes. The eye sees only the printer's inked shapes on the page. Yet a story impinges on our consciousness as a totality, with sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feelings somehow smuggled into us through those inked shapes, and released into our perception without having passed through our sensory organs in the normal way. (275)

This "impression of everything else" in Heinlein's novel is controlled by Smith's point of view, since he exists as an outside authority untouched by human life. His godlike presence in the novel suggests an interpretive authority in how he views the nature of man. Even though he travels to Earth with the second expedition, he never truly becomes a part of Earth. He carries with him the powers, the philosophies, and the perceptions of a creature from another place in the universe. Stover has this to say about the viewpoint of the Martian: "Smith is the proverbial Martian, viewing American society from the outside, his cosmic detachment standing for an idealistic viewpoint. He thereby defamiliarizes our accustomed affairs, making them look strange and stupid, worthy of indictment and fit for radical reform" (57-58).

Complementing his narrative authority is a doubling of Smith's character as represented by his name. He exists as a blend of man and God, natural and supernatural. On the one hand, the name Michael suggests the archangel of Scripture. This shows his supernatural side, the part of him that comes from another world. In terms of its Hebrew derivation, the name Michael, literally translated, means "one who is like God." On the other hand, the last name of Smith links him with the ordinary inhabitant of Earth. The common surname shows his human side, the part of him that originates from human parents. Heinlein uses the structure of the Martian's name to represent this dual nature, thereby reinforcing Smith's authority as a critic of human life. This protagonist provides a voice for Heinlein to express his own views, a technique used throughout his fiction.

Before we consider other doubling devices in *Stranger in a Strange Land*, it seems appropriate to take note of Heinlein's goals in his work. This brief

overview will indicate the purpose behind the narrative techniques used by Heinlein, who based his writing on his own life experience. When we examine Heinlein's background, we recognize the factors that shaped his characteristic outlook in his work. We also come to understand why he felt the need to use science fiction or, as it is called today, fantastic realism as a vehicle for his strong opinions.

Heinlein began his career as the owner of a small family business, but he did not fit the profile of a typical businessman of the 1930s. "The difference is," writes Stover, that "he [ran] this whole huge thing as a personal extension of himself; he [was] not one of the faceless lot of portfolio managers of the bureaucratic sort that put the struggling hero of a story called 'Let There Be Light' out of business" (30). Heinlein believed that the corporate people of his day were not generally either hard-working or particularly honest. He wrote his first story, "Life-Line," with these thoughts in mind. In this story Heinlein casts himself as a judge who critiques modern capitalism and invention, thereby setting a pattern that would continue to appear in his later work.

This device of linking himself with a strong character in his fiction gives Heinlein a platform from which to express his own ideas about government, politics, and philosophy. He uses the same technique in *Stranger in a Strange Land*, where Smith reflects Heinlein's thoughts about fundamental issues of human existence. Slusser remarks:

Heinlein has discovered his own mode, and is now using it openly, where previously he seemed uncertain whether to emphasize adventure or propaganda. The ideology of this novel is nothing less than the natural extension of the author's 'religion' of man. Other trappings have been added along the way, but these serve merely as new clothing for familiar ideas. Heinlein's vision of the universe has now hardened into dogma. The purpose of *Stranger in a Strange Land* is little different from that of his earlier work, . . . to the extent that the didactic machinery in *Stranger* has subdued all other aspects of Heinlein's fiction to this one end. (18-19)

Heinlein projects his voice through the Martian to express his struggles with two main questions about human existence. More specifically, he raises existential questions pertaining to sex and religion. Apropos of his novel Heinlein commented in a letter to a colleague: "I don't see how to take out the sex and religion. If I do, there isn't a story left. The story is supposed to be a completely free-wheeling look at contemporary human culture from the nonhuman viewpoint of the Man from Mars" (*Grumbles* 228).

In dealing with the topic of sexuality, Heinlein opens new territory that had not been explored previously in the genre of science fiction. Robert Plank notes that in *Stranger in a Strange Land* "Heinlein does not . . . follow the old tradition of science fiction, to ignore sex. Overt sex is very much present, and indeed explicit" (86). Valentine Michael Smith has spent the majority of his life on another planet, and he appears to be totally igno-

rant of sex as we know it. For example, because Mars does not have much water on its surface, when two people share a glass of water it becomes a powerful emotional bond, similar to what we consider to be the psychological dynamics of sex. Since the bonding comes from this sharing of water, sex becomes a meaningless action to Smith.

Heinlein presents sex, through the eyes of his main character, as an uncomplicated, purely physical act between a man and a woman. When Jubal Harshaw's three secretaries try to seduce Smith, he responds with no hidden agendas because he has no reason to think anything of this playful act. Heinlein also presents the idea of multiple-partner sex, but the motive behind such experience for Smith seems different from what we would imagine. Plank writes:

Promiscuity would seem to be the model, but what makes promiscuity attractive is diversity and freedom of choice, and these are so far lacking that the sex life of [Smith] and his circle could be expressed in a simple mathematical formula: the maximum number of combinations are consummated. What an achievement! The only trouble is that the scheme leaves room for neither love nor spontaneity. (86)

This fact brings a certain monotony to sex that complicates our notion of this physical and emotional experience.

Another topic that *Stranger in a Strange Land* explores is religion, which Heinlein views from the perspective of existentialism. Questions such as "What is man?" and "What is God?" begin to be addressed with the attempts to put Smith into a category. He is human, but he has existed on another planet all of his life. As such, he obviously exists differently than the other characters in the novel. Although his abilities and beliefs vary from those of his counterparts on Earth, he seems to have a better understanding of where he fits into the universe. This presentation of Smith dramatizes the issue of human nature and identity. We have to see, suggests Heinlein, that man is a socially constructed being: we are what we are constructed to be by our environment.

The question of God emerges, then, within the context of attempts to understand ourselves. Where does God fit in this complicated picture? The church in the novel, called the Fosterites, brings the issue of religion to the forefront. Smith exists as an all-knowing creature because the "Old Ones," the dead Martians, are omniscient beings who have shared everything that they know with him. However, in a close examination by Jubal Harshaw, we find that Smith does not comprehend the notion of religion. An extended passage in the novel summarizes these conclusions:

Jubal at last got certain ideas clear in his own mind: (a) Mike did not know that the Fosterite service was a religious one; (b) Mike remembered what he had read about religions but had filed such data for future contemplation, having recognized that he did not understand them; (c) in fact, Mike

had only the most confused idea of what the word 'religion' meant, even though he could quote all nine definitions for same as given in the unabridged dictionary; (d) the Martian language contained no word (and no concept) which Mike was able to equate with any of these nine definitions; (e) the customs which Jubal had described to Duke as Martian 'religious ceremonies' were nothing of the sort to Mike; to Mike such matters were as matter-of-fact as grocery markets were to Jubal; (f) it was not possible to express as separate ideas in the Martian tongue the human concepts: 'religion,' 'philosophy,' and 'science.' (176)

These comments seem to suggest an underlying absurdity in all our conceptions of religion. Moreover, if there is no need for religion, there is no need for God. The concept of God and human understanding becomes complicated in this text, and it seems to be the central theme in Heinlein's work. With the Martian we get a perspective uninfluenced by the social environment of Earth, a theoretically unbiased view that implies a certain narrative authority.

By the time that Heinlein wrote *Stranger in a Strange Land*, he felt that he had established himself as a popular writer and could express more of his own thoughts and beliefs. With this novel he challenges people to think, to move beyond the received beliefs of their forefathers into a realm of thought open to newness and innovation. He has some things to say about life and death and the role that religion plays in the grand scheme of things. Heinlein has asserted that the words of Jubal Harshaw, in the thirty-third chapter, sum up his own thoughts while he was writing this mind-pricking parable:

Self-aware man is so built that he cannot believe in his own extinction . . . , and this automatically leads to endless invention of religions. While this involuntary conviction of immortality by no means proves immortality to be a fact, the questions generated by this conviction are overwhelmingly important . . . whether we can answer them or not, or prove what answers we suspect. The nature of life, how the ego hooks into the physical body, the problem of the ego itself and why each ego seems to be the center of the universe, the purpose of life, the purpose of the universe—these are paramount questions . . . ; they can never be trivial. Science can't or hasn't coped with any of them—and who am I to sneer at religions trying to answer them, no matter how unconvincingly to me? Old Mumbo Jumbo may eat me yet; I can't rule Him out because he owns no fancy cathedrals. Nor can I rule out one godstruck boy leading a sex cult in an upholstered attic; he might be the Messiah. The only religious opinion that I feel sure of is this: self-awareness is not just a bunch of amino acids bumping together. (452)

Here Heinlein makes a bold attempt to give enlightenment to the character Jubal Harshaw. At this point Harshaw has come to a realization about things that have haunted him. He comes to the conclusion that he can question life, but he fails in his attempts to find answers. Heinlein does

not claim to know all the answers, but he does make a noble attempt to bring such questions to the surface. He uses the voice of Harshaw to raise the existential questions that originally inspired the project that became his masterpiece.

Having considered Heinlein's outlook in this novel, we may now look more closely at the literary device of doubling that he uses to establish a platform for his ideas. As discussed earlier, Heinlein aligns himself with and speaks through the main character. The problem, however, lies in defining who the main character is: on one side is the Martian, Valentine Michael Smith; on the other side is Jubal Harshaw. Together these two men comprise Heinlein's authorial voice. Partly for that reason it is impossible to examine Smith without examining Harshaw, and vice versa.

First of all, these characters' names are significant in implying a connection between them. Smith represents the ultimate God-human. His name Michael, as I have already noted, refers to the supernatural, and his surname Smith affiliates him with the Earth. He is the ultimate wanderer of the universe, having transcended terrestrial ties and existing in a world in, yet outside of, that which surrounds us. Jubal Harshaw has also been given a famous first name. In biblical history Jubal is the son of Cain, a child of Adam and Eve. Cain, because of a poor offering to God, is forced to traverse the Earth for the rest of his life. By implication, then, Jubal Harshaw is another restless wanderer. This common denominator creates the blend in this science-fiction novel that Heinlein was striving to achieve. He uses the genre that usually describes an exploration of unknown worlds, a wandering throughout the universe, and he infuses it with an exploration of humanity and human existence, a metaphorical wandering of the Earth.

These two characters are linked by name in still another way. The Martian possesses the name Valentine, a saint that we associate with the power of love. The fourteenth of February is a holiday celebrating love in honor of this martyred saint. Jubal, the son of Cain, is believed to be the inventor of music. The word Jubal, in the Hebrew tongue, also can be used to describe a river. With these two sets of names, we see a common motif of creativity and emotion. Moreover, both characters seem to be cut from the same mold in their approaches to life. They share common views on religion and sex, as discussed earlier in this essay. Although Heinlein makes it clear that the Martian provides a voice for his ideas, he yet explains the novel's central theme with reference to a speech by Harshaw. It becomes impossible, then, to separate the two in this novel, despite their being linked by virtue of their names. Nonetheless, they together project Heinlein's own outlook in this existential work of science fiction.

We often associate old age with wisdom and youth with adventure. Heinlein brings these two concepts together in this novel. The use of the older Jubal Harshaw and the younger Valentine Michael Smith gives us Heinlein's authorial voice. Slusser writes that in *Stranger in a Strange Land* "youth somehow combines with old age in an odd sort of hermaphro-

ditic union, making both one" (19). Through such doubling Heinlein offers the fullest glimpse of his own opinions regarding the anomalies of human existence.

As the human race has ventured into space, it has undertaken, ironically, the most important voyage: the journey to an understanding of self. Heinlein supported the new age of technology and invention that characterized the period in which he lived. He had no trouble with representing these brave, new worlds in a positive light. However, Heinlein does not want to stop there. He uses the notion of interplanetary travel to open readers' minds to the uncharted and undiscovered worlds wherein lie potential answers to the questions we need to address concerning our own existence.

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