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From the Editor’s Desk

Dear Reader,

I wish to thank all of our authors and editors for making this edition possible. I also wish to thank our faculty advisor, Dr. Osborn, for his help, and Mrs. Gempel, without whose assistance we could not have taped an outrageous number of flyers promoting this amazing journal throughout the university.

As for you, my dear reader, I truly hope you enjoy our efforts.

Thank you,

Ajla Pervan
Editor-in-Chief
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The Dr. Katherine Maren Sorenson Award
For Excellence in the Study of the Novel

The Katherine M. Sorensen Award recognizes one student in Literary Study II whose presentation reveals him or her to be a superior reader of the novel, exhibiting in his or her reading, writing, and delivery Katherine’s characteristic virtues: a precise intelligence and wit, a capacious imagination, and a humane learning.

Ambiguity and Discovery in O’Connor’s
*Everything That Rises Must Converge*

Aspen Daniels

When readers finish a Flannery O’Connor short story, they often feel disoriented and confused. Startled by the violent climax and unsure how to interpret the imagery, they question what the ending means and how to understand the story in light of it. While critics have ably studied different ways in which O’Connor’s stories evoke larger theological mysteries, few have addressed if her plots themselves might contain purposive ambiguities.¹ The few critics who do address this question assume that O’Connor does not create unknowable ambiguities. Sarah J. Fodor identifies a dichotomy between O’Connor’s desire to communicate “religious significance” to her readers and her “New Critical aesthetic of dramatization” that taught her to show, not tell.² She argues that readers sometimes misunderstand the meanings O’Connor meant the text to communicate because, in accordance with this aesthetic, O’Connor subtly implies her meanings rather than making them clear. In this way, Fodor assumes that O’Connor always had a specific authorial intent that she wanted readers to understand. Steven T. Ryan makes a similar assumption when he writes that “there is very little intentional ambiguity underlying her

¹ See Jack Dillard Ashley on the omniscient narrator, Thomas M. Linehan on natural imagery, John N. Somerville Jr. on humor, Diane Tolomeo on the violent climax, and Judith F. Wynne on irony.

[O’Connor’s] stories.”³ Similarly, Clara Claiborne Park raises the question of “how so accomplished an artist consistently failed to convey to her fallen readers the meanings she intended,” without considering that in some cases O’Connor did not mean to convey a specific meaning at all.⁴

While in her letters collected in _The Habit of Being_ O’Connor did provide interpretations for some problem passages, she left many others unexplained. These passages challenge us to consider the ambiguity on its own terms. Although O’Connor does communicate meaning through her short stories, she also creates real ambiguities on the level of the plot by interweaving spiritual with physical events and by leaving unclear how the characters respond to them. This ambiguity of the characters’ response is deepened on a rhetorical level by the narrator’s creation of an ironic barrier between the character and readers. These narrative ambiguities shape the meaning of the story by causing readers to contemplate the theological mysteries they point towards. In each of the stories contained in this collection, the most ambiguous moment can be found in the shocking, dramatic climax that ends it. “The Enduring Chill” and “Parker’s Back” both end with this kind of climax; “The Enduring Chill” is clearer than “Parker’s Back” in that the narrator identifies the meaning of the imagery, but both leave unresolved what exactly happened and how the character is changed by it.

At the end of “The Enduring Chill,” it is clear that the Holy Ghost descends on Asbury Fox. Asbury is a sick intellectual who wants to die because he has failed as an artist. But he has just learned that he only gave himself undulant fever from drinking unpasteurized milk. Besides the blow to his sense of self-importance, he will have to live with the recurrent fever for the rest of his life. In the last sentences, the narrator describes a spiritual change in Asbury:

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The boy fell back and stared at the ceiling. His limbs that had been racked for so many weeks by fever and chill were numb now. The old life in him was exhausted. He awaited the coming of new. It was then that he felt the beginning of a chill, a chill so peculiar, so light, that it was like a warm ripple across a deeper sea of cold. His breath came short. The fierce bird which through the years of his childhood and the days of his illness had been poised over his head, waiting mysteriously, appeared all at once to be in motion. Asbury blanched and the last film of illusion was torn as if by a whirlwind from his eyes. He saw that for the rest of his days, frail, racked, but enduring, he would live in the face of a purifying terror. A feeble cry, a last impossible protest escaped him. But the Holy Ghost, emblazoned in ice instead of fire, continued, implacable, to descend.5

What is happening here? The narrator makes an unexplained leap from the “bird” etched by a water stain on the ceiling to the “Holy Ghost,” and from its “appear[ing]” to descend to its actually “descend[ing].” Either Asbury is experiencing a vision, or the Holy Ghost has taken on the form of the water stain and is physically present in the room. Restated in other terms, the question comes down to whether the water stain becomes the Holy Ghost only symbolically or literally.

Evidence that Asbury is experiencing a vision and the Holy Ghost is only present symbolically can be found earlier, when the narrator writes that Asbury’s eyes look “prepared for some awful vision about to come down on him.”6 Further, this entire scene is focalized on Asbury, describing his perceptions. Since the narrator first writes that the bird “appeared all at once to be in motion,” it is reasonable to suppose that it appears this way to Asbury and that the last sentence also describes Asbury’s perception. However, this

6 Ibid, 114.
interpretation ignores the narrator’s careful word choice in the last sentence: “the Holy Ghost… continued, implacable, to descend.” While earlier the narrator focalized on Asbury’s perceptions and used the mitigating expressions “like,” “appeared,” and “as if,” here she uses an authoritative voice to describe this manifestation as a real action. In this way, the narrator prevents readers from explaining away the ambiguity so easily. Further, when Asbury recognizes the bird’s apparent movement, the narrator writes that “the last film of illusion” is torn from him. This statement suggests that Asbury’s perception of the bird as a stain on the ceiling is illusory and that the reality is the living bird’s descent.

Here, the narrator sets up two hypotheses; by describing the bird’s transformation in concrete terms, she gives readers enough information to discard the first hypothesis, that the bird only represents the Holy Ghost symbolically. But rather than dispelling the ambiguity, this conclusion deepens it by raising more questions: what does it mean for the Holy Ghost to be present physically? Has He been present all along? How can a stain on the ceiling contain this spiritual being? This moment is ambiguous because the narrator unexplainably identifies the physical water stain with the spiritual third person of the Trinity. In this way, the narrator pushes readers to consider the possibility that spiritual reality may become present in physical matter in ways we do not understand. Her narrative ambiguity invites readers to recognize in this moment both the Christian incarnational mystery, that a concrete thing can in some way embody God, as well as their own utter incomprehension of it.

If, as I have argued, the bird’s descent should be understood literally, then it is possible that Asbury is not aware of its spiritual significance that the narrator reveals explicitly to the reader. The narrator raises this question by switching between Asbury’s consciousness and an omniscient point of view without clearly showing which is which. She writes, “the old life in him was exhausted. He awaited the coming of new.”7 While these sentences describe Asbury’s physical and spiritual state, is it unclear whether they describe his consciousness. Is Asbury aware that he has

7 O’Connor, 114.
come to the end of himself and does he desire this “new life”? In sentences such as the following, which opens with “he felt…,” the narrator clearly focalizes on Asbury. But she concludes the story from an omniscient point of view when she introduces the term “Holy Ghost” to describe the bird. Thus the reader knows that the bird descending on Asbury is the Holy Ghost, but does not know whether Asbury has made this connection. In this way, the narrator creates a level of irony between the reader, who is privy to her omniscient perspective, and Asbury, who may not have this insight.

Hand-in-hand with this ironic ambiguity goes the question of whether Asbury is receptive to this vision or whether it is forced upon him. Earlier in the story, Asbury resisted injunctions from a visiting priest, Fr. Finn, that he accept the Holy Ghost and the understanding of his own ignorance that this acceptance entails. “‘The Holy Ghost is the last thing I’m looking for!’ Asbury cried. ‘And He may be the last thing you get,’ Fr. Finn responded prophetically.”

In the last paragraph, it seems as though Asbury’s discovery that he must live and that he is not the tragic hero he considered himself to be has changed his attitude. The narrator writes that “he awaited the coming of new [life],” using a verb that is both active and receptive. But the final description of Asbury’s reaction as “a last impossible protest” and the Holy Ghost’s “implacable” descent undermine this interpretation. To add complexity, Asbury’s experience of the Holy Ghost is described in similar terms to his earlier illness as a “chill.” This correlation draws attention to the inexorability of the Holy Ghost’s descent, which Asbury is unable to avoid just as he cannot avoid his physical illness. This is problematic because if Asbury lacks the freedom to reject the Holy Ghost, then his acceptance of Him is meaningless.

On a theological level, the ambiguity of Asbury’s response to the Holy Ghost prompts the reader to ponder the mystery of divine power and human free will. In life, the Christian is baffled in the attempt to understand how God’s grace interacts with his or her free will. Secular readers, whom O’Connor understood to

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8 O’Connor, 107.
form a large part of her audience, are also forced to recognize this mystery by O’Connor’s use of the theological term “Holy Ghost.” On a more familiar level, however, they can recognize in it the psychological tension between an individual’s will and the inexorability of circumstance. Again, the narrator raises differing hypotheses in the reader’s mind but withholds the information that would enable the reader to accept one of them. In this way, the narrator gives readers just enough understanding to recognize that they are fundamentally baffled.

Like “The Enduring Chill,” the ending of “Parker’s Back” interweaves spiritual with physical events, although this story is even more ambiguous in its description of the spiritual reality Parker experiences. “Parker’s Back” also does not fully explain whether Parker understands this experience as well as in what way it changes him, or if it changes him at all. O.E. Parker is a former sailor who seeks satisfaction and a sense of self-worth by covering his body with tattoos. As a teenager, he saw a tattooed man in a circus whose skin looked like “a single design of brilliant color” and an “arabesque of men and beasts and flowers.”9 But as Parker covers his skin with tattoos, he finds that “the effect was not of one intricate arabesque of colors but of something haphazard and botched.”10 After a traumatic tractor accident, Parker tattoos a picture of a stern Byzantine Christ on his back, ostensibly in order to impress his puritanical wife, Sarah Ruth, but more importantly in obedience to an inner instinct. Parker thinks about spiritual reality beyond surface appearances for the first time when he examines his soul, which he recognizes as “a spider web of facts and lies.”11 The story reaches its climax in Parker’s epiphany, when he finally acknowledges his Biblical name, Obadiah Elihue. When he arrives home in the early morning, Parker finds his door barred. Sarah Ruth, on the other side, asks for his name and refuses to open when he calls himself “O.E.” The narrator describes this scene:

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9  O'Connor, 223.
10 Ibid, 224.
11 Ibid, 241
“Who’s there?” The same unfeeling voice said. Parker turned his head as if he expected someone behind him to give him the answer. The sky had lightened slightly and there were two or three streaks of yellow floating above the horizon. Then as he stood there, a tree of light burst over the skyline. Parker fell back against the door as if he had been pinned there by a lance. “Who’s there?” the voice from inside said and there was a quality about it now that seemed final. The knob rattled and the voice said peremptorily, “Who’s there, I ask you?” Parker bent down and put his mouth near the stuffed keyhole. “Obadiah,” he whispered and all at once he felt the light pouring through him, turning his spider web soul into a perfect arabesque of colors, a garden of trees and birds and beasts. “Obadiah Elihue!” he whispered.¹²

Here, the narrator uses imagery that shows this moment to be a conversion for Parker. The sunrise is described in otherworldly terms as “a tree of light” that causes Parker to fall dramatically against the door. When Parker pronounces his name, his soul is converted into “a perfect arabesque of colors, a garden of trees and birds and beasts.” This description is meaningful because it echoes the narrator’s earlier description of the tattooed man at the circus. The repetition of this description shows that Parker has been searching for some kind of beauty all along. He initially tried to attain this beauty physically, then realized that no amount of tattoos could change the ugliness of his soul, and now has attained it internally through acknowledging his true name.

But what is happening here is ambiguous because the physical sunrise and dialogue somehow correspond to an unexplainable spiritual transformation. The physical light from the sunrise is the agent of Parker’s conversion. Further, the narrator uses physical terms to describe Parker’s invisible, spiritual soul. Souls are not ordinarily understood in terms of shapes and colors. While the

¹² O’Connor, 242-243
earlier uses of this description show us that a spiritual change is occurring, they do not provide an interpretive key to decode this puzzle. What does it mean for Parker’s soul to be “a perfect arabesque of colors” and “a garden of trees and birds and beasts”? The garden could refer to the biblical Garden of Eden and a state of restored innocence; it is also associated with growth, renewal and beauty, like the colors. But beyond mere associations, this description does not explicitly explain the nature of Parker’s spiritual change. Here, rather than presenting readers with clear alternative hypotheses, the narrator simply gives readers a sense of confusion.

This scene also raises questions about Parker’s acknowledgment of his name, leaving unclear whether Parker understands his own conversion. Like in “The Enduring Chill,” the narrator creates an ironic barrier between Parker and readers by revealing information to them that Parker may not be aware of. The narrator first focalizes on Parker, writing that “he felt the light pouring through him.” But she hinges the rest of the sentence on the phrase “turning his soul into,” which expresses an omniscient perspective by describing the effect of the light objectively. Does Parker feel the effect the light is having on him or is he unconscious of his own internal change? And if Parker does not mean to accept a new identity when he gives his name, in what way is it still significant?

The ambiguity of whether Parker means to accept a new identity when he gives his name is complicated by the question of whether Parker even understands what the name Obadiah Elihue means. Jordan Cofer draws on the biblical allusions contained within Parker’s full name to understand this story. He points out that while Obadiah was a faithful prophet who condemned the pride of Edom, Elihue was a prideful youth who unjustly condemned Job.13 These two names represent warring parts of Parker, his prophetic calling and unregenerate self. Ultimately, Cofer writes that “as Parker embraces his own name of Obadiah Elihue, he is doing more than accepting his given name; he is accepting his

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prophetic calling.”14 But does Parker know that the name Obadiah represents a prophetic calling? Readers familiar with the biblical tradition would connect these names with their Old Testament namesakes, and those who look up the name Obadiah will find that it means “servant of Yahweh” in Hebrew. Parker’s mother is a Methodist, and he was baptized as a baby. But the narrator does not mention that Parker has any exposure to Christianity other than when his mother brings him to a revival and he runs away before entering the church. Sarah Ruth is more religious, and she repeats his name in “a reverent voice,”15 but does not seem to divine any meaning in it besides its biblical ring.

It is also unclear whether Parker’s experience fundamentally changes his character. On the one hand, even after acknowledging his name, Parker’s treatment of Sarah Ruth is similar to his behavior earlier in the story when he wanted to “bring Sarah Ruth to heel.”16 Rather than apologizing for his lies and for leaving her without notice, Parker tries to silence Sarah Ruth by showing her his tattoo. “‘Shut your mouth,’ he said quietly. ‘Look at this and then I don’t want to hear no more out of you.’”17 On the other hand, Parker does show evidence of change by trying to share his own spiritual revelation with Sarah Ruth when he explains the significance of the tattoo to her.

Further, the narrator uses imagery of Christ’s passion to describe the last scene, causing readers to see Parker as an image of Christ. Besides the description of Parker as pierced by the light “as if he had been pinned there by a lance,”18 the narrator writes that Parker is “in anguish” when Sarah Ruth does not recognize the tattoo.19 Also like Christ, Parker does not resist Sarah Ruth’s beating; and afterwards, the narrator writes that “large welts had formed on the face of the tattooed Christ.”20 But Parker does not seem to understand his new identification with Christ. Here again,

14 Cofer, 35.
15 O’Connor, *Everything that Rises*, 229.
16 Ibid, 232.
17 Ibid, 243.
19 Ibid, 243.
20 Ibid, 244.
the narrator draws connections that the reader perceives but that Parker may be unaware of. The story culminates with his shock and grief as he cries “like a baby” after being driven from the house by Sarah Ruth.21

Thus, the narrator does not end the story on the high note of Parker’s epiphany. Rather, she ends on a more ambiguous note by describing Parker’s rude return home. This ending raises the question of whether Parker’s character is changed fundamentally and gives the reader enough evidence to answer either way. Parker can be seen as still spiritually confused, unable to admit his own guilt or to recognize the signs of Christ in his predicament. Or he can be seen as fundamentally changed in that he can now be identified with Christ and is experiencing persecution for his new beliefs.

This ambiguity in Parker’s internal conversion is true to the Christian conversion experience. When does conversion occur? Is the Christian always conscious of it? Can the Christian experience something like it but still be fundamentally unchanged in his or her character? Will it last? By leaving the reader with similar questions about Parker’s experience, O’Connor prompts readers to ponder this mystery in Parker’s life. The way ambiguity functions here is similar to the way it functions in “The Enduring Chill” in that O’Connor preserves an understanding of theological mystery by withholding information on the narrative level, making it impossible for readers to come to facile conclusions about what happened to Parker’s soul.

The ambiguous climaxes of these two stories are representative of all the stories in this collection. While some stories are more ambiguous than others, all create feelings of disorientation and raise unresolved questions in the reader’s mind. The title story “Everything that Rises Must Converge” leaves readers with a nightmare feeling of unreality, as Julian runs toward lights that “[drift] farther away the faster he [runs],” his feet moving “numbly as if they [carried] him nowhere.”22 “Greenleaf” sets up an incomprehensible parallel by describing the bull that gores Mrs.

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21 O’Connor, 244.
22 Ibid, 23.
May to death as a “wild tormented lover” who “burie[s] his head in her lap.”23 “A View of the Woods” leaves readers wondering whether Mr. Fortune dies with his granddaughter and how their demise is set in motion by the eerie woods that Mr. Fortune recognizes as an “uncomfortable mystery.”24 In “The Comforts of Home,” Thomas’ dead father is paradoxically just as present in the final scene as any of the living characters, even though he is invisible and only Thomas hears him. In “The Lame Shall Enter First,” readers are unsure whether 10-year-old Norton’s spiritual “flight into space” is legitimate when he hangs himself to reach his dead mother, whom he claims to see his waving at him from the stars.25 In “Revelation,” Ruby Turpin somehow absorbs “abysmal life-giving knowledge” from gazing “as if through the very heart of mystery” at her hogs.26 In “Judgement Day,” it is unclear whether or not Tanner’s physical trip home to Corinth, Georgia in a coffin corresponds with a spiritual homecoming.

These ambiguities are similar to those I have studied more comprehensively in “The Enduring Chill” and “Parker’s Back.” They arise from spiritual events that the narrator weaves into the fabric of the plot itself, and from both the narrator’s irony that gives readers a privileged perspective and other details that leave readers questioning the characters’ responses to the violent climaxes. This list is by no means comprehensive, as O’Connor’s narrative ambiguity is subtle and multi-faceted.

In this way, O’Connor’s creation of narrative ambiguity is not a failure but an achievement, pointing readers toward the transcendent theological mysteries her stories evoke. In her essay “The Grotesque in Southern Fiction,” O’Connor writes:

If the writer believes that our life is and will remain essentially mysterious, if he looks upon us as beings existing in a created order to whose laws we freely respond, then what he sees on the surface will be of interest to him only as he can go through it into an

23 O'Connor, 52.
24 Ibid, 71.
25 Ibid, 190.
26 Ibid, 217
experience of mystery itself. His kind of fiction will always be pushing its own limits outward toward the limits of mystery, because for this kind of writer, the meaning of a story does not begin except at a depth where adequate motivation and adequate psychology and the various determinations have been exhausted. Such a writer will be interested in what we don’t understand rather than in what we do.27

Thus, in O’Connor’s short stories the narrative ambiguity “push[es] its own limits outward” toward spiritual mystery; by causing readers to question what is happening at the level of the plot, the stories make it impossible for readers to assume that they fully understand the mystery depicted. In this way, reading a story in *Everything that Rises Must Converge* is not like solving a puzzle but like discovering a new place or person; no matter how much you find out, there is always more to discover. O’Connor makes this point in another essay, “The Nature and Aim of Fiction.” She writes: “If a writer is any good, what he makes will have its source in a realm much larger than that which his conscious mind can encompass and will always be a greater surprise to him than it can ever be to his reader.”28 The questions which readers discern in her stories are questions in O’Connor’s mind as well. She wrote just as we read: to discover, and the world O’Connor made live is so like the real world that neither she nor we can fully understand it. Precisely by leaving unresolved questions in our minds, O’Connor invites us to keep mulling their ambiguities over, helping us discover and contemplate the spiritual mysteries towards which they point.

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28 Ibid, 83.
Dust-Covered
Mary-Catherine Scarlett

Reality has never betrayed me;
No, no it never has.
I've lived as free as a prisoner
Of double-sided glass.

Believed I what appeared inside
That smoke-infested trap
Could asphyxiate my gaze
Like a caged bird in a cave.

Enumerating everything
Imagined borne alone,
I vowed and bowed to luck or fate—
Whatever dealt this hand.

And onward, onward did I tread
Within that selfsame box,
Began to swim those ceaseless laps
Through shredded-up excuse.

Yet when my eyes espied existence
Of a world without,
I cupped my hands to block out sounds
Of mirror images.

When I dust-covered that vast crowd
Surrounding my vain cell,
I found the hammer by which I
Could break free from that hell.
Welcome to the vale of soul-making.
*What is the soul, are its ingredients?*
Stop, I see you reaching out, but
Thinking does not first extend.
It begins and reaches inward. You yourself
Must think with your own thoughts.
*But who am I really?*
Let us reach in and see.

Have you heard it before?
The rippling, swelling of soul-making?
A disgusting(ly), beautiful sound, the
Multi-layered shattering of
*My thoughts are my own!*

What are we? Try giving it a tune.
*La la la la la la la*
This is nothing. Give it a name.
*Do re mi fa so la la la ti*
Approach the fog. Strike a path.
*Nonsense is not a privation of sense.*
Feel your fingers becoming mist,
Let what you know fall about you,
You have no need of that old,
Worn-out shape where we will go.
What is the cause of meaning?
As ear becomes what is heard, let your
Mind think of meaning and what
It means to
Mean.
What does it mean to mean?
Is the mind and soul only
Inconclusion? Is to think so mazelike?
Haha, welcome to the fog.

Welcome to the vale of making—what is it?
Is it that which breathes into the clay of
Words? Where can I find it but
Instantiated in the what and how
And the eternal why, why, why?
Welcome to the vale of meaning-making?
The fog is still here.
Homer, Vergil, Dante, Keats,
Forgive me, my tongue is not
My own.

I feel cold.
Then you begin to see.
Poets are foolishly cold creatures.
Here we make words, simple
Moth-eaten veils to keep warm.
See how beautiful they are, these
Hand-me-downs of blurred faces.
Should I sit here with needle of brain
And thread of language, these words
Would still never be full cloth.

At the end, shall I not return
Dust to dust, bone to human stone?
Will my words, bare and pitiful,
Be understood now, not to speak of
Later? The cold that I feel now,
Will it really not mean later?
You are on the edge of life.
But am I to fall forward or backward?
There is only one answer, one path.
Write.

The sun is rising.
I have dreamt of decayed prophets,
Whose tongues spoke fire and
Turned fog into stories. They are dead.
They who surely navigated the fog,
Came and forged their own soul. The
Formless It. But please,
Forgive me, confused as I am,
I forget myself and have forgotten
To say,
“Welcome to the poem.” Ah!
There it is. It. Is a
Poem. It is a
Word.
“Oh vana gloria de l’umane posse!” Nowhere else in Dante’s *Commedia* is the problem of poetic pride dealt with more directly than in Cantos 10-12 of *Purgatorio*, the terrace of pride. Oderisi’s discourse on earthly fame in Canto 11 famously deals with that “desire for eminence” common among artists. According to Oderisi, worldly renown is “nothing other than / a breath of wind.” By the end of Oderisi’s discourse, Dante the pilgrim has learned about the transience of fame, thanking Oderisi for filling “[his] soul with sound humility, abating / [his] overswollen pride.” Flanking Oderisi’s discourse on the empty glory of the powers of humans and worldly renown is God’s art in Cantos 10 and 12.

Commentator Barolini states that past Dante exegesis “traditionally read the terrace of pride as an exercise in humility and viewed the reliefs as a decorative way of underscoring Oderisi’s remarks on the vanity of all human achievement.” However, as Barolini says, several questions are worth raising which move beyond such an interpretation: why does Dante, in the terrace of pride, identify himself as he “who will chase both [Guidos] out of the nest?” Is such poetic prophesying an example of poetic pride? And as Barolini asks, why does Dante “choose to posit a kind of supreme realism that is God’s art, deliberately putting himself in the position of having to re-present God’s realism with his own?”

Before considering these questions, it is important to consider what pride meant to Dante. Patrick Boyde, in *Human Vices & Human Worth in Dante’s Comedy*, argues that Dante idiosyncratically treats pride by attempting to harmonize “the

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2 Ibid., Purg. 11.100-1.
3 Ibid., Purg. 11.118-20.
6 Barolini, 123.
divergences within the Aristotelian, Christian, and courtly value-systems” of his time. Placing Dante within the context of his time sheds light on Dante’s conception of that foundational vice. The most pertinent kind of pride in the context of Purgatory 10-12 is the artist’s pride in his own work—the kind of pride Dante would be most familiar with himself. In Canto 11, Dante’s meeting of Oderisi, the “glory of that art / they call illumination now in Paris,” opens with recognition and acclaim—from one artist to another. Oderisi corrects Dante’s praise, passing on the compliment to Franco Bolognese, another rivaling illuminator. Oderisi recognizes that he only willingly shares that glory, of which he is now “but a part” because of the instruction he receives in Purgatory; in life, he would not have been so gracious. In the Italian, Oderisi calls his sin superbia, defining it as eccellenza or pre-eminence—that is, the desire to be recognized as the best in one’s field. Boyde notes that Oderisi’s mention of God “introduces the vital contrast between divine omnipotence and the limitations of potentiae humanae.” As has been continuously reiterated in the Divine Comedy by Dante himself, human art has its limitations and often falls short of its aim. Any work constructed by human hands alone necessarily misses the mark when compared to God’s art.

According to Boyde, Vanagloria is the first of the capital vices and superbia is its arch-vice. Gloria in itself is a kind of honor. Boyde argues that “‘Glory’ is only ‘empty’ (vana or inanis) if it is not deserved. ‘Vainglory’ is a vice in an artist only if his primary intention in the act of making is to achieve fame or to outdo his rivals.” Oderisi’s speech complicates poetic pride for the pilgrim: is all glory empty, being “nothing other than / a breath of wind,” or is there a kind of glory characteristic of the artist, which arises from his particular human achievement?

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7 Patrick Boyde, “Pride.” In Human Vices and Human Worth in Dante’s Comedy, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 174.
8 Dante Alighieri, Purg. 11.80-1.
9 Ibid., Purg. 11.85.
10 Boyde, 189.
11 Boyde, 189.
12 Dante Alighieri, Purg. 11.100-1.
To further his point, Oderisi asks Dante the pilgrim: “would you find greater glory if you left / your flesh when it was old than if your death / had come before your infant words were spent?”\(^{13}\) Oderisi’s moral message is clear: earthly fame is not worth seeking after because it will merely pass like a gush of wind. While instructive and powerful, Oderisi’s speech also seems illogical; of course Dante would acquire more glory in having lived beyond the infantile period of speechlessness. After all, it is necessary that he live past that period into adulthood in order to construct the Divine Comedy. Does Oderisi’s speech suggest that human achievement itself is meaningless?

Oderisi’s survey of artists, who have received passing fame, further confuses the reader’s understanding of artistic gloria. Oderisi states:

In painting Cimabue thought he held
the field, and it’s Giotto they acclaim--
the former only keeps a shadowed fame.
So did one Guido, from the other, wrest
the glory of our tongue--and he perhaps
is born who will chase both out of the nest.\(^{14}\)

Dante the pilgrim learns that fame, even of a skilled artist, passes away. This part of the speech shifts focus from human talent and ability to how that talent is received by others. Oderisi does not mean then that human achievement is purposeless but that seeking after fame is useless, never to endure “upon the peak.”\(^{15}\) Many critics agree that Dante implies himself as the one “who will chase both out of the nest.”\(^{16}\) Why would Dante, on the terrace of pride, insert himself in this poetic lineage? What exactly chases the two poets out of the nest so that they now, like Oderisi, only share a part of fame? One agent of this change is time; with the passing of time new poets are born who will outdo those who came before them. Another agent of this change is the new poet himself. He chases

\(^{13}\) Alighieri, Purg. 11.106-8.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., Purg. 11.94-99.
\(^{15}\) Ibid, Purg. 11.92.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., Purg. 11.99.
the others out of the nest. But if Oderisi is any example for poetic pride, it is likely better for their salvation that they are forced to share their fame with another. When a poet is properly instructed in humility, fame should be recognized as that which is transient. Though the gloria they have is not described as vanagloria like it is for Oderisi, the danger, as evidenced by Oderisi, is that it may become vanagloria if not properly checked. At the time they are chased out of the nest, their gloria has not been perverted into vanagloria; this suggests that their primary intentions were neither to achieve fame nor to outdo their rivals. Giotto, in taking fame from Cimabue, did not intend to surpass him (though he did); the same can be said for the two Guidos and for the third poet, Dante himself.

How does Dante understand himself in relation to these other poets? Following the logic that it is virtuous to share fame with another, Dante’s chasing of the two Guidos out of the nest is almost charitable. If nothing else, it is the necessary course of artistic fame. Dante’s talent surpasses the talent of the Guidos so that their fame must be eclipsed. If Dante the poet is being instructed in the same way that Dante the pilgrim is being instructed, he is firmly aware of his own fleeting fame. And though Dante arguably could not have foreseen the extent of his fame today, his fame has continued and increased for centuries. Perhaps Dante knew that his poetic project so far surpassed any other like it that an “age of dullness” must follow it.17 Especially considering the divine art of Cantos 10 and 12, in which Dante the poet re-presents God’s art, Dante has truly aspired to a fantastic poetic project unlike any poet before him.

Dante the poet specifically attributes the sculptures of Cantos 10 and 12 to the “One / within whose sight no thing is new,” that is to say, God himself.18 In doing so, the sculptures become a sort of supreme realism. They are visible parlare or speech made visible.19 The sculptures Dante the pilgrim sees, instructing him in lessons of humility and pride, are so realistic that “not only Polycleitus /

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17 Alighieri, Purg. 11.93.
18 Ibid., Purg. 10.94-5.
19 Ibid., Purg. 10.95.
but even Nature, there, would feel defeated.”20 The art in these Cantos is superior even to nature, achieving “greater verisimilitude because of their artifice or artistry” as Christian Moevs states in “Centaurs, Spiders, and Saints.”21 Though Dante attributes this supreme realism to God, as it would only be appropriate to Him, he must re-present God’s art as poet to communicate what he, as pilgrim, has witnessed. The problem of representation and poetic pride arises especially in these two Cantos. As Barolini asks, why does Dante posit a “kind of supreme realism that is God’s art, deliberately putting himself in the position of having to re-present God’s realism with his own”?22 Further, at the beginning of Canto 11, Dante rephrases or re-presents another of God’s works, the Lord’s prayer. Why does Dante the poet rephrase this prayer in his own words? Looking back to Inferno, Canto 11, Virgil says that “[Dante’s] art would follow nature, / just as a pupil imitates his master; / so that your art is almost God’s grandchild.”23 Dante’s re-presenting of God’s art, which surpasses nature, seems to make his art even closer to God’s art. According to Moevs, this moment is the “most artistically self-conscious passage of the Comedy.”24 Dante is aware of the poetic heights he strives for, achieving a great level of artistry and originality in these two Cantos. But does he aim too high leading him into poetic pride?

Pride is famously Dante’s particular vice in the Commedia. On the terrace of envy, Dante tells Sapia that he “[fears] much more the punishment below … already / [he feels] the heavy weights of the first terrace,” namely the terrace of pride.25 Dante also thanks Oderisi, after his discourse, for filling him with humility. Poetic pride, especially for a poet who attempts to re-present God’s art, seems like an easy sin to fall into; Dante the pilgrim is certainly aware of the sin of pride in himself. However, the distinction

20 Alighieri., Purg. 10.32-3.
22 Barolini, 123.
23 Dante Alighieri, Purg. 11.103-5.
24 Moevs, 21.
between Dante the poet and Dante the pilgrim becomes helpful in thinking about how Dante the poet understands his poetic pride.

Dante the poet intentionally evades either the mention of pride itself or a particular species of pride in relation to himself, revealing that poetic pride is not problematic for him, especially considering his poetic project of writing a poem sacra. After Oderisi’s discourse, Dante thanks him for filling him with humility and “e gran tumor m’appiani.” Mandelbaum translates this as “abating [his] overswollen pride,” while Hollander translates this passage as “[easing] a heavy swelling there.” In neither case does Dante refer to Oderisi’s vice (superbia or vanagloria). In Canto 13 when Dante speaks with Sapia, he only alludes to pride as the particular vice he fears rather than naming a specific species or kind of pride like vanagloria. At first, Dante’s earlier claim that he will “chase both out of the nest” seems like vanagloria—the desire to outdo another. But again, he describes the glory of the Guidos as gloria, not vanagloria, by extension excluding himself from Oderisi’s vanagloria. Oderisi makes another reference to glory when he tells Dante that his “glory wears the color of the grass”; in the Italian, glory here is referred to as “nominanza.” It is important to think back on Boyde’s claim, based in the theology of Dante’s time, that gloria is only a vice if it is not deserved. Dante the poet can understand that his fame will not last forever while also recognizing his own talent.

According to Barolini, Oderisi “makes fame a function of one’s name,” pointing out “that our ‘nominanza’—our fame, our glory, our ‘nameability’—is … evanescent.” But just after Oderisi instructs Dante in the fleetingness of one’s name, Dante asks the name of the one Oderisi spoke of earlier. Oderisi answers that he is Provenzan Salvani. If his fame, perpetuated by his name, were nothing other than a puff of air, why would Dante’s own Commedia

27 Ibid., Purg. 11.118-20.
28 Ibid., Purg. 11.118-20.
29 Ibid., Purg. 11.99.
30 Dante Alighieri, Purg. 11.115.
31 Barolini, 54.
further this fame by writing down his name? This passage is full of paradoxes which in one moment suggest learned humility and then in another suggest perpetuation of pride. However, Dante the poet gives special importance to a poet’s nominanza through what he does in this passage rather than what he says. Oderisi seems to get carried away in his discourse on earthly fame. Dante brings him back to the importance of human achievement by asking for Provenzan Salvani’s name. Further, Dante knows the importance of his own poetic project. To Oderisi’s question, “would you find greater glory if you left / your flesh when it was old than if your death / had come before your infant words were spent”—the poet answers a resounding yes. This principle applies the less for Dante than for any other poet thus far. Dante’s is a sacred poem, which means that his poem is the joint work of man and God; for this reason, poetic pride is not problematic for Dante as it is for Oderisi.

If Dante’s poem were not a sacred poem, he would be exceptionally guilty of presumption and vainglory. Barolini claims that Dante “expresses the dilemma of art and provides the formula that synthesizes the various facets of the terrace of pride: all art is error, but some art—like his and God’s—is non-false.” However, Dante still recognizes the limitations of his own human art. Rather than claiming that his art is not error, he safely claims that God’s art is not error. Barolini suggests that Dante prevents us from condemning him for aiming too high in his art; he knows what is at stake “in his imitation of divine mimesis.” Oderisi’s words may apply to most artists, but Dante aspires to total verisimilitude as a divinely inspired poet, “one invested with a divinely sanctioned poetic mission.” What at first appears as a lesson in humility for the poet turns out to be an opportunity to place himself above the ranks of such poets like Oderisi who are guilty of vanagloria, with his particular poetic project and mission in mind.

32 Alighieri, Purg. 11.106-8.
34 Ibid, 54.
Figure. 1. Observed Versus Synthetic Lightcurve for KIC 201325107

Fig. 2. Accretion Image for KIC 201325107

Fig. 3. Temperature Profile for KIC 201325107
Development of an Eclipse Mapping Routine Using Python for Analysis of Kepler Data
Nathan Smith

Abstract

An extensive development and implementation of the eclipse mapping method using Python and its relevant libraries is discussed. The code utilizes a minimization function in Python with various solving methods. These methods are used to solve the maximum entropy equation with a chi-squared constraint to the observed photometric light curve. These methods are first evaluated on two-dimensional Gaussian test data with no chi-squared constraint and then used to image the accretion disks of the Cataclysmic Variable KIC 201325107, revealing their Gaussian structures. Moreover, the structure of the code, along with potential design flaws, other errors, and parameter effects on computational time are examined. Factors such as the variance within the Gaussian weighting algorithm, the resolution of the disk image, the number of points within the observed light curve data, and the constraint level of the algorithm can drastically affect the quality of the image. The above methods and parameters are then considered as a whole and conclusions are drawn regarding the steps for further research. Finally, the code's GitHub repository is discussed for version control and open source development.

Introduction

Of the vast number of systems in the cosmos, roughly half contain multiple stars, including triple and quadruple star systems. The most common, however, is the binary star system, which involves two stars orbiting around a common center of mass known as the barycenter. Within this class of star system, the characteristics can vary greatly. For example, the period of the orbit can range from a few minutes to a few years. In turn, this disparity dramatically impacts orbital dynamics and stellar evolution, creating a variety of
binary sub-classes and beautiful stellar fireworks. These systems commonly form a ring of hot gas around one of the stars, known as an accretion disk. These disks often behave in ways that are not well understood, so it is important to understand their structure by creating an image of the star with its accretion disk. The images are created by maximizing an entropy equation while staying constrained to the data observed from the Kepler Space Telescope. The goal, then, is to develop an algorithm in Python that takes in telescope data as input and outputs an accretion disk image along with other data to better understand the accretion disk’s structure.

**Formalism**

The idea for this algorithm is to imagine a grid laid over the accretion disk. Each box in the grid is going to cover a small piece of area which can have a brightness value. When all of these brightness values are added together, you have the brightness that we perceive through the telescope. Because the star system is a binary, the orbiting stars will eclipse each other, causing a periodic dip in the brightness that is measured. An equation for the brightness or flux \( f \Phi \) of the system at any point in the orbit can be written in the following way

\[
f_\Phi = \frac{\Theta^2}{4N^2} \sum_{j=1}^{N^2} I_v(j)V(j, \phi)
\]

where \( I_v(j) \) is the flux value of a piece of area in the grid, and \( V(j, \phi) \) is a function that determines whether that same piece of area is eclipsed by the other star in the binary. \( N \) is the resolution of the grid, and \( \Theta \) is a constant which depends on the distance to the system in kilo-parsecs.

The next component is the entropy equation, which is going to be similar to a metric known in information theory as the Kullback–Leibler (KL) Divergence, or relative entropy information gain. This function is written as
This equation determines the amount of information lost when a known function \( Q \) is used to approximate \( P \). In other words, how many more bits of information are needed to accurately represent \( P \)? When constructing an accretion disk image, the KL Divergence is denoted as the entropy function \( S \) and can be written as

\[
S = - \sum_{j=1}^{N^2} p_j \log \left( \frac{p_j}{q_j} \right)
\]

where

\[
p_j = \frac{I_j}{\sum_k I_k} \quad q_j = \frac{D_j}{\sum_k D_k}
\]

These equations model the information entropy, or disorder, of the brightness of each piece of area covered by the grid. \( p_j \) is the brightness of one piece of area over the sum of each brightness in the grid. On the other hand, \( q_j \) represents a weighted brightness. This weighted brightness accounts for the physics of the system that we already understand. In this case, \( D_j \) accounts for the fact that an accretion disk has a circular structure, so the algorithm will attempt to create images of a similar kind.

The final component is the chi-squared constraint, which is written as

\[
\chi^2 = \frac{1}{M} \sum_{\phi=1}^{M} \frac{(f_\phi - d_\phi)^2}{\sigma_\phi^2}
\]
Where $f_\phi$ is the total brightness the grid, $d_\phi$ is the observed brightness of the system and $\sigma_\phi$ is the uncertainty of the observed brightness. This equation constrains the algorithm to create images that only fit the telescope data. With these components in place, the algorithm will maximize Equation 3 while constraining it to Equation 5. The algorithm will also measure the temperature of the accretion disk in terms of the distance from the center $r$. The equation associated with this model is

$$T \propto \left( \frac{1}{r} \right)^{\frac{3}{4}}$$

Results

The algorithm has three outputs: one of the synthetic telescope data generated from Equation 1 plotted against the actual data, another of the accretion disk image, and another of the temperature profile of the accretion disk. The algorithm was run for the binary star KIC 201325107, whose parameters were found via Phoebe modeling (Jones 2017).¹

Conclusions

Overall, the algorithm produced acceptable results for the first test run and successfully replicated image results from others who have used this algorithm (Baptista Sterner 1993).² However, certain improvements need to be made, namely, the accuracy of the synthetic flux data from Fig. 1. The discrepancy may be due to error in the computer code or, more likely, to a bias in the algorithm which is not accounted for. Moreover, the interesting pattern in Fig. 3. from 0 to 0.5 should be further investigated. It is possible that this pattern could represent orbit resonances, which

¹ Jones J and Olenick R and Sweeney A, N. 2017, Kepler K2 Observations and Modelling of Algol-type binary KIC201325017
² Baptista R and Steiner JE, N. 1993, Improving the Eclipse Mapping Method
would be very valuable information, but it could also be due to the entropy bias in the algorithm, which aims to maximize the entropy of the image instead of constraining it to the data.

All of the code used for this project can be found on my Github repository: https://github.com/elUser81. One of my goals for this project is to create an open-source development community around this algorithm for its continuous improvement and ease of access for other universities who are doing similar research. I encourage any and all who are interested in this code to submit pull requests and develop this project further.

**Acknowledgments**

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Petrichor
Emma Palmer

Rising
steam from the roads,
seeping warmth in the walls,
beating softly on tin-roof dreams;
it steeps

red clay
in its own musk,
dropped petals in thick scent
that wafts a rosy ring around
the lamps

which glow
in this damp dusk
with faery light, as though
the smell could tell what dark woods dream
in rain
An Exercise in Sublimity
Maria Rossini

Smooth heads breathe and decline
Serenity capping a smooth and slow violence
Evenly dragged, easing into the gradual loss
A peaceful exhalation
Powdered wigs atop ruddy guts
Sighing into a milky green inevitability
Which meets itself again and again
For the first time

Very even scars
Topped by rocks that shrug to say
There is no pride without some erosion
Let chunks be nibbled away
And to exist will be
A glorious catastrophe
A tumult of breezes
And recent things trodding frozen mud

If I could be furrowed by
The even hand of time
And have such parallel wounds
A prophet of the past
Of white, rust, water
My feet a broad derivative
Of my flat and earthy head
I would be the impersonal uncommon
A contented victim defined but once
By the matterless shadow of a glimpsed bird
winking on my face
Poem
Vincent Christianson

In our mythological, me-making, and God-defining moments, we cannot do anything but grasp into falling; this lingering, buried-deep-inside-our-DNA taste for the test of taste arises in each boy who loves curiously by easing a hand up her thin inner thigh. Their reach is echo, their hands are distant reproductions, the minute image seen mirrored in the mirror a million times later, miles from Eve’s genesis reach towards fruit still warm from the serpent’s touch, now the genetic reach of Icarus’s stretch to sun, cautioned child to fire, boys up thighs, poets to polysemy... All fall—into knowing, ocean, obscurity.
Carson County Plains
Ethan Owens

I took a summer drive
Through the oil ridden
And treeless Texan plains.

To my left, I looked
And wondered how many miles
Of plains I could see.

Against the sky, the plains
Formed a straight line both flaxen
And sprinkled with olive.

In the clouds, a flock of birds flew free.
The gold of the plains all the while
Their flecked feathers reflected.

In an oilfield, plainsmen worked,
Hands stained with a blackened mélange.
Their sweaty skin in the early sun glowed.

Every well was dark and old,
Their black silhouettes burned
Against the blonde plains.

The rigs low to the plains dipped
Like a man picking up keys or loose change.
As they stood, each well's body groaned.

The wells were rooted to the plains.
In their minds were tastes refined;
In their hearts, pure black gold.
Role of Prx-1 Expressing Cells and Their Primary Cilia in Long Bone Fracture
O.S. Amandhi Mathews, Emily Moore, Yingzi Yang

The ability of bone to effectively regenerate tissue allows for fracture repair. However, the exact mechanism of bone regeneration at a fracture site remains elusive. Recent work shows that periosteal stem cells can have high regeneration potential and contribute to bone fracture repair. Specifically, a subset of cells in the periosteum, which express Prx-1 gene are said to have high osteogenic or chondrogenic potential. However, the exact pattern of these cells and their role in skeletal repair remain unknown. Mechanosensory organelles on these cells called primary cilia may have an important role in bone development, maintenance, and osteogenic differentiation. We hypothesized that bone fracture repair would be affected in the absence of the primary cilium of these prx-1 periosteal cells. Deletion of a protein that is essential for maintaining the structure of the primary cilium, IFt88, allows disruption of the primary cilium of these cells. We used a tamoxifen-inducible adult mice cilia knockout model (Prx1CreER-GFP; Rosa26tdTomato) containing prx1-driven GFP expression with a red fluorescent reporter (tdTomato) to more accurately identify cells that express prx1 in the fracture callus of a mouse post-surgery. Surgery was performed to make a clean cut on the femur of mice and the bone was kept aligned using a pin. Mice were sacrificed at 7, 14, and 21-days post-surgery and examined for callus mineralization and prx1-positive cell localization. In general, the periosteal stem cell specific cilia knockout mouse showed reduced bone formation and low mineralization at the callus. Chondrogenic markers were upregulated and osteogenic markers were downregulated in the cilia knockout mouse indicating that the callus persists in chondrogenic state in the absence of the primary cilium. The vast majority of these prx1 cells were found in the periosteum and not in the bone marrow or muscle. Our data suggest that these prx1Cre transgene expressing cells have an important role in bone fracture repair and their primary cilia are a target for bone regeneration therapeutics.
When Notre Dame became a cathedral of fire,
The flames ignited the world to wonder why.
Stones born and raised on Europe’s bedrock
Cannot catch, fuel, furnish—ah! the wooden roof.
She was more than the Parthenon,
More than the Pantheon,
More than a Temple of Reason.
Her rose window read the light from the West
And wrote on the people and altar facing East:
My friends, find your end upfront at the feast.
But the sun replaced the Son;
A beast was ordained a priest;
And razed the stones on Europe’s bedrock.
Naked. Exposed. Alone:
Ravished and ripped through her spine.
Now that window of Europe’s soul
Is like an ashen eye, burned-black, a coal.

Just like Poetry.
Hawking’s “No Thing” and Aquinas’ Nothing
Alex Broussard

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” For Aquinas this statement declares a theological and metaphysical truth. For Stephen Hawking “God” is a non-answer for the problem of the beginning of the universe. Instead of God, Hawking chooses gravity as the cause of the universe’s “spontaneous creation.” Were Aquinas alive today, exposed to modern physics, I speculate he would not likely quarrel with Hawking about material causes. Instead, Aquinas would likely say that Hawking is not talking about creation, but mutation—change. This paper concerns Hawking’s misunderstanding of creation due to his failure to make a distinction between “nothing” and “no thing.” I contend that due to his misunderstanding Hawking fails to ask or to answer the question of the origin of things, while Aquinas both investigates this question properly and formulates a sensible answer in terms of being.

When Hawking says that the creation of the universe is caused by gravity, he explains not the ultimate origin of things, but their contingent material cause, i.e., a change within something. Hawking takes the existence of the universe for granted, and he states that the origin of space and time is a positive change from a negative gravitational energy. Hawking’s “nothing” is unsatisfactory, because gravity is in fact something. Even when there is no “when,” given that time does not yet exist, and given that there

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1 See Genesis 1:1. While the Old Latin Scripture used by Augustine says “In principio fecit Deus,” Jerome’s translation contains the more nuanced “creavit,” which is both closer to the meaning of the Hebrew “אָרָב" and more indicative of a creative act than a merely transformative act—a distinction of crucial importance.

2 Hawking, The Grand Design, (New York, Bantam Books, 2010), 30. “Napoleon is said to have asked [Pierre-Simon, marquis de Laplace,] how God fit into this picture [of scientific determinism]. Laplace replied: ‘Sire, I have not needed that hypothesis.’”

3 The Grand Design, 180-1. “Because there is a law like gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing… Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, and why we exist. It is not necessary to invoke God…”

4 Ibid., 180-1.
are no things yet to occupy any space, there is still gravity. So, the subsequent question is “What is the origin of gravity?” Hawking’s horizon on “things” is limited to matter, and while gravity may explain these things in terms of material causes, gravity does not explain its own existence or the existence of these things. Either the universe is the summation of material objects excluding the non-material fields which generate them, or it is the summation of material objects and these generative fields. If the universe is the former, Hawking may have aptly explained the material causes of the universe, but he has failed to explain his meta-universe of gravity. If the latter, Hawking has used the universe to explain its own creation, so he sloppily conflates the universe with its cause and senselessly claims that something came from nothing.5

Gravity without any matter is empty, so there is “no thing,” but because gravity exists there is still not nothing. Augustine noticed something similar when reading Genesis 1. He said, “If God spoke through a creature (creation) when he said ‘Let there be light,’ how was light the first of creation if there was already a creature through which he said, ‘Let there be light?’”6 Augustine observed that if there was some medium through which a creative act took place, that act was in fact not a creative act. True nothingness is more than just the absence of things, which is for there to be “no thing.” An empty bucket, for example, has no water, so in that way there is “no thing,” but nothingness would imply there is no bucket there to hold water. In a mathematical example, “no thing” in this case refers to an empty set “∅,” while nothing refers more to the statement that “there exists no set.” God created, as Augustine saw it, “by the coeternal Word, i.e., by the inner and eternal reasoning

5 Laks, André, and Glenn W. Most, Early Greek Philosophy, (Cambridge, University Press, 2016), 44, Parmenides Fragment 8. “τί δ’ ἄν μιν καὶ χρέος ἄρσεν / ὕστερον ἢ πρόσθεν, τοῦ μηδενός ἄρξάμενον, φῦν;” (“But why should it have to rise and come into being at some earlier or later time, when it would have come from nothing?”). To say that something which did not exist is caused itself to exist is absurd, because it implies that it actually did exist to cause itself. There is no moment in which something could come into being from nothing. (trans. me).
6 See in Minge’s Patrologia Latina 34. “Et si per creaturam dixit Deus, Fiat lux; quomodo est prima creatura lux, si erat iam creatura, per quam Deus diceret, Fiat lux?” (MPL034, De Genesi ad Litteram Libri Duodecim 1.2.4). (trans. me).
of the immutable Wisdom.”

Rather than resembling the filling of a bucket, a set, or the gravitational field (all of which is mutation), creation is something coming to be from genuine nothingness.

Aquinas makes it clear that God is the source of a continuous creation and not merely the first cause of some change. Unlike Hawking, Aquinas does not take existence for granted. He says, “Everything that does not belong to the concept of an essence or quiddity [viz., existence,] comes to it from outside and enters into composition with the essence.”

Noticing that there are two parts to things, namely a “whatness” (“quiddity”—essence) and a “thatness” (existence), he states that existence is something added onto an essence. Existence brings into being the things of the universe—the essences which receive being externally. God, who is “being in all its purity,” is not something within the universe which would receive being (and thus have his being limited by an essence); rather, his very essence is existence, and he gives being to the universe and all that exists within it. Aquinas notes that God continuously maintains the property of things’ existence within all existing things. Nothing is the cause of its own externally-granted being. If being were taken away, it would cease to exist. What Hawking has described with gravity is more the cause of becoming within being than of being in things. For example, when an artist paints, he is not causing being per se, but changing things which already exist (i.e., paint and canvas) into something else—becoming, not being.

In fine, Aquinas has realized that the nature of nothing is more significant than Hawking’s “no thing.” Hawking frequently accuses believers of deflecting the problem of the origin of things, but he does not arrive at any conclusion other than an existing potentiality causing itself to be actualized. While Hawking admits to adopting any “effective theory” to explain observable

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7 Migne., “Verbo sibi coaeterno, id est incommutabilis Sapientiae internis aeternisque rationibus” (MPL034, De Genesi ad Litteram Libri Duodecim I.10.20). (trans. me).
9 Ibid., 4.8.
10 See Summa Theologiae, I Q. 104 Art. 1.
phenomena, his grand M-Theory neglects to address the cause of gravity or the cause of the existence of anything, gravity or gravity-caused. Because Hawking did not understand the “nothing,” he ended up saying no thing.

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11 See *The Grand Design*, 32.
An Animalistic Death Cult:
Materialism and Religiosity in Evelyn Waugh’s
The Loved One
Teresa Linn

French political thinker, Alexis de Tocqueville, upon observing the America of the nineteenth century, noted the great threat of materialism ruling the hearts and minds of Americans: “Democracy favors the taste for material enjoyments. This taste, if it becomes excessive, soon disposes men to believe that all is nothing but matter; and materialism in its turn serves to carry them toward these enjoyments with an insane ardor.”¹ At the time of his observation, he noted that religious practice in America stifled this ever-growing materialism, for “belief in an immaterial and immortal principle, united for a time with matter, is so necessary to the greatness of man.”² He foresaw that when the American refuses to acknowledge any transcendent, immaterial power, the material world becomes his god.

In Evelyn Waugh’s novel The Loved One: An Anglo-American Tragedy, Tocqueville’s prophecy of excessive materialism becomes a grotesque reality. Hollywood has fallen prey to empty aestheticism, lacking a religion to turn its gaze to the immaterial. As a society so enraptured with physical beauty and without any familiarity with the immaterial, Waugh’s Hollywood strives to conceal the decay of the flesh through beautification, for the body's decay shatters the hope of lasting beauty. Man thus takes great pains to hide his physical entropy even after death. Waugh presents Hollywood’s obsession with the preservation of the physical in the form of the spiritually vacuous cemetery of Whispering Glades. Embellished with frequent pairing of sacred language and atheistic culture, this masterfully crafted novella presents a drama of an offertory ritual turned diabolical, where Aimée Thanatogenos is the sacrificial lamb, Mr. Joyboy the high priest, and Dennis Barlow the purified congregant. While the religiosity surrounding the practices of

² Ibid, 520.
Whispering Glades appears to elevate the cemetery to a spiritual level, its juxtaposition with the emptiness of the “artists”' lives and Aimée’s annihilating suicide illustrates the perverse materialism reigning over Whispering Glades that ultimately results in the blasphemous worship of death.

From the beginning, Waugh saturates this irreligious world with the jargon of worship. Whispering Glades is a “flood-lit temple,” adorned with an abundance of religious but frivolous language surrounding the very foundational aspects of the institution. The space where the morticians transform the cadavers has become sacred, “a quarter where no layman penetrated”; the garments worn by the loved ones are found in “sliding shelves like a sacristy where vestments are stored”; Mrs. Komstock’s body lies on the table in her wedding dress, “transfigured.” Wearing the trappings of institutional religion while lacking its substance, the cemetery becomes altogether blasphemous. As Frederick Beaty observes, this is “not merely a Godless [cemetery] in the simply negative sense but one that [has] substituted idolatry of materialism for true Christianity.” In its material worship of the body in death, Whispering Glades extends beyond individualistic materialism and into full-fledged idolatry of death.

In conjunction with Whispering Glades’ veneration of the beautified dead, the artistic disguise which facilitates the disregard for the true identity of a corps ultimately extends to the worship of death. In a strictly material world where no soul exists after the body dies, the decay of the body in death truly signifies man's annihilation. However, the morticians of Whispering Glades attempt to conceal this decay, glorifying the body and in a sense immortalizing it. Hence follows the vague religiosity of worship that permeates Whispering Glades. In this necropolis, the denial of the possibility of an immortal soul degrades men to the level of beasts, while the animal cemetery, the Happier Hunting Grounds,

elevates animals with human rituals. To prepare the reader for Aimée’s startling suicide, the Happier Hunting Grounds takes on the rituals associated with the cemetery of men, parodying the words from the Burial of the Dead in the Common Book of Prayer: “Dog that is born of bitch hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery.”

The novel conflates humans and animals so extensively that their funerary rites are indistinguishable. Revealing their active roles as interior participants in this cult, Aimée and Mr. Joyboy do not recognize the degradation of man at Whispering Glades. As such, they find the Happier Hunting Grounds perverse in giving human rituals to beasts. Aimée says, “[The Happier Hunting Grounds] try and do everything the same as us. It seems kinda blasphemous.” She is not wrong; even the Happier Hunting Grounds attempts to conceal death’s gruesome sting, for “a bowl of roses stood beside the telephone; their scent contended with the carbolic, but did not prevail.”

Aimée and Mr. Joyboy's blindness to their own blasphemy but recognition of the perversion at the Happier Hunting Grounds further highlights the lie of the incorruptibility of the flesh told at Whispering Glades, where “the [painted] face [is] entirely horrible; as ageless as a tortoise and as inhuman.” This degradation of man, as Ann Slater articulates, is evident even in Aimée’s name: “Aimée’s surname is Thanatogenos. Thanatism is the belief that at death the human soul ceases to exist. Without a soul, man is no more than a beast. [...] For a Catholic like Waugh, they have forfeited the soul.”

That is why Aimée’s final combustion is in an animal incinerator and why Joyboy receives an annual card that says, “Your little Aimée is wagging her tail in heaven tonight, thinking of you.”

At this sacrilegious temple, Mr. Joyboy plays the part of the esteemed high-priest who transforms the deceased from cadavers to “Loved Ones,” yet his perverted use of art and his pathetic

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6 Waugh, 122.
7 Ibid, 95.
8 Ibid, 16.
9 Waugh, 75.
11 Waugh, 163.
personal life reveals the empty materialism that plagues the whole institution of Whispering Glades. He is the Hollywood funerary industry personified, possessing a contrived but artistic religiosity with an empty interior. From the start, Mr. Joyboy's distinctiveness as a spiritual entity is evident. Regarding his physique, there is “a lack of shape in his head and body,” but “these physical defects [are] nugatory when set against his moral earnestness and compelling charm of his softly resonant voice”; one might say his appearance is ethereal, even angelic.\textsuperscript{12} He is described as “kinda holy” and “the incarnate spirit of Whispering Glades —the one mediating logos.”\textsuperscript{13} As mediator, so also is he priest. However, this minister of Whispering Glades confirms the utter perversity of the death-cult in the “art” he uses on dead bodies to communicate the emotions of the living. After giving a Loved One “the Radiant Childhood smile,” Joyboy justifies this unsolicited facial design by saying, “Miss Thanatogenos, for you the Loved Ones just naturally smile.”\textsuperscript{14} He furthers the sacrilege by claiming that it is within the “nature” of dead bodies to smile, giving them agency in the act of smiling. Thus, as a religious agent of Whispering Glades, Joyboy performs the role of mediator between a lifeless cadaver and a beautified “Loved One,” emphasizing the distortion of dead bodies into glorified, lifelike material rather than the rotting corpses that they are.

Mr. Joyboy's relationship with his mother further highlights the illusion of religious depth that surrounds Whispering Glades; the artistic flashiness distracts the morticians from recognizing the false deity of death that they worship, resulting in the near emptiness of their personal life. Aimée expects Mr. Joyboy's private life to mimic his professional sanctity, for she hopes that “he frequented a world altogether loftier than anything in her own experience. But it was not so.”\textsuperscript{15} To Aimée’s dismay, Joyboy resides with his selfish, demanding mother. What is most disturbed in the relationship between these two is the failure of both Joyboy and his mother to recognize the humanity in those

\textsuperscript{12} Waugh, 66, 67.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 95, 143.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 69.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 112.
around them, resulting in their pathetic lifestyle. Mrs. Joyboy, hardly acknowledging Aimée’s presence, pours affection on her pet parrot, saying, “If I hadn’t had Sambo [the parrot] to love me I might as well be dead.” Similarly, Joyboy ignores his mother’s dignity in his financial stinginess towards her. Since he “[seeks] to make a good impression on the world,” Joyboy hesitates to offer any comfort to his mother, claiming that “anything spent on Mom was money down the drain.” Because she has no utility in improving Mr. Joyboy's material status, she is deemed useless. This personal life of Mr. Joyboy's further reflects the depravity that results from extreme materialism and extends to the worship of glorified death.

Aimée Thanatogenos, the “loved one born of death,” similarly takes on a religious role as the “vestal virgin” of Whispering Glades through her work as a cosmetician, although her partial recognition of the ephemeral nature of her work points to the insubstantial foundations of this false cult. Dennis describes her as the “sole Eve in a bustling hygienic Eden, this girl was a decadent.” She is the “handmaiden to the morticians” in this paradise of aesthetics. Aimée’s title of a “decadent” emphasizes the inflated importance she gives to physical beauty. All the while, she possesses a spiritual persona; she “[works] like a nun, intently, serenely, methodically.” Pairing religious language with the “crucial phase of [Aimée’s] art,” painting the faces of cadavers, Waugh emphasizes the consecration of this act, almost as if it were sacramental, to make blatantly obvious the distortion of reality. Interestingly, Aimée seems to recognize the shallowness of this death-cult when she says, “at the end of the day when I’m tired I feel as if it was all rather ephemeral. [...] My work is sometimes burned within a few hours. At best it’s put in the mausoleum and even there it deteriorates.”

16 Waugh, 114.
17 Ibid, 112.
18 Waugh, 143.
19 Ibid, 54.
20 Ibid, 94.
21 Ibid, 69.
22 Ibid, 69.
23 Ibid, 89.
the paradox of her whole life’s work: the dead are immortalized through the beautification of their bodies, but their bodies still decay. Nature still runs its course.

While Aimée evidently has some insight into the debased customs of Whispering Glades, her ultimate acceptance of the creed of materialism paradoxically leads her to suicide; if a glammed-up dead body is all she will become, taking her life in the face of spiritual emptiness is not criminal but reasonable, for she purposefully actualizes her ultimate potential as she sees it. Encountering intense emotional turmoil caused by the love triangle between Dennis and Joyboy, Aimée finally finds solace at Whispering Glades:

Here she waited for dawn. Her mind was quite free from anxiety. [...] In exaltation Aimée watched the countless statues glimmer, whiten and take shape while the lawns changed from silver and grey to green. She was touched by warmth. Then suddenly all around her and as far as eye could see the slopes became a dancing surface of light, of millions of minute rainbows and spots of fire; in the control room the man on duty had turned the irrigation cock.\(^{24}\)

While viewing the “entrancing” spectacle of the sprinklers at the cemetery grounds, Aimée submits to the belief that the flashy image of Whispering Glades is all that awaits her, and as a result, she embraces it actively. She radically succumbs to the deception of the incorruptibility of the flesh, and thus acts upon such belief by killing herself.

However, Aimée's suicide is not just an acceptance of this creed of materialism; it is a sacrifice to “the deity she serves”—death.\(^{25}\) Frederick Beaty postulates that “Aimée does not martyr herself on behalf of some noble cause; rather, as a burlesque of the tragic heroine, she ends her life because it is empty and

\(^{24}\) Waugh, 149.
\(^{25}\) Ibid, 150.
purposeless.” In the moments before her suicide, references to “the altars of old Gods,” “Attic voices,” and “Alcestis and proud Antigone” suggest that in her death, Aimée participates in her own pagan sacrifice. Furthermore, this is not just a human sacrifice to death but a bestial one as referenced earlier. In denying her immortal soul, Aimée equates herself with animals and thus meets her material end in an animal incinerator. Joyboy says in response to her death that she was a “simple America kid”; Dennis suggests that putting Aimée in the incinerator is the equivalent of “[having] a sheep here to incinerate.” Kids (goats) and sheep are animals traditionally used in sacrificial offerings. Aimée’s incineration is thus a bestial offering in consequence to the death she worships, and inasmuch, it is her proper end. Waugh’s inclusion of such a death emphasizes the intense debasement of man when he embraces pure materialism.

Similarly exemplifying this depravity is Mr. Joyboy during the moments in which he discovers Aimée’s death. Regarding Mr. Joyboy's frantic behavior, Frederick Stopp states, “What irony that Joyboy, called to the art of preserving dead bodies, should be unnerved by actual death, and be forced to escape an ugly situation by concealing the death and disposing of the body!” However, Stopp misses a crucial aspect of Mr. Joyboy's hysterics. Responding to Mr. Joyboy's distress, Dennis says, “You think that your career will suffer if Dr. Kenworthy learns you have the poisoned corpse of our fiancée in the ice-box? For your mother’s sake this is to be avoided? You are proposing that I help dispose of the body?” After which, Mr. Joyboy “[gulped]” in affirmation. Mr. Joyboy's ever-present concern with material status continues even in the face of his fiancée’s suicide. He is so completely swept up in excessive materialism that he willingly permits the bestial

27 Waugh, 149.
28 See page 5.
29 Waugh, 149.
32 Ibid, 155.
sacrifice of his fiancée. This horrendous behavior of Mr. Joyboy is the extreme to which Waugh takes his reader in an attempt to illustrate the depravity of excessive materialism.

After observing the shallow materialism that deteriorates into the worship of glamorized cadavers and bestial sacrifices, it is difficult to overlook this question: where does Dennis, the foreign and feeble poet, find himself in this decadent, deceitful cult of death, and how does he manage to escape it? Waugh gives Dennis, like Joyboy and Aimée, a sort of religious persona as well. He is described as “a missionary priest making his first pilgrimage to the Vatican;” as he recites poetry from anthologies, he acts “as a monk ... [repeating] a single pregnant text, over and over again in prayer.”

Aimée’s reaction to Dennis’s brashness fortifies his spiritual distinctness: “He is cynical at things which should be sacred. I do not think he has any religion. Neither have I [...] but I am ethical.” Her averseness to Dennis’s frequent frankness in regards to things she deems sacred as a leading member of the fragile death-cult proves that his god is not of the dead. Contrary to Aimée and Joyboy’s hollow god of materialism, Dennis's deity is the muse of art—she who directs him to meditate with “the intellect rather than crude emotion.” More specifically, she calls him to study the phenomenon of the Hollywood culture of death. Waugh describes her influence upon him as such: “there was a very long complicated and important message [the muse] was trying to convey to him. It was about Whispering Glades, but it was not, except quite indirectly, about Aimée.” He has been sent to observe. Even Aimée notices Dennis’s preoccupation with Whispering Glades; she says, “I think it quite right a man should show interest in a girl’s work but he shows too much.” It is arguably his fascination with her profession which attracts Dennis to her in the first place.

However, Dennis’s ambitions to become a non-sectarian minister in an attempt to win Aimée’s heart indicates his

33 Waugh, 17.
34 Ibid, 102.
36 Ibid, 105.
37 Ibid, 129.
divergence from the muse’s path and, more broadly speaking, Waugh’s depiction of the attractiveness of the shallow materialism offered by Hollywood. Following Aimée’s rejection of his abrupt and tactless marriage proposal, Dennis seeks to elevate his social status above Mr. Joyboy's; “one of [his] chief aims was to raise [his] status.”38 He inquires at one point, “You would say, would you not, that a non-sectarian clergyman was the social equal of an embalmer?”39 These choices leave him entangled in a messy love triangle that detracts from his artistic task. However, all is not lost for Dennis. Frederick Beaty identifies that “Dennis’s love for [Aimée], a priestess in this temple of the dead might seem to divert him from the muse’s objectivity—the understanding of death itself—the exact opposite occurs. The tragedy of Aimée’s unexpected demise contributes ironically to the deepening of his knowledge and even liberates him from artistic doom.”40 Aimée’s death, the logical fulfillment of the cult of materialism, sets Dennis free to “[carry] back instead a great, shapeless chunk of experience, the artist’s load; bearing it home to his ancient and comfortless shore; to work on it hard and long, for God knew how long.”41 As Naomi Milthorpe states, Dennis’s encounter with “his loved one’s once-irrefragable body,” Aimée’s incineration, signifies “his empyrean moment of vision.”42 This vision of reality reacquaints him with his artistic task and spares him from the obliterating dangers of materialism found at Whispering Glades.

In this brief but profound novel, Evelyn Waugh illustrates a world in which materialism is taken to its logical extreme; the morticians of Whispering Glades have renounced the immortal soul, and in its place, they fall prey to the sacrilegious exaltation of the glorified dead body. While the satirization of Aimée's bestial sacrifice and Dennis’s artistic deliverance seems absurd, Waugh masterfully does so to accentuate the emptiness of utter materialism

38 Waugh, 158.
39 Ibid, 123.
40 Beaty, 178.
41 Waugh, 164.
and expose the death-cult that results from it. Waugh makes painfully obvious the great blasphemy of Whispering Glades to direct his readers to the spiritual, for as Flannery O'Connor says, “the only way to the truth is through blasphemy.”

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All Poets Are Poets
John Duong

I was Stevens, if only
For the span of a dream.
Just out of reach, beyond the
Boundary of my mind’s mind,
I saw the bird. What a beautiful,
Mystifying creature. Those feathers
Dangled before me. In that instance,
They were real. Truly they were
Fire-fangled and could not be anything
But fire-fangled.
Then I closed the book and woke up
To become once again
Me, but more.