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## The Marginal Gloss

Notes and Asides on  
Poe, Valéry,  
“The Ancient Mariner,”  
The Ordeal of the Margin,  
*Storiella as She Is Syung*,  
Versions of Leonardo,  
and the Plight of Modern  
Criticism

### Lawrence Lipking

When Paul Valéry published selections from Poe's *Marginalia*, in 1927, he presented them in an ingeniously logical form. Poe's text (in French translation) occupies the right of two facing pages; now accompanied, on the left, by the constant traffic of Valéry's own notes. Nor is it only in matters of style that the commentator seeks to draw his author out. Departing from Poe's whimsical and scattered thoughts on his pleasure in marking up margins, Valéry sets out to construct a system.

One can see in these preliminary explanations the germ of a *theory of notes*. . . .

This sketch of a theory of the “form” should call for a rigorous discussion. . . .

Valéry's logic, in fact, seriously misrepresents Poe's own approach to the margin. The last sentence of the original introduction, omitted by the translator, had insisted that *nonsense* characterizes the marginal note. Poe's joke cuts deep. The attraction of marginalia, for him, consists of the opportunity for defiance of rigorous discussion, for the

“Quelques Fragments des Marginalia,” translated and annotated by Paul Valéry, *Commerce* 14 (1927): 11–41. James Lawler has translated the notes in Valéry's *Collected Works* (Princeton, 1972), 8:177–92.

The margin, for some authors, can never be wide enough.

*All this may be whim; it may be not only a very hackneyed, but a very idle practice;—yet I persist in it still; and it affords me pleasure. . . .*

*In the marginalia, too, we talk only to ourselves; we therefore talk freshly—boldly—originally—with abandonnement—without conceit— . . . [Poe]*

*Just as the goodness of your true pun is in the direct ratio of its intolerability, so is nonsense the essential sense of the Marginal Note. [Poe]*

total originality and unexpectedness he so prized—in short, for complete independence from the text. The marginal note, like a pun, or like a manuscript found in a bottle, offers the reader a kind of puzzle; divorced from the context that first stimulated it, it renders no more than a fragmentary clue to buried possibilities of meaning. The more outrageous the clue, the better the puzzle. Poe challenges the ingenuity of his reader. Deciphering the apparent nonsense of marginalia, we perform the act of reading, as Poe conceives it: a continual decoding of the keys or intentions secreted in the text.

Valéry constructs a different model for the act of reading. The puzzle to be solved, as he would have it, is always the reader's mind itself.

One might observe on this subject that the attentive reading of a book is nothing but a continuous commentary, a succession of *notes* escaping from the inner voice. Marginal notes are part of the notes of pure *thought*.

The text furnishes the occasion, but its value begins and ends with the activity of the mind. Margins, for Valéry, exemplify the infinite extension of thought, the profound white space, forever waiting to be filled, that supplies the necessary condition of mental life. We read, as we live, above all in the margins; in becoming, not in being.

The logic of this position reaches its culmination after the end of Poe. Valéry's com-

An orangutan; a gold bug; a raven.

Though Poe expects the reader of poetry to succumb to an elevated excitement of soul, his own reviews (as of *Barnaby Rudge*) cast the reader in the role of detective.

*The main difficulty respected the mode of transferring the notes from the volumes—the context from the text—without detriment to that exceedingly frail fabric of intelligibility in which the context was imbedded . . . —what, then, would become of it—this context —if transferred?—if translated?* [Valéry omits a sentence ridiculing translation.]

*I concluded, at length, to put extensive faith in the acumen and imagination of the reader:—this as a general rule.* [Poe]

As Dante said of the poems after the death of Beatrice in *La Vita*

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mentary continues on its way, glossing the white space of nothingness.

Poe stops at the very moment when he ought to have developed the most interesting reflections of his preliminary discourse.

That multitude of disordered thoughts, whose subsequent review confirms some, dissipates others, abolishes or deepens here and there the present effects of a quantity of bygone moments registered one by one—no theme more stimulates the mind [*l'esprit*]. The essential object of the mind is mind. What it pursues in its analyses and its constructions of worlds, what it tracks on earth and in heaven, can only be itself. It looks for an idea of itself that will *saturate* it, equal it, exhaust all its powers, or restore it to what it is. But nothing teaches it the *transcendence* of its desire and of its nature, *which is desire*, more clearly than the immediate *sight* of its contradictions and of the infinite ways that it possesses of considering and classifying the same object.

As the mind transcends its occasions, the gloss transcends its text. Only the limitations of space prevent Valéry's margin from going on forever. The mind—Valéry's mind, at any rate—cannot bear the idea of finishing. To finish, as to know thyself, would involve a kind of immortality, or a kind of death. Thus the apparatus of the margin, with its constant suggestion that revisions are possible, explanations are needed, delivers a vivifying truth: however much the text pretends to finality, it is always open to change. And even the gloss requires in turn a gloss.

The difference between Poe's and Valéry's theory of notes—between a theory that emphasizes the nonsensical unpredictability of notes and a theory that discovers in notes the essential logic not only of all reading but of the mind itself—cannot be resolved. To some extent, perhaps, it derives from a conflict be-

*Nuova*, where the divisions of meaning precede each poem rather than follow it, the gloss here is *widowed*.

*A poem is never finished; it is only abandoned.*

And yet another gloss.

The difference is rooted in language. Valéry translates Poe's rather foppish English into lucid French (condensing his stray thoughts into paragraphs); my own translation of Valéry's gloss, in turn, is less precise than his French. (Does

tween two genres: marginalia, and the marginal gloss. Marginalia—traces left in a book—are wayward in their very nature; they spring up spontaneously around a text unaware of their presence. Nor could they have been considered publishable until the Romantic period had encouraged a taste for fragments and impulses, the suggestive part rather than the ordered whole. Significantly the term was introduced by Coleridge, that great master of the fragment; and Poe himself (so far as I can find) was the first author ever to publish his marginalia. The charm of such notes depends on their being on the edge: the borders of intelligibility (Poe) or consciousness (Valéry). The reader catches an author off his guard, intercepting a thought that may scarcely have risen to formulation. At their best, marginalia can haunt us like a few passing words overheard in the street; all the more precious because the context remains unknown.

The marginal gloss, however, responds to another frame of mind: the need to spell everything out. Once glosses explained or interpreted hard words. The modern fashion of translation on a page facing the original might be considered the ultimate gloss—every word explained. But the margin can also offer more general conveniences of interpretation. Before the development of printed books, margins often supplied the information now relegated to the table of contents and index. Anyone who has read a scroll, or a modern microfilm, will appreciate the difficulty of turning back or ahead to locate the right place in the text. The gloss can provide a series of running heads, where the reader's eye, skimming down the page, quickly grasps the drift of the argument without its details; textbooks still use this device. Unlike marginalia, therefore, the marginal gloss frequently serves to affirm the relation of the part to the whole. Thus Valéry reshapes the chance remarks of Poe into co-

one render *l'esprit* as *mind* or *the mind*?)

Blake's famous marginalia on Reynolds are an exception: they attempt to seize Reynolds' book physically, convert it, and make it aware of Blake's vision.

*Astounding confessions, marvelously sincere or perverse impressions are brought to light. There are those who dare to write what they scarcely dare to think.*  
[Valéry]

"Gloss" (from the Greek for "tongue") originally referred to a foreign or obscure word that required explanation; eventually the explanation itself became the gloss (as the most difficult words in poems eventually come to be regarded, by critics, as the keys to interpretation). The degeneration of the word into "glossing over"—a sophistical explaining away—was abetted by confusion with another word, the glossy glaze that stands for superficial luster. This etymology reflects the modern suspicion of glossing in general.

herent essays. However dense the text, the gloss holds out the hope that all perplexities can be explained and all obliquities reduced to order. Margins, so conceived, rationalize the white space of books. The possibility of glossing demonstrates that the space surrounding print is not a vacuum but a plenum.

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The need of relating part to whole, in all probability, was the issue that motivated the most famous marginal gloss in English. From the very beginning, the parts of "The Ancient Mariner" appeared to Coleridge as something given. His friend Cruikshank gave him the dream of the skeleton ship; Wordsworth gave him some of the incidents and details; and his reading, as Lowes showed so thoroughly, gave him a ready supply of images and phrases. "The Ancient Mariner" is assembled with the economy of a dream, where fragments of the day return in strange new constellations. But from the first it was never clear to readers that the pieces of the ballad held together. Even Wordsworth, Coleridge's dear collaborator, obviously agreed with the critics that the parts had mastered the whole. In the notorious note he supplied for the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), Wordsworth listed among the "great defects" of the poem, "that the events having no necessary connection do not produce each other; and . . . that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated." Coleridge's poetic career, it might be argued, never fully recovered from the shock of this rejection. If his best poem had been accumulated rather than connected, what right had he to consider himself one of those supreme reconcilers, unifiers, harmonizers: a poet? To answer Wordsworth's criticism, Coleridge would have to demonstrate that the brilliant fragments of "The Ancient Mariner" made

Valéry presents three "essays," which he titles ("Fragments des Marginalia," "De l'Expression," "Fatale Supériorité"), edits, clarifies through translation, and dignifies with notes.

. . . I adduce the high spiritual instinct of the human being impelling us to seek unity by harmonious adjustment, and thus establishing the principle, that all the parts of an organized whole must be assimilated to the more important and essential parts. [*Biographia Litéraria*, chap. 18]

Percy's *Reliques*; voyage literature; the Cambridge Platonists; Gothic romances; David Hartley; the *Arabian Nights*; Cain and the Wandering Jew; Cowper and other contemporary poets; Wordsworth; notebooks; *Anima Mundi*.

Many of the stanzas are laboriously beautiful; but in connection they are absurd or unintelligible. [Southey, *Critical Review*, October 1798]

Defects three and four. The first is "that the principal person has no distinct character"; the second, "that he does not act, but is continually acted upon." Each might be considered a slur on Coleridge himself, or on the failure of his personality to make a whole.

one great whole—even if the demonstration obliged him to redefine the nature of poetry itself.

The most ambitious of all Coleridge's critical statements, in fact, literally ends with "The Ancient Mariner." At the close of the first volume of *Biographia Literaria*, the celebrated passage on the primary and secondary imagination is followed by a promise to explain the powers of the imagination more fully "in the critical essay on the uses of the Supernatural in poetry, and the principles that regulate its introduction: which the reader will find prefixed to the poem of *The Ancient Mariner*." The essay never appeared, of course. But almost simultaneously with the *Biographia* an extraordinary new version of "The Ancient Mariner" came out in *Sibylline Leaves*—the version that we know today. For the first time the strange and seemingly arbitrary happenings of the ballad were interpreted by a civilized scholastic voice: a marginal gloss.

An ancient  
Mariner meet-  
eth three Gal-  
lants bidden  
to a wedding-  
feast, and de-  
taineth one.

It is an ancient Mariner,  
And he stoppeth one of three.  
"By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,  
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"

The gloss casts an entirely new light—a kind of secondary imagination—over the poem. The reader who had turned to the first pages of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, on the contrary, had been purposely cast adrift. "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere" opens a book whose title is an oxymoron, whose author is anonymous, and whose archaic language and action, like Chatterton's, seem to suggest a hoax. In one respect, indeed, travesty *does* dominate the poem: a travesty of conversation. The mariner manages to talk to the wedding-guest only by mesmerizing him; no

In the first chapter of the *Biographia*, Coleridge quotes an epigram of his own composition, "To the author of the Ancient Mariner":

Your poem must eternal be,  
Dear sir! it cannot fail,  
For 'tis incomprehensible,  
And without head or tail.

But when Coleridge had first inserted the epigram in the *Morning Post* (24 January 1800) it had referred to another poet. The change of attribution shows how much he had internalized Wordsworth's criticism.

The epigraph (Thomas Burnet on the spirit world) might be considered a substitute (however inadequate) for the essay.

Note the suspicions of Charles Burney (*Monthly Review*, June 1799): *The author's first piece, the "Rime of the ancyeent Marinere," in imitation of the style as well as of the spirit of the elder poets, is the strangest story of a cock and a bull that we ever saw on paper: . . . a rhapsody of unintelligible wildness and incoherence, (of which we do not perceive the drift, unless the joke lies in depriving the wedding guest of his share of the feast). . . .*

response is allowed; throughout the crisis of the poem the parched tongues of the shipmates do not permit them to speak; and the discourtesy of the idiom extends even to the two voices that discuss the mariner, in the air and in his soul, as if he were not there. Such impoliteness begins with the first word, which points rather than describes. "It" is a phantom reference, of course, and in the natural world the "it" would be a "he." "Three," moreover, might be three of anything; and the wedding-guest's reasonable question about why he has been stopped will be answered only by a palpable non sequitur, "There was a ship." Coleridge, in 1798, does not encourage the cause and effect, the give and take, of conversation. He deals instead with isolated spirits: the Marinere; the wedding-guest; the poet; and the reader.

In 1817, however, the situation has changed. Now the abrupt opening stanza no longer requires an effort of reading merely to understand what is happening. The gloss briskly ignores "it" to get on with the story, and delivers a commonsense world of ordinary occasions. The word "Gallants" not only tells us something about the dress and social class of the "three," but implies a judgment upon them. Whether we read the gloss or ballad first, moreover, we are always aware of a companion who knows the answers. The activity of the reader's eye, skipping back and forth between the margin and the text, now performs the work once left to the imagination. The gloss familiarizes every supernatural event; it assures us, in spite of the wedding-guest's fears, that the mariner is alive, sustained by a world of facts.

Nor does the gloss confine itself to facts. Again and again it interprets the narrative by reading it as a parable. In the world of the gloss, actions have causes and consequences, parts fit into wholes, and human motives are not arbitrary.

Compare the far more friendly word that opens some of the conversation poems: the humble "Well."

The comic possibilities of the speaker's failure to listen (as in "Resolution and Independence") have attracted notice from the first. Coleridge's own weakness for monologue associates him with the mariner, for instance in Keats' account of their "conversation" (April 1819) or in Beerbohm's cartoon of *Table Talk*.

In *Sibylline Leaves* the gloss alternates between the left margin (on the left-hand page) and the right. Of readers I have questioned, some read the gloss first, some the text, and some always read from left to right. A few refuse to read the gloss at all. No one admits to having read the gloss but not the poem.



And lo! the  
Albatross  
proveth a bird  
of good omen,  
and followeth  
the ship as it  
returned  
northward  
through fog  
and floating  
ice.

The ancient  
Mariner  
inhospitably  
killeth the  
pious bird of  
good omen.

And a good south wind sprung up behind;  
The Albatross did follow,  
And every day, for food or play,  
Came to the Mariner's hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,  
It perch'd for vespers nine;  
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,  
Glimmered the white Moon-shine.

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!  
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—  
Why look'st thou so?"—With my cross-bow  
I shot the ALBATROSS.

The connection between the coming of the albatross and the splitting of the ice, which the ballad had left us to assume, the marginal voice insists upon as "proved." A moment later, therefore, the mariner's crucially unmotivated shooting of the albatross can be judged a recognizable "crime" (as the gloss will call it), a clear violation of the laws of hospitality and piety. Meanwhile, the text's curiously strong association of the bird with moon-shine is omitted for the more prosaic nautical detail of "floating ice." The contrast here between the symbolic drama of the text, where everything is to be inferred (" 'Why look'st thou so?' "), and the pious certainty of the commentary could hardly be more pronounced. The gloss is superbly—some might say smugly—knowing. Not in thrall to the mariner's perspective, it understands the meaning of his experiences, it understands him as he cannot understand himself.

Above all, the author of the gloss knows that the world makes sense. A learned occultist, he seems able to answer most of those difficult questions about the nature of Invisible Beings that Thomas Burnet had once posed, in a passage Coleridge chose as an epigraph for "The Ancient Mariner." When the corpses of the crew are reanimated, for

Since the *Lyrical Ballads* were intended to interest by the dramatic truth of emotions (*Biographia*, chap. 14), not by sensational situations, it is presumably the mariner's guilt that makes his crime seem real to him, not the "crime" that justifies the guilt. Or so it was in 1798.

Coleridge's famous reply to Mrs. Barbauld—"as to the want of a moral, I told her that in my own judgment the poem had too much; and that the only, or chief fault, if I might say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination"—may well refer to the gloss rather than the poem. Their acquaintance, however, did precede the publication of the gloss.

The author of the gloss is *more* knowing than Burnet, since Coleridge omits a damning qualification in Burnet's Latin: "But

instance, the gloss firmly distinguishes one spirit from another: "But not by the souls of the men, nor by daemons of earth or middle air, but by a blessed troop of angelic spirits, sent down by the invocation of the guardian saint." Appearances cannot mislead the marginal commentator; he perceives, in whatever happens, the signs of a universal order.

At one moment, indeed, this ability amounts to a stroke of genius. When the mariner reaches his lowest point, in part 4, "Alone, alone, all all alone, / Alone on a wide wide sea!", unable to pray and longing to die, he opens his eyes and notices a world outside himself.

of what Value are all these Things?  
Has this Seraphic Philosophy any  
Thing sincere or solid about it?"

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and every where the blue sky belongs to them, and is

The moving Moon went up the sky,  
And no where did abide:  
Softly she was going up,  
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemoaned the sultry main,  
Like April hoar-frost spread;  
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,  
The charmed water burnt alway  
A still and awful red.

their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

The first stanza by itself, we might suppose, merely confirms the mariner's loneliness. He compares himself to the restless moon; her tranquillity, her companions throw a sad light on his own agonized isolation. But the gloss sees much further. Rather than a commentary, it supplies an extended meditation on the implications of "moving" and "abiding." The mariner, though fixed, can find no place of rest; the moon and stars, though always moving, are always at home. Nature, which through so much of the ballad seems

Psychologically, the mariner attempts to suppress his pain by imagining a world outside his own. Yet the moon (symbol of imagination) ironically leads his eye back to the closed and unilluminated circle of his prison. While *she* can mock the sea, *he* remains under a charm.

inhabited by unpredictable terrors, here takes on another aspect: its motions are appointed, its silence full of joy. By beautifully humanizing the heavens, the gloss suggests a transition to the mariner's impulse of human love for the water-snakes—"By the light of the Moon he beholdeth God's creatures of the great calm"—which begins to break the spell, and returns him to the world of the living. The voice in the margin knows that the world is not a collection of individuals but a family. It pronounces a blessing on the interconnectedness of things that confers even on a lonely man the sense of blessing.

But whose voice is speaking in the gloss? Technically, of course, it cannot belong to the poet, since the "eth" and the pious idiom recall another era. Coleridge borrowed his model, in fact, from Renaissance travel books, especially those of Purchas. As the early travellers report their immediate, often confused experiences, which Purchas' gloss relates to other sources, so "The Ancient Mariner" recounts a wild voyage that a gloss restores to context; the margin brings the truth of the voyage home. Coleridge deliberately contrasts the primitive wonderworking of the ballad with a later and wiser reader skilled in hermetic doctrine. And the effect of the contrast is not to explain away the wonders of the poem but to color them with another kind of faith.

Consider, for instance, the reference to the homecoming of "lords" in the gloss on the journeying moon. The charm of the passage, its special poignance, depends on its evocation of a vanished ancestral age, when well-loved lords ruled over well-appointed demesnes. Those days are gone. By the time that Coleridge wrote the gloss, his own early dream of presiding over a happy home had long been dead; his sojourns did not end with silent joy. Yet no one loves his native country so much as an exile. The serene distance of olden times, like the distance of the moon

Compare the similar moment in "Lewti" (written at the same time), when the river-swans lure the Circassian from his suicidal mood:

O beauteous birds! methinks ye measure  
Your movements to some heavenly tune!  
O beauteous birds! 'tis such a pleasure  
To see you move beneath the moon.

The first version of the "Rime" had been wilder still. In 1800 Coleridge dropped some of his archaisms; "eldritch" became "ghastly," "pheere" became "mate."

*How few are the men, to whom it is given  
to return regularly like a star, to  
command their day as they command their  
night; to form for themselves their  
household instruments, to sow and to  
reap, to gain and to expend, and to travel  
round their circle with perpetual success  
and peace and love! [Wilhelm Meister's  
Apprenticeship (trans. Carlyle), bk. 7,  
chap. 6]*

The gloss may well have been conceived, and perhaps written, during Coleridge's long self-imposed exile in Malta (1804–5). On Coleridge's return to London, Wordsworth reported, "He dare not go home, he recoils so much from

and stars, invests the gloss with an aura of unproblematical faith, of certain knowledge, that can pierce the heart of a reader less sure where he belongs.

Coleridge himself was such a reader. Returning to "The Ancient Mariner" many years after its composition, he must have continued to feel its strange imaginative authority. But the metaphysician in Coleridge could not be satisfied without discovering the principles of that authority: moral, rational, poetic. Both Coleridge's religion and his pride as a poet demanded justification of the realm of spirits. He must learn to read his poem soberly, as Purchas or Burnet might, without the intoxication of creative enthusiasm. And a great deal of the poet's activity, in the decades after "The Ancient Mariner," may be seen as an effort to become that voice in the gloss: a pious reader entirely at home with his world and his text.

Should such a reader, however, be allowed to intrude on the poem? The terrible power of "The Ancient Mariner," after all, grows from its sense of isolation. The reader's own loneliness bears witness to the truth of the mariner's experience; the "semblance of truth" transferred from "our inward nature" to procure "a willing suspension of disbelief" is the fearful knowledge that each of us exists alone. The ultimate implication of such knowledge seemed, to many early readers, literally unspeakable; beyond any gloss.

the thought of domesticating with Mrs. Coleridge." A separation was soon effected.

An authority derived also from Wordsworth, whose companionship, now lost, had once inspired the poem.

*I would gladly . . . spare both myself and others this labor, if I knew how without it to present an intelligible statement of my poetic creed; not as my opinions, which weigh for nothing, but as deductions from established premises conveyed in such a form, as is calculated either to effect a fundamental conviction, or to receive a fundamental confutation. [Biographia, chap. 4]*

*There should have been no other witnesses of the truth of any part of the tale, but the "Ancient Mariner" himself. . . . the sensitive reader feels himself insulated, and a sea of wonder and mystery flows round him as round the spell-stricken ship itself. [H. N. Coleridge, Quarterly Review, August 1834]*

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been  
Alone on a wide wide sea:  
So lonely 'twas, that God himself  
Scarce seemed there to be.

The mariner learns better; but he could not tell his tale at all, he could not mesmerize his hearer, if the "horrible penance" of loneliness did not continue to haunt his vision. To superimpose a pious moral or the illusion of conversation upon such a tale—to gloss it

over—is to reduce it to the level of the ordinary. Was the addition of the gloss a mistake?

Doubtless some readers will always think so; and anyone who puts the highest value on spontaneity and excitement will still do well to go back to *Lyrical Ballads* 1798. But Coleridge's own theory requires a different answer. Indeed, according to one of his most important definitions, only on its appearance in *Sibylline Leaves* did "The Ancient Mariner" become a legitimate poem. In the same crucial fourteenth chapter of the *Biographia*, where Coleridge defends *Lyrical Ballads* against its critics, he appeals to the basic nature of poetry. A just poem, he says, does not consist of a "series of striking lines or distiches, each of which, absorbing the whole attention of the reader to itself, disjoins it from its context, and makes it a separate whole, instead of an harmonizing part." But neither does a poem resemble "an unsustained composition, from which the reader collects rapidly the general result, unattracted by the component parts," like a marginal gloss. Rather, Coleridge writes in one of his most brilliant and characteristic passages,

The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself. Like the motion of a serpent, which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power; or like the path of sound through the air; at every step he pauses and half recedes, and from the retrogressive movement collects the force which again carries him onward.

The ideal reading of the ideal poem, according to this definition, requires a perpetual advance and retreat, a constant adjustment of the part to the whole. A reader, sharing the perspective of both moon and mariner, has the experience at once of moving and being

Charles Lamb, who thought of the ballad as a kind of miracle—"I was never so affected with any human tale"—, was offended both by Coleridge's first revisions and by Wordsworth's preface. "I am hurt and vexed that you should think it necessary, with a prose apology, to open the eyes of dead men that cannot see." A significant metaphor.

Strictly speaking, the legitimation occurs in the white space, or margin, between the two volumes of the *Biographia*.

Cf. the views of Wordsworth and other critics on the *defects* of the "Mariner."

The image of a serpent of intellect, or self-consciousness, recurs obsessively in the work of Valéry: snake, worm, python, reptile, viper, hydra, ouroboros. "Whoever you are, am I not / that satisfaction which dawns / in your soul, when it loves itself?" ("Ébauche d'un serpent," ll. 115–17). Valéry specifically associates the bending back of the mind or poem on itself with the need to find variant expressions—gloss upon gloss. In Coleridge's own fullest definition of self-consciousness, *theses vi* and *vii*

suspended. It is an experience not unlike reading a ballad of wonders with a marginal gloss.

In its final version, then, "The Ancient Mariner" comes close to defining Coleridge's idea of a poem. The metaphor of the journey, where the succession of strange parts turns out to have been a passage home, demonstrates the internal connection that so many unfriendly reviewers had resolved to overlook. Indeed, Coleridge had found a way of physically involving his critics with his argument. The tension between the two ways of construing the mariner's tale—between experiencing it and interpreting it—is recreated by the eye of every reader, as it snakes back and forth between the text and the margin, interrupting and interpenetrating one script with another, and striving to make a simultaneous order out of two different phases of seeing. Shocking incidents alternate with grave reflections, and the reader tosses between them. Yet finally the ballad and gloss conclude together; for the mariner's own last understanding of his story, the need to love and reverence all things for the sake of that God who "made and loveth all," is identical with the last statement in the margin. As a divided consciousness might be healed by a moment of prayer, so a divided text is healed by a moral intelligible to the wise and simple heart alike. And the reader joins in that union. No longer stunned by wonders, he should rise from the ordeal of this serpentine text exhausted, perhaps, but sadder and wiser.

3

Significantly, however, Coleridge could find no better commentary for his pastiche of a sixteenth-century ballad than a pastiche of a seventeenth-century gloss. Eighteenth-century glosses—the apparatus of *The Dun-*

of chapter 12 of the *Biographia*, it is noteworthy that his note (on the I AM of Jehovah and Descartes) is longer than the thesis it glosses.

*... contemplating intuitively this one power with its two inherent indestructible yet counteracting forces, and the results or generations to which their interpenetration gives existence, in the living principle and in the process of our own self-consciousness. [Biographia, chap. 13]*

And to teach,  
by his own  
example, love  
and reverence  
to all things  
that God made  
and loveth.

Though the *OED* uses Coleridge's "sadder" to illustrate the meaning "sorrowful," his word retains its more archaic senses: sated or weary; steadfast; orderly and regular in life; serious in thought.

*ciad Variorum*, for instance—were not so sad and wise. Nor did they tend to emphasize the essential unity of the text. The nature of glossing itself had changed in the century between Burnet and Coleridge; changed most dramatically in the gradual replacement of the marginal gloss by the footnote. Part of the change must be accounted for by convenience in printing. Footnotes, gathered in one place on the page, cost less than marginal notations, and the mass production of books inevitably pulled glosses down to the cheaper method. Yet the technical change could not have taken place without a far more profound change in attitudes toward books. So long as books kept their sacred ties to the Author of All, so long as the notion that the world was a book to be read by men retained its power, glossing could be regarded as a logical extension of the text: an unfolding of parallel, equally authoritative meanings into infinity. Thus Dante's fourfold method of interpretation assumes that multiple correct meanings are folded together into the text, waiting to be disclosed. Given a wide enough page, it would be entirely proper to inscribe those various readings side by side. It would be absurd, on the contrary, to consider the moral or allegorical interpretations as *footnotes* to the literal or anagogical; every faithful reading is equally scriptural, equally true. Typologically the perfect gloss, of course, is constituted by the relation of the New Testament to the Old: absolutely parallel, reflective, mutually reinforcing. The great poets, the sad and wise readers of the Christian era, regard an interpenetrating text, which they scan from margin to margin in the great common effort of reconciling one dispensation with another, or the created world with the truth of revelation.

Both the books from which Coleridge borrowed his apparatus of glossing derive, in fact, from the fundamental insight that the

*The Commentary which attends the Poem, was sent me from several hands, and consequently must be unequally written; yet will it have one advantage over most commentaries, that it is not made upon conjectures, or a remote distance of time.* ["Advertisement," *Dunciad Variorum*]

Margins also shrank, moreover, when readers (unlike Coleridge) lost the habit of filling them with notes; see the measurements by A. W. Pollard, "Margins," *The Printing Art* 10 (September 1907): 17–24.

E. R. Curtius' study of "The Book as Symbol" (chap. 16 of *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard Trask, published in German in 1948) is the first of many on this theme.

Renaissance self-consciousness about the text may be illustrated by *The Shepheardes Calender*, which explains its typology in an introductory Argument, supplies arguments and emblems for each month, and interprets each poem with a lengthy Glosse.

world is a book. The author of *Purchas His Pilgrimes* knows exactly

*What kinde of  
Naturall  
Historie this  
is*

—nothing less than mundane charts and evidences for a collective spiritual history of the world. Lest the reader should become too absorbed in the stories of travel, forgetting his pilgrimage, the Rev. Samuel Purchas fills his margins with biblical citations, and “occasionally every where by Annotations, and in some parts professedly by speciall Discourses, insinuateth both the Historie and Mystery of Godlinesse, the right use of History, and all other Learning.” His text is the world. It does not draw its ultimate authority from the mere written accounts of the voyagers, which are only so many testimonies to the providential order that God has written into nature, but directly from God’s own texts, His Scripture and His earth. Indeed, the New World is interesting for Purchas primarily because it glosses the Old, like the marginal testament of nature. A flat map, representing the two Worlds side by side, would emblemize this notion of a text: cleft but corresponding columns that furnish the key to each other’s universe of meaning.

In practice, therefore, Purchas spends little thought on the authenticity of the written records. Where accounts differ, he collates them (as a humanist scholar might gloss over contradictions in the classics or Scriptures); he does not investigate them. The margin is reserved for running heads, scriptural parallels, and the occasional moral aside, as in the case of Hudson’s mutineers.

*The wicked  
flee where none  
pursueth.*

The text requires unfolding and interpretation, but not establishing; least of all does it require the mutineers’ side of the story. Implausible incidents in the narrative, for Pur-

**And as David prepared materials for Salomons Temple; . . . so here Purchas and his Pilgrimes minister individuall and sensible materials (as it were with Stones, Bricks and Mortar) to those universall Speculators for their Theorically structures.** [“To the Reader”]

1. *Cor.* 2. 14.
2. *Tim.* 3. 15.

The first book of Purchas treats King Solomon’s navy; successive sections unfold “the Allegoricall and Anagogicall sense or application of SALOMONS *Ophirian* Navigation,” “The Tropologicall use of the Story,” and “The Tropologicall or Morall use enlarged and amplified; and a view taken of Mans diversified Dominion in Microcosmicall, Cosmopoliticall, and that Spirituall or Heavenly right, over himselfe and all things, which the *Christian* hath in and by *Christ*.”

**Now they began to talke amongst themselves, that England was no safe place for them, and Henry Greene swore, the shippe should not come into any place (but keepe the Sea still) till he had the Kings Majesties hand and Seale to shew for his safetie.** [Abacuk Pricket’s story]



chas even more than for Coleridge, are something given. One of the few places where the gloss evinces some suspicions comes in the voyage of Magellan.

*Little men  
with long  
eares; a  
fabulous  
report. Such  
hath bin the  
ground of  
fabulous Mon-  
sters in Pliny,  
&c.*

But Purchas' skepticism is provoked, of course, by that of Magellan's men; a heathen (even Pliny) is not owed the credit due a Christian. Just below, the gloss displays no such skepticism about a report from the inhabitants of Timor.

*The Devill  
appeareth.*

Purchas records his fact: *The Devill appeareth*. It is not his business to challenge or debate it in a footnote. The evidence for such facts does not depend on one or another account; it surrounds us everywhere, in the margins of our world.

Certainly Thomas Burnet, whose *Telluris Theoria Sacra* (1681) was considered by Coleridge "poetry of the highest kind," takes the earth for his text. Like any good textual editor, moreover, he tries to reconstruct a perfectly uncorrupted text: geologically, the original earth, without seas or mountains, "all one continued and regular mass, smooth, simple and compleat," like an eggshell. His evidence (noted in the margins) derives of course from Scripture. Nor could the parallel between the double texts of earth and Bible ever falter, since both are written by the same hand. Every theory of Nature and Providence, Burnet says, contains a Romance, "a *Plot* or *Mystery* pursued through the whole Work . . . ; but these things we do not make or contrive our selves, but find and discover them, being made already by the Great Au-

**The Pilot which our men brought out of the Ilands of Molucca, told them, That not farre from thence was an Iland named Arucetto, in the which are Men and Women not past a Cubit in height, having eares of such bignesse, that they lye upon one, and cover them with the other. But our men would not sayle thither, both because the Winde and course of the Sea was against them, and also for that they gave no credit to his report.**

**They say, that when they goe to cut the Wood of Saunders, the Devill appeareth to them in divers formes, and asketh them what they have neede of: And that after this Vision, many of them are long sicke.** [Vol. 1, bk. 2, chap. 2]

The remark occurs in the midst of Coleridge's attempt to define poetry, in the fourteenth chapter of the *Biographia*. At one time Coleridge had intended to translate the *Theoria Sacra* "into blank Verse, the original at the bottom of the page."

*Tell. Theor. lib. 2. c. 7.  
2 Pet. 3. 5, 6, &c.*

Unlike Coleridge, Burnet did not think he had written a poem: "there is, methinks, more of beauty in such a Theory, at least a more masculine beauty, than in any Poem or Romance" (preface).

thor and Governour of the Universe." Yet Burnet's later works, notably the *Archaeologiae Philosophicae* (1692), seem less confident about their rules of evidence. The passage Coleridge used, for instance, dwells upon the prevalence of error: "For it is the Part of a wise Man not only to know those Things which are to be known, but also to distinguish and discern those Things which cannot be known." Burnet had run afoul of critics and pamphleteers, a swarm of cavillers who objected that he had collated his two texts only by trimming; and while he did not sink to answer them in footnotes to his major work, he did reply point by point in added "Remarks." By the end of the seventeenth century the gloss had lost some of its authority. It was no longer self-evident to readers that Scripture and the world were strictly parallel.<sup>1</sup>

He had also run afoul of the literal mind. The most decisive of such literal minds, doubtless, belonged to the father of the Enlightenment, Pierre Bayle. The *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697) did not invent the footnote, but it helped create a model of scholarship in which the marginal gloss would soon be forced to bow.<sup>2</sup> To distinguish those things which can be known from those which cannot, Bayle reasons, one first needs to go back to sources: to review the whole course of previous scholarship. What do we know about David? about Spinoza? Only what the first, uncontaminated sources tell us.

<sup>1</sup>Eighteenth-century editions of Burnet print his gloss as footnotes.

<sup>2</sup>In *The Ordering of the Arts in Eighteenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1970), I have argued that Bayle's inductive method gave rise to a new mode of scholarly argument: *perpetual commentary*, in which the sequence of thought depends on reviewing all known sources of information. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, for instance, respond moment by moment to earlier biographers and critics, even though Johnson seldom names them. Virtually ignored by modern scholars, perpetual commentary should probably be considered the central organizing principle of eighteenth-century criticism; a principle still obeyed in *variora* and the Critical Heritage series.

For Coleridge's omissions from Burnet, see the *Notebooks*, 1:1000Hn.

In 1690 Sir William Temple's reply to Burnet, *An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning*, had abruptly sparked the war between Ancients and Moderns.

Bayle takes the text as his text. A thin rivulet of certain facts—the hard knowledge that has *priority*—flows over great depths of footnotes, where skeptical analysis demolishes the everlasting shipwreck of legend, conjecture, rumor, hearsay, falsehood, myth—and gloss. In place of the scheme of parallel knowledges, Bayle puts the hierarchy of the certain over the conjectural, true over false. Establishing the letter, as in editing a classical text, must take precedence over the unfolding of collateral significances. And by and large modern scholarship, with its freight of footnotes, still follows Bayle's model.

The popularity of the new style of glossing, however, carried with it some obvious disadvantages. Foremost, perhaps, was the problem of scholarly unoriginality, of sheer incremental accumulation, now displayed so visibly on the page. The burden of the past weighs heaviest in our footnotes. Bayle's own example tends always toward the encyclopedia; and many scholars during the eighteenth century, like modern Ph.D. candidates, were oppressed by the possibility that they might go on gathering references forever, without ever rising to the eminence of their own thin text. Nor could a treatise strewn with footnotes easily achieve a sense of unity. A few scholars rose to the challenge. Gibbon, most notably, succeeded in fashioning the footnote into an art-form, subtly and amusingly modulated into his overarching narrative.<sup>1</sup> But many other authors—as in

<sup>1</sup>For instance, chap. 53 of the *Decline and Fall* reports that the royal college of Constantinople "could show an ancient manuscript of Homer, on a roll of parchment one hundred and twenty feet in length, the intestines, as it was fabled, of a prodigious serpent." A note comments, "According to Malchus (apud Zonar. I. xiv. p. 53), this Homer was burnt in the time of Basiliscus. The MS. might be renewed—but on a serpent's skin? Most strange and incredible!" Gibbon's exclamation has actually led us back to his text: "But the seventh and eighth centuries were a period of discord and darkness." The witty manipulation of the reader's eye, and his attention, is almost unique to this author.

our own time—tried rather to devise strategies for avoiding footnotes. In an age that had become conscious of the long linear sequence of history, and its own comparatively late arrival on the scene, new ways had to be found for burying the past;<sup>1</sup> lest the past rise up and dominate the page.

A particularly interesting case is posed by Giambattista Vico's famous *Principles of a New Science concerning the Nature of the Nations* (1725). The phrase "scienza nuova" itself implies a claim of radical originality, and Vico's admirers have tended to follow his own example in accepting his priority as a social theorist. Indeed, the issue seems crucial, since Vico insists so strongly on the shaping power of origins, beginnings, *nascimento*: "The nature of institutions is nothing but their coming into birth at certain times and in certain guises." Yet the originality imputed to the *New Science* represents a considerable scholarly puzzle. While eighteenth-century scholars and modernists often find Vico's ideas breathtakingly fresh and new, Renaissance scholars often find them familiar. Even the newest of his new discoveries, the priority of poetry over other kinds of knowledge, can be associated with a Renaissance truism. Is it possible that the *New Science* is backward looking?

Whatever our answer, we must recognize that Vico's roots in the past confront him with a problem. How can an author so obsessed with origins afford to ignore the full history of his subject, the anticipations of his predecessors? Yet how can the author of a new science compromise his ideas with footnotes and glosses, the whole dead weight of that scholarship he is presuming to overthrow? Vico's solution is fascinating. He uses no marginal glosses; those would indicate a parallel or equality among different sorts of knowledge which would work against his no-

The discovery that sparked the new science, "a new critical method for sifting the truth as to the founders of the [gentile] nations from the popular traditions of the nations they founded" (*Autobiography*), may itself be considered an outgrowth of Bayle's perpetual commentary, substituting traditions for texts.

Vico's early works, *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* (1708) and *De antiquissima italorum sapientia ex linguae latinae originibus eruenda* (1710), already raise the problem, not only by what they say but by the language in which they are written. In order to perfect his etymological method, it was necessary for Vico to develop Italian as an instrument for uprooting Latin; turning the ancient gentile language into a commentary on itself, or self-exhuming gloss.

*And because he had also observed that by the publication of lexicons and commentaries Latin had fallen into decay, he resolved never again to take into his hands any such book . . . ; but to read the Latin authors completely free of notes, entering into their spirit by means*

<sup>1</sup>See W. Jackson Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970).

tion of historical development. Nor does he use footnotes; those would imply that his text rises out of others rather than springing up of itself. Instead, he crams his citations and references, his sources and scholarly arguments, into the very fabric of his text, in parentheses and digressions (Edward Said's rich, recent *Beginnings* reveals part of its debt to Vico in a similar technique, where the attempt to assimilate the best modern continental theory into a criticism of radical beginnings sometimes sets the ideas afloat upon a sea of names) that constantly interrupt the progress of the thought. Vico's page, clotted with an almost unreadable mass of evidence, is the visible sign of his effort to master and supersede all previous theory. His powerful ideas break over the opposition like waves, at once submerging the past and taking their shape from it.

Nor was uncertainty about the proper apparatus for a text, in the eighteenth century, confined to scholars. Many poets and storytellers—like the authors of *A Tale of a Tub* and *Tristram Shandy*—were also self-conscious about their glosses. As poets began to address a larger audience, a public whose familiarity with the classics could not be taken for granted, obscurity became a problem; poems had to find ways of conveying the information that would enable them to be read. Thomas Gray's poems, so difficult to finish or publish, seldom appeared without a pack of notes. Far more than their predecessors, eighteenth-century poets had difficulty in preserving the unity of the text, the separation of "pure" poetry from accompanying digressive foreign matter. Few poets succeeded. Of Christopher Smart's two typological masterpieces, *Jubilate Agno* and *A Song to David*, the former was neither noticed nor published in its own time, and the latter seemed largely incomprehensible. Yet Smart had provided a gloss. Indeed, the *Jubilate*—Smart's personal liturgy—consists of a gloss, in which the poet's life glosses the

*of philosophical criticism, just as the Latin authors of the sixteenth century had done. [Vico's Autobiography]*

As a professed *autodidact*, Vico refers most often to his own text, glossing one part of the new science by another. Readers who have first encountered the *New Science* in Bergin and Fisch's one-volume abridgement (1961), which suppresses most of the references and puts others in footnotes, are likely to follow the argument better, though at the risk of overlooking its origins.

When Gray first published his "Progress of Poesy" (1757), without notes, he used an epigraph from Pindar, in the Greek: "Vocal to the Intelligent alone" ("intelligent" retains the sense of "well-informed"). By 1768 he had been persuaded to supply an extensive commentary, and added a bit more of Pindar: "But for the Crowd they need Interpreters."

Smart's summary of the contents of *A Song to David* is printed as a marginal gloss in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (3d ed., 1974) for three reasons: to make the poem easier to follow; to emphasize its typological basis; to clarify the

Bible and the Creation glosses humanity. The antiphonal form, on facing pages, anticipates that later day when we shall meet the Maker face to face.

intricate antiphony between Smart's music and his thought.

Let Matthew rejoice with Uranoscopus, whose eyes are lifted up to God.

For I am inquisitive in the Lord, and defend the philosophy of the scripture against vain deceit.

Let James the less, rejoice with the Haddock, who brought the piece of money for the Lord and Peter.

For the nets come down from the eyes of the Lord to fish up men to their salvation.

Let Jude bless with the Bream, who is of melancholy from his depth and serenity.

For I have a greater compass both of mirth and melancholy than another.

[Fragment B1, ll. 130–32]

Smart reads the fishes, as he reads his own pain, for the glory they can teach him. Confronting a divided page—the page of modern life, where knowledge is severed from faith and the text from its interpretation—he strives to knit it up. The world becomes a book once more, for Smart; though a book that no one but him was willing to read. His gloss was too personal. Like Coleridge, he can find common ground with his audience only in a moment of prayer. The spiritual gloss of the *Jubilate* calls for annotation. Before it could be understood, before it could even be recognized to exist, it required an editor.

One editor might be the poet himself. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many poets maintain the fiction that a pre-existent manuscript has fallen into their hands, that they serve as editors, not authors, of their works. The culmination of this fiction may be seen in the poetry of a connoisseur of eighteenth-century themes and stratagems. Who is the author of “The Waste Land”? Its chief editor, at any rate, carefully keeps us in doubt; removing portions of the manuscript, for instance, that might render authorial intentions too explicit. Eliot strives for editorial virtues: impersonality, alertness to sources, objectivity. Preferring to think of his text as something not begotten but given, he can

Two editors, in fact: one (W. F. Stead, 1939) to recover the manuscript, one (W. H. Bond, 1954) to understand its arrangement.

Whether for purposes of deception (*Ossian*) or art (*The Ring and the Book*).

In addition to the cancelled imitation of Pope (*The Waste Land*, ed. Valerie Eliot [New York, 1971], pp. 38–41), the influence of Dryden claimed by Hugh Kenner, the famous echo of Goldsmith, etc., the manuscript reveals many other hints of eighteenth-century readings; for instance, the cunning subversion of Collins' “Ode on the Death of Mr. Thomson” in the “Exequy” (p. 101).

accept the suggestions of Pound, his fellow editor, as gracefully as if they were reconstructing a papyrus together. Nor does he shrink from footnotes. No doubt the notes to "The Waste Land" originated as a makeweight and were carried out with tongue in cheek, but they powerfully confirm what the poem implies: the distance of the author. Eliot claims no authority over his text. It is not the poet, after all, but Tiresias who *sees* the substance of the poem.

Tiresias, moreover, is "the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest." Like the gloss in "The Ancient Mariner," the notes to "The Waste Land" supply a principle of unity barely hinted by the poem itself. The knowing Tiresias, like Coleridge's knowing hermetist, inhabits a cosmic perspective where the past and future, the chasms between men which seem to lock each in a prison of the self, are woven together. Eliot required such a perspective. Shoring fragments against his ruins, connecting nothing/with nothing, his criticism was no less obsessed than Coleridge's with the need for unity—an end to dissociation. Again and again the essays contemporary with "The Waste Land" return to an attack on "internal incoherence of feelings" or "formlessness," to a plea for poetry with a better central nervous system. The threat of dislocation haunts "The Waste Land"; not only its emotions, but its arrangement of lines upon the page. Eliot sets his poem on the shore, where sea and land mingle and margins become difficult to distinguish. Indeed, "The Waste Land" is profoundly unsatisfying to gloss, because it insists on a disconnection, a failure of parallels and correspondences, that rebukes our facile efforts to find a key. Tiresias understood it all before it happened, evidently by consulting a pre-text or various strata of his experience; but the poem as we have it refuses to settle on a line. "The Waste Land" constitutes its own marginalia. It comments on an irrecoverable text, a sense of relation

*Miss Weston's book will elucidate the difficulties of the poem much better than my notes can do.*

Compare the (scandalous) remarks on "William Blake" (1920): *You cannot create a very large poem without introducing a more impersonal point of view, or splitting it up into various personalities. But the weakness of the long poems is certainly not that they are too visionary, too remote from the world. It is that Blake did not see enough, became too much occupied with ideas.*

"Swinburne as Poet" (1920)  
 "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921)  
 "Andrew Marvell" (1921)  
 "John Dryden" (1921)

A minority view?

#### CATALYSIS AND THE CAT

Eliot's "scientific" investigation into the workings of poetry resembles a father explaining to a child how the telephone works. "Picture a cat—a cat with a long, long tail—a *very* long tail—that stretches

between the world and the book that has been sadly lost.

Could it be found again? Eliot's famous article on "'Ulysses,' Order, and Myth," published the year after "The Waste Land," suggests that it could. "In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity," Joyce had invented a principle of order, control, form, nothing less than "a step toward making the modern world possible for art." He had restored, in short, that system of parallels on which not only the marginal gloss but the unity of art seemed to depend. Joyce had widened the page. The continuous implicit marginal gloss of *Ulysses*, the sequence of Homeric wanderings that maps it out, provides a possible direction for a modern book. It is not what the gloss stands for, Eliot suggests, but the gloss itself that matters. If the world could no longer be read like a book, a book could yet expand into a world. Willfully imposed by the author, the gloss returns. "I do not suppose," Eliot says, that Joyce "will ever write another 'novel'." But he might yet write a book that would be a world.

## 4

The mode of *Finnegans Wake*—readers have always suspected—is *glossolalia*: "fabricated nonmeaningful speech," associated with schizophrenia; or more sympathetically defined, *the gift of tongues*, the Pentecostal gloss or inspired original language made of many languages in which the Holy Spirit speaks through the chosen. But once at least Joyce showed himself a master of more ordinary glosses. At the center of the *Wake*, the episode called "Night Lessons" represents a tour de force of glossing, in which all the resources of the page—left margin, right margin, the space within, the space below—are put to artistic use. Here Joyce parodies all scholarship, all scholasticism, in-

from Chicago to New York. You step on the tail, and hundreds of miles away the head lets out a screech. That is how the telephone works. . . . But *there is no cat*." No ur-Tiresias; no primal text.

For nothing can be sole or whole  
That has not been rent.

I do not know any edition of *Ulysses* that prints the *Odyssey* as a running marginal gloss. It would be economical.

In the light of Curtius' pioneering work on Joyce and on the theme of the world as a book, as well as his constant laments over scholars' forgetting the past, it may be worth noting that Gabriel Josipovici's interesting *The World and the Book* (London, 1971) does not mention Curtius, and Marilyn French's fine study of *Ulysses*, *The Book as World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), cites Curtius only at second hand and Josipovici not at all.

Acts 2:4. *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

The sequel (Acts 2:6, 12) provides a specimen of early *Wake* criticism: *Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. . . . And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying to one another, "What meaneth this?"*



cluding his own. Yet the episode also functions as a microcosm of the *Wake* as a whole; a connection that Joyce acknowledged when, in 1937, he published part of the chapter separately as a little book, *Storiella as She Is Syung*.

*Storiella*, regarded by its author as a trial run for the “mighty mother” of a book to follow, is a daughter book in more ways than one: Lucia Joyce designed an elaborate capital letter for the beginning, an occupation her father was happy to provide for his troubled storytelling girl. But the little story is related mostly, of course, to the enormous macrocosm of stories that gave it birth. To call it an offspring of the parent work would be no mere figure of speech. For the structure of the *Wake* grows from its cells. A few pages sliced off at almost any point, placed under a microscope, would reveal the family features of the whole: the recurring cycles; the fragments of a few basic anecdotes and folktales; the genetic arguments among father, mother, daughter, sons; the richly overdetermined verbal texture; the history of the race. *Multum in parvo*. In the small world of the cell, as in a fairy tale, the bigger worlds of learning first take form. Every *Storiella*, properly nurtured, can grow up to be Mother Queen.

The first readers of the episode, however, found it “difficult of acceptance,” as Joyce wrote to Frank Budgen—“yet the technique here is a reproduction of a schoolboy’s (and schoolgirl’s) old classbook complete with marginalia by the twins, who change sides at half time, footnotes by the girl (who doesn’t), a Euclid diagram, funny drawings etc. It was like that in Ur of the Chaldees too, I daresay.” Joyce underestimates his own ingenuity. To appreciate the technique of *Storiella*, we need to understand its place in the whole (just before bedtime, in the nursery above the pub, the children are studying their homework: all previous thought), the personal rivalries of the siblings (Shem, Shaun, and Issy), the distinction among different kinds of scholarly apparatus (textual asides, marginalia,

“Night Lessons” is chapter 10 of *Finnegans Wake* (bk. 2, chap. 2, pp. 260–308). *Storiella as She Is Syung* consists of the beginning and end of that chapter (pp. 260–75, 304–8). An earlier version had been published in *transition* 23 (July 1935): 110–29.

*Letters*, 3:427.

Clive Hart’s *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake* (London, 1962) remains the best guide to Joyce’s “architectonic principles.” My own interpretations of the *Wake*, like proper night lessons, result from nodding and napping over all previous scholarship. I am grateful to A. Walton Litz for sharing his litter.

July 1939, *Letters*, 1:406.

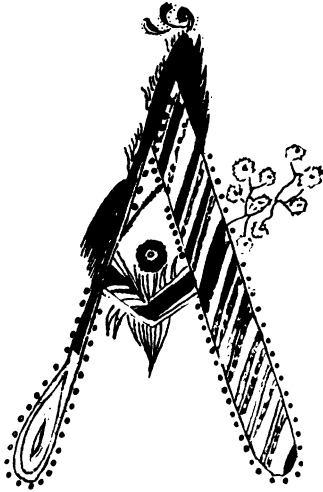
In 1936 Curtius took down some “Marginalia from Conversations with Joyce” (transcribed by Breon Mitchell, *A Wake Digest*, ed. Clive Hart and Fritz Senn [Sydney, 1968], pp. 80–81). A few of the notes, written on blank pages of *Anna Livia Plurabelle*, cast light on *Storiella*:

kl. familie im Geburtsort der Isolde.  
Kinder spielen die Weltgeschichte.

Schlafzimmer der Kinder uber der Bar,  
wo der Vater Bauern betrunken  
macht.

When their studies are finished, the  
children are put to bed.

marginal gloss, footnotes), and the geography of the cosmos in relation to Dublin. Even then, Joyce's high jinks may come as a shock.



S WE THERE **Unde et ubi**

are where are we  
are we there from  
tomtittot to tee-  
tootomtotalitarian.

Tea tea too oo.

*with his broad  
and hairy face,  
to Ireland a  
disgrace.*

Whom will comes over. Who to caps  
ever. And howelse do we hook our hike to **Sie**  
find that pint of porter place? Am shot, says  
the bigguard.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rawmeash, quoshe with her girlic teangue. If old  
Herod was to go for me like he does Snuffler I'd do nine  
months for his beaver beard.

Permission of The Society of Authors, London. Photo courtesy  
The Newberry Library.

The reader who hungers after explication should turn at once to my Homework. But we need another commentary as well: a look not only at what the page is saying, but what it is doing. See the appendix.

*Shem spatters the left-hand margin with snatches of song, gags, jeers, adverts, parodies, irrelevant associations, passing inspirations, effluvia, himself. He is hopeless as a student; no one who read his notes could possibly use them to reconstruct the text. A twister of words and*

In the beginning, and at the center, was the text. Joyce tells a story of creation: a tale that contains all others, as one cell might hold the codes to build the family of man. But what is the text? A dream, of course; a homework lesson, entailing the corpus of all human knowledge; an anthology of folktales; a series of directions; a Bible, recording the generations from Genesis to the Last Judgment; some permutations and

SHAUN IS A SCHOOLMAN; HE CAN EXPLAIN IT ALL. CONSISTENTLY RELEVANT, HIS COMMENTS DEMONSTRATE THAT HE UNDERSTANDS THE TEXT MUCH BETTER THAN IT KNOWS ITSELF. HE LIVES IN A WORLD OF DEFINITIONS,

sounds, he plays at being a one-man music hall, complete with graffiti in the urinals. His essence is nonsense.

*But Shem is a writer—perhaps the writer. His puns and parodies, like Joyce's own, unlock the shackles of language, the cramping childish notion that a word, a text, a history, a sequence of thought, a homework assignment, the solution to a problem, must be one thing and one thing only. A writer knows better (Joyce himself liked to use the left margin for second thoughts; Letters, 2:413). At the center of "Night Lessons," in fact, Shem will literally take over the text, moving from his margin to prove Platonically that opposites can join and that the answer to a geometry problem can lie in a human behind. Silly, uninhibited, creative, he has the common touch.*

combinations of words (which makes the opening as Beckett-like as any in Joyce); the family diary of a publican; nursery talk; whatever we choose to bring to it. Indeed, in its aspect as homework lesson the text might be said to reflect the inattention of its readers. Naturalistically, Joyce drafts a true map of misreading: a workbook as it might pass through the collective consciousness of three wool-gathering and self-occupied students, each of them distorting or misspelling it according to his or her concerns.

So it was, Joyce said, in *Ur of the Chaldees*. But surely texts can be reconstructed. Every attentive reader of the *Wake* becomes a paleographer, looking for an *Ur*-text; whether a clear premeditated line of music and story (like those we can hear in Joyce's own recorded performances) or an anthology of all permissible meanings (like those found in Reader's Guides or my own Homework appendix). Such readings reify the text. Open on the one side to any irrelevance, on the other to oversimplification, it nevertheless survives its commentators. The text has the mystery of ancient wisdom, of something given. Misprints and all, it exists as an object of study.<sup>1</sup>

CATHOLICALLY AT HOME. THE MYSTERY OF EXISTENCE PRESENTS ITSELF TO HIM MERELY AS A CLICHÉ, ONE MORE EXAMPLE OF THE UNDE-ET-UBI PROBLEM. MASTER-NOTES FOR THE UNIVERSE, HIS HOMEWORK WOULD PREPARE ONE FOR THE FINAL TEST FAR BETTER THAN THE TEXT WOULD, WITH ALL ITS CONFUSIONS.

HE ACCEPTS WHAT HAS BEEN GIVEN. SIC. THE UNIVERSE HAS BEEN CREATED, WITH ALL ITS ABSURDITIES; LET IT STAND. THE PAGE IS INTENDED THIS WAY, WITH ALL ITS APPARENT MISPRINTS; LET IT STAND. SURELY AN AUTHOR MUST BE IN CONTROL. SIC.

<sup>1</sup>Issy takes everything personally. She reacts to the text by attending to only those bits that arouse her own concerns: sex above all. A purely sexual creature, she waits for any mention of "the business each was bred to breed by" (*FW* 268:6), which she notes as "The law of the junger!" (n. 3). Her emotions footnote the ambitious intellect of man; knowing though she is, she is a pushover for romance.

While she does not respect the text, therefore, she confirms its authority. A hint of heroism on the page tosses her on her back (*FW* 279, n.), a hint of the moon turns her to motherhood. The relation of text to footnote, Joyce notes, is basically chauvinistic: the wisdom of the earthdaughter looks up to the power of the *übermensch*.

Moreover, each of the members of *Storiella* eventually enacts a small dramatic cycle. As the book proceeds, the seeming harmony of the page (each part keeping to its own station) proves to be unstable.

*The marginal gloss on the right becomes sullenly silent, and then*

The text seems contaminated by the children's reading of it<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>and the footnotes rise high on the page.

EXCHANGES  
PLACES WITH  
THE  
MARGINALIA  
ON THE LEFT.

By the end of the book, indeed, each element has degenerated into a parody of itself.

*Catiline.* The Value of Circumstantial Evidence,  
*Cadmus. Ezekiel.* Should Spelling? Outcasts in India, Collect-  
*Solomon. Themistocles.* ing Pewter, Eu<sup>1</sup>, Proper and Regular Diet  
*Vitellius. Darius.* Necessity For,<sup>2</sup> If You Do It Do It Now.  
*Xenophon.* Delays are dangerous. Vitavite! Gobbie  
Anne: tea's set, see's enough! Mox soonly  
will be in a split second per the chancellorry  
of his exticker.

*Pantocracy.* Aun  
*Bimutualism.* Do  
*Interchangeability.* Tri  
*Naturality.* Car  
*Superfetation.* Cush<sup>3</sup>  
*Stabimobilism.* Shay  
*Periodicity.* Shockt  
*Consummation.* Ockt  
*Interpenetrativeness.* Ni  
*Predicament.* Geg<sup>4</sup>  
*Balance of the* Their feed begins.  
*factual by the theoretic*  
*Boox and Coox,*  
*Amallagamated.*

**Mawmaw,  
luk, your  
beeefstay's  
fizzin over.**

**Kakaopoetic  
lippudencies  
of the  
ungumptions.**

<sup>1</sup> Eh, Monsieur? Oû, Monsieur? Eu, Monsieur?  
Nenni No, Monsieur.

<sup>2</sup> Ere we hit the hay, brothers, let's have that response  
to prayer.

<sup>3</sup> Kish is for anticheirst, and the free of my hand to him!

<sup>4</sup> And gags for skool and crossbuns and whopes he'll  
enjoyimsolff over our drawings on the line!



*Shaun's scholasticism is reduced to a weary list of historic names and abstractions.*

The text, asserting its authority, counts to ten in Gaelic, pompously pronouncing the Sephiroth as if its elementary arithmetic were holy commandments, the sum of all knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

SHEM, THE  
COPYCAT,  
REPRODUCES  
PHRASES FROM  
ULYSSES AND  
SHAUN.

<sup>2</sup>Issy's clamoring for the attention of the Father leads her to exhibitionism (funny drawings), thumbing her nose at superior learning.

Where can we go from here? Joyce seems to teach the lesson of a scholarly *reductio ad absurdum*. Creation, at the end, boils down to a mere recitation of words, the return of the Logos into letters; wisdom is reduced to a mere listing of the names of the dead; writing, to ignorant self-assertion; annotation, to a sign of skull and crossbones. In the uneasy vale of post-modernism, more than one critic has accused *Finnegans Wake* of deliberately bringing literature to the point of exhaustion, working every technique until its bones show through. Evidently the charge has some substance. As *Storiella* nears its close, light dies before its uncreating word; the page literally begins to disintegrate before our eyes.

But Joyce's technique has not yet come to an end. The lesson of *Storiella* requires another page: the telegram from abroad that launches another cycle.

#### NIGHTLETTER

With our best youlldied greedings to Pep and Memmy and the old folkers below and beyant, wishing them all very merry Incarnations in this land of the livvey and plenty of preprosperousness through their coming new yonks

from  
jake, jack and little sousoucic  
(the babes that mean too)

Let there be hce alp ssi abc  
10987654321GLOOS

And the margin is barely  
coordinated with the page.

*Wir graben den Schacht von Babel.*  
[Kafka]

GLOOS  
tLe reehT eB gtLhi

Suddenly the scholarly apparatus has disappeared—no gloss, no marginalia, no notes. Or rather, no text. For now the text belongs to the children; they have come in from the margins, and collaborated on a letter of their own; now *they* mean too. Nor is this revolution only a matter of form. Beneath the festive surface of the Nightletter, the children send a powerful message: the old folks, the old world, the old ways of writing are dead. There will be no more homework assignments. Insofar as Pep and Memmy survive their Christmas trip to the underworld, their old knowledge will be reincarnated in the works of the living; pre-posterously. Another generation puts in its claims; and the last shall be the first.

*Storiella*, then, like the *Wake* itself, is a book that has no end. It returns to an original unannotated text, a new testament where the children (little apostles) freely rechristen themselves and reinterpret (with the dreams of babes) the meaning of the book of man. The cycle starts again. Recovered ages hence, the telegram might serve as text for someone else's homework. Joyce reaffirms the vitality of scholarship; not because glossing can ever establish the truth, but because glosses break down, finally, into the fictions of life. The lesson of *Storiella* is that children *do* learn; they learn to take over the text. And scholars do the same. Joyce recapitulates the fear that has haunted so many writers from the eighteenth century to the present—the fear that our inheritance from the past is too rich, too intimidating, ever to be unified and made our own—only to mock it. The gloss, he shows us, is not a way of shattering the text to pieces, but a way of preparing a new revised standard edition. There, on the page, everything falls together. "Singalingalying. Storiella as she is syung."

5

Joyce's creative solution to the problems of

The Letter from America (associated with Shaun) and the Telegram from Australia (associated with Shem) are two running motifs in the *Wake*. A Nightletter (signed by all three siblings) is neither letter nor telegram, but something of both; and so independent that it does not even ask the parents to send money.

Youlldied.

Pre-posterus: before-coming after; hind end first.

Pro-sperus: according to-one's hope.

As Vico may be said to have transferred Bayle's method of perpetual commentary from texts to traditions, so Joyce may be said to have renewed perpetual commentary by rearranging Vico's synthesis of myths and words into the atomistic form of Bayle's skeptical encyclopedia. It is noteworthy that Joyce arranges his resumé of Vico's cycle—"in deesperation of deispiration at the diasporation of his diesparation" (*FW* 257:25–26)—(as A. Walton Litz points out) in strictly alphabetical order.

*Syung*, because the story is threaded together (Danish *sy*, sew; for the association of needlework and stories, cf. Walter Benjamin on "The Storyteller").

*Syung*, because it is sung.

glossing, however, does not offer much comfort to less creative writers. A scholar who thinks of his own work as preserving, not overthrowing, the texts of the past, who thinks of his own contribution to learning as progressive—at least somewhat in advance of Ur of the Chaldees—rather than cyclic, can hardly mock the footnote. The authority of literary research requires the piling of text upon text. Even critical books without footnotes look curiously bare; and critics who shun the footnote often compensate (consciously or not) by strewing their lines with submerged quotations or an autumnal spray of names. We come late in time, as scholars; we cannot do without glossing. Yet the question remains: is the footnote, that method popularized in the eighteenth century, still adequate to our needs?

The question is worth posing, I think, for two reasons. First, technologically, advances in printing seem likely to free the mass-produced page from its long bondage to a solid block of text supported by smaller type at the bottom. Innovations like offset lithography do not *compel* authors to rearrange their presentation of arguments on the page, but they do encourage some experiments with form. Second, a considerable body of modern formalist criticism has long insisted that every aspect of a text—including its visual setting—is responsible for its ends. No mode of printing, no mode of glossing, can be neutral. Poetry, in an age of print, consists partly of decisions about where to draw the line; fiction, partly of decisions about how well the book will counterfeit a work of nonfiction: historical scholarship, partly of a convincing reproduction of the look of other historical scholarship.<sup>1</sup> Once technology has enabled an author to shape the page to his liking, no convention provides a hiding place. To be sure, a writer alone cannot claim authority over the page; the reader also has

<sup>1</sup>Footnotes, partly of homage raised to the text.

*Syung*, because it holds Jung's archetypes (Lucia, the original Storiella, was being treated by Jung at the time of writing).

*Syung*, because in spite of its age the story is so young.

Modern footnotes and modern theories of progress were introduced at the same time and in the same context: the late seventeenth-century war between Ancients and Moderns. *Ulysses* declares that war void.

Might the marginal gloss serve better?

This essay would have been hard to prepare before the invention of invisible tape and photocopying.

Stéphane Mallarmé.  
Viktor Shklovsky.  
Roman Jakobson.  
Louis Hjelmslev.  
Ezra Pound.  
Marshall McLuhan.  
Walter J. Ong, S.J.  
Hugh Kenner.

*Printing and the Mind of Man*, ed. John Carter and P. H. Muir, with an introductory essay by Denys Hay (London, 1967), offers a useful descriptive catalogue of documents pertaining to the rise of print. See also Elizabeth Eisenstein, "Some

rights, prescribed by the rules of scholarly presentation. But the contract between writer and reader may well be open for renegotiation.

The long hegemony of the footnote may be jeopardized, moreover, for another reason. Fewer and fewer literary critics, these days, would accept the philosophical model of discourse on which the relation between text and note was founded: the clear division between certain knowledge, brought to light in the text, and conjectural or historical evidence, cited below. The search for truth that underlies Bayle's relativism now itself seems positivistic. No knowledge is certain; even the best text represents only one construction, a relatively arbitrary act of interpretation. Viewed this way, the footnote appears less a means of forcing disputants to demonstrate their proofs, more a means of cleverly asserting the priority of the text. Footnotes, as everyone knows, are defensive. They stand for a scholarly community, assembled by the author specifically so that he can join it. But a critic who considers that community an illusion, fabricated for self-serving ulterior purposes, may choose another allegiance. The epigraph, for instance, favored by many of those critics who scorn the footnote, does not pretend to prove anything. Rather, it suggests an initial mood or state of mind. As independent and divorced from controversy as the morning star, and as soon forgotten, it casts a vaguely benign influence over the struggling arguments to come.

The marginal gloss is more embattled. Originally, I have said, such glosses responded to the need for a total interpretation, the fitting of the part to the whole. But the notions of what interpretation might be, of what a whole might be, have not remained stable. The gloss of "The Ancient Mariner," for example, might be thought to unify the poem by interpreting it through the vision of another time, when the harmony of the world

Conjectures about the Impact of Printing on Western Society and Thought: A Preliminary Report," *Journal of Modern History* 40 (March 1968): 1-56.

Many of the formulas of modern literary scholarship can be traced to the editing of ancient texts, where techniques assume the moral imperative of preserving (not tampering with) a strictly limited supply of precious remains, and where the proudest hope of the editor is to hear his work described as scrupulous, disinterested, definitive, or unimpeachable. A few of these words sometimes apply to literary history; only very rarely to criticism.

The reader may select his own epigraph for this essay. Here are some samples:

The sun is but a morning star.  
—Thoreau

The sun has never seen a shadow.  
—Leonardo-Valéry

Per amica silentia lunae.  
—Virgil-Hugo-Verlaine-Yeats

The moon's an arrant thief,  
And her pale fire she snatches from  
the sun.  
—Shakespeare-Nabokov

Glosynge is a glorious thyng,  
certeyn,  
For lettre sleeth, so as we clerkes  
seyn.  
—Summoner's Tale



could be taken for granted; but a reader more in tune with Coleridge's own way of thinking might conclude that the tensions between the poem and the gloss, their dialectical oppositions, are precisely the source of the whole—a union *made* of tensions. The margin, unlike the footnote, is capable of such dialectic, since it rises to rough equality with the text. Indeed, for a modern critic it may emblemize the self-enclosed behavior of the text, in which the only fit response to a column of words consists of another column of words, sometimes parallel to its opposite number but never proving or refuting it. The "truth" of the margin is that many alternate truths are possible. Philosophically, perhaps, that makes it a proper gloss for modern times.

Nevertheless the marginal gloss has not yet replaced the footnote. One reason, certainly, is that new conventions have yet to be established. Competing marginal ideologies contend for the edge of the page: formalism, illustration, diacriticism, *tympan-philosophie*, paracriticism, doodling, or what in the present case can only be called eclectic marginalism. Nor should one underestimate the skepticism of the reader. Footnotes can be ignored, at discretion; marginal glosses always cry for attention and threaten to split the experience of reading asunder. Some readers may find the continual dispersion of the thought refreshing, as the to-and-fro of a tennis match relaxes the eye; but others will long for an old-fashioned undivided text. Once upon a time margins, like indices, served the reader's convenience. These days they often reflect an author talking to himself.

Even the best marginal gloss, moreover, tends to leave questions open. Consider one final example. *Les Divers Essais sur Léonard de Vinci*, the three pieces on Leonardo that Valéry gathered together in 1931, accompanied by the marginal commentary he had

The supernatural against the natural;  
dream against reason;  
the path of the serpent.

In an introduction to *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris, 1972), pp. i–xxv, Jacques Derrida argues that philosophy is a "Tympan": an extreme Hegelian dialectic or water-wheel in which alternatives are not synthesized but drum, resound, or spin against each other. The essay, which plays with various senses of "tympan," is accompanied by a continuous marginal gloss, or drumming, by Michel Leiris. I do not know whether French literature, like English, often refers to "tympany" in the sense of a morbid swelling or inflation (e.g., "Puffed up with this Tympany of self conceit" [*Anatomy of Melancholy*]).

For the past few years the magazine *diacritics* has reserved its margin for notes and pictures. Most uses of this space have not been especially imaginative, though one should except the paracritic Ihab Hassan ("Abstractions," Summer 1975), whose swervings to the margin are animated by a sense of self-revelation and controversion.

In a glossy margin, Narcissus saw his face.

Valéry was commissioned to write "Introduction à la Méthode de Léonard de Vinci" in 1894; it was published in *La Nouvelle Revue*, 15

added the previous year, compose a masterpiece of glossing. Valéry's work on Poe's *Marginalia*, a few years before, may have inspired the project; but his whole life had prepared it. Spiritually, logically, technically, the book required a gloss. First of all, the subject was Leonardo. From the very beginning of Valéry's career, the idea of Leonardo had supplied him with not only a model of thought but a method of procedure—above all, the method of *notes*. Almost fifty years later, Valéry still recalled his excitement at twenty on first encountering Leonardo's pages.

I had not imagined until then that the world contained so extraordinary a document of the life of a first-rate mind, and of its intimacy with its power. . . . But these notebooks of Leonardo were absolutely for himself alone, his laboratory of secret research. There he recorded only what could serve him in developing his resources. There he pursued I do not know what way of indefinite progress into knowledge and power: those terms inseparable for him.

The word for notebooks is "cahiers," and what Valéry remembers is partly the origin of his own private laboratory: the twenty-nine volumes of *Cahiers* that hold the essential variations of his mind. The essays on Leonardo are quarried from these notebooks; phrases and thoughts combine in the body of the text; and the right margin, a selection of afterthoughts, breaks them back down into fragments. Ashes to ashes, notes to notes. Valéry creates a form that allows his mind to circle back upon itself—the tribute of one master of notes to another.

Leonardo had also shown Valéry another way: the refusal to separate knowledge from power, or science from art. The implications of this refusal, pondered for decades, seemed to require a new start—a new organization of

August 1895. In 1919 he reprinted it, slightly revised, with a new preface, "Note et digressions." "Léonard et les Philosophes," first published in *Commerce* 18 (Winter 1928), was intended as the preface to a book on Leonardo by Leo Ferrero. All three essays were gathered in *Les Divers Essais sur Léonard de Vinci* (1931), accompanied by a facsimile of marginal notes written in 1929–30. ("Digressions" had lost its final "s" in 1924.) The essays and notes are reprinted in Valéry's *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1957), 1:1153–1269. Malcolm Cowley has translated the essays and notes in *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry* (Princeton, 1972), 8:3–157; selections from the notebooks and letters concerning Leonardo are appended. Two later pieces by Valéry, "L'Oeuvre écrite de Léonard de Vinci" (1939) and "Léonard de Vinci" (1942) are collected in *Vues* (Paris, 1948), pp. 217–31.

"L'Oeuvre écrite de Léonard de Vinci" (first published in *Figaro*, 13 May 1939). All translations in the text are my own.

In the *Cahiers* Valéry sometimes refers to himself as Lionardo or simply L, a name given him by K[arin], his Beatrice figure. Note the entry at 14:590, "Jealousy and love extending to *psychic possession*," where K and L are jotted in the margin.

thought not only for Valéry but Western civilization.

In the work of painting, Leonardo found all the problems that could posit for the mind the design of a synthesis of nature; and some others. . . .

The particular case of Leonardo da Vinci posits for us one of those remarkable coincidences that insist on a reversal of our mental habits, as if awakening our attention in the midst of ideas that have been passed down to us.

In the case of Valéry, this return on himself (*un retour sur nos habitudes d'esprit*) demanded a famous long silence. The first essay on Leonardo announces the inadequacy of the "picturesque," a kind of art that depends on intuition or beauty spots (*les beaux sites*). And Valéry was true to his theory. His twenty-year abstention from poetry, the fastidious interlude that has so haunted critics, consciously followed the example of Leonardo. Before resuming his art, he would submit it to deliberate, rigorous intellectual introspection, testing the process of making by the scruples of knowing. Whether or not he succeeded is open to debate (as it was in his own mind). But the period of silence lends a special authenticity to Valéry's return. The later essays on Leonardo come back to the scene of his first voyagings; once more he draws his bow. The subject has not changed, the preoccupations remain the same. Yet now there is a gloss. The older Valéry, a "scientist" of his own making, views his earlier writings (sometimes rather sourly) across a gulf of time and space—from the margin. The distance between the text and the gloss exemplifies the distance between several persons; the youngest twenty-three, the oldest fifty-nine. Nor are they quite comfortable with each other. A white space falls between them: the symbol of a silence that might fall between a reunited

*.When circumstance made me consider da Vinci, I saw him as the type of that labor conscious that art and science are inextricably mixed, the exemplar of a system of art founded on general analysis and always concerned, when it makes a particular work, to compose it only of verifiable elements. . . .*

*This remarkable reciprocity between making and knowing, through which the first is guaranteed by the second, is characteristic of Leonardo. ["Léonard et les Philosophes," *Oeuvres*, 1:1260-61]*

In an important early essay "Sur l'Introduction à la méthode de Léonard de Vinci," written in 1920 and later published in *Approximations* (1922), the critic Charles Du Bos already anticipated many of the directions of Valéry criticism. Du Bos (himself a virtuoso of journals and self-explorations) points out quite accurately that "Leonardo here is only a pretext, the ideal figure Valéry constructs from possibilities of the human mind"; he contrasts the "Introduction" with the "Note," observing the "similarity of the thought and the divergence of the stress"; he notes the human cost of Valéry's quest for purity. The difficulty of communication between the worlds of making and knowing, however, as well as between English and French, may be seen in his translation of the line of verse with which he ends:

*Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart.*

[Ton âme était comme une étoile, et existait d'une existence séparée.]

child and father; or any text and any explanation of what it once meant.

Internally, moreover, each of the essays on Leonardo also invites a gloss. Valéry's logic of thought is built on a logic of metaphors; setting out to "prove" that poetry constitutes a kind of practical science and philosophy, he proves in addition that his own science and philosophy are made up of a kind of cerebral poetry. Images sustain the argument, and a single controlling image dominates the pages of each essay. Literally as well as metaphorically, Valéry's mind expands into the margins. "Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci," for instance, evokes a recurrent, obsessive ascension, the image of a flight into space. A letter to Gide, written while the article was still being prepared, brilliantly associates the flight of Leonardo with Valéry's flight in pursuit.

What a travesty! having to pull the great Flying-Man down to this format. How often I have seen him, from the Peyrou, crossing from the sea to the west, breaking the circles of the fine sky. He was experimenting, in the air, on that machine inseparable from himself—but in reality, on *me*. Was it to teach me to read?

At the end of the "Introduction" the image returns; a quotation from the last page of Leonardo's notebook, his research on aviation, fills the last lines of Valéry's own first flight.

"The great bird will take his first flight mounted on a great swan, filling the universe with amazement, filling all writings with his glory, eternal honor to the nest where he was born!"

Filling space, certainly, is what the "Introduction" aims to do. Commissioned to write on Leonardo, and reduced to despair by the difficulty of grasping so high a figure, the

On the logic of the Leonardo essays in relation to Valéry's thought as a whole, see Marcel Raymond, *Paul Valéry et la tentation de l'esprit* (Neuchâtel, 1946), pp. 35–44; Louis Perche, *Valéry: Les Limites de l'humain* (Paris, 1966), pp. 62–80.

*I pursue the observation of the functioning of the mind. I would like to make from this what Leonardo made with the flight of birds. [Cahiers, 25:845]*

3 January 1895; *Correspondance d'André Gide et de Paul Valéry* (Paris, 1955), p. 229.

*Here is an astonishing prophecy, which would be a small thing if it were only a pure view of the possible, but which achieves sublimity from being uttered by the first man who had really studied the problem of flight, who had conceived the technical solution, at the beginning of the sixteenth century! [Oeuvres, 1:1198–99]*

young Valéry “could find nothing better than attributing to the unfortunate Leonardo my own agitation, transporting the disorder of my mind into the complexity of his.” The Renaissance man would offer his wings to the modern. And the solution worked, the pages were filled—with Valéry’s imagination.

I propose to imagine a man who has exhibited so many separate activities that, when I conceive the reach of his thought, it could not be more extensive.

Expanding into the infinite, the mind of Leonardo encompasses every dream of his analyst. The method of *construction*, in which the painter’s vision sees through every appearance to capture its “true form” or principles of being, affords the writer a liberating sense of mastery. Space itself becomes his element, a vast plenitude of radiating lines organized by the artist.

Indeed, as Valéry warms to his task he begins to be incapable of leaving anything out. The “vast collection of forms” held in Leonardo’s “symbolic mind” sweeps over the page in an extraordinary long passage on the poetry of space.

He fixes the air in the wake of larks in ravellings of shadow, in frothy flights of bubbles whose aerial ways and fine breathing must destroy and disperse them across the bluish leaves of space, the depth of the vague crystal of space.

He reconstructs all buildings; all modes of joining the most different materials tempt him. He plays at distributing things in the dimensions of space: curves, frames, straining domes; galleries and loggias in lines; masses whose arches hold their weight in air; ricocheting bridges; the depth of greenery in trees fading into the atmosphere it drinks; the structure of migrating flights whose triangles, acute toward the south, display a rational combination of living beings.

“Note,” p. 1232. The letter to Gide emphasizes Valéry’s intention of learning, not only to read, but to pad.

*In reality, I gave the names man and Leonardo to what then appeared to me as the power of mind.*  
[“Introduction,” 1:1155]

It is not always clear, in the “Introduction,” whether space should be considered a metaphor for the page or the page for space; both are “pure” until broken by the mind.

*His effort of thought seems, from all this, to take part in that slow transformation of the notion of space—from a vacuum chamber, an isotropic volume—which little by little has become a system inseparable from the matter it contains, and from time.*  
[1:1177]

He plays, he takes courage, he translates  
all his feelings clearly into this universal  
language.

The triumph of Leonardo turns into the triumph of the author; every jotting, every particle of space, comes alive with potential meaning. The whiteness of the page holds no more terrors for Valéry. "Space, when we want to picture it to ourselves, at once stops being empty, and fills with a host of arbitrary constructions." The word "arbitrary" here may seem a little ominous, a word that will return to trouble its author. Valéry would come to be embarrassed by the optimism of his younger self. Nevertheless, the images of the "Introduction" sustain its powerful ambition: the outpouring of ideas that would one day spill into the margin.

A quarter of a century later, however, Valéry was engrossed by another set of images. Part of the "Note and Digressions" consists of a review of his earlier state of mind; part, of a justification of his "method." Yet the focus has changed. Valéry rereads his essay, quite deliberately, with a cold and destructive eye, in order to remake it.

There is no temptation more consuming, nor deeper-seated, nor more fertile, perhaps, than that of repudiating oneself.

Considering that the "Note" was written to preface a new edition of the "Introduction," this approval of self-repudiation seems paradoxical. But the paradox forms the essence of the "Note." The problem that Valéry now articulates is exactly the way that consciousness, and even creativity, depend on rejection. As the later essay repudiates the earlier, so the mind denies any limits on its powers; images of plenitude yield to images of insatiability. Thus the "Note" enacts a series of rejections. To begin with, Valéry (contra Proust) rejects the past: "I do not search for

1:1191. The whole passage, on architecture, is relevant.

Much of "Leonardo and the Philosophers" circles around the notion of the arbitrary; indeed, the essay might be said to prove, to the author's satisfaction, that the activity of philosophy is essentially more arbitrary than Leonardo's principles of painting. See especially the end (1:1267-69 and gloss).

*The morning after finds the night  
before weaker or stronger than itself; and  
both feelings are offensive.* [1:1200]

Since publication itself is a premature hardening, a betrayal of the mind's flexibility, Valéry also sets out to *unpublish* his earlier work (driving the first version out of circulation by replacing it with another).

lost time, which I would rather push back. My mind takes pleasure only in action.” The historical Leonardo, the Leonardo found in facts and documents, interests him very little.

The sheer amount of retrieved material truth puts the reality we seek in danger. Truth in the raw is more false than falsehood. Documents inform us at random of the rule and the exception.

Similarly, Valéry denies that the life of an author, still less his emotions, should have anything to do with his works; denies the influence of the world on an artistic construction; denies the significance of personality; denies Time; denies Death.

This last denial, however, almost gives away the game. For the “Note” is haunted by thoughts of death; or more precisely, by the way that consciousness, with its insatiable thirst for purity and its eternal refusal to be bound to the things of this world, eventually comes to resemble the death it denies. The worm of consciousness—in the essay as in so many of Valéry’s poems—preys upon life. That is at once its weakness and its power.

There is no idea that satisfies the unknown conditions of consciousness so well as to make it vanish. There exists no thought that destroys the power of thinking, and concludes it—a certain position of the bolt that definitively shuts the lock. No, no thought that would bear for thought a resolution of its own development, like a final concord of its permanent dissonance.

The price for such immortality must be paid in loneliness. Valéry carries his rejection of the mere objects of thought, his preference for the potential over the actual, to fanatical lengths. His central image for the place of consciousness, in the “Note,” consists of an invisible box in the darkness of a theater—Plato’s cave, or a coffin—where

*Je ne recherche pas le temps perdu*  
(1:1203, gloss; written in 1929–30).

*What is truest of an individual, and most Himself, is his potential—which his real life is uncertain to make good.*

*What happens to him cannot draw out of him a self he does not know.* [1:1203]

See Jean Hytier, “The Refusals of Valéry,” *Yale French Studies* 2 (1949): 105–36.

*There is certainly no last thought in itself and by itself.*

*In the case of certain male insects, there is a last act, of love, after which they die. But no thought can exhaust the power [virtualité] of the mind.* [1:1219]

Thinking about Leonardo often leads Valéry to think about love. Amour, in his terms, represents primarily an obsession—testimony to an absence, which confirms rather than relieves one’s aloneness. (Cf. Freud’s essay on Leonardo.)

night hides all the spectators from view, and only the stage of appearances can be seen. No living thing can touch the restless mind. The "I" of Valéry, like the Ancient Mariner, does not fear death but Life-in-Death, his proper mistress. And like the Ancient Mariner's, his ultimate loneliness goes beyond the reach of any gloss.

If I have led you to this solitude, and even to this desperate clarity, it was necessary to carry to its utmost consequence the idea of intellectual power I had made. The characteristic of man is consciousness; and that of consciousness a perpetual emptying out, a detachment without rest or exception from everything that appears to it, whatever may appear. An inexhaustible act, as independent from the quality of apparent things as from their quantity, by which the *man of mind* must finally reduce himself, knowingly, to an indefinite refusal to be anything that might be.

Leonardo, in Valéry's mind, has made the Great Refusal; he has rejected everything but the potential. What choice has Valéry except to do the same?

Two choices—so far as the gloss is concerned. Valéry's logic, in practice as well as theory, can point his margin in alternate directions. One method would be to consider the marginal gloss as an emblem of consciousness: a perpetual refusal to acquiesce in any position held by the text. So long as a text exists, some space will always be left for the gloss to perform its denials; and every gloss becomes in turn a text to be repudiated. To some extent the *Diverse Essays on Leonardo* follow this logic. Valéry qualifies and contradicts his previous thought on each new occasion, moving farther to the right; the *man of mind* leaves spoils of himself on his own *field of mind*. Only the accident of death could keep him from going on forever.

Yet Valéry also follows another method.

#### THE PARADOX OF THE ARTICHOKE

Does the effort of eating it require more energy than it returns in nourishment, so that one might starve in the process of eating an unlimited supply?

Eventually one might begin to eat the spikes.

*un refus indéfini d'être quoi que ce soit*  
[1:1225]

Part of Leonardo's strength, for Valéry, consists of his refusal to publish. He left much to be reconstructed, nothing to be withdrawn.

Why should there only be *two* choices?

Why not as well a *thousand*?

A famous variant in the second stanza of "Palme" exemplifies the pull of opposing forces. In *Odes* (1920), the "slow fiber" of the tree balances between the attractions of earth and heaven *avec mystère*; in later versions, *sans mystère*. Valéry literally demystifies his act of perception.



Just before the end of the “Note,” at the very moment when the text has concluded that every meaning or object or other person can exist only in ourselves, suddenly a broken message falls across the page.

Any kind of image is perhaps only a beginning of ourselves . . .

*lionardo mio  
o lionardo che tanto penate . . .*

As for the true Leonardo, he was what he was . . .

The train of insatiable logic is interrupted by a small historical fact, a cry of love, perhaps—or only impatience. But whatever its meaning, the bit of marginalia asserts its own brute fact: the fact of the *other*. Like the wind that rises at the end of “Le Cimetière marin,” ruffling the pages of the poet’s book and calling him back to life from meditation, a few words of human feeling shake him from his self-absorption. “He was what he was. . . .” Valéry is not repudiating his text so much as acknowledging the presence of another. The persistent claims of everything that consciousness denies will not be checked; as, in a darkened theater, another hand might grasp our own. The unknown hand, with its unknown motivations, reminds the author of the world outside his circle. “Le vent se lève! . . . Il faut tenter de vivre!” The margin represents that life. However outlandish, its notes can serve to throw out fresh accidents for the text to feed on; distracting the mind from its own deathly rigor.

The example of Valéry, then, leads us back where we started: the distinction between the marginal gloss and marginalia. One method—the marginal gloss, or science of notes—aims at a constant refining of thought, an omnipresent rationalizing will that fans out (like the later style of Henry James) toward fuller and fuller explanations. The

*These words, whose traces?*

*One might read pensate or penate.*

*What intimacy . . . So it was necessary for an unknown hand to place a tender inscription on these learned pages.*

Valéry’s own interpretation of the mysterious fragment, written by someone in Leonardo’s notebook, is clarified by his wish to read *pensate*, as well as by the comment (*Cahiers*, 8:374) that love was Leonardo’s reward for his thought.

*Et cetera. Et cetera.*

*Mallarmé did not like this word-gesture [mot-geste, as opposed to mot juste]. He proscribed it. I myself relished it, and was astonished.*

*The mind has no more specific response. It is itself that this locution calls to life. [Cahiers, 10:105]*

“Un Coup de dés,” according to Valéry (the first reader ever to see it), aims at a perfect *form*, however arbitrary its *content*. It admits no revisions, accidents, *et ceteras*. While every element of the text keeps in motion, like the stars in a constellation (to use Valéry’s own repeated metaphor), the textual constellation of the Word remains fixed. Valéry aims at a different experiment, making room for any number of *et ceteras*, for all the possible combinations spinning in the infinite moment before the dice cease to roll.

other—marginalia, or the art of digression—engages in the spontaneous generation of afterthoughts, signifying with its arbitrary departures that no two thoughts are the same, no explanations are final. The last of the *Diverse Essays*, “Leonardo and the Philosophers,” confronts these different methods, and tries to reconcile them in the figure of Leonardo. But Valéry’s own work belies him. Two opposing visions haunt him: a vision of perfection, in which the poem or essay would finally be purified, through a lifetime of revisions, into a flawless essence; and a vision of undying process, in which the poem or essay would remain open to every imaginable variant. Standing at a perpetual crossroads, Valéry wants to take all the ways. Thus *Monsieur Teste*, “the demon of the possible,” attempts to mediate between the permanence of the text (*texte*) and the restlessness of the head (*lête*). Yet Valéry’s test case leaves no avenues open. For all their flights and fancies, his notes, like Leonardo’s, witness a master craftsman.

Nor do the margins of the *Essays* on Leonardo go outward forever. Despite all Valéry’s techniques for holding them open—his refusal, for instance, ever to consider one of Leonardo’s finished works—the essays and glosses leave an impression, at last, of coherence. If anything is wanting, it is spontaneity. Most of the time Valéry seems to be writing an orthodox gloss, as if the mind of his younger self were fully present to him and the problem of conceiving a potential Leonardo were incapable of change. The *Diverse Essays on Leonardo* compose a classic text, where every jot of marginalia closes into a marginal gloss. Valéry explains everything—except why explanations, in a fluid world where we never dip into the same page twice, should be possible.

The problem recurs, I think, in many margins. Modern critics like to proclaim their independence from the texts on which they

Some of Valéry’s marginal comments (culled from his notebooks) were written long before the text; some, at the same time; some, long after. So also in the present margin.

*Perhaps it would be interesting to make, just once, a work which would display, at each of its nodes, the diversity that can present itself to the mind, and from which it chooses the unique sequence that will be given in the text. This would substitute, for the illusion of a unique fixing and imitating of the real, that of the possible-at-each-instant, which seems to me more true.*  
[“Fragments of memoirs of a poem,” 1:1467]

The glosses end with a playful recommendation of indeterminacy, emblemized by the final three dots:

*The existence of unconcerted notions, or the accidental coexistence of terms created independently from one another, makes room for antinomies or paradoxes very favorable to a rich development of misunderstandings and subtleties sufficiently philosophical . . . [1:1269]*  
But the notes to “Leonardo and the Philosophers,” composed almost immediately after the text, seldom if ever disagree with it. Text and gloss together carry forward a single argument: philosophers have much to learn from Leonardo’s method.

The uneasiness of many critics with texts has begun to resemble the

comment; yet they also like to offer explanations. What begins in marginalia abruptly turns into marginal gloss. Similarly, we are all familiar with cases of dogmatic critical relativism: criticism which insists that no reading of a literary work (not even—or especially not—the author's) has authority over any other, yet promotes its own readings as if they embodied historical necessity. Margins lend themselves to doubletalk. The very displacement of marginal commentary, its frank disclosure of being beside the point, may seem to guarantee its honesty; it does not pretend to replace the text. According to the conventions of the stage, we always trust an actor's asides. Yet a surfeit of asides can break a play apart. As marginalia accumulate they create their own contexts, and their seeming detachment may serve to push the text aside. Nor need they pay attention to anyone else's meaning. Like the spirit voices of "The Ancient Mariner," they inhabit another sphere, and leave the one who overhears them more lonely than before. The sentence from Poe that Valéry suppressed returns to haunt us: if the essence of the marginal note is nonsense, then a criticism modeled on such notes will make its peace with nonsense.

When the text has gone, how long can the gloss remain? For Valéry, the need for notebooks and revisions and variants and afterthoughts was created by a counter tendency, the immense prestige and glamor attached to the notion of a finished work of art. Regarded by others as a god, the poet could retain his integrity only by seeing through his own illusions, disclaiming the myth of inspiration, and constantly reminding himself that his poem, like any product of human frailty, is mortal; could be other than it is. Valéry looks to the margin to save himself from idolatry, the worship of the text. But the margin can also harbor idols: the God of Chance, who believes that all texts are equal, or separated only by a throw of the dice; the

uneasiness of poets talking about their poems. A critic who wants to own or use texts, not to make them more available, may feel his existence threatened by the rival claim of the poem to its own meaning (hell is other people's texts). Compare Valéry's experience of feeling "strangely divided" while Gustave Cohen explicated "Le Cimetière marin": *I felt like my Shadow. . . . I felt like a captured shadow; and yet I identified myself, at moments, with one of those students who paid attention, took notes, and from time to time smilingly regarded that shadow whose poem their teacher, stanza by stanza, was reading and commenting on. . . .* [1:1498]

Derrida's *Glas* (Paris, 1974) consists of two columns, one of them playing with Hegel and the other with Genet, whose indifference to each other creates sometimes a wild cacophony (as in the counterpointing of Hegel with Poe's "Bells," pp. 173–80) and more often a "double solitude." The puns of the *glas* (passing bells), as Derrida says, "toll the end of signification, sense, and signifier" (*signifiant*; p. 39). In short, they ring in nonsense.

#### TO THE READER

Time will assuage.  
Time's verses bury  
Margin and page  
In commentary,

For gloss demands  
A gloss annexed  
Till busy hands  
Blot out the text,

God of Glossing, whose worshippers hold that the poem and the gloss, the poet and his critics, are ultimately the same. It is not the perfection of the text that haunts us now, but its porosity. We write, as we live, more marginally than Valéry did. The sacred texts have begun to disappear; the world is no longer a book, and books are seldom worlds. Yet more and more critics require the margin, not for evidence of what they know, but for evidence that they exist. The white space remains to be filled. The gloss outlasts the text.

And all's coherent.  
Search in this gloss  
No text inherent:  
The text was lost.

The gain is gloss.

—J. V. Cunningham

And yet. . . . Would it not be possible, *just once*, for the margin to contain something more? the authority of the marginal gloss combined with the impulses of marginalia, each mutually supporting the other? at once a whole and a part, a commentary and a new text, Shem and Shaun, the world and its rivers, the serpent of consciousness and a slimy living thing. . . .

A marginal gloss is never finished: it is only abandoned.

## HOMework

*Some Threads in the First Page of Storiella as She Is Syung (Finnegans Wake, 260: 1–7 and n.)*

AS WE THERE are where are we are  
we there

UNDE ET UBI

Where are we? Spinning in the void of pre-creation, or the chaos of existence. Since grammar (first of the trivium) has not yet been invented, the words do not clarify into sentences, like "We are there. Where are we? Are we there?" Rather, they spin through all the possible permutations. Similarly, no

WHENCE AND WHERE? A SCHOLASTIC INQUIRY PERTINENT BOTH TO "THE ENIGMA OF EXISTENCE" AND THE PROVENANCE OF THE TEXT. BOTH QUESTIONS WILL BE

direction can be found to guide us to the pub.

from tomtittot to teetootomtotalitarian.

“Tom Tit Tot,” a folktale resembling “Rumpelstiltskin,” derives from the primitive magic of names, like totem (tootom) and taboo (as pointed out by Edward Clodd in *Tom Tit Tot: An Essay on Savage Philosophy in Folk-Tale*, 1898); hence it is associated with the naming of Adam, or creation of man. In the story, Tom Tit Tot spins flax with his tail. A teetotum is a spinning, four-sided toy with a letter (including T for totum and N for nihil) on each of its sides; it can be associated with the tetragrammaton (name of God) or Fortune’s wheel. When the world spins to its end, God will authorize a Last Judgment. The first and the last, the smallest tomtit and largest total, will join in His ultimate totalitarian government.

Tea tea too oo.

Thoughts of T (totum) and teetotaling, along with the song “Tea for Two,” lead to Joyce’s everlasting tea. A primal brew, it suggests the female creation, especially by chiming with “titty.” “Ti” is also ten (in Danish), the number of H.C.E. (“the decent man”) and God in the Kabala, and thus reproduces rapidly when abetted by the female oo (a “noughty zeroine”). In addition to offering the primal egg (Greek), “oo” denotes woman by signifying buttocks and (in Germany) the ladies’ john. It may also represent the tooting of the teakettle (which will boil over at the end of the chapter) and the end of a verse in a song (cf. “Tee the tootal of the fluid hang

ANSWERED—TO A SCHOOLMAN’S SATISFACTION—IN THE TEXT BELOW. WHERE? HERE, IN THE PUB. WHENCE? AN “IMAGINABLE ITINERARY THROUGH THE PARTICULAR UNIVERSAL” (DUBLIN AND THE CYCLES OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE), ENDING BACK HERE IN “OLD VICO ROUNDPOINT.” AND THE ENIGMA OF EXISTENCE? WE’RE HERE BECAUSE WE’RE HERE.

the twoddle of the fuddled, O!" [6:28]). Double o will reappear often in the chapter, both in mystic mathematics and as the diagrammatic form of a circle, gyre, cycle, or ass (see esp. 293).

Whom will comes over. Who to caps ever.

With the infusion of woman, the first stage of a Viconian cycle—the Divine age, or Birth—turns into the second—the Heroic age, or Marriage. God the Father, associated with fathers or tyrants generally, with H.C.E., and with the Russian general who had insulted Ireland, couples with His mate. The liturgical echoes (e.g., Whose will be done, whose Kingdom come, forever) assert His power. His will must be kept, His sexual desire (overcoming Him) mounts over the cap (*mons veneris*) of woman, He establishes the caps of ecclesiastical or military authority, and His pronouns always take capital letters. But his high estate is shadowed by the rivalry of his sons. Will Shakespeare, we know from *Ulysses*, overcame his own father, becoming his ghost; and two sons (if we take "to" as a noun, "cap" as a verb) will always do their father one better.

*with his broad  
and hairy face,  
to Ireland a  
disgrace.*

And howelse do we hook our hike to find that pint of porter place? Am shot, says the bigguard.<sup>1</sup> Sic

*Shem recognizes the story in the text as one of his father's (cf. the second paragraph of Portrait of the Artist: "His father told him that story: . . . he had a hairy face"), conflating John Joyce with H.C.E. and the*

A variation of the prankquean's second question—"why do I am alook alike two poss of porterpease? And: Shut! says the wicked" (22:5-6)—seeks out the pub. God has given His directions, "where" has been replaced by "here" (*hoc* and *haec*) in the childrens' grammar lesson, and the cycle turns—the hike of mankind hooks—toward

WHO IS TO SIC THE  
SIC? JOYCE WARNED  
THE PUBLISHER  
OF STORIELLA TO BE  
"VERY CAREFUL NOT  
TO FORGET THAT  
MARVELLOUS  
MARGINAL

bearded God of the Zohar. Like Samuel Beckett (another Shem), he considers the tale "Another insult to Ireland" (Ellmann's James Joyce, p. 411). Patriotically, he also superimposes Buckley and the general on the marching song "Follow me up to Carlou" (Letters, 3:428-29), which begins "Lift, MacCahir Oge, your face, / Brooding o'er the old disgrace." (The main version of the Buckley story, FW 353, draws on the same ballad, whose ending, with black Fitzwilliam's decapitated head, helps provoke Issy's thought of John the Baptist below.) To an Irishman (or boy) in his cups, creation and history both seem an affront.

its next stage. Father is in his cups (*caps* in Scottish); the pub, or pint of porter place (Porter is one of the names of H.C.E., a publican and gate-keeper), is the destination of heroes. Here they relieve themselves, here they arrive at a sexual entrance, shooting their seed into sustaining fluid. Here they tell their stories.

For instance, the story of Buckley and the Russian general, a favorite of Joyce's hairy father. Buckley, an Irish soldier, aimed at the general, but was deterred first by his epaulettes (caps?) and next by his defecation (will coming over?). Finally, when the general made ready to clean himself with a piece of turf (an insult to Ireland!) Buckley shot him. The story is conflated with testimony from the Parnell Commission inquiry, where another Buckley admitted having tried to shoot a suspected informer (an ex-Fenian). The gun misfired, but the intended victim ran away shouting "murder," and later testified that he "saw the bullets whizz past his ears" ("Am shot"). Generals and Fenians might be described as Guards, and "big-guard" also plays with "bugger," "beggar," "bigger," etc. (see the Concordance). But a more important association is probably "biggod" or "b'god" (cf. 111:3, 366:12). At the moment of shooting, God and the Father are overthrown by a new generation. Vico's third stage, the Human age, or Death, simultaneously puts an end to heroes and, with a thunderclap, ushers in another cycle.

Whence.

<sup>1</sup>Rawmeash, quoshe with her girlic teangue.  
If old Herod was to go for me like he does  
Snuffler I'd do nine months for his beaver  
beard.

Nonsense ("ráiméis," Gaelic for "romance": possibly also "aw, me ass!"), quoth Isabel with her

MONOSYLLABLE  
'SIC' " (9 MAY 1937,  
LETTERS, 3:397).  
TWO YEARS BEFORE,  
IN THE VERSION IN  
TRANSITION, THE  
PRINTER HAD LEFT IT  
OUT.

gaelic tongue. Issy responds to the sex rather than the violence of the story; her girlish tongue (female as tea) speaks of romance. But death lurks in her first word, suggesting raw meat (with a garlic tang) and ashes. Indeed, her chosen sexual role is Salomé, whose vamping of her stepfather Herod caused the murder of John the Baptist as well as her own. If the hairy old tyrant desired her like her mother Herodias (a Snuffler speaks through the nose—hypocritically—like the apostate Queen of Judea) she would willingly become pregnant. Moreover, her pregnancy would redeem death, since another of her aspects is the mother of Christ (the temporal ruler, Herod the Great, here being identified with God the Father). If we read “go for” as “attack” and “do” as “serve a sentence,” however, a more ghoulish meaning emerges. If the Tetrarch were to punish her as he does John the Baptist (for the association of Snuffling with religious cant and with a castration theme—as in cutting off noses or heads—see Swift’s “Mechanical Operation of the Spirit”) she would serve nine months in return for a bodiless beard (Salomé, in Wilde’s play, admires Jokanaan’s hair). The motifs of incest and *Liebestod* are reinforced by other Joycean associations: the beaver of Hamlet’s ghost, the relation of Herod (as “Cormwell”) to Mark of Cornwall (hence Isolde) and Cromwell (the English tyrant who raped Ireland). Issy flirts with disaster; but she wants to give love a chance.