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Poetry and the Environment: an Ecocritical Exploration of Simon Armitage's "The Bears in Yosemite Park"

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Abstract:

Simon Armitage's " The Bears in Yosemite Park" is read in this paper as an eco-poem in which the poet takes a swipe at the human activities that ruin nature and animal habitats. The poem which was written in the 1980s, collected and published in *Zoom* (1989) is a pioneering piece on its own in eco-poetry. It embodies the poet's endeavour to expose and chastise the lack of awareness on the part of the human world about what is really damaging the environment. The ekphrastic comparisons the poem invites are ones in which the coexistence of the human and nonhuman worlds is accentuated. The narratives the poem weaves about the non-human life in particular are replete with genuine tenderness and pathos that do not slide into sentimentality. A pragmatic approach is adopted by the poet so that the argument would come across as unaffected albeit heartfelt, tender and even melancholic.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Ecco-poetry, Simon Armitage, environment, pastoral

Introduction

It goes without saying that nature has been central to poetry from antiquity. This connection between poetry and nature, in particular, the rural landscape and grazing pastures yielded what is termed as the Pastoral, a genre that dates back to Ancient Greece. The Pastoral grew strong during the Renaissance, took a more palpable form within the Romantic tradition, and never ceased to influence literature ever since. Whether it is idyllic, melancholic, elegiac or nostalgic, the Pastoral documents the human beings's encounter with, response to, and conception of wild nature. Therefore, the Pastoral and/or its elements can be clearly traced fully or partially in the writings of every age and era and almost every poet has tried his/her hand at the pastoral, adapting or even appropriating it. Evolving and developing, the English pastoral tradition includes such practitioners as Spenser, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton, Goldsmith, Gray and many others. In the Romantic tradition ushered by Wordsworth and Coleridge's *The Lyrical Ballads* (1798) along with other fellow Romantics, nature and the landscape transcended the mere pastoral boundaries and achieved a higher spiritual level. The pantheistic treatment of nature was short-lived, but traces of this adoration of nature lived on as part and parcel of the poetical canon which shaped the natural musings of Thomas Hardy for instance, or the Neo-Romanticism of the 1930s. One can think of Robert Frost, Dylan Thomas, Philip

Larkin among many others to realize that the pastoral proves to be highly resilient and adaptable.

Notwithstanding the place of nature in classical or even modernist traditions, eco-poetry, per se, is by no means simply pastoral, nor even remotely pantheistic. It is not also axiomatically categorized as Romantic or Neo-romanticistic even though all the antecedent traditions and schools are still evidently traceable in it. One reason why is certainly because the objectives of an eco-poem do not coincide with those of a romantic or pastoral poem. The eco-poem is a byproduct of an environmental awareness and a concern about the damaging effects of the human world on nature, nonhuman life and climate and therefore it hosts a portent apocalyptic streak. Some of the demands of the Homo sapiens, ironically from Latin meaning "wise men", in this technological age happen to be draining and ruining the Earth and its air and depleting its natural resources. Eco-literature, eco-poetry included, is the offspring of an anxiety on behalf of the environment, drawing a rather bleak and gloomy picture of the future on this planet. Occasionally, it takes on the form of critiques of, but also diatribes against, civilization, industrial and urban cultures that have been expanding at the expense of the environment destroying green spaces and animal habitats and threatening the equilibrium of the ecosystem in its entirety. Eco-poetry is the voice given to otherwise *voiceless* nature.

With this in mind, “the study of literature as if the environment mattered” is labeled eco-criticism, a “term itself apparently dates no further back than 1978, when it was coined by William Rueckert” (David Mazel 1). Eco-criticism explores eco-literature which is inspired by the dread of a grim future, hence it itself evokes dystopian images, constructs nightmarish scenarios and weaves macabre tales of the disintegration of the natural world as we know it. This futuristic apocalyptic narrative of eco-literature is what defines the “anthropocene horror” that Timothy Clark takes to mean “a sense of horror about the changing environment globally, usually as mediated by news reports and expert predictions, giving a sense of threats that need not be anchored to any particular place, but which are both everywhere and anywhere.” Alternatively, eco-poetry also demonstrates an “ecological grief” that Clark diagnoses as “grief for the loss or threatened destruction of a specific landscape, place or species” (61). The poem under study, Simon Armitage’s “The Bears in Yosemite Park”, issues an ominous warning about and expresses deep grief over the gradual destruction of the environment by human’s egoist habits. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to explore why Armitage’s poem is an elegy written in the awareness of the lack of awareness with respect to the threats posed to ecosystems worldwide.

The Bears in Yosemite Park

Christian James Taylor argues that Simon Armitage, as one of the New Generation poets, makes of poetry a platform to blend a "contemporary cultural reference with an ecologically charged postmodernism which suggests an engagement with 'recent developments in cultural history and environmental politics'" (148). Indeed, Armitage's "The Bears in Yosemite Park" is an area where environmental and cultural references crisscross. Curiously, this poem first appeared in Armitage's debut collection of verse entitled *Zoom* (1989). In *Zoom*, Armitage magnifies certain situations as the title of the collection itself indicates; the magnified realities are not necessarily entirely invisible to humans, but also not yet sizable enough at the time to stand out on their own and raise the alarm. In a series of fragmented images that stay true to the collection title, "The Bears in Yosemite Park" is shaped by the growing environmental awareness which started in the 1960s, but slowly picked momentum in the subsequent three decades. Glen A. Love refers to "the notion that literature encompassed nonhuman as well as human contexts, nature as well as culture, found a few critical proponents during the 1970s and 1980s" (3). Armitage must have intended his poem as a strong message of warning about the danger threatening nature and wild life on account of the selfish and destructive human activity. Populated by references to wild life (Bears, seagulls and whales) and natural phenomena (land sliding, heavy snow/rain), the poem weaves a cogent argument against humans' heedlessness to nature and their indifference to its nonhuman inhabitants.

When the poem opens, a sudden downpour of rain is driving hikers at Mam Tor out and hence the harsh climate seems to reprimand the unwanted intruders, making a 'crocodile' (British slang for a group of people walking in pairs) of hikers haste to their cars to shelter from the rain and to call the entire hiking adventure off. The voice heard in the poem could belong to a school boy on a field trip to Mam Tor, one of England's natural spots in the midland. The choice of schoolboys if indeed the narrator is one recapitulates the romantic notion that yet untainted and as such closer to nature, children are better attuned to wilderness than the brood of hikers who happened to be visiting Mam Tor and who ironically scurried to their rides at the first sign of heavy rainfall:

> A crocodile of hikers spills out into
> a distant car park as the rain permeates
>
> our innermost teeshirts, and quickly we realise:
> this moment is one which will separate some part
> of our lives from another. (*Paper Aeroplane*)

Contrarily, honouring and copying primeval cavemen, the schoolboys let themselves get drenched in rain before they intuitively take shelter in one of the Blue John mines where "true" darkness greets them as they navigate deeper into the cavern. In contrast to *fake*- artificial lights, this "true darkness" with its exciting and thrilling effect brings them closer to the natural world while it

simultaneously references prehistoric cavemen who might have once populated these hills long before the advent of civilisation.

Retaining some of its prehistoric characters, Mam Tor (literally mother hill) in the English Midlands is famous for its frequent landslides, hence the multitude of mini-hills in the area. It witnessed also some mining activity when Blue John, a colourful semi-precious mineral, was dug out of it and exported to Europe and other parts of the world. The untamed quality of the site is reinforced by the constant shaking of the lower layers of shale which earned the hill the alternative name of Shivering Mountain. Instability and continuous sliding can be metaphorically seen as Mam Tor's way of resisting human unwelcome intrusion which is intended to subjugate wilderness to human servitude. While roads were built to penetrate into the hilly landmark and makes it more accessible to people, these roads are apt to close due to snow storms and/or land movements, making of the hills, at least temporarily, an invincible territory. In Armitage's poem, Mam Tor is not idyllic, but more significantly, it is not human-friendly as it continues to counteract human efforts to domesticate it. It is riddled with mysteries, hence its irresistible attraction, but it is also rife with life threatening dangers to human's insatiable greed or even unguarded curiosity. True to its name, it is mother and nourisher, pregnant with unfathomable riches and secrets.The poem insinuates, nonetheless, how the growing tourist industry is robbing Mam Tor of its shield of seclusion and

probably causing it to gradually become unfit for other species. To drive home this idea, Armitage references not only Mam Tor in England, but also another natural landmark across the pond, namely, Yosemite Park in the States. Marion Thain draws attention to how "Armitage's poetry as a whole is a patchwork of different forms of narrative, borrowed without ceremony from different areas of culture and stitched together, often combined or overlapping" (69). Rather than being "a patchwork" or a pastiche, "The Bears in Yosemite Park" creates a plurality of consciousnesses and multiplicity of voices and references.

To begin with, the speaker cites a line that he catches on the radio about Yosemite Park and that seemingly casual piece of news operates as title and opening line, merging and blurring the boundaries between the two in the same way geographical barriers collapse. The radio broadcasts a report or a documentary about the habitats of bears in Yosemite Park in California, USA half way across the world being ruined by human irresponsible tourist activity. The radio does not say that in so much words, but neutrally and detachedly reports from inside the Park. On his way to Mam Tor, the narrator listens to the story of the bears having to deal with the mess tourists leave behind in the this animal sanctuary. While Mam Tor in England is still sheltering animals and preserving its wild nature, Yosemite in the States is being taken over by humans so that its wild life is seriously at risk. The image of Yosemite bears "busy in the trash cans, grubbing for toothpaste" is casually reported in the matter-of-fact,

objective manner of documentaries. Just like Mam Tor in Derbyshire, Yosemite in California ironically preserves its indigenous Indian name which happens to mean "killer" in Miwok, an endangered language of Aboriginal Americans. "Yosemite" is also confused with the word for grizzly bear in the same language due to their similar pronunciation (Anderson). So whether "killer" or "bear", Yosemite is losing its wild character and as such it is no longer a haven for wild life after humans encroached on and set foot in the bear's territory. And just like the Indian tribes of Ahwahneechee that used to inhabit Yosemite were forced out of their lands by new settlers, the bears will be likewise driven out of Yosemite if humans continue to act selfishly and irresponsibly. Mam Tor, on the other hand, could be one step away from being in a like manner ruined by human activity considering that it too may become a busy tourist destination.

Joanna Kruczkowska comments on Armitage's language which interrupts "the vision of the real world or, on the other hand, constituting indispensable facts in a chain of events." She also refers insightfully to Armitage's view of poetry as a dialogue between the informing half of the self and its translating half. Therefore, a plurality of voice is created as the author becomes the speaking and listening party and his words acquire meaning when "they're spoken, seen or heard" (Armitage as cited in Kruczkowska 59). The poem successfully juxtaposes and/ or blends these multiple voices which happen also to originate from two distant parts of the world. Live and in person, a guide supplies

information about whales, caves and seagulls to a probably a group of schoolboys on a field trip to Mam Tor. The awareness that other forms of life live, breed and die while humans live, breed and die is developed. Whales swimming underwater and seagulls flying in the air have as equal rights as humans to live safely in their natural environment. All through the trip, the narrator's mind swings between the news on the radio he picked on his way to Mam Tor and the information offered by the guide about local life. In other words, the narrator's mind replays, in retrospect, fragments from the radio report, while he listens to the descriptions and information the trip guide supplies so that a connection across the globe is forged. Alternatively, the bits of information on Mam Tor given by the local guide trigger the narrator's short-term memory which is almost hypnotized by the radio report on Yosemite. The narrator even had off pat the Yosemite ranger's outburst of curses against nude swimming while the latter is riding his skidoo around the park:

On the radio
somebody explains. The bears in Yosemite Park
are stumbling home, legged up with fishing-line

and polythene and above the grind of his skidoo
a ranger curses the politics of skinny-dipping.

(*Paper Aeroplane*)

Armitage raises awareness regarding how the priorities of those who are campaigning for the protection of natural spaces need to be urgently adjusted. The park ranger is unmistakably taken to task for not only the noise his skidoo makes, but also for being more alarmed by the indecency of the divers than the human garbage amid which the park animals have to live. The narrator's mind multitasks as it recalls what he heard on the news about the Yosemite bears being thwarted by plastic garbage and the talk about killer whales pairing for life. The poem however does not document the reaction of its speaker to the news on the radio and he does not even seem to be exactly disturbed by it. His descriptions are almost graphic, yet he maintains an attitude too levelheaded to let him offer any personal statement or display signs of distress on account of, for instance, whales nursing their dead. The latter is an unmistakable reference to grieving female orca whales (also known as killer whales) carrying their dead calves around for weeks before letting them go in an act of extended mourning, which is on an equal footing to humans. The pun on the word killer in "killer whales" and Yosemite (killer in Miwok) doubles the emphasis.

The speaker's response might come across as reticent and even detached though not indifferent because he actually cannot hide his enthusiasm for Mam Tor. His silence symbolically showcases the lack of awareness which characterises the 1980s before large sections of the public became environment-conscious. Halfway through his contemplation, the narrator documents a moment

of realisation and epiphany that this encounter with nature blesses him with. He professes it as a life changing experience that makes him realise that his life runs parallel with other creatures's and in particular the killer whales invisible to the onlooker on shore, but still co-existing "calling across the base of the ocean". This existential parallelism and partnership is carried a notch further in the concluding lines when the speaker juxtaposes the killer whales on their way to "quiet waters" and his group driving home in their underwear after their clothes were drenched in the rain:

> This is life. Killer whales are nursing their dead
> into quiet waters and we are driving home
>
> in boxer-shorts and bare feet. (*Paper Aeroplane*)

His semi-nudity and bare-footedness conjure up primitivism and the ultimate need to going back to the basics. It also foils and ridicules ranger's rant against nude swimmers in Yosemite Park, which he earlier picked on the radio.

Final Remarks

"The Bears in Yosemite Park" creates a polyphonic atmosphere that blurs geographical, cultural and historical boundaries. Simon Armitage skillfully employs juxtaposition and parallelism on linguistic, visual and thematic levels to drive home his main themes which are first and foremost environmental. And

therefore, “The Bears in Yosemite Park” is one of the best examples of how echo-poetry should tackle environmental questions whether the eco-poet addresses them by an ecological grief or anthropocene horror approach. There is an unmistakable pathos in the reference to whales nursing their dead or bears having to deal with human trash, but it never slides into sentimentality. It is hardly anthropomorphic either in the sense that human behaviour is by no means the yardstick by which to measure the mourning of the killer whales. Emotions are not the monopoly of humans; animals which may have existed long before us on this planet experience deeper and probably even nobler emotions. People have to put an end to Speciesism and discriminative treatment of other life forms.

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Breaking the Struggling Barriers in War Poetry: A Study in Keith Douglas`s Selected Poems

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Abstract

Keith Douglas is a modern war poet who presents new vision and theme to war poetry. His panoramic depiction of war from all its facets: bitterness, irony, tragedy assists in presenting a new vision of war poetry. Adopting the contrastive role of killers and victims completes the realistic vision that remains scribbled with focusing on one side. Adopting a naked reality at the expense of sentimentality adds an extra truthfulness and neutrality to his pen. Though he is accused of stultifying patriotism, anger and pity, he adds a metaphysical aura to his poetry. His message is delivered softly clear from any distortion of emotionality and sentimentality. Douglas breaks the berries that distinguishes the dead on the war field as enemies and friends depending on the spot he falls on. Seeing both as humankinds is in itself the grave message and addition to the humanity ethics. Reading Douglas` war poem forces readers to see the complete truth.

Key Words: death, victim, war poetry, humanity, sympathy, roles, destruction.

كسر الحواجز المتعثرة في شعر الحرب: دراسة في قصائد مختارة لكيث دوغلاس

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كلية التربية للبنات

جامعة الانبار

الملخص

كيث دوغلاس شاعر الحرب في الحرب العالمية الثانية قدم رؤية وموضوعات جديدة على شعر الحرب. الوصف الشامل للحرب من جميع وجوهها: المرارة ، السخرية ، المأساة ساعد بتقديم رؤى جديدة أضافت الكثير لشعر الحرب. تبنى ادوار لكلا للقاتل والضحايا اكمل الرؤية الواقعية التي قصد تقديمها. انتصر اسلوبة الواقعي على العاطفة ليضيف مزيدا من الصدق إلى قلمه. على الرغم من اتهامه بتهميش الوطنية والغضب والشفقة ، إلا أنه اضاف هالة ذات صفات تجريدية إلى شعره. ارسل رسالته بوضوح من أي تشويه عاطفي . دوغلاس يكسر الحدود االتي ميزت الموتى في ساحة الحرب بين عدو وصديق. إن النظر إلى كلاهما كخسارة للبشرية هي الرسالة الهامة التي نقله للإنسانية. إن قراءة قصيدة دوكلاس الحربية تجعلك ترى الحقيقة كاملة.

.الكلمات المفتاحية: الموت ، الضحية ، شعر الحرب ، الإنسانية ، التعاطف ، الأدوار ، الدمار

1- Introduction

Keith Douglas (1920-1944) is the unique British poet of the second world war. In spite of the little light that is shed on him, his role in war poetry is unimaginable. He is the son of a military captain. His deprivation in his childhood sharpens his ability as a poet. The sickness of his mother and her collapse participate in the final breaking of the family. The father deserts the family searching for a new life. Douglas` loneliness starts at his six years old with the separation of his parents to have a complete lonely childhood. His loneliness is worsened in a boarding school then he is enrolled in charitable school. Among such an opera life, his talent is born. He appears as a promising poet, his accuracy in handling words balances with his power in painting. His study in Oxford university is interrupted by his decision to be a volunteer for military duty in the second world. He finds in war a fertile arena to develop his ability and "logical stage in his programmatic development as a poet" (Shires 87). The effect of his tutor Edmund Blunden, the poet of first world war, is clear in his eagerness. Selecting to be a warrior rather than a graduate is to re-establish the order of life and world that are torn interiorly and exteriorly because of the tragic national and his familial traumas.

His attitudes to the role of poetry are unique. He believes that true poetry is the reflector of what the poet feels not what others say or expected to be said. Thus, independence and sincerity are the stamp of Douglas on the war poetry. He is not a moralizer, but a responder to every experience. He outstrips his predecessors by dropping any stereotypes and ideals and face reality of war with humanity no exaggeration in hate or love. Though he adopts objectivity and mirrors the traumatic scenes of war unsentimentally, his message of horror of war isn't detracted. He draws with every poem the scene of its true battle field.

This grants his work authenticity by combining visual with verbal element to achieve the "ethic of sight" that Douglas never betrayed (Kendall 152) .

In spite of his short years as he is killed at his twenty during the invasion of Normandy like "his compatriots, Wilfred Owen and Isaac Rosenberg (who) are killed in the world war I" (Ramazani 860), Douglas enriches war poetry with new touches by delineating fighting scenes from various corners by adopting contrastive roles in the same poem. In his poetry there is no longer stereotyped angel / evil struggle since each part is shown and the killer can be a victim. He grants his readers an opportunity to see the actual story of war from three-sided photo. He penetrates each role to present a true image of war. His poetry makes a revolution in war poetry because the voice of the poet is neutral. Angels are infiltrated by devil and devils have part of humanity. His voice stripes the old pity of the horror of war to show true human reaction to atrocity. Thus, his roles or masks in his poem are various: "victim and killer, satirist and eulogist, disinterested spectator and committed participant " (Fergoson 2090) . These voices sometime are injected in one role.

His participation to the war poetry is innumerable. His private broken life participates in strengthening his ability in sharing pain in two ways. First his loneliness facilitates his understanding of the suffer and injustice and secondly it pushes him in the middle of large war to weld or settle the two wars of his life and the world. Though he owes much for his old competitors like Owen , Rosen and Brook, he calls for the alienation from their effects. In spite of his introspection and self- distance in delineating the horror of war which is different from the style of subjectivity of first world war poet, he is "unable wholly to deny the influence of the soldier-poets of 1914–18" (Kindall *The Oxford Handbook* 300).

2- Analysis of Selected War-Poems

War is depicted in detail by the poets of the first world war, Douglas presents his vision in a unique style. He states that he shows only "new horrors or any worse pain" (Douglas, *The Letters* 289). Thus, he opens a new stage in war poetry. He depicts war authentically and impersonally. He copes with Auden`s beliefs that war poetry should "deal with events of which he has first-hand knowledge" (Oostdijk 110). In spite of his brief life, he introduces new themes and grants life to buried bodies in the war poetry. He doesn't want to show only pity and depilates the old scenes of his processors, he does not seek to gain the readers approval his goals are larger, but he decide to reflect the fighting field as it is from both sides. The readers will be forced to confront the true meaning of killing and death. Romanticism, reality and suffer will be mingled in his poems because he decides not to be pigeonholed as his old poets. He lets his emotions reflects the cataclysmic war with its self -division and ambivalence. Nothing can be added to war after reading his poetry because everything is mapped accurately. Though to Osbert war poetry gathers as "the two incompatible " (90), Douglas tells more about this unique connections and finds it not incompatible, showing killer and killed fighting and ignoring the cause of shedding blood.

"Vergissmeinnicht", as "the culmination of that development towards a greater humanity" (Shires 135) can be the starter of discussion here. In "Vergissmeinnicht", Douglas catches a very unique scene when he revisits the battle arena of previous battle with his comrade. They find the dead German soldier who hit their tank when he was alive. The taste of victory and ecstasy of finding their previous enemy dead is vanished when they rummage in the belongings of the decomposing corpse. Though Douglas is keen in being objective, detached and keeping a distance in depicting the scene unsentimentally, he gazes at his victim and depicts it in detail as if he wants to

show the readers the untold horror of the war and the "scrutiny of a dead enemy" appears in many other poems as part of his way of depicting the two sides (Kendall 154) . The distortion on the decayed body:

how on his skin the swart flies move;
the dust upon the paper eye
and the burst stomach like a cave. (111)

The gaining of searching in the belongings of the dead enemy is lover`s photograph that is autographed with German word “Vergissmeinnicht Seffie” which means 'forget me not'. This photo lies beside the dead body as a signal that reminds the killers of their atrocity. The means of destruction, the weapon still hard and saved whether its owner is vanished. Douglas shows the true losers in war :

We see him almost with content,
abased, and seeming to have paid
and mocked at by his own equipment
that's hard and good when he's decayed.(Graham 111)

Douglas cannot help humanizing the dead body by depicting him as a lover whose death will hurt all his non -combatant lovers. Depicting the enemy with such closeness as a “one’s kin or mirror image,” (Ramazani 2016 871), the killed is mirrored alike. This technique participates in destruction of the sense of victory or honor and Though he adopts unsentimental depiction, he shows" sympathy even for the enemy in whom lover and killer were mingled" (Ramanzi , 2003 860). Part of the uniqueness of this poem is inviting the readers to share this pain. Pushing the readers to sense the pain is repeated in "How to Kill" in which The enemy appears as a man who has his people. Though he is an

enemy, the German soldier is humanized as a loss in the humanity sense. Indulging in depicting his private life, the poet presents a hard-hitting message of the atrocity of war. In a letter to his friend, Douglas admits "I never tried to write about war … until I had experienced it" (Douglas, Collected Poems, 149). The audience is forced to be implicated through the invitation and imperative of the poet:

Look. Here in the gunpit spoil
the dishonoured picture of his girl
who has put: Steffi. Vergissmeinnicht.
in a copybook gothic script.

……..
But she would weep to see today(112)

The role of the killer and the victim are mixed in this poem. The killer shows a great sympathy for the victims` lovers. The killer`s humanity is stultified partially if not completely. The appalling question mark here who is the actual victim? This is a new addition of Douglas` poetry who breaks the old barriers that creates a deep crack between victory and loss, to reflect war poetry through authentic perspective that bridges the two. He allows his reader not to focus on the sense of victory but on sympathy as well toward even enemy.

At the outset of the poem the poet adopts the role of the killer who shows repose when death corrupts his enemy. The role is developed to mediate in the distortion of the body. Finding Steffi`s photo is considered as the climatic point of caring for the killer's lover and thinking of the hit that he is directed to non-combatant people. Douglas succeeds in allowing various new reactions to

the dead enemy. Showing sympathy for the lover is new to war poetry. The dead evil in the first stanza turns to be a poor victim in other stanzas. The killer and the lover are integrated to be one:

For here the lover and killer are mingled
who had one body and one heart.
And death who had the soldier singled
has done the lover mortal hurt. (112)

The first glance on the disturbing title of "How to Kill", the readers can guess the poem contains instructions of killing. The poem depicts the dehumanization and destruction as a game. This distinguishes his unique look at war, besides his unsentimental detachment, he presents plurality of emotions of war. His panoramic view of mirroring war as tragic, indignation, and games by evil individuals adds much reality to the essence of the poem. This poem is unique in its plain writing. Goldenshon describes its writing as "sober decency" (128). War is delineated as a game in this poem. The tanker tests his skill as a professional killer. The poem starts with innocent playing with ball to end with an evil throwing of a shell. The poet hints to the modern weaponry that makes human destruction just as a game:

Under the parabola of a ball,
a child turning into a man,
I looked into the air too long.
The ball fell in my hand, it sang
in the closed fist: Open Open
Behold a gift designed to kill.(112)

The commander of the tanker wants to examine the skill of his weapon by shattering an innocent man. The poem shows the advancements of weaponry in the second world war that strengthens the easiness of killing. Killing from distances without knowing the killed cannot detract the sting of consciousness. Though Douglas adopts the style of objectivity, humanity emerges when he focuses of both sides: the killed as well as the killer. The killer mediates on the smiles and the movement habits of the victim before shouting the death ball. Though the poet is the killer, he records the beliefs of both sides the destroyer and the victim. Though Douglas depicts the scene detachedly, he penetrates the privacy of his victim who mediates in the effect of the absence of his enemy soldier from his lovers perspectives :

Now in my dial of glass appears
the soldier who is going to die.
He smiles, and moves about in ways
his mother knows, habits of his.
The wires touch his face: I cry
NOW. Death, like a familiar, hears.(112)

The speaker adopts two roles allowing the poet to move smoothly in the battlefield to check the commander and his preparation to announce the death for his victim who behaves softly. The poet goes further when he refers to the victim`s mother. Reflecting the dead`s privacy is worthy because "each corpse poses new ethical challenges for the poet and the reader" (Kendall 151).

Here there are two facets for death ecstasy from the winner and sorrow from the enemy soldier`s family and life. The reader is forced to respond to two contrastive positions the ecstasy of the killer for shooting accurately and the

sympathy to the family for the absence of soldier son. Killing from distance due to progression of technology does not lessen the human sympathy, this poem shows the true meaning of war because it shows no victory in war without killing other life thus, even the meaning of victory is stained with disgrace. Douglas shows no glory nor patriotism in the game of killing:

and look, has made a man of dust
of a man of flesh. This sorcery
I do. Being damned, I am amused
to see the centre of love diffused
and the wave of love travel into vacancy.
How easy it is to make a ghost.

The weightless mosquito touches
her tiny shadow on the stone,
and with how like, how infinite
a lightness, man and shadow meet.
They fuse. A shadow is a man
when the mosquito death approaches. (113)

In "Landscape with Figures," Douglas opens a new stage in war poetry. It is "a far cry from the Apocalyptic" (Press 232). It delineates Douglas style in most of his war poetry. In the first part of the poem the poet appears as spectator who depicts the destruction in the battlefield from detached scene nearly from the sky as dotes. While in the second part he comes closer to examine the horror of war by confronting the dead bodies personally who seem to be like shocked actors in mime. Douglas describes the scene gradually to reach the highest point when he matches the contracted feelings. Reality

confronts unreality in part three because readers are no longer need to have lessons of patriotism or heroism:

Pearched on a great fall of air
A pilot or angel looking down
On some eccentric chart, the plain
Dotted with the useless furniture
discerns crouching on the sand vehicles
squashed dead or still entire, stunned
like beetles; scattered wing cases and
legs, head, show when the haze settle…(103)

The poet takes a neutral side to have flexible movement between different roles and shed lights on the parts of struggle to reach the peak of authenticity of the definition of war. He is no longer adopts the stereotyped combat of angel / evil. Douglas probes the multi roles to be the killer, killed, quester, penitent, priest and victim. He forces these views on the readers to see the scene from all sides not from a false views of the winners. Douglas steps on a forbidden stage in war poetry:

I am the figure burning in hell
and the figure of the grave priest
observing everyone who passed
and that of the lover. I am all
the aimless pilgrims, the pedants and courtiers
more easily you believe me a pioneer
and murdering villain without fear

without remorse hacking in the throat. Yes

I am these and I am the craven

the remorseful the distressed

penitent: not passing from life to life

but all these angels and devils are driven

into my mind like beasts. I am possessed,

the house whose wall contains the dark strife

the arguments of hell with heaven.(103)

In his "Dead men", Douglas moves from multi personalities into multi visions to present his readers with various states of life. The poem in the first stanza depicts the euphoria of lovers who follow their emotions:

Tonight the moon inveigles them

to love: they infer from her gaze

her tacit encouragement.

Tonight the white dresses and the jasmine scent

in the streets. I in another place

see the white dresses glimmer like moths…(96)

The narrator moves to another location in the front line of the battle to reveal the second vision in the poem which is stained with death. The cruelest vision is the dead men who are lived underground in oblivion. They are deceived by their false dreams and selfish leaders. The painful end occurs when they are turned into food for dogs. Douglas shows various dreams to be offered to the readers who are obliged to mediate in the life and its loss for the sake of false slogans. The atrocity of war is presented realistically, he doesn't

want to "shape our responses" (Shires 117), but he forces his reader to feel deeply. Douglas offers these dreams to show its distortion by the cruelty of war which reverses the human cycle painfully:

……. Come
to the west, out of that trance, my heart –
here the same hours have illumined
sleepers who are condemned or reprieved
and those whom their ambitions have deceived;
the dead men, whom the wind
powders till they are like dolls:

they tonight rest in the sanitary earth perhaps
or where they died, no one has found them
or in their shallow graves the wild dog
discovered or exhumed a face or a leg
for food: the human virtue round them
is a vapour tasteless to a dog's chops**.**

Living multi roles to reveal the truth from various sides appears obviously in his "The Prisoner". He presents two roles to allow the readers to see the full truth, not half of it. The distortion of lover`s face with the other half of death image is enough to show the distortion of full humanity due to war. Death is imposed on love to cripple it. The narrator is divided into two halves: one cares for life and the other is prevented from it. The new touch of reading both parts is the penetration of the same spirit and revelation of self-division. He reveals this interference when he tells his unattained lover, Cheng, that such love is threatened by the horrible attendance of death:

Today, Cheng, I touched your face
with two fingers , as a gesture of love
for I can never prove enough
by sight or sense your strange grace;
but like moths my hands return
to your skin, that's luminous
like a lamp in a paper house,
and touch, to teach love and learn.
I think a thousand hours are gone
that so, like gods , we'd occupy:
but alas, Cheng, I cannot tell why,
today I touched a mask stretched on the stone hard. (67)

4- **Conclusion**

Douglas` panoramic depiction of war from all its facets: bitterness, irony, tragedy assists in presenting new visions of war poetry. Adopting the contrastive role of killer and victims completes the realistic vision that he intends to present. picturing a naked reality at the expense of sentimentality adds an extra truthfulness to his pen. Though he is accused of stultifying patriotism, anger and pity, he adds a metaphysical aura to his poetry. His message is delivered clear from any distortion of emotionality and sentimentality. Douglas breaks the barriers that distinguishes the dead of the two components on the war field. Regarding both as humankinds is in itself a grave message that shocks humanity ethics. Reading Douglas` war poetry is the only choice for people intend to see the complete truth. Douglas adopts different positions in his poems to reflect multi sides and various

attitudes. This technique is virginal in war poetry. It participates in presenting a true image of war. He engraves immortal touches on war poetry.

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Modern Theories of Meaning in Arabic and the Western World: A Contrastive Study

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Abstract: *The current research presents a simple account of some semantic theories that are comparable between the western world and the Arabic world. The aim is to reveal the fact that the Arabs had developed and discussed these theories years before the western world did. This, in fact, had happened mainly in the framework of religious studies, as the study of meaning has been part and parcel of religious study in general. Only prominent examples of such theories are presented; the paper does not claim, of course, to present a comprehensive account of all ancient and modern theories. This is left to future research by any researcher who wills to do so.*

Introduction

Meaning has always been an interdisciplinary field of study for scholars from different academic disciplines: philosophy, psychology, neurology, linguistics, semiotics, theology, etc., because "a significant degree of overlap" is there among these disciplines" (Cruse, 2000: 10; Kreidler, 1998: 2). The very nature of humanity lies in the fact that there is a means (language) through which humans, among other things, are able to transfer knowledge across time and space. The case being so, how language works, how words come to mean what they mean, and the nature of meaning have been questions that philosophers and thinkers and other scholars had raised (and actually still raise) as early as the documented history can trace. Meaning is still the mystery it used to be; "there are even some, Wittgenstein (1953) and his followers, who think that it is impossible to have a theory of meaning" (Daviz and Gillon, 2004: 1).

The present study tries to trace some of the similarities between the efforts exerted by modern Arab scholars and English speaking and western scholars in the domain of theories of meaning. Comprehensiveness is not aimed at since a full account of the topic would require a lot more space, time, and effort, outside the limits of a paper like the one at hand.

The study hypothesizes that there are some obvious similarities between modern Arab theories and western theories in so much as Arab scholars have talked about the same basic ideas western scholars discuss, and in some cases have pioneered in some fields such as that of 'pragmatic meaning.

Theories of Meaning in Western Literature

To give an account of the theories of meaning in the English speaking world, one has no doubt to give a historical background of the context in which they emerged. To do this, means presenting a survey of the theories that tried to deal with the issue of meaning in the western society which, as a matter of fact, dates to the ancient times. However, despite the long history of the study of meaning, traced back to the time of ancient Greek philosophers who were the first to attempt to answer questions that relate to the nature meaning, the field of semantics as a branch of linguistics with systematic attempts may be attributed to Breal's (1897) "Essai de Sèmantique" in the nineteenth century which was basically of a diachronic, etymological nature (Anees, 1985: 7; Geeraerts, 2010: 10). The following is a brief chronological account of the theories that emerged within the framework of western culture:

1- Mentalist Theories

These theories are the first theories proposed to account for how language works. However, their focus was usually limited to word meaning. Among these the following are the most celebrated ones:

a. The Natural Theory

This theory, basically a referential (naming) theory, is attributed to Plato. He framed this theory in his ***Cratylus*** (Modrak, 2001: 13). Plato, following his tutor Socrates believed in a natural link between the sounds and what they mean, between the names and the entities they refer to. He admitted though that the clarity of the link may become vague or even lost with time, as it was the case of Greek in his time (Anees, 1985: 63 see also Geeraerts, 2010: 2-3). The idea was, we can say, that the advocators of this view thought language change to be a process of decay; the deeper one goes back into history the nearer he would be from the, 'natural' and 'pure' version of language; the variant in which words , or more exactly names can be readily linked to their meanings. This theory of

language finds its place, with some modification, in some modern accounts (as that of Humboldt and Jespersen) (ibid).

b-The Conventional Theory

On the other extreme was Aristotle who headed the group of the 'conventional' theory of a meaning; Aristotle believed that the relation between sounds and meanings is conventional rather than natural (Mordak, 2001: 13). This is clear why people from different countries are able to speak different languages; they can invent new meanings by conventionally attributing them to new words or by attributing new meanings to already existing words.

In modern time, the most famous proponent of the theory is De Saussure who adheres to the arbitrariness of sign- meaning relation. He proposes a triadic composite to describe the linguistic sign (signifier, signified, and signification).

Both theories are mentalist; they refer to the mental reality of meaning, though they differ in the nature of the relationship that holds between sounds and meanings.

2- Behaviourist Theories

The above mentioned theories postulate some abstractions since they refer to concepts in the mind of the language user. And these are 'things' that are objectively unobservable, a matter which behaviourists totally refused. Behaviourists hold a central tenet that "only theoretical entities that can be directly observed may be admitted into theories about human behavior" (Daviz and Gillon, 2004: 2). So, any sentence that refers to an abstraction (and not a

concrete object) is nonsensical and meaningless. Within the framework of the behaviourist theory, words meanings are no more than 'responses' to stimuli. When these responses are externally reinforced, they turn into habits (linguistic habits).That is, language is, though complex, is merely behaviour like any other human behaviour.

3- Context of Situation Theories

The first to refer to the role of context of situation in understanding meaning was Bronislaw Malinowsky (1884-1942), Professor of Anthropology at the London School of Economics from 1927 onwards. Malinowsky's "most important aspect of theorizing", as distinct from his purely ethnographic work, was associated to the functioning of language (Sampson, 1980: 223). He was affected by the behaviourist fallacy of denying the "existence of unobservable thought processes." However, his comments on language use in civilized societies show that he was not wholly consistent in his 'bad behaviourism (ibid: 224-5). For Malinowsky, language use was a matter of doing rather than telling; "words are tools, and the 'meaning' of a tool is its use" (see ibid 223-225).

Malinowsky's colleague, J. R. Firth accepted his views. In fact, they affected each other; their views about language were ultimately very similar (Sampson, 1980: 225). Firth uses the word 'meaning' to refer to what a word does (ibid), which, he had noticed, differs from one context to another. Hence, he incorporated what his colleague calls the 'context of situation' in determining meaning. In doing so, Firth was to opt between two types of context: one that postulates that an utterance or part of an utterance is "meaningful" if, and only if, it can be used appropriately in some actual context, and a more narrow sense of context, the text surrounding the word or the longer form whose meaning is to be expounded" (ibid: 226).

After Firth the turn came to Austin who, in his celebrated (1962) "How to Do Things with Words" and in other writings differentiates between 'constatives' and 'performatives', a distinction between sentences which submit to the true-false judgment when their meaning is checked in reference to external world, and sentences that do not submit to a similar truth value judgment (in Martinich, 1996:120-129).

The scholar who further developed Austin's preliminary distinction is John Searle who states that a sentence can be seen to have three interrelated aspects: its locution, its illocution, and its perlocution (Martinich, 1996: 130-140). He further attempted a classification of the second type (illocution) into what he calls 'speech acts', a topic that has received a great deal of attention in the last few decades.

As a matter of fact, the study of meaning did not stop here; there are nowadays a growing cognitive trend of semantics within the bigger framework of cognitive linguistics and cognitive sciences in general, but for the limitation of scope, and focus of comparison this new trend will be left out.

Theories of Meaning in Arabic Literature

The Arab scholars were not detached from the ancient studies of language and meaning; some of the Arabic scholars, in fact, had inherited the theories of the Greek philosophers. The most well-known thinker who advocated the natural theory of sound-meaning relationship is Abbad bin Sulaiman Assaymari. However, most Arabic scholars did not agree with the natural theory (Anees, 1985; 64). The study of meaning within the Arabic culture, in fact, used to be closely related to the study of rhetoric because a number of issues that relate to dictionary meaning have connections to one or more rhetoric study. These connections though appear vague, are quite strong;

they need only some light to figure out clearly (Alsheikh, 1999: 3). As an example of these is the study of the relation between literal meaning and figurative (metaphorical) meaning which has been a 'coin' that received interest from semanticist on one side and rhetoricians on the other (ibid: 4).

Arabic scholars' interest in the study of meaning has received an impetus from another direction, namely religion due to the need to understand Holy Quran and the Hadith. In the early centuries of Hijra, there used to be no problem in understanding both; however, within the course of time and due to different factors, the need to a systematic study of meaning emerged. This kind of study has not been purely linguistic; it serves religious goals, namely understanding religious language to arrive at judgments (fatwa).

First let us turn to the nature- convention controversy. With regards to this issue, it suffices to quote two towering figures in modern time: Mohammed Ridha Al-mudhafar and Mohhmed Baqir As-sadr. Both of these scholars side with the conventional theory of meaning. The first writes (1425 A.H.: 53):

> It is undoubted that the relationship between utterances and their meanings in any language is not autonomous [natural], like for example the relationship that holds between smoke and fire since this claim would require such relationship to be universal. But a Persian, for example, does not understand Arabic utterances or any other language without learning.

In this short text, he refers to the need for learning as evidence to the fact that the link between utterances and meanings is not natural. The other scholar, As-Sadr (1424 A.H.: 82-84) after surveying the natural theory and its weaknesses, moves on to say that though the conventionalists are righteous in refusing the natural view, they provide so little to solve the essential problem (of the utterance-meaning relationship). He moves on to survey three theories that try to account for the nature of relationship: the 'putting' theory, the 'consideration theory, and his own theory, the 'association' theory which

postulates that meaning identification (or creation) is an application of a general rule of how human mind operates. The association between an utterance and a meaning can emerge due to repetition (quantitative factor) or due to an effective circumstance, that is to say a qualitative factor (ibid: 88). Either cause to create the association, the result is that when one hears the utterance, his mind will automatically recall the meaning. So, it is obvious that Arab scholars were well aware of the conventionality of the linguistic sign, or what De Saussure called 'arbitrariness' of the linguistic sign.

Another thing that attracts the attention is the incorporation of context in the attempt to arrive at the intended meaning of utterances and texts. For example, they were aware of its importance in understanding the verses of Holy Quran for instance in incorporating the reasons beyond the revelation of verses (Alrajhi PP 225-233 as cited in Jabal, 1997: 20), and in understanding the hadith, too.

Arab scholars, also, differentiate between 'jumala khabareeya' and 'jumla inshaiyya' (see As-Sadr, 1424 A.H.: 95), which is exactly the same distinction Austin makes between 'constatives' and 'performatives'. A further distinction is made between what Assadr (ibid: 93-95) calls "addelala al-lughaweeya" or "almadlul attasawori" (linguistic or semantic meaning) which is user and context-free meaning and "almadlul at-tasdeeqi" which is very close to pragmatic meaning. These are only some examples that can be referred to show the similarity between Arabic and western theories.

Conclusion

The above survey, though very brief and highly selective, sheds some light on the similarities between the two schools of thought. The clear fact is that

Arab scholars have not been away from the issues tackled within the western circles of study; they might, in fact, be ahead of their counterparts in certain respects. However there is a need for deeper, more comprehensive studies of this type in order to arrive at a more accurate view.

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الملخص

يمثل البحث الحالي استعراضاً بسيطاً لبعض نظريات المعنى التي يمكن مقارنتها بين الدراسات العربية والغربية والهدف هو اثبات أن العرب تناولوا هذه النظريات قبل الغرب بسنين وهذا وقع في حقيقة الامر ضمن اطار الدراسات الدينية حيث تمثل دراسة المعنى جزءاً اساسياً من هكذا دراسات بشكل عام. تم الاشارة فقط الى نماذج بارزة لهكذا نظريات حيث لا يمكن أعطاء استعراض شامل وتام لكل نظريات المعنى القديمة والجديدة في هكذا بحث مقتضب ونترك لمن يريد من الباحثين المهتمين مهمة القيان بذلك.

Charles Allston Collins's Apology for his Art

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Abstract:

This research paper focuses on Charles Collins's decision to give up painting and seeks to provide a reading of this confessional 'Apology' that is psychologically and aesthetically consistent. It draws on the work of Harold Bloom and Martin Meisel to try and trace Collins's creative anxiety through various kinds of artistic realisation. It establishes a Bloomian anxiety of influence between Collins and his contemporaries and positions these anxieties as progenitive, giving rise to potentially beneficial results in terms of critiquing and reforming the relations between social organisation and machine culture. It argues that Collins did not leave painting from weakness or lack of resolve but because he refused to be dominated by any other figure and sought to become completely independent and establish his own originality of touch: or, in terms of narrative art, his own 'voice'.

Keywords: Charles Collins, his Apology for Art, and Harold Bloom and Martin Meisel

الخلاصة:

يتناول هذا البحث قرارَ چارلس كولنز التخلي عن الرسم ويسعى إلى تقديم قراءة في هذا الاعتراف الشخصي المتماسك نفسياً وجمالياً. ويقودنا ذلك إلى محاولات هارولد بلوم ومارتن ميزل متابعة قلق كولنز الخلّاق من خلال أنواع مختلفة من الإنجاز الفني. ويُثبِتُ البحث أن بلوم يخشى من وجود تأثر وتأثير بين كولنز ومعاصريه وينتقل هذا التأثير من سَلَفٍ لِخَلَف مما يؤدي إلى احتمال ظهور نتائج مفيدة بهيئة نقد وإصلاح العلاقات بين المؤسسة الاجتماعية والحضارة الآلية. ويُظهر البحث أن كولنز لم يتخلى عن الرسم بسبب الضعف أو قلّة العزيمة بل لأنه رفضَ أن يُهيمن عليه أيّ شخص وأن يكون مستقلّا تماماً وأن تكون له لَمَساته الأصلية أو صوته الخاص كما يُقال في فن السرد.

Charles Allston Collins's Apology for his Art

> It is the strain, the anxiety, the excitement that kills, even more than the mere labour. The fate of this man and of the other is told in a word; but what words can describe the agony that each of them has endured in the years, and months, and days which have preceded and ushered in the end?
>
> Charles Collins's 'Chesterfield Junior. A Son's Advice to his Father', *All the Year Round*, 15 (1866), p. 47.

Introduction

This study has emerged in response to the demand of establishing some thorough way of gaining a detailed understanding of an artist's trajectory. It is also an approach that has tried to adapt to the interdisciplinary nature of the study, which considers historical, cultural, and biographical factors that influenced Collins's artworks and works of literature within the larger arena of Victorian print and visual culture. Most existing accounts of the reasons for

Collins's transition from artist to journalist and travel-writer are insufficient. They simply record that in the mid-1850s Collins gave up painting and attempted to become a writer, as though it was simply easier for him to make a living this way. Other accounts, such as Catherine Peters's, stress what we might call the 'invalid' explanation, which pictures Collins surrounded on his deathbed by half-finished paintings, due to physical incapacity, because the very act of sitting down to draw brought out all of his worst nervous symptoms, and proved unendurable.[1] It is my contention that neither of these accounts provides a sufficient explanation of Collins's decision. In the *All the Year Round* series of eight comic letters from 'Chesterfield Junior' containing 'A Son's Advice to His Father'—all now newly attributed to Collins in the 'marked-up set' of the journal—Collins finds space in the complex satirical structure of the prose to occasionally hint in public at his own dilemma, as the epigraph indicates. In private, as Meisel is aware (uniquely amongst those who have written on Collins), Collins also left a lengthy and extraordinary unpublished account of his decision to give up painting that reveals a series of artistic and ideological scruples that have nothing to do with physical illness or weakness of mind or body. This research paper is dedicated to an analysis of this account and will draw on the work of Harold Bloom and Meisel, among others, to try and trace this anxiety through a variety of kinds of artistic realisation.

Charles Allston Collins's Apology Letter: an Overview

It is a twenty-three-page document dated 22 April 1856 and is currently archived in The Huntington Library, San Marino, California, to whom I am grateful for permission to quote from it. The piece is written on two fascicles of five leaves sewn together of what appears to be ordinary writing paper 177x110 mm. The document is written on the right side of each opening, the one exception being the back page of the first fascicle, which is written on. The pages are unnumbered whereas the two fascicles are numbered. The entire piece is addressed to Holman Hunt, and is entitled 'Charles Allston Collins[']s] Apology for his Art under a deep sense of high-minded responsibility'. The first fascicle chiefly summarises the possible influence of particular episodes involving Millais, and the second one is chiefly a panoramic view of numbered conclusions and questions, in which Collins attempts to 'sum up' the case for and against his being guilty of plagiarism, 'like a judge after a trial'. The

[1] Catherine Peters, *The King of Inventors*, pp. 159, 230.

document as a whole constitutes a searching self-interrogation and a defence against the charge of unintentionally plagiarising Millais in painting. Collins reveals to Hunt that he has worried over the legitimacy of an idea for a particular painting for two years, and the document is '[t]he result of some two years of patient thought and laborious determination to do my best with this work cost what it might':

> Such causes as those detailed above have operated to stifle the very breath of my professional existence. Such causes at last after months of struggling were too much for me. They seemed to strike the brushes out of my hand – and at last it was almost a relief to find that the year had advanced so far that the thing could not be done in time for the Exhibition.[2]

The 'Apology' letter is clearly a very significant document in its own right, as being a very detailed account of the genesis of an idea for a painting by someone who, it is fair to call a leading member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. It is even more significant in the context of the oddity of Collins's career given the unreliability or the absence of other critical works that interpret the same issue, with the exception of Meisel's essay. This study therefore seeks to provide a reading of the 'Apology' that is psychologically and aesthetically consistent. All available interpretive means have been carefully adopted in the present paper to live within Collins's own feeling of his document's subject. Of course, the written information in the 'Apology' might not fully reproduce truly or completely Collins's mental dilemma, as, although never published, it is still a textual artefact, but it does at least offer harder evidence towards the interpretation of hidden motives and subconscious values that governed his decision to stop painting than any other document. As far as Collins's persona is concerned, he refuses to settle for anything that is second best: something that later emerges in his writing, particularly in the essays on 'Novelty' and 'Something New'. He always seeks newness and originality in artistic work and seeks his quality in his own work.

Sources and Designs of *The Electric Telegraph*

The picture that Collins was planning to execute was to be called 'The Electric Telegraph', and while the central figure was to be—as in so many previous Collins paintings—a woman depicted undergoing strong emotions, the situation

[2]San Marino, The Huntington Library, A.L.S. 22 April 1856, HH 1.

was clearly dependent on the conditions of modernity and human nature under the stress of technological advances.

A fatal train crash took place on 9 June of 1865 at 2:30 pm. One of the passengers was Charles Dickens who was travelling together with his mistress Ellen Ternan and her mother. While he survived, others were not as lucky. Ten people were killed and almost 50 were injured in the Staplehurst railway accident. This crash is known to have had an effect on Dickens's writing. One of his short stories from the 1866 extra Christmas Number, called 'No. 1 Branch Line. The Signalman',[3] was a ghost story relating to a train crash. Matthew Wilson Smith has interestingly described 'The Signal-man' as follows:

> 'The Signal-Man' is the tale of a consciousness traumatized, not by a single event, but by a system in which disaster hovers forever overhead, and it is a story that wrestles with ghosts not only of dead passengers but of a dying genre. The narrator of the story is a gentleman out for a stroll in the countryside who encounters a signalman occupying alone some signal-box by a tunnel in a deep railway cutting. The signalman is able to send and receive warnings of danger on the line by means of a telegraph and an alarm bell. Three times in recent days, he has heard his alarm bell ring in a mysterious fashion, and each warning has been followed by the appearance of a phantom. Shortly after each appearance, a railway disaster occurs by his post. The first time, two trains crash in the tunnel; the second time, a young woman dies aboard a train; and the last time, it is the signalman himself who is struck down by an oncoming train. Throughout the tale, the signalman goes pale for no clear reason, stares at the alarm bell even when it doesn't ring, and looks again and again toward the red light in the tunnel: all nervous conditions that recall Dickens's own post-traumatic stress, with its shake, its loss of voice, its persistent illusions. The modernity of this trauma is underscored by the fact that Dickens locates the signalman's experience within a profoundly industrialized environment. Over and again, Dickens draws the reader's attention to the technologies that structure the signalman's sense of space and time.[4]

Although Dickens wrote 'The Signal-Man' almost eleven years after Collins planned 'The Electric Telegraph', the former seems to echo the latter or at least they both agree that modern technology generates an exorbitant melodramatic anxiety.

[3] Charles Dickens, 'No. 1 Branch Line. The Signalman', *All the Year Round*, 16 (1866), 592-597.
[4] Matthew Wilson Smith, 'Victorian Railway Accident and the Melodramatic Imagination', *Modern Drama*, 55 (2012), 497-522 (p. 515).

However, here is how the project is described in Part 1 of the 'Apology'—

> I thought of the Electric Telegraph as a dramatic agent in a picture and determined that the subject should be a wife enquiring by means of it after her husband's safety. At first I thought it should be the wife of a traveller by sea who had heard of the wreck of the ship in which her husband was sailing. Then I thought it would be more completely a subject of our own day if it was a Railway accident which had caused her fears. My idea was that having heard that an accident had happened to the train in which her husband was travelling, she had hastened to the nearest station to enquire through the Telegraph after her husband's fate. [. . .] It subsequently became apparent to me that it would be a wonderful increase of the dramatic effect of the picture if the writing [on the telegram] were shown, and Millais suggested that the figures ought to be done on such a scale that the writing might be easily legible.[5]

Collins initially sets out how he thought of the subject and carried out research by sending test telegrams and going to various stations with telegram offices to take characteristic PRB observations 'from nature' but also records how Millais would make suggestions about how the three main figures, the woman, her daughter, and the clerk, in the painting should stand or look. At this point it becomes clear that Collins cannot accurately remember during the lengthy process of sketching designs for the painting, how much or what specific input Millais has had. He does recall, however, that 'over and over again [I] besought him <u>not</u> to suggest' improvements, and that he tried to limit Millais' role to 'helping me to decide which of my own designs I should adopt'.[6] Collins's painful pride and desire to dissociate his work from Millais even as he recognises him as a role model comes across as quite obsessive at the beginning of the 'Apology', where he tells Hunt that the purpose of the document is to analyse how his 'difficulties' in completing the painting 'are attributable in this case to one cause':

> The fear of winning success by means of Millais' brains, or in any measure doing so. Let me then examine how much of this work is all my own or at any rate not the result of any advice from Millais on this particular subject [. . .] as to throwing off the influence of his conversation and opinions on art <u>generally</u> of course that is impossible.[7]

[5] A.L.S. 22 April 1856, HH1, fols 3-5
[6] A.L.S. 22 April 1856, HH1, fol. 7.
[7] A.L.S. 22 April 1856, HH1, fol. 2.

Millais had suggested, for example, that 'the child might be left out of the design as it was not likely that the mother would bring it with her when so hurried and on such an occasion'.[8] Collins had countered that if the child was only two or three years, the mother would be unable to leave it at home. There were exchanges too, over whether the veil the woman wears should be in the act of being thrown back—which Collins thought 'too momentary an action for painting'—or being held up while reading.[9]

Sketches for 'The Electric Telegraph' survive in The British Museum, and are reproduced here with permission. They show Collins experimenting with different positions for the daughter, who is reading one of the posters, particularly one announcing 'INSURANCE RAILWAY ACCIDENT' in three of the sketches. It is clear Collins intended to create situational irony through showing how commercial interests assume visitors to the office will only be motivated by desires to make insurance claims, an assumption which is rebuked by the emotion of the woman's figure, which speaks of her pure anxiety for her husband's safety. The sketches are all titled by the Museum as 'The Railway Accident', presumably in ignorance of Collins's 'Apology' and the fact that the painting for which they are studies was to be called 'The Electric Telegraph'.

[8] A.L.S. 22 April 1856, HH1, fols 7-8.
[9] A.L.S. 22 April 1856, HH1, fol. 8

recto verso

Fig. 1: Charles Allston Collins, Design for 'The Electric Telegraph'	
British Museum number	1891,0404.22
Description	Study for the painting 'The Railway Accident'; a telegraph clerk taking down a message from a woman, woman lifting a veil, on the wall a notice of insurance for railway accidents. Verso: Study for the head and arm of the little girl in 1891-4-4-25 Pen and brown ink, touched with brown wash
Materials	papers
Dimensions	• Height: 241 millimeters • Width: 146 millimeters
Exhibition	1947 Jun-Jul, Birmingham CAG, 'The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood', no.139b 1994-5 Sept-Jan, BM, Pre-

history	Raphaelite Drawings, no. 79
Acquisition name	• Purchased from: Charles Fairfax Murray • Previous owner/ex-collection: Wilkie Collins
Registration number	1891,0404.22

Fig. 2: Charles Allston Collins, Design for ‘The Electric Telegraph’	
Museum	1891,0404.25

number	
Description	One of several studies for the picture,'The Railway Accident'; a telegraph clerk taking down a message from a woman, man and woman turned r, a little girl in the foreground at left Verso: A separate study for the woman's head and arm Pen and brown ink, touched with brown wash.
Materials	papers
Dimensions	• Height: 253 millimeters • Width: 197 millimeters
Exhibition history	1994-5 Sept-Jan, BM, Pre-Raphaelite Drawings, no.82
Acquisition name	• Purchased from: Charles Fairfax Murray • Previous owner/ex-collection: Wilkie Collins
Registration number	1891,0404.25

Fig. 3: Charles Allston Collins, Design for ‘The Electric Telegraph’	
Museum number	1891,0404.23
Description	Study for the painting ‘The Railway Accident’; a telegraph clerk taking down a message from a woman, woman looking over clerk's shoulder Verso: A separate study for the woman's head Pen and black ink, touched with grey wash
Materials	papers
Dimensions	• Height: 188 millimeters • Width: 138 millimeters
Exhibition history	1947 Jun-Jul, Birmingham CAG, 'The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood', no.139a 1994-5 Sept-Jan, BM, Pre-Raphaelite Drawings, no.80

Acquisition name	• Purchased from: Charles Fairfax Murray • Previous owner/ex-collection: Wilkie Collins
Registration number	1891,0404.23

Fig. 4: Charles Allston Collins, Design for ‘The Electric Telegraph’	
Museum	1891,0404.24

number	
Description	One of several studies for a picture, 'The Railway Accident'; a telegraph clerk taking down a message from a woman, interior scene, man and woman turned r, with view of horse and two figures through window at left Verso: Head of a bearded man Pen and brown ink, touched with brown wash
Materials	papers
Dimensions	• Height: 261 millimeters • Width: 201 millimeters
Exhibition history	1994-5 Sept-Jan, BM, Pre-Raphaelite Drawings, no.81
Acquisition name	• Purchased from: Charles Fairfax Murray • Previous owner/ex-collection: Wilkie Collins
Registration number	1891,0404.24

The designs are obviously quite early ones, and show many signs of changes of plan and uncertainty of line. Nevertheless, it is clear Collins took them very seriously. Collins even 'built up in [his] room a kind of imitation of the office desk &c.',[10] but he could not get Millais's suggestions out of his mind: he reported in his 'Apology' that 'such is a kind of brief view of the history of a very painful part of my life more painful than any one would believe'.[11] Part of the painfulness is that Collins represents Millais as not just someone whose ideas and suggestions can take hold of him, but also as someone who has some degree of control of something as fundamental as Collins's sight or vision itself:

> Millais' influence on the education of my eye has doubtless been great, and must affect everything I paint whether I ever see him again or not. I cannot alter my opinion of what I believe to be the canon of right & wrong in art because his opinion has had a share in forming mine as to its laws. [. . .] If made use of, it is probable that it is the picture I should be known by and that people would often say to me 'was not that picture yours of the Electric Telegraph'? It is therefore especially important that I should be able to feel

[10] A.L.S. 22 April 1856, HH1, fol. 7.
[11] A.L.S. 22 April 1856, HH1, fol. 11.

> that it is really my own, and that I should not be occupied half my life in trying to get known by some other work that I might not be tormented by feeling myself associated with what I should feel ashamed to claim.[12]

Collins's desire to project a future in which he would feel free of any recollection of Millais's influence, not just on the final version of the painting, but on the whole of the decision-making process behind its composition, seems almost pathological:

> Should I hesitate to make the wife watching what the clerk is writing because I have an indistinct recollection that when I was undecided as to whether I would make her do so or have her looking away I took Millais' opinion on the question and he said he thought she should be looking at the writing. This is only an impression. Should I hesitate to do the figures on a tolerably large scale so that the words which the clerk is writing should be legible, because Millais was of opinion that they ought to be so done that the spectator might be able to read the writing. Having stimulated my memory to the utmost these are all the tangible objections I can find to my proceeding with this work. [13]

There is a strong mixture of pride and jealousy here, as well as a kind of over-thinking, which Collins clearly tries to limit, by reference to Millais's much-praised 1853 RA exhibit, *The Order of Release*, see below:

[12] A.L.S. 22 April 1856, HH1, fols 12-13.
[13] A.L.S. 22 April 1856, HH1, fols 16-17.

Fig. 5: John Everett Millais, *The Order of Release*, 1853. [Online display at] Tate Gallery

This picture shows a weeping young Jacobite soldier being released from prison on presentation of an order evidently obtained for him at great personal expense by his forceful but triumphant wife, with a babe in her arms. Collins concludes that to speculate as to whether he was trying to come up in 'The Electric Telegraph' with an equivalent subject 'in which a wife's care for her husband's well-being might be displayed' with equivalent force' to *The Release* would be 'to enquire too curiously': 'To go so deep as this with the investigation of motive is generally productive of little besides perplexity'.[14] This leads him to conclude, as part of his summing up, that 'it is not necessary to enquire how I came to think of the subject at all'. [15] There are clearly a number of ironies here, given that the 'Apology' is a detailed enquiry of this nature, and an important study of how artistic ideas are developed.

It is interesting at this point to compare Collins's methodology with another of Millais's paintings, namely *The Rescue*. Both artists had been planning to exhibit their paintings in the exhibition of 1855. Just as Millais designed the frame for *Convent Thoughts*, Collins painted the fire-hose of *The Rescue,* which occupies a prominent position in the bottom right-hand corner of the painting. Robyn Cooper describes *The Rescue* as 'a pictorial narrative telling the dramatic story of a fireman's rescue of three children from the blazing nursery of a grand

[14] A.L.S. 22 April 1856, HH1, fol. 11.
[15] A.L.S. 22 April 1856, HH1, fol. 14.

London house and their delivery into the arms of their grateful mother'.[16] In so doing, Cooper prompts us to consider some interconnecting matches between the main theme of Collins's 'The Electric Telegraph' and Millais's *The Rescue*. Both paintings accurately represent a problematic story of modern society and both were constructed when the two men were working in close collaboration with each other. The central implication of both paintings is a domestic focus whose primary goal is to reflect the urgent necessity of safety which, lets the audience experience a depth of immense sensation in the sense that they are watching women and children in the face of a close domestic calamity. In February 1855 Collins wrote an important letter to Hunt (unpublished) in which he compares the technological inventions of the nineteenth-century, in terms of incredible craftsmanship, to the Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages, in a move which shows him shifting away from simplistic 'Pre-Raphaelite' nostalgic ideals towards a kind of progressive modernism:

> They [People] look back to old days when half a town was voluntarily engaged in piling up a Cathedral where strength and beauty we cannot approach and then they divide their time between, the aforesaid lamentations that we produce nothing like this now, and miserable attempts at pseudo gothic dilettante imitations—forgetting/narrow minded soul that they are/that we have now [new] things around us, natural emanations from the modern mind, [words deleted] just as glorious as the triumphs of masonry, or rather much more so. For surely this little mahogany instrument not two foot high which [words deleted] tells the wife whether the wreck she has had news of has made her a widow or whether her children are fatherless through the railway accident which has befallen the train in which she knew her husband was travelling[—]something of this my subject—which summons a physician to one in extremity or one to a death bed when pardon the dying man desires—surely the instrument which does these and a thousand other marvels—setting time and distance at defiance is a thing to glory in. This, and the lighting of this town by gas, and our railways and machinery are the natural production of nineteenth century mind just as these buildings so justly admired were of the thirteenth—and it is worse than useless to ignore these colossal achievements of our own day and [words deleted] try to force back the stream to its source again[,] an experiment the pitiable results of which there are abundant opportunities of judging of in every cheap new gothic structure which is added to the list of London edifices. For the right view of

[16] Robyn Cooper, 'Millais's *The Rescue*: A Painting of a 'Dreadful Interruption of Domestic Peace', *Art History*, 9 (1986), 471-486 (p. 474).

> such wonders as the Electric Telegraph [. . .] refer to Exodus 31. 1 to 7. A most wonderful passage. [17]

This is indeed 'a most wonderful passage' of writing since it completes part of the puzzle, and denotes very clearly the point at which Collins parted company with the more reactionary aestheticism of Pre-Raphaelitism, which is focused on the phrase 'pseudo gothic dilettante imitations'. It is absolutely in tune with the progressivism of Dickens's manifesto for *Household Words* 'A Preliminary Word'. Collins might surely have a clever plan to frame the theme of his painting and he knew exactly what the painting was going to represent. He might address a continued social issue he experienced and he might think that it was the job of the modern artist to record it. Therefore, he had connected its theme with Exodus 31. 1-7:

> Then the Lord said to Moses, 'See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills— to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts. Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamak, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given ability to all the skilled workers to make everything I have commanded you: the tent of meeting, the ark of the covenant law with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent'.

The biblical passage obviously celebrates technical genius and the way in which the craftsmen of any age fulfil God's work. But in conjunction with the letter to Hunt, we can also see how Collins was aiming to create a model for himself and for his fellow artists that places them in the same role as inspired craftsmen. He might try to uplift the artists' moral and spiritual condition in the sense that the artist should be filled 'with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills' in order to 'make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze'. Collins might consider himself as 'one of the strongest and most unmistakable types of' artist who was able to create no fewer than six artistic designs for 'The Electric Telegraph', the 'glorious subject', and he yet might sacrifice them all for 'the noble idea of the scapegoat'. This item derives from another unpublished letter to Hunt, from February 1855, in which

[17] San Marino, The Huntington Library, A.L.S. 7-14 Feb. 1855, HH 68.

Collins also works between biblical and modern ideas to discuss one of his friends' ideas for a new painting:

> You speak of your want of sympathy in lonely labours. I wish I could convey to you the deep interest with which I think with them. I was especially struck with the noble idea of the scapegoat. It is a glorious subject full of wild terror and/much more/one of the strongest and most unmistakable types of Him who bore our sins and was wounded for our transgressions and as that it becomes a theme of the utmost and most touching interest and importance I envy you the subject.[18]

Returning to *The Rescue*, Collins was clearly present for much of the painting's development, noting in the same letter to Hunt that 'his picture of a fireman rescuing a family of children and bringing them to their mother is beginning to look truly glorious'.[19] The possibility of Collins's influence on *The Rescue*, through suggestions and critique as it was under development, seems obvious, particularly as, with the deadline looming, Collins was actually permitted to touch the canvas.

Fig. 6: John Everett Millais, *The Rescue*, 1855. [Online display at] National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Oicture credito

The Rescue represents a fireman assisting a mother and her three children to escape from their burning house whereas 'The Electric Telegraph' was to depict the moment of a married woman's realisation that her husband's train has evidently been involved in an accident and she becomes very worried about his safety. She goes to the Telegraph Office, standing anxiously behind the shoulder

[18] A.L.S. 7-14 Feb. 1855, HH 68.
[19] A.L.S. 7-14 Feb. 1855, HH 68.

of a railway telegraph operator as he slowly takes down a message. We can safely conclude that the narratives of *The Rescue* and 'The Electric Telegraph' were directed towards the same domestic purpose which was to give 'priority to gender over class by attempting to assimilate "the man" and "the woman" to the Victorian abstract types of hero and mother'.[20] Like the fireman in Millais's *The Rescue*, Collins gives the railway telegraph clerk in 'The Electric Telegraph' power and authority and lets the mother become subordinate to the Telegraph Office Clerk as a man. However, while there is a similarity, there is not necessarily a debt or a specific reference. We can also see, for example, that the clerk occupies a similar role as unwitting messenger as the peddler in Collins's own *Berengaria's Alarm*. In the light of the Victorian ideology of male and female roles, 'The Electric Telegraph' can be firmly characterised by the masculinity and power of the operator, but like other of his pictorial narratives, Collins makes the drama of the mother/woman's emotions his central focus of attention.

Collins's Apology: Literary and Psychological interpretation

As the account above suggests, some kind of combination of literary and psychological theory seems required in order to explain the anxieties of indebtedness evident in the 'Apology': the artist's fear that he has failed to create himself or that others will believe that he has copied somebody else. Usually, fear is provoked by a specific and immediate reaction: 'fear is a useful, rational kind of fright elicited by realistic external dangers'.[21] Similarly:

> [f]or long time, psychiatrists and psychotherapists have also overlooked the fact that anxiety not only has negative, disintegrative facets but also some positive, constructive ones. [. . .] Anxiety [. . .] shows in a great variety of ways. Subjectively it may be experienced as a most unpleasant interference with thinking processes and concentration, as a diffuse, vague and frequently objectless feeling of apprehension or as a discomforting feeling of uncertainty and helplessness. As it arises in its milder forms, it may show objectively by a shift in tone of voice, and/or tempo of speech, by a change of posture, gesture and motion, also by the anxious person's intellectual or emotional preoccupation or blocking of communication. [22]

[20] Robyn Cooper, 'Millais's *The Rescue*: A Painting of a 'Dreadful Interruption of Domestic Peace', *Art History*, 9 (1986), 471-486 (p. 479).
[21] Maurice R. Stein, Arthur J. Vidich and David Manning White, *Identity and Anxiety: Survival of the Person in Mass Society* (Illinois: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), pp. 112-168 (p. 130).
[22] Stein and White, *Identity and Anxiety,* pp. 129-130.

Harold Bloom has famously argued in his *Anxiety of Influence* (1973) that 'the largest truth of literary influence is that it is an irresistible anxiety'.[23] His central point is to confirm that the phenomenon of 'the anxiety of influence *comes out of* a complex act of strong misreading', [24] sometimes referred to as 'creative misprision', which is then linked to a series of psychological and rhetorical movements in an artist's work (the six so-called 'revisionary ratios'). Bloom's ground-breaking theory was developed from studying the work of the young Romantic poets of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century, and looking at their relationship with famous predecessors. In Collins's case, there is ample evidence of his attempt to define his personal style as a painter in distinction to the work of famous predecessors from an earlier generation (his own father, David Wilkie, Washington Allston, E. M. Ward), as well as—more powerfully—to the work of forceful members of the PRB, whose stated mission, was, specifically, to escape from the influence of the artistic traditions of Raphael and, in England, Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), portrait and history painter and art theorist, who enthusiastically praised the artistic efforts executed by Raphael.[25] Given his evident ability to ignore or deny the extent of his own influence on his contemporaries, it is possible to argue for a reading of the 'Apology' that shows Collins profoundly misreading the situation and experiencing the stages of Bloomian anxiety of influence in regard to his Pre-Raphaelite friend, John Everett Millais.

For example, in the 'Apology' we can see that Collins, with painful objectivity, attempts to distinguish his own creativity from that of the group, and this must, in Meisel's words, connect both with 'Collins's personality and how he thought and felt about himself' as well as the 'complex of emulation and fellowship, competition and mutual support', which existed between Hunt, Millais and Collins, suggesting that each 'artist is more likely to be nervously aware of what his contemporaries are up to that of the triumphant achievements of the past masters'.[26] There is an interesting distinction that can be developed here between Bloom's presentation of influence anxiety working across generations and centuries, and Meisel's exploration, which involves the present. This reproduces, in a way, the debate between the choosing of historical subjects for representation and modern ones, which is clear in PRB choices of subject and in

[23] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. xviii.
[24] Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. xxiii.
[25] For more information see Martin Postle, 'Reynolds, Sir Joshua (1723–1792)', *ODNB*, online edn. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23429> [accessed 1 September 2017].
[26] Meisel, 'Fraternity and Anxiety: Charles Allston Collins and the Electric Telegraph', p. 127.

Collins's work. In 'The Electric Telegraph' Collins attempts to produce a painting that reflects modern life and this is precisely the heart of the matter. Because it represents modern life, it will be subject to immediate cultural criticism that may be interesting for the viewer but which may give additional anxiety to Collins because it reproduces the pattern of his own stress about his own trajectory as an artist. His pattern of anxiety is not so distanced as Bloom presents it, this 'anxiety, this mode of melancholy, is the anxiety of influence, the dark and daemonic ground upon which we now enter'.[27] Meisel puts it this way:

> Collins expressed his anxiety as a concern over his originality, not over the insufficient support, loyalty, and cohesion of the group [. . .] nor even over his formal standing. His insecurity is not about belonging, but about autonomy, and it suggests a deeper anxiety over identity. A secure sense of self is what enables one to hold the balance between autonomy and community we experience. This is generally familial, and it is reasonable to suppose that its comforts (provisional identity and relief from autonomy) and its anxieties (threatened identity and inhibition of autonomy) carry over into subsequent experience.[28]

This leads to a kind of adaptation of Bloom to take into account the fact that in reading the 'Apology' 'what emerges, however, are not revelations about the formative past, which remains obscure and conjectural, about rather future insights into the subjective present'.[29] Collins's anxiety might have its roots in 'the oedipal and pre-oedipal rainforest, but its preoccupations are with the threats and uncertainties in the indeterminate present'.[30] Thus, for an artist like Collins, participating in what may be thought of as one of the first *avant-garde* movements, a distinction has to be made between 'anxiety over success' and 'anxiety over influence': 'the two are not very well insulated from each other, but neither are they indistinguishable'.[31] Bloom argued that 'the irony of one era cannot be the irony of another'[32] but the anxiety of influence amongst contemporary artists is embedded in a set of stylistic choices and intentions (synchronic) that are perhaps harder to distinguish than they are over time (diachronic). The discussion of the relation between specific works such as the proposed 'The Electric Telegraph', Millais' *The Order of Release*, *The Rescue*,

[27] Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 25.
[28] Meisel, 'Fraternity and Anxiety', pp. 112-168 (p. 135).
[29] Meisel, 'Fraternity and Anxiety', p. 135.
[30] Meisel, 'Fraternity and Anxiety', p. 128.
[31] Meisel, 'Fraternity and Anxiety', p. 128.
[32] Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence,* p. xxiv.

and Collins's own *Berengaria's Alarm* or even *Convent Thoughts* has illustrated this complexity.

This may be particularly the case with narrative painting that attempts a modern-life genre subject, as we see occurring in the mid 1850s, this being a topic that 'has received relatively little attention as a scholarly category'.[33] Again, important work in cultural theory has been carried out by Martin Meisel, on which I draw. In his 1983 publication Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England, Meisel draws explicit links among pictures and works of literature (novels and plays) since they all constitute a convenient dialectical field that developed in the late nineteenth century: 'the novel is the most thoroughly narrative and serially progressive of forms; painting is the most pictorial and static; and plays, with a story unfolding through a visible enactment, appear to combine something of both'.[34] Meisel remarks that narrative painting and drama should be closely linked:

> [T]he narrative language of painting and that of the drama had much in common. In both, emotion became typified character, and was subordinated to situation. The fact that situation—a word with static overtones—played so large a part in storytelling in the theatre, on canvas, and between boards, is one of the considerations that points to what might be called a common structure or style.[35]

The Electric Telegraph and Apology: Revisited

Thus, it would be interesting to try to read 'The Electric Telegraph' for its latent as well as surface story as you would read a novel. Like many paintings, this incomplete artwork can be regarded as a text in its own right because it was circumstantially, contextually, and effectively intended to relate a situation that has wider significance than the individual drama that is being depicted and the language of the story is charged with the artist's own disabling anxiety and desire about himself. It can be argued from various perspectives that 'The Electric Telegraph' is an attempt to make a link between the new relations of people and technology by considering the relation between modernisation and culture, paying more attention to communication than transportation. But as safe transportation relies on perfect telegraphing communication—how precisely the

[33] Mark Bills, *Dickens and the Artists* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 84.
[34] Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 3.
[35] Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England*, p. 10.

signalman receives and sends signals—the reading of the situation in Collins's painting basically depends on cultural sources in which the impact of the technological modernity on the human becomes a source of trepidation or even terror. It has been noticed that, as suggested by Nicholas Daly, 'industrial modernity is predicated on intellectual separation' between people and machines. The corollary of this is a modernity that obsessively replays the meeting of the two. [36]

From this perspective, both literature and narrative painting are actively involved in modernisation, rather than simply mirroring it. To argue that literature and narrative painting take part in and help constitute modernisation is to take a more general position on the politics of culture. In the 1850s and 1860s literature and narrative painting continue to be preoccupied with Victorian machine culture, and in fact they play an important part in the accommodation of new technology. The narrative picture can tell its story in a silent symbolic way that satisfied a large number of mid-Victorian spectators. This is supported by Kate Flint's substantial argument that 'for many mid-Victorian spectators, their favourite paintings were those which told stories. Art had the function of confirming the narrative which they used to make sense of their lives'.[37] In 'The Electric Telegraph', Collins can thus be seen to try to assist readers to acclimatise to certain changes in technology and social organisation. His picture clearly connects to elaborately staged 'railway rescue' / 'fire rescue' scenes in the dramas of 1850s (see pp. 73-4), arguing that the historical roots of these scenes are in the experience of industrial modernity, including industrial accidents. His picture might be said to represent an anxiety about the railway or the train as part of a larger and hostile machine culture. The continuous experimentation with the position of the radio-operator in 'The Electric Telegraph' seems to work towards the climactic scene of Collins's anxiety that shows him struggling with how to make fantasy perform distinct cultural work. If its manifest content shows a scene that conforms to Victorian stereotypes of the wife's role, and presents her anxiety over her husband's safety in a sentimentalised way, the picture also works to link its gloomy portrait of new technology to the hidden drama of railway rescue sequence scenes.

[36] Nicholas Daly, *Literature, Technology, and Modernity, 1860-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2004), p. 2.
[37] Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 197.

In the mid-Victorian era there was a cultural trend for the vivid evocation of the potential danger of the railway. As Daly puts it elsewhere:

> [T]he railway journey is described as a constant assault on the fragile nervous system of the traveler in ways that suggest a more than casual resemblance to the sensation novel. The traveler, like the reader of sensation fiction, is thought of as having been harnessed into a particular apparatus.[38]

In this regard, there was possibly a sort of anxiety associated with the concept of the deleterious effects of railway travel even in the absence of a specific accident. The subject of 'The Electric Telegraph' may shield itself against modernity by secreting a layer of consciousness, a kind of progenitive anxiety that may protect the subject rather than cause harm and show that anxiety may have its own uses. One of these is its direct link with sensation genres in exploring the contemporary fears of possible degeneration. Not surprisingly, the sensation genres, whether in the novel, drama or narrative paining, rely on anxiety to frame their story, allowing the reader/audience/spectator to generate the kind of variety of excitement and expectations characteristic of a powerful response to an artistic stimulus. In its testing of new opinions and courting of new impressions, Collins's 'The Electric Telegraph' is gesturing to the larger role that the new transportation and communication systems play in mediating our experience, making pioneering use of 'telegraphic messages'. The planned painting is a suspense-machine and 'that suspense works to retool the subject of modernity', for those who have no training risks being overwhelmed by modernity.[39] This all helps explain Meisel's feeling that in 'The Electric Telegraph' Collins deliberately 'turns the original Pre-Raphaelite programme in another direction' by presenting in the same painting 'a continuity embracing modern dress, domestic anxiety, the forces of nature, human agency and invisible social organisation' in such a way that it is not just nature alone but human culture that speaks for the spirit.[40]

Let us analyse this a little further. In the 1830s and 1840s there were many disastrous railway accidents. They were directly caused by mechanical failure of critical components of the train: engine, track, points tender axles, and wheels.[41]

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[38] Nicholas Daly, 'Railway Novels: Sensation Fiction and The Modernization of The Senses', *ELH*, 66 (1999), 461-487 (p. 470).
[39] Daly, *Literature, Technology, and Modernity*, *1860-2000*, p. 52.
[40] Meisel, 'Fraternity and Anxiety', p. 127.
[41] Peter R. Lewis and Alistair Nisbet, *Wheels to Disaster! The Oxford Train Wreck of Christmas Eve 1874* (Stroud: History Press, 2008), p. 56.

In his narrative painting, arguably, Collins is almost performing a journalistic task in proposing that 'The Electrical Telegraph' would help in a small way to remind those who run railway networks (or the government) that lessons can be learnt from past catastrophes in order to prevent them recurring. He invites the spectator to speculate on how the accident came about, drawing on their knowledge of real-life accidents.

*

When we now look back to a typical statement about Collins's 'failure' as an artist and his 'giving up' of painting for literature—for example, Ellis's statement that he was 'too *sensitive* and *highly-strung* and *nervous* for success in the battle of life'[42]—we can now see that these simplistic criticisms of Collins's weaknesses obscure various sophisticated forms of anxiety that were in play during the composition of 'The Electric Telegraph' and, its prose equivalent, the 'Apology'. There is a Bloomian anxiety of influence in relation to perceive stronger artistic spirits, but contemporary rather than historical; there is also a profound concern about originality and a success anxiety; there are also progenitive anxieties that give rise to potentially beneficial results, in terms of critiquing and reforming the relations between social organisation and machine culture.

Collins was to a demonstrable extent conscious of the almost frightening power of the subject and situation he had thought of in 'The Electric Telegraph'. The systemic nature of a disastrous railway accident was obvious enough to create traumatic anxiety, via the press, in the public at large. In a recent essay, Matthew Wilson Smith pinpoints the main reason behind most railway catastrophes in mid-Victorian era, namely 'the communication technology on which the whole system relied', which could fail to cope with an overcrowded network given that, for example, signalmen were forced to remain on duty 'for fifteen, twenty-four, and thirty consecutive hours'.[43] Victorians were therefore acutely aware of the importance of communications technology for the safety of the rail system. Collins's 'The Electric Telegraph', as we have seen, pays obsessive attention to the figure of the operator in the telegraph office whose difficulty in sending or receiving the signals is the object of the wife's tortured attention (see figs. 3 and 4). That Collins understood what was at stake here is

[42] Ellis, 'Charles Allston Collins', in *Wilkie Collins, Le Fanu, and others*, pp. 71-2. My emphasis.
[43] Smith, 'Victorian Railway Accident and the Melodramatic Imagination', p. 502.

obvious from the first of the 'Chesterfield Junior' essays, quoted above. In reversing the usual order of wisdom flowing from father to son, by parodying the original Chesterfield *Letters to His Son on the Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman* (1774), Collins is playing with the theme of modernity, in ways that, as suggested, are not always ironic, though the reader supposes initially that most of what is said by the young upstart son is to be viewed with suspicion. The question of the speed of modern progress comes up, and the way in which any man who is employed to work to deadlines is subject to ever increasing pressure:

> This is the kind of work that kills. Or, if it does not kill a man at once, it knocks him up, reduces him into what is called 'a low bad state'—a state which consigns bun to the hands of the physician—an invalided state, to last, more or less, always. Then is he bidden—though there are mouths to be filled which can only be filled by his professional exertions—to leave off. He must abandon work for a time; and though this may mean abandoning income too, he is strictly forbidden to be anxious, or to have 'anything on his mind'. [44]

It is hard to resist reading this as in some respects an autobiographical confession, or at least, reading it in the light of Collins's own professional experiences. 'Chesterfield Junior', then goes on to connect this presentation of professional anxiety (what is now called 'stress') specifically to the electric telegraph:

> Does not everyone know of similar instances? But what does all this come to? Are we to give up the 'glorious gains' of modern times? Are we to cut down our telegraph-posts and coil away the magic wires? Are we to pull up the rails upon the iron-road, and make a 'turnpike' of it again? Shall we send our merchandise by the road-waggon and the barge, and our letters by the old mail-coach? Such questions are ridiculous. There is no going back in this world; no standing still even, with impunity. The fact is, that these painful results of modern practices are in some sort inevitable. In every age the weak have gone to the wall.[45]

From the advance of technology, which cannot now be escaped, Collins, as 'Chesterfield Junior' then moves on to the operator, the signalmen whose human

[44] Charles Collins, 'Chesterfield Junior. A Son's Advice to his Father', *All the Year Round,* 15 (1866), 45-48 (p. 47).
[45] Collins, 'Chesterfield Junior', p. 47.

error Wilson Smith has pinpointed as the centre of public anxiety about railway accidents:

> My respected father remembers, perhaps, the case of a certain signal-man at one of our most frequented junctions, whose duties were so manifold and bewildering, and involved such intricate calculations of time and place—a half second wrong here, or a half inch wrong there, being sure to bring about the most dreadful consequences—that the man at last fell into a morbid condition about his work, and, being strained and bewildered to a degree far beyond his powers of endurance, remarked at last, with terrible calmness to one of his comrades, 'He knew the day would come when he must make a mistake, and that when that day came he should most surely be killed'? This is quite a modern instance, and is no doubt fresh in your memory, as is also the end of the poor wretch who did at last make a mistake, and was at last killed.[46]

From this sequence, written up almost a decade later, it can be concluded that the narrative topic of the painting, 'The Electric Telegraph', was chosen to encapsulate the social anxiety over new technology and represent it as a human-level drama. The catastrophic railway problem is determined, here, as neither personal nor moral, but technological and systemic—and it is one and the same with the personal, professional stress 'that kills a man', or which invalids him out of his trade.

*

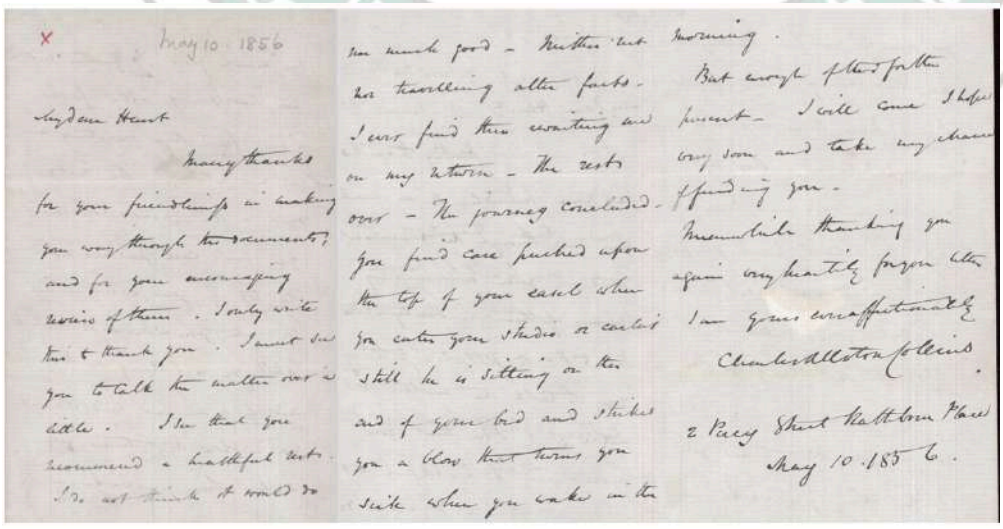
In these ways, then, we can begin to understand why the composition of 'The Electric Telegraph' represented such an acute crisis in Collins's trajectory as a creative artist and why it held together some very powerful forces at once deeply personal and also public: powerful enough to produce a change of course. The 'structured intensity and affective interest of the narrative situation, and the bold modernity of the dramatic agent'[47] in the proposed picture filled Collins with excessive excitement and the stress of producing it for the deadline of a public exhibition brought on the kind of complex series of anxieties that I have outlined above. Although Collins's experience and talent eminently qualified him to achieve the task, the suspense of the outcome gave it an almost sensational hold over him, as this further extract from his unpublished letter to Holman Hunt, written in the run-up to the 1855 Exhibition, indicates:

[46] Collins, 'Chesterfield Junior', p. 47.
[47] Meisel, 'Fraternity and Anxiety', p. 115.

> I noted what was cause of comfort to me, I mean indications that I do not stand alone in the extreme suffering and anxiety which painting causes me and which I never have found so wearing and torturing as in what I am at this time engaged in. It is a picture in which the Electric Telegraph plays a prominent part and every day for months past or almost every day has been loaded with anxiety so great that I almost wonder that I have not given up what so distresses me. But the subject is one so pregnant with greatest interest to me that I go on thankful that I have got it. People are apt to groan over these times.[48]

The subject, Collins believes, is 'pregnant with greatest interest' to him, so in other words, the progenitive anxiety still predominates at this point. By the time of the 'Apology' however, Collins has clearly also confronted, and in many ways over-thinks and overestimates Millais' power over him, in a form of Bloomian anxiety of influence, but one which is so bound up with the immediate forms of artistic suggestion and idea that it cannot be overcome. The engagement with non-Pre-Raphaelite ideas of technological modernity and mass communication also leads Collins into new and dangerous territory, resulting in a form of guilt that in turn led to the 'Apology' taking on, in Part II, the narrative form of a judge's summing-up after a trial. The act of sending the papers to Holman Hunt, and waiting for his verdict was also part of a process by which, like the stressed professional in the 'Chesterfield Junior Letter', Collins surrendered his case to other experts to decide.

The unpublished letter below therefore helps complete this phase of Collins's journey:



[48] A.L.S. 7-14 Feb. 1855, HH 68.

My dear Hunt

Many thanks for your friendship in making your way through the documents, and for your encouraging review of them. I only write this to thank you. I must see you to talk the matter over a little. I see that you recommend a healthful rest. I do not think it would do me much good — Neither rest nor travelling alter facts. I ever find them awaiting me on my return — The rest over — The journey concluded — You find care perched upon the top of your easel when you enter your studio or earlier still he is sitting on the end of your bed and strikes you a blow that turns you sick when you wake in the morning.

But enough of this for the present. I will come I hope very soon and take my chance of finding you.

Meanwhile thanking you again very heartily for your letter.

I am yours ever affectionately | Charles Allston Collins

2 Percy Street Rathbone Place | May 10. 1856.[49]

This is crystal clear evidence that Hunt replied to Collins's 'Apology' and it sounds as though Hunt has, in sending his verdict, or diagnosis, suggested that Collins should take a break from his grappling with the painting, before returning to his challenge. It would seem that Hunt, like other commentators such as Ellis, Peters, and Hawksley, also diagnosed Collins's case wrongly, or at least understood it in insufficient depth. This is harder to explain because Hunt was the direct recipient of the 'Apology' whereas the others did not know of its existence. Whatever Hunt's counsel, or perhaps in taking it to a further dimension, Collins did give up painting, but permanently and reinvented himself as a writer. Short though it is, the 'Apology' is a document in the form of a quest for the very hallmarks of originality. The relation between painting and literature informs the experience of each.

Final Remarks

This study has explored the neuroeconomics of Collins's artistic transition between art forms and the role of different kinds of anxiety in the decision-making process. It argues that Collins did not leave painting of his own free will, but because he refused to be dominated by any other figure and in order to become completely independent and establish his own programme and originality of touches or, in terms of narrative art, 'voice'. It is not too much to suggest that, rather than give up painting because of rejection by the PRB,

[49]San Marino, The Huntington Library, A.L.S. 10 May 1856, HH 70.

Collins in fact ended up breaking from it to establish his own norm or standard of representation. Collins went on to harness progenitive anxiety as a sensational source of power in his non-fictional and fictional writing. In an unpublished letter to Wilkie, archived in the Morgan Library, not previously noted by any commentators, Collins reveals that by the 1860s he was taking a medicine called 'super phosphates of Soda' as 'a brain tonic'.[50] A brief survey of this type of medicine shows that the sustained use of this formula was believed to calm the mind and relieve anxiety. [51]

In some degree, we can now understand that in the mid-1850s, 'The Electric Telegraph' represented, to him, a nervous network of an achieved anxiety rather than an accomplishment. In subsequently forsaking painting for writing, Collins's artistic gifts did not lose their exceeding vitality or strength of novelty, but given the disparity of form in the majority of his literary work, it will not be easy to establish if he achieved his artistic intentions more or less completely. Nevertheless, various characteristic traits of observation, sensibility and visual understanding have now been established in Collins's artistic programme, as well as the depressive tendency, by which we can see that he was at the mercy of his own acutely observant mind and his own mind was disposed to deal very mercilessly with his own perceived shortcomings.

[50]New York, The Morgan Library, A.L.S., 16 January 1865, MA 3152.8.

[51] Brain Tonic 'is a safe, non-addictive, natural remedy containing 100% homeopathic ingredients. These ingredients have been specially selected to temporarily relieve symptoms of mental fatigue'. Source: <https://www.nativeremedies.com/brain-tonic-relieve-mental-fatigue-symptoms.html> [accessed 27 March 2018].