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PLAY FOR MORTAL STAKES:

FUNERALS AS MODERNIST ACTS OF FICTION

by

JANINE M. UTELL

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Abstract

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Janine M. Utell

Adviser: Professor Edmund L. Epstein

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the ritualization of death in British literature of the interwar period and its implication for narrative and genre. The authors under consideration include poets of the Great War (Robert Graves, Charles Sorley, Isaac Rosenberg, the Sitwells), and later writers such as Katherine Mansfield, Aldous Huxley, Virginia Woolf, W. H. Auden, Ivy Compton-Burnett, and James Joyce. Using the methodology of ritual studies, an interdisciplinary approach combining the perspectives of religion, anthropology, and literary criticism, I examine how these texts create a fictive space in which death can be ritualized and how this process makes narrative meaning.

The fictive space of the text becomes a space for survivors to discover or construct meaning where there may seem to be none. This ritual process may manifest itself in a number of ways: through parties, celebrations, and dinners, through storytelling, and through the presence of traditional elements of death ritual such as wakes and washing. These elements, and their use in the production of narrative meaning, are key in the poetry of the Great War. However, the ritual process may also

fail, as it does in many texts I examine from the 1930s. This points to a failure in the attempt to give meaning to the life of an individual and to that dead person's story, a failure which has implications for the construction of narrative.

Further, the texts under study reveal the process of reinvention of ritual and tradition, and the intersection of past and present, through the deployment of spontaneous, transformative performance. I argue that this use of ritual subverts the use of genre, particularly those of romance and comedy, in my discussions of Mansfield, Woolf, Vera Brittain, and James Joyce. It is my hope that this focus on ritual in Modernist and interwar texts will provide a new perspective on the construction of narrative and genre, particularly in its relation to the representation of the individual, and the meaning granted that representation.

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Table of Contents

Introduction: Words Like Weeds: Fictive Space and Funeral Ritual in Modernism

Come then, pure hands, and bear the head
That sleeps or wears the mask of sleep,
And come, whatever loves to weep,
And hear the ritual of the dead.

– Tennyson (14)

What is the point of bothering about people who are not going to invite you to a meal?

– Solzhenitsyn (qtd. in Enright, 103)

The ghost of Thomas Hardy looms over this project in two respects. The first is as author of The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886), which Rosemary Sumner considers a proto-Modernist text. The novel ends with an anti-funeral. The protagonist, Michael Henchard, after selling his wife and, years later, rising to the position of mayor in the town of Casterbridge, dies in ignominy. He leaves a document for his daughter stipulating that he is not to have any funeral:

That Elizabeth-Jane Farfrae be not told of my death
or made to grieve on account of me.
& that I be not bury'd in consecrated ground.

& that no sexton be asked to toll the bell.

& that nobody is wished to see my dead body.

& that no murners walk behind me at my funeral.

& that no flours be planted on my grave.

& that no man remember me.

To this I put my name.

MICHAEL HENCHARD (326)

Henchard wishes his death to go unremarked and thus his life to go unremembered. He catalogs various mortuary elements and customs only to reject them in a last request whose ultimate purpose is that its writer be forgotten. Yet by his act of oblivion expressed in writing, Henchard has committed some part of himself to memory. He has articulated and embodied his own death in a last gesture against the disorder and chaos that death brings to the self.

Hardy's own funeral ritual was opposed to Henchard's anti-funeral in its gruesome elaborateness. He died in 1928 and wanted to be buried in Stinsford Churchyard, Dorset; in his own final request, he wrote that he wished to be buried "if possible in my wife Emma's Grave or close to the foot thereof" (qtd. in P. Turner 264). However, others, such as Sydney Cockerell and J. M. Barrie, felt Hardy, as a national figure, should be buried in Westminster Abbey. A compromise was reached: "The heart was duly excised, wrapped in a towel, and kept, as the parlour-maid recalled, "in my biscuit-tin" until the "heart-burial at Stinsford." The rest of the body was cremated, and the ashes buried in Poet's Corner" (P. Turner 264).

These two funeral instances function as an intersection between ritual and modernism, an intersection I seek to examine in the discussion that follows. Modernism has been described as a period of fragmentation, of rupture with the past. In critical discourse it is characterized by experimentation and avant-garde movements: Roger Fry's Post-Impressionism, the Cubism of Gaudier-Brzeska, the Vorticism of Ezra Pound. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarland call Modernism "the Great Divide" (20). However, another way of looking at Modernism is to note the continuity between the innovation of the period and the tradition that comes before. Critics such as Sumner and Michael Levenson, and historians such as Jay Winter, argue for acknowledgement of these continuities, and for rejection of the oversimplification of a "Great Divide."

The figure of Hardy is representative of the connections between tradition and modern modes. His work is marked by "the mingling together of the everyday with unknown regions, whether of mind or universe [which] is a crucial aspect of modernism" (Sumner 21); we see this mingling in other works of the Modernist period, including texts to be studied here. Yet in addition we see a different kind of mystery, the presence of a different kind of relationship between the everyday and the unknown, also noted in Hardy's work: the presence of ritual.

A concern with death and how it is to be dealt with is what Allyson Booth calls a "habit of thought" (4). Philip Mellor in his studies of high modern responses to death writes that death is a "potent challenge" to the "ontological security" of the self in high modernity (12-13). Death is "the ultimate *absence* of meaning"; therefore death's presence makes clear "the existential isolation of the individual in high

modernity" (19-20). There have been several critical studies of the representation and response to death in modernist literature. Alan Friedman examines the depiction of "fictional death" in his study of twentieth-century literature. Drawing on Philippe Ariès' argument that in modern society attitudes towards death are destabilized, leading to a failure to cope properly with the end of life, Friedman argues that funerals are "elided," devoid of meaning. He writes, "Modernist fictional death, no longer tragic and consummatory, the ultimate and timely form of closure, became unpredictable, incoherent, often initiatory and pervasive" (23). On the other hand, Christopher Ames claims that modernist death is not incoherent; rather, it is a site for the affirmation of life through the festive. Funerals are read as celebrations of life and moments where, through the deployment of the carnivalesque, order is actually reinstated and worth of the individual life is revaluated.

While acknowledging the value of such studies, I propose that a further contribution to the study of modernism, and the presence and representation of death in modernist literature, can be made by examining texts of the interwar period through the lens of ritual criticism, through a concerted study and interpretation of the presence and enactment of death ritual in works before and after the First World War. In my discussion I expand the field of modernism to include texts of the 1930s, a move I think is overdue in the study of the period. The texts of the thirties, by such authors as Louis MacNeice, Ivy Compton-Burnett, and Stevie Smith, offer the same kind of multilayered readings and experimental responses to tradition, form, and conceptions of the self as more canonically accepted "Modernist" texts, and so have a place here.

The use of ritual criticism calls for a similar widening of definitions and conceptions. Ritual does not only have to be traditional or formalized; it can be spontaneous, improvised, adaptive. Phillip Wheelwright argues that the metaphoric and the mythic – key components of ritual – are needed for individual and communal life. Ritual is not found only in places we automatically think of as religious or sacred; it can be found in the mundane, particularly when it comes to funeral ritual. In the texts under study we find "the investments in memories surrounding death work across and connect formalized ritual practices and 'sacred' spaces with those actions (and aspects of material environments) which are usually considered to be 'routine'" (Hallam and Hockey 184).

Ritual criticism draws on the fields of anthropology and performance, on genre, and on religious studies to describe and interpret "the metaphors on the basis of which people act, especially those they repeatedly act out or elevate to the status of gesture" (Grimes, Ritual 147). This is the methodology upon which I base the arguments that are to follow. As I employ ritual criticism, it has its roots in the work of Arnold van Gennep and his studies of rites of passage. In my study of modernist funerals, I examine the ways these practices function as rites of separation, transition, and incorporation and serve both the dead and the living. The ideas of Victor Turner, and his discussions of liminality and communitas, are also a significant part of my study, as I look at the cultural construction of death ritual, the transitional space in which this ritual takes place, and the coherence and community created – or destroyed – by these performances. Clifford Geertz and Kenneth Burke make an important claim that ritual resides in processes of fusion, in the coming together of disparate

elements in a space made sacred, a claim we may keep in mind as we apply ritual criticism to literature, particularly as we consider the idea of the "fictive space." Fictive space, a concept of Ronald Grimes, is a ritual space contained within a literary text. This sacred space in a text, where the sacralizing process of fusion occurs, is the site of the enactment of death ritual – or the site of its failure.

I plan to argue three theses here. These three strands of my discussion are interwoven with each other; different aspects of the three main points will emerge at different points in the chapters to follow.

First, I argue that rituals provide meaning. Through text and gesture, rituals aim to provide meaning, order, coherence for the individual and the community. This is particularly important for death ritual, as this practice is necessary – individually and socially – to reveal meaning in death, and to come to terms with death. Funerals became very important in the interwar period in response to the mass carnage of the Great War, and the violence and chaos that reverberated afterward throughout the collective memory of English society. In the texts of this period, funerals – and other less explicit death rituals – are present in order to make meaning out of the disruption of death, and, in consequence, to give meaning to life.

The second strand of my argument is that rituals are reinvented and revised. They may be secular, personal, and spontaneous, yet, as a result of the transformative processes of connection and fusion present in the ritual space, these practices are given sacred meaning. This action provides continuity between tradition and "Modernism," or modern modes. Modernism should be read not simply as a rupture with the past or a fragmentation of tradition. The relationship between what we

habitually think of as "Modernism," and the periods that come before and after which are usually excluded from the discussion – namely the Victorian period and the thirties – is fluid. It functions as a semipermeable membrane through which certain habits of thought and practice are shared. I propose that thinking about death, and representing death and its attendant ritual practices, is one of these habits.

Third, I put forth that these uses of ritual have an effect on generic convention, the way narratives are constructed, and, ultimately, the way life stories are told. Biography is a critical component of death ritual. The end of a life provides the end of a story, and it is a story that survivors, those left behind, can tell and retell, fashioning the biography into part of the collective memory. Stories give us power over death, while allowing us the recognition that we are powerful: death is the ultimate end to a story. The story of a life is constructed by the individual to give meaning to existence; it might be finished by survivors, retold and reworked to give meaning to death. The use of genre is in itself somewhat ritualistic, governed by rules and codes in order to create narrative within a demarcated fictive space. Death ritual, in the texts under study here, transforms genre, and thus brings change to narrative.

At the time of this writing, the New York Times has just published its annual "The Lives They Lived," a special issue of essays on people who have died during the year and the significance of their lives – and deaths. An editorial note at the beginning of this issue says, "We have found people – a fan, a son, a scholar, an acolyte – who can bear special witness, revealing the passions and meanings of the lives they lived" (19). Others are called in to give meaning to lives that have ended,

and in some way to give coherence to the time that has just passed. These writings – any writings about death – make a contribution to the collective memory: "It is language, and the whole system of social conventions attached to it, that allows us at every moment to reconstruct our past" (Halbwachs 173). Death and narrative are closely intertwined, and the rituals of each may transform the other as it passes through cultural processes of enactment.

This is deeply connected to writing and ritual in that they are both embodied processes. Valentine Cunningham writes:

> How could we not [...] notice how far writing is so totally taken up with the body that it is from end to end a great somatic stunt, a theatre of bodies on display, a battlefield of the wounded, mutilated and dying, an anatomy of theatre, a great dissecting table of the cut-open, probed, tented, haruspicated corpse? (Reading 42).

The body is present in ritual through performance. In death ritual, this body is dying: there is the corpse. The bodies of survivors exist through negation: they are alive while the person they are there for is dead. The body is crucial, and ritual is part of the struggle to prevent the total objectification of the body. Ritual performance is the process of deobjectifying, of sacralizing, the body. The physical act of writing that surrounds death – as permitting biography, opening the way for meaning, and allowing commemoration – is an essential part of the embodiment of ritual. The fictive space of literature, transformed by ritual, in turn allows for the literature itself to be changed, an alteration manifested in the subversion of genre.

The significance of the many states of the ritualized body is a crucial element of the discussion of Chapter One, "Reinventing Ritual: The Pageantry of Death Before and After the Great War." The focus of this chapter is on the ways ritual can be revised to suit the purposes of modernity, and the effects these revisions have on the poetry of the First World War. Chapter Two, "Memento Mori: The Sacred, the Secular, and the Subversion of Genre," continues the discussion of the relationship between ritual and writing by examining the fluid nature of processes of sacralization and their place in the world of the everyday. Chapter Three, "Necessary Morbidities: Funeral Rituals, Ritual Failures in the 1930s," discusses the ramifications for the verbal framework of narrative and memory when the ritual surrounding that framework collapses. This section treats what happens when a necessary "habit of thought" fails.

The final chapter, "Last Rites and Resurrection: The Ritualization of Death in the Fiction of James Joyce," brings together the various strands of the arguments presented here. The work of Joyce illustrates the processes of revision in life-writing that can take place through the deployment of death ritual – the ways ritual can be revised, can fail, and can then be revised again – and the subversion and recreation of genre that is possible through the embodiment of transformative ritual practices.

Chapter One: Reinventing Ritual: The Pageantry of Death Before and After the Great War

For to speak of the dead means to deny death and almost to defy it. Therefore speech is said to "resuscitate" them. Here the word is literally a lure: history does not resuscitate anything. But the word evokes the function allocated to a discipline that deals with death as an object of knowledge and, in doing so, causes the production of an exchange with living souls.

Such is history. A play of life and death is sought in the calm telling of a tale, in the resurgence and denial of the origin, the unfolding of a dead past and the result of a present practice.

– de Certeau (47)

Let us then uniformly abandon the horrible, sickening, and grim *paraphernalia of the grave.*

– Phillips (3)

I.

Death and Social Conventions

Throughout the literature of the Great War, death is present in the midst of youth and excitement. Death was present at the start of the war, in the celebrations of August 1914, and it was present in the Armistice Day celebrations in November 1918. In between, those involved in the war as soldiers and as civilians struggled to

cope with the mounting carnage and destruction. One of the ways people dealt with death when traditional rituals failed was to create new ones. Those created during the war to cope with death are marked by their composite nature, their spontaneous quality, enabling participants to individualize death when no other way was available. These personalized rituals, combining elements of religious tradition, images, sound, poetry, music, and Victorian funeral custom permitted the creation of memory and meaning in a way that traditionally sanctioned commemoration did not. Funerals become ways to remember, to individualize, and to create narrative. While the literature and culture of the time during and after the Great War are often described as fragmented, experimental, and dissonant, in later chapters we may see that these pieces come together in the creation of ritual. These rituals themselves are experimental, yet they reinvent tradition in ways that enable authors and readers to transform the interwar world, to create continuity across the rupture which seemed to emerge between the summer of 1914 and the winter of 1918. "Let us then uniformly abandon the horrible, sickening, and grim *paraphernalia of the grave*," and find the ways in which ritual transforms the fictive space of literature between the wars, bringing an awareness of mortality and equipment to understand and cope with that awareness. We will first deal with the nature of death ritual, and then examine some of the literature written during the war.

The funeral for the Unknown Warrior in November 1920 matched that of the Duke of Wellington in pageantry: "Arrangements were highly ritualized, even Masonic" (Bourke 236). After the Great War, concern among grieving families was

such that the government realized something needed to be done to provide some forum, some outlet, for mourning. Lloyd George, with the approval of King George V and under the direction of Lord Curzon, arranged a public funeral for an unknown dead soldier. Six bodies were recovered from France, one from Ypres, one from Cambrai, one from Arras, one from the Somme, one from the Aisne, and one from the Marne. A blindfolded officer selected one of the anonymous coffins. The body was then transported to England in a newly made coffin fashioned from an oak from Hampton Court Palace, then buried in Westminster Abbey in French soil (Bourke 236-7). The funeral itself relied on multiple symbols. The oak functioned as a sign of strength. The soil of France, brought to England to bury the solider in, echoed the claim that France had become the home of the men buried in her battlefields, France and England becoming one in death. The ship which brought the body across the English Channel to Dover was called the Verdun and it recalled the most gruesome battles of the war. The crossing and the arrival at Dover Beach signified the return of a fallen hero as "God Save the King" and the "Marseillaise" were played. One might even recall Matthew Arnold's poem "Dover Beach": "And we are here as on a darkling plain/Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight/Where ignorant armies clash by night" (257). The soldier himself was buried in Westminster Abbey, with other national heroes ("Navy's Tribute" 14). As a London Times reporter wrote,

> They [symbols of commemoration] are impersonal, or, more truly, they are personal to us all. They shadow forth, imperfectly, as symbols must, the cloud of thick-coming thoughts and feelings that

> have filled our minds and hearts throughout these years of anguish and of endeavour – of anguish unutterable and endeavour unsurpassed. ("Armistice Day" 15)

As Bourke points out, these proceedings were "highly ritualized," but it is important to look beyond the perception that they were simply "baroque." They were drama, they were spectacle, but they also were written in a language that a grieving nation would understand, and needed to hear.

In the week following the funeral, over a million people visited the tomb. The funeral for the Unknown Warrior fulfilled a need felt by every individual who suffered the loss of a loved one in the Great War: the need to grieve, to come to terms with death. "To one group of people these rites, we believe, will be particularly acceptable – to the widows, the parents, and the other nearest relatives of the great host who have died, and more especially of those who have died without a name" ("Armistice Day" 15). The funeral was more for the living than for the dead, a "great host" represented by a nameless, faceless man with no past and no story. Nothing like this had ever been done before. There was a sense that it was a completely different kind of funeral, one for all. Many of the bereaved smiled and wept not simply because the ceremony was a moving moment of national pride or remembrance, but because the Unknown Warrior could be theirs.

Chances were the Unknown Warrior was <u>not</u> theirs. How, then, could this be a funeral? Doesn't a funeral offer an opportunity for remembrance of an individual life through the sharing of stories and memories, a chance for family and friends – "nearest relatives" – to come together for closure? A funeral is a ritual meant for an

individual and for the loved ones and social group of that individual. The sketches for the unveiling of the Cenotaph, which also took place on the Armistice Day of 1920, and for the procession of the Unknown Warrior to Westminster Abbey, both indicate seats for "Bereaved" – four separate sections ("Sketch" 14-5). The "Bereaved" were people suffering loss, but they were also an abstract entity, a demarcated social group signifying "loss." Funerals enable those left behind to mourn the beloved dead, the absent one, but also they allow the mourners to first be separated from social life, and then re-integrated. The special seating for the bereaved along the procession route to Westminster Abbey set them apart from society in their grief, but in them all of society was grieving. The funeral was for everyone.

Death rituals are intimate and personalized even as they are social and public. Funeral ritual celebrates an individual's life while allowing a space to seek to understand the death. How, then, does this national, official, ceremony serve as a funeral? What we see here may be considered in light of Lévi-Strauss' idea of bricolage: the funeral for the Unknown Warrior is entirely invented, constructed from composite elements and symbols, a reinvention of existing ritual in order to serve the need to come to terms with death when the death seems meaningless, when the body is absent, when the scale is immeasurable.

Ritual here is present and needed, and in this need we see a continuity between tradition and modern modes. Tradition is that which is established, often through repetition; it is governed by rules and conventional wisdom. It provides continuity with the past, and seeks to create something unchanging (Hobsbawm 1-2).

Modern modes indicate a rupture with the past, with tradition; they are new, unpredictable, and full of anxiety. In modern modes, the meaning of tradition is questioned, while tradition is originally conceived so meaning does not have to be questioned; it can be merely be taken as given. However, it is important to note that there is a dialectic between past and present, between modern modes and tradition, evident in the reinvention of ritual that takes place here. Old rituals can no longer be sustained or performed without questioning meaning and significance; however, the new rituals incorporate elements of the old – the rupture is not complete. Rituals may be reinvented to allow for revision of meaning. On the other hand, revisions of meaning may be arrived at through the performance of reinvented rituals.

A very short time after the war itself began people began the attempt to define what exactly made the "Great" War different: the unparalleled carnage; the shift from a soldier class of a small proportion of the population to "Kitchener's Army" of volunteers, meaning more families had participants – and casualties. The distinctions between the Great War and the European wars of the past, as well as the changes wrought in society and culture by the conflict, have led many critics and historians to propose what Joanne Bourke calls "the disillusionment thesis," or more generally, to propose, as do Paul Fussell and Modris Eksteins, that the Great War led to the birth of Modernism. However, more recent works of criticism and history argue that the rupture was not immediate or total, that the line between "tradition" and "Modernism" is not as stark as previously argued. As Hynes (War) and Winter show, the continuities between tradition and modern modes may be seen in the culture, society, and arts of interwar Britain. These continuities may be present in the

(sometimes implicit) need for ritual, and the elements of ritual which writers of this period invent, reinvent, and incorporate into their work. The examination of the literature of the interwar period, a period "more obsessed with death than any other period in modern history" (Cannadine 189), will show that the roots of this obsession may spring from the battlefields of the Great War, but the impulse – itself, I would argue, an obsession of the period as well – comes from a wide, living variety of death customs and funeral traditions.

Rituals provide meaning, continuity, and community. If these things are threatened, if the rituals which provide them disintegrate, new ones arise to take their place. Eric Hobsbawm calls this the "invention of tradition" (1). He finds that invented traditions are "vague" regarding "values, rights, and obligations" of the participating group; further, they fill only a "small part of the space left by the secular decline of both old tradition and custom" (10-11). As we shall see, the burial rituals and memorials created in the wake of the Great War are "vague"; they embody conflicting values and struggle between tradition and modern modes, as in, for example, the work of Sir Edward Lutyens. We see this in burial rituals on the battlefield, postwar memorials, and the poetry of the time. However, we may want to consider re-evaluating the idea of ritual to include this kind of ambiguity; rituals rife with ambiguity continue to exist during and after this period as struggle for meaning continues. This ambiguity stems from a desire to create meaning and coherence, and a recognition that this desire can never truly be fulfilled.

The rules for death ritual in the Victorian period were rigidly set. A funeral might have all of the following accoutrements: an elm coffin, silk winding sheet, pall-bearers in full mourning dress complete with wands and top hats, a wealth of black ostrich feathers, horse and coach, pages, footmen, and mutes – an almost Greek array of designated mourners. In addition to yards of black crepe, paramatta, streamers, a household might also purchase mourning pincushions, mourning tea-sets, mourning jewelry, mourning stationery. Mourners were expected to provide at least a minimal display of bereavement; the ostensible reason was so that the mourning family could show society that it had endured a loss, and thus should be set apart and treated differently. A family might suffer very real ostracism, if the family was not considered to have mourned properly.

Many historians, including Ariès and Gorer, have used this phenomenon as evidence that the Victorians knew how to assert the importance of the dead individual and his or her memory; they knew how to deal with death in a healthy way by acknowledging its presence and mourning publicly and privately, rather than suffering from a "denial" of death. The death of an individual was no insignificant thing, but a momentous occasion that needed the proper time and attention for both the memorialization of the dead person and the recovery of the bereaved. However, as Cannadine has pointed out, these elaborate ceremonies do not necessarily provide evidence that the Victorians had some higher understanding of dealing with death (191). Rather, etiquette and social obligations (and spending quite a lot of money) often come to take the place of actually mourning and remembering the dead person. Metcalf and Huntington point out that funeral ritual needs to take into account the

extinguishing of a living person, that person's empty place in society, and that person's movement into a possible afterlife (62-3). Yet, Victorian ritual is often more concerned with the social place of the living who remain behind than with the dead. The corpse, the dead person, ceases to matter. Pageantry serves to assert the importance of the family, and to disguise a distaste for death. Thus Victorian death rituals often reveal just as problematic a relationship between mourners and the dead as later rituals. They may be inadequate, and will prove to be even more so when England is confronted with the Great War.

The decline in extravagant death rituals began even before the Great War. In her study of death and the Victorians, Jalland writes that while the Great War hastened the decline, the trend was already in place:

> Death was effectively removed from the domain of the family and became instead a communal sacrifice for the nation -- death could no longer be readily mourned by individual families. [...] The Great War represented a unique combination of vast numbers of soldiers killed simultaneously, together with violence, horror, and anonymity, and physical impossibility of using Victorian mourning rituals. (372-3)

Cannadine notes that Victorian mourning rituals had come to seem "superfluous and irrelevant" (218). Too many families were grieving, thereby rendering impossible the total separation of the grieving from others that was signified by Victorian death ritual. The wartime economy straitened the circumstances of many, making luxurious mourning unseemly and difficult. And, finally, very few families had bodies to bury. France was truly the last home and resting place for most of the dead young men.

After the war, even as commissions for memorials were made by the hundreds, individual families did not need the services of undertakers and firms who specialized in the goods of cemeteries and funerals – there simply were no bodies to fill the coffins. Yet while the Victorian trends described earlier became less popular, and then impossible, in the early part of the twentieth century, ritual itself, in revised forms, was no less important: witness the overwhelming response to the burial of the Unknown Warrior. The traditions of the Victorian funeral, some of which stretch back to the sixteenth century, had no place in the modern world made by total war, a world where attitudes towards death had so radically changed; still the revision and transformation of tradition through ritual to fulfill modern needs held a necessary place in interwar society.

Death ritual provides an important space for and vocabulary of performance which enables people to reorder their experience without the lost one, to examine and accept new roles, and to make sense of loss of life. Eric Leed writes generally of the use of ritual to interpret and understand wartime experience, claiming,

> War experience is nothing if not a transgression of categories. In providing bridges across the boundaries between the visible and the invisible, the known and the unknown, the human and the inhuman, war offered numerous occasions for the shattering of distinctions that were central to orderly thought, communicable experience, and normal human relations. (21)

Leed, using the ideas of Victor Turner, describes war as a liminal experience, a place of initiation: "The experience of war, like the experience of initiation, is primarily a

nonverbal, concrete, multichannel learning experience that can never adequately be reproduced in mere words" (74). Leed argues that the experience of the Great War, as read by soldier-poets, whose work will be examined later, may be ordered through the metaphor of ritual. In the work of memoirists, such as Robert Graves and Vera Brittain, these metaphors provided categories and patterns that provide understanding of chaos.

Yet ritual is not meant to be simply metaphoric, but a cohesive, creative performance composed of both word and action. Naming no-man's-land a liminal space, a boundary, a *seuil* (threshold), is no longer a metaphor once that space becomes a burial ground, once the trenches become graves. War disrupts boundaries, especially those between the living and the dead; ritual is needed to re-establish those boundaries. Leed writes,

> The front is a place that dissolved the clear distinction between life and death. Death, customarily the "slash" between life/not-life, became for many in the war a "dash," a continuum of experience the end of which was the cessation of any possibility of experience. (21)

The soldiers themselves felt the need for these rituals, "funerals" which seem so radically different from what their parents may have known, actions which seem to subvert or even pervert tradition. But these are necessary to the soldier. Death may come suddenly, it may come violently; it may be a cynical joke as young men fall sacrificed to ideals spouted by Wise Old Men only interested in their politics and their pocketbooks. But death ritual is still important, not simply because it gives respect to the death of fallen comrades, not simply out of honor, but because it maintains the

distinction between the living and the dead, and forces the living to come to terms with the death all around them, to individualize those deaths and endow them with meaning.

The work of burial during the war was spontaneous and characterized by bricolage: "it has to use this [heterogeneous] repertoire, however, whatever the task in hand because it has nothing else at its disposal" (Lévi-Strauss 17); elements from various religious rites and communal activities compose the war time burial. This quality of bricolage will survive into the literature of the interwar period. Ritual is no less meaningful for its spontaneous creation or revision. All funeral ritual, even the Victorian funeral, considered the height of propriety, is in some way characterized by this collage of elements. Ruth Richardson writes,

> What was popularly thought of as a "decent" funeral was a composite ritual. [...] Apart from the burial service, it was composed of secular rituals – which included physical attentions to the corpse, watching, waking and viewing the corpse, some form of refreshment, and lay ceremonial surrounding the transport of coffin to church and grave. (17)

As we shall see, we may use ritual to understand aspects of modern literature but only if, according to Ronald Grimes (Ritual), we expand our understanding of ritual itself. In his work on the Great War, Bernard Bergonzi argues that the modern world is a place and time devoid of ritual; however, ritual as part of modern modes is deeply important, even though that ritual may be implicit or invented.

One incident that illustrates the necessity and nature of ritual during the Great War is the mass burials during the Christmas truce of 1914, themselves part of a larger schema of holiday rituals which brought the two fighting sides together for a brief time. On Christmas Eve, the Germans along the front in Flanders began putting up traditional Christmas trees in the trenches, decorated with candles. German soldiers sang carols, which when heard by the French were so mesmerizing that they listened silently and then applauded. Then food – cake and wine, beef and jam – was exchanged across no-man's-land. The next day, Christmas morning, the soldiers came together in fraternization. Modris Eksteins describes the scene:

> Soldiers moved into no man's land, or in some cases even into each trenches, and celebrated. Some were shy. Others were more open. They talked, sang, and exchanged stories and gifts. As the morning wore on, confidence grew. Burial parties were arranged. The 6th Gordon Highlanders and the 15th Infantry Regiment, a Westphalian unit, joined in a moving ceremony for the dead. As Scotsmen, Englishmen, Saxons, and Westphalians lined up on both sides of a communal mass grave, the Reverend J. Esslemont Adams, minister of the West United Free Church, Aberdeen, and chaplain of the 6th Gordons, read the Twenty-Third Psalm in English. A theology student then read it in German: "*Der Herr ist mein Hirt: mir wird nichts mangeln. Er weidet mich auf einer grünen Aue: und führet mich zum frischen Wasser...*".
>
> The Lord's Prayer followed, sentence by sentence, in both

languages:

"Our Father Who art in Heaven. *Unser Vater in dem Himmel...*"

At many points mutual entertainment through song and hymn was normal. [...] (Eksteins 110-11)

The coming together of foes on Christmas in 1914 was signaled by different forms of communal activity: the sharing of food, exchanging gifts, singing songs. The activity culminated in a burial party, the final rite which ushers an individual out of society and redefines the roles of the living. This important rite of initiation, of separation and definition, was shared by two groups from different cultures, in a time of crisis; however, the presence of the ritual on the battlefield, in the midst of the sacred space of Christmas, indicates that the cultures were not that different, and that the ritual serves to maintain continuity with tradition, with humanity, in a time of chaos.

This does not look like the kind of burial with which either British or German soldier might have been familiar; it is simple and spontaneous. As indicated by other evidence of burial during the war, these men were probably buried in shallow graves in the frozen mud, and the graves marked with simple wooden crosses, if at all. The graves themselves may have been mass graves, devoid of individual marking. There were no eulogies, and no traditional funeral readings or prayers or practices. However, the soldiers took language and gestures that would have been meaningful to both groups on a most basic level – prayers, food, song – and reconstructed them into a significant burial ritual.

The presence of ritual on the battlefront indicates a need for humanity and community. Burial for most of the men was impossible, and death occurred on such a scale as to make men indifferent to the reality of the inglorious death and even more inglorious burial; yet soldiers tried to bury as many as they could, particularly if the fallen was a friend or acquaintance (Cannadine 204-5). As the war progressed the meaning of the conflict became increasingly difficult to define, and it became increasingly difficult to maintain that there was any meaning at all; this does not mean that individuals did not seek meaning in their lives and deaths and in that of their comrades. The carnival that the war had seemed in August 1914 was replaced by a carnival of death. Wilson McNair, in writings from 1916, described events at the front in France and Flanders:

> They were not...they would never be again in all the world, the light-hearted lads who swung ashore only ten days earlier upon the soil of France. Age and care and sorrow were come upon them and the shadow of death had fallen upon every one. War was no longer a game: it had become a fiery trial. Some of these men would come back, but their return would be with bitterness, and with the deep anger of those who have wrong kindled within their hearts. (112)

McNair produces rhetoric exalting the young, brave Tommy forced to confront and live with death in the prime of his youth. The only way he can do this is to provide Tommy with a "good death," the good death of the Victorians, a death where one is at peace and unafraid. He writes, "Those who die, die splendidly in the bare stations or in the hospitals that are only just opened and have not yet been furnished – die indeed

as 'Tommy' has taught the world to die; 'with a stiff lip, unless indeed the lip be bended in a smile'" (269). If an English soldier must die, he dies like a hero, and should be afforded a hero's burial.

The opposition between the reality of burial practices on the battlefield, and the need seen in the burial of the Unknown Soldier, results in the kinds of spontaneous, improvised death rituals seen on Christmas 1914. Burial practices give meaning to death which seems to be inherently meaningless. In McNair's text, these practices also indicate a common humanity, a humanity that the enemy does not share. McNair employs the idea of the "good" death for British soldiers. Only German corpses smell bad when they die: "They [dead German soldiers] lay till they grew bloated and terrible under the hot suns, and until the whole land should be filled with the stench of their corruption" (193). Like Polyneices, they are left to rot without any death rituals, without any commemoration or memorial.

Of course, this is untrue: much of the British poetry of the Great War is noted as "modern" because of its unflinching attention to grotesque details, such as the smell of corruption, even among the English dead. However, McNair touches a nerve with his propaganda by insinuating that the Germans do not even have humanity enough to bury their dead properly. He describes a scene along the Marne,

> a fierce and sinister light which the eyes of men have not viewed before in this Western world of civilization. It is the light of the German funeral pyres which they have builded to cremate their dead. By the glow of the burning villages they have gathered the dead and brought them together in piles, heaped up under the pure sky. Man

> upon man they are heaping them, youth upon youth, bodies that yesterday went forth with young life in them and to-day are offal upon the face of the earth. Great pyramids they build with these dead, that loom up dark and horrid in the night and already cast their taint upon the winds. Around the piles of dead they build wooden pyres and over them pour barrelfuls of paraffin and then cast straw upon them that the work lack nothing in its effectiveness....And the strong fire leaps upon the dead men, curling above their faces and picking out for the last time beloved features which it seems to caress before devouring. (155)

It is simply not accurate that cremation was never seen before this horrible vision; in fact, support for wider employment of cremation had been a significant part of the debate surrounding funeral reform in the nineteenth century in England.[1] However, the vision McNair describes calls up something worse than pagan, a hellish scene from the underworld that contrasts sharply with neat plots shaped out of the chaos of the battlefield and marked with small white crosses. The enemy does not even afford their dead a soldier's burial, a ritual with honor and humanity. Rather, the bodies are destroyed; the corpse is devoid of meaning, and is swept away in dark flame.

The "corpse" itself is a multivalent idea. The corpse was "garbage" (McNair 233) when it was the rotting body of the enemy, horrid next to the clean and quiet form of the Tommy waiting for his peaceful rest. The corpse was so important that

[1] See, for example, a series of letters in the London Times in February 1875 arguing for and against cremation.

even in the chaos of battle, at risk to life itself, it should be buried properly. Yet, the men themselves, even alive, were corpses as they daily faced both being buried alive and confronting the remains of comrades who had not been buried, existing in a kind of necropolis. The trenches, set up as small cities with corners named for streets in London, were cities of the dead. And the corpse gained meaning through its absence, through the void in and for comrades and families who lost loved ones but would never have a body to bury, the men having been cut to pieces in battle. Ruth Richardson lays out the multivalent idea of the corpse, with values that were revised and transformed over time as society changed: faith and the fear of God's judgment were attached to the corpse before and throughout the Victorian period,[2] but as science and empirical research into medicine also gained ground in the nineteenth century and came into conflict with this faith, the corpse became an object, of study and of commerce. Yet highly personal and emotional value is attached to the body of a loved one, and grief ensues when these values are transgressed. Finally, as Huntington and Metcalf point out, a society's own values are illustrated by the funeral rituals it employs – or creates.

The Great War marked the first time that creating official war cemeteries was a serious concern for the British government. Casualties – dead and missing – were on such a great scale that the dead could not possibly be shipped home. The bodies

[2] Jalland argues that an important part of the Victorian ideal of the "good death," and the deathbed practices that follow from this ideal, arises from the Evangelical movement of the time.

themselves, the bodies that were there, would have had to be exhumed, since all attempts were made to bury the dead:

> From 1915, attempts were made to bury the dead in military cemeteries. Graves were dug in advance. Wartime burial became a matter of sanitation, morale and military exigency. Although not always possible, speed of burial was recognized as desirable, if only because the sight and stench of death upset those servicemen who remained alive. (Bourke 214)

Again we see that burial is not simply for the dead but for the living. In Robert Graves' memoir Goodbye to All That, soldiers were constantly being forced to redefine their roles, literally and figuratively, as comrades were killed. One of the main purposes of burial ritual, besides providing this transition moment for the living to assess their new roles, is to help the living find meaning in death. Those who remained alive could be spared the horror of watching the bodily decomposition of their fellows, but could also consider the meaning the life of the dead may have had, and thus what meaning their own life and death might have.

In wartime this becomes more and more difficult; as a soldier reassesses his role, so does he reassess his purpose in life. The burials in the battlefield may have instead shown survivors how little meaning life – and the war – really had. Many soldiers describe the "indignities" of burial, particularly mass graves; Bourke notes that

> notions of decency had to be altered. Burial parties attempted to give [...] a Christian burial by reading sections from the Book of Common

> Prayer over mass graves. Even if the words could not be heard over the roar of shells, the burial service was recited. (215)

Still, burial could be a cursory chore. Albert Andrews, a private, wrote in his diary after the Somme, "You put them in a hole ready dug with boots and everything on. You put in about 10 or 15, whatever the grave will hold, throw about 2 feet of earth on them and stick a wooden cross on the top" (qtd. in Bourke 215). Burial during the war certainly called for alterations in "notions of decency." Instead of being properly washed and dressed, a soldier was thrown fully clothed into a grave with at least a dozen other men. No special funeral prayers or eulogies are given; there are simply readings from the Book of Common Prayer. What meaning could such a ritual have? Yet its very existence indicates there was need for it. These rituals are spontaneously constructed, filling a space where there was no meaning. In a place where rituals seem to have no meaning and are superseded by chaos, this does not mean the rituals are indeed meaningless. Their elements, through practice, are invested with meaning. They may not last as rituals, they may be temporary, but as a result of the rituals taking place in a certain place and a certain time, they becomes significant for their participants.

The burial rituals on the battlefield serve another important function that provides a second perspective on the corpse beyond its importance in and of itself. They serve to separate the living from the dead, a boundary which sometimes could be difficult to delineate. Paul Fussell writes that the trenches themselves were "a common grave" (51), the battlefield a "boneyard" (70). Modris Eksteins adds, "Working parties digging or repairing trenches repeatedly uncovered corpses in all

stages of decay and mutilation. Most of the time they simply shoveled them out of the way. Fragments of bodies did find their way, however, into sandbags" (151). The trenches were graves, the battlefield a cemetery; the only burial possible was in a sandbag. Men lived with death with no escape, forced to remain in its presence until they were unsure if the world of the living truly existed. The men existed in a liminal space between life and death. No-man's-land was a liminal space, an ever-shifting line of demarcation between the living and the dead. The Menin Gate was a *seuil*, a doorway into the world of the dead. Burial rituals proved to the men they were still alive.

At the same time, while the corpse was an inescapable reality for the soldier, it was also an absence, an illusion. There were corpses, but then, as Allyson Booth notes, there was also "corpselessness" (21). The body existed for many families simply as a void, a loved one gone but with no corpse to mourn and no life to celebrate. Many of the rituals meant to fulfill the need for mourning were based entirely on illusion. The Roll of Honour took the place of a body to bury, and it was read voraciously in the London Times every day by civilians. Individual crosses stood in Flanders fields over, in all probability, mass graves. The Red Cross, and later the Imperial War Graves Commission, were inundated with requests to search for and bury missing persons, many of whom were never found. Finally, after the War Graves Commission was founded, they placed crosses on graves in cemeteries throughout Europe; when the crosses eventually wore out, they were sent home, in lieu of a body. So many objects and ideas stood in for the body, corpses that could not be mourned because they could not be found. Almost 200,000 British soldiers

were listed as "prisoners or missing," never to be buried: they were the "unburiable," in Wilfred Owen's words (qtd. in Booth 63). Yet, despite the illusion, or perhaps because of it, these invented rituals were constantly being created among a people that needed to mourn. These rituals filled a need that had not been anticipated, had never before been experienced. Previously, such needs could be filled at home, with centuries-old traditions. Such traditions no longer served. There is an absence of the necessary ritual needed to provide closure. These are attempts to create the death ritual necessary for closure for the dead and the living.

The rituals constructed on the battlefield to bury fallen comrades were performed by the survivors to enable them to continue on after the destruction of men they may have known quite intimately. However, both at home and on the field, the sheer number of casualties made difficult some more individualized, personalized mourning. In October 1914, the editor of the Daily Express, R. D. Blumenfeld, wrote,

> One would have thought, before the war began, that the single report of the killing or disablement of any friend or acquaintance would be terribly disconcerting. So it was, at the beginning. The first eight or ten casualties had as much publicity as all the rest put together. People discussed deaths of young second lieutenants with bated breath. Gradually the familiarity of the thing became apparent. You receive the news of the death of your friends as a matter of fact. (qtd. in Marwick 41)

Another diarist, H. Lucy, writes in September 1915, "Death on the battlefield has become so much a matter of course as to deprive it of some of its terror" (qtd. in Marwick 134). Yet while the terror of death on the battlefield may have abated, leaving only numbness, and while the grief of loss may have been blunted by sheer quantity that kept coming, the need to commemorate the dead remained in several forms. This need came from tradition, as Samuel Hynes points out (War); the need came from political expediency; and it came from pride and grief.

The official memorials constructed during and after the Great War were bulwarks against fear and regret. Large and imposing, made of stone and bronze, they were attempts to remind people that the "sacrifice" of the young had not been in vain. They were also meant to provide the bereaved with a place to mourn: "Communal commemorative art provided first and foremost a framework for and legitimation of individual and family grief" (Winter 93). Official memorials took the place of many Victorian death rituals; they maintained martial commemorative tradition, rather than familial burial tradition. Official memorials were places people could go to grieve, and be seen to grieve. One's presence at the memorial signified mourning, much as black clothes and jet ornaments may once have signified mourning. The name of a dead soldier inscribed on a memorial indicated which families in a town may have lost someone, indicating to the rest of the town who was bereaved, as may have been done earlier by black-bordered stationery and calling cards or a black ribbon on the door. A visit to the local memorial, or a trip to London to see the Cenotaph, takes the place of a visit to the cemetery when there is no body, no headstone, to see. The difference, the important difference, is that the memorial is

simply a name, the Cenotaph an empty tomb. The Cenotaph itself commemorates corpselessness; its meaning is given by all and by no one, like the funeral for the Unknown Warrior. Private meaning is removed and replaced by public meaning, private mourning becomes public.

These are all forms of public mourning, and many less extravagant traditions were held over from the previous century. However, memorials created a place where mourning became not only public but official and state-sponsored. Why, as Winter says, did family grief need to be "legitimated"? Why were individual frameworks for mourning not sufficient? Perhaps because the grief was too great: there were too many dead, too much loss. Most families never had a body to bury and to commemorate; perhaps official memorials served to take the place of the body and offer a space for mourning where there would not have been otherwise, since most funeral rituals do require a body. The Great War is the first war where such memorials were conceived and built on such a scale; without the creation of these new rituals and spaces, there would have been no place for mourners. Memorials such as the Cenotaph gave a ritualized place for the bereaved to "bury" a loved one whose remains were not present. Without it, how would such families mourn?

The memorials provide a ritual space to the bereaved. We saw this in the sketch for the processions on Armistice Day 1920 for those attending the unveiling of the Cenotaph and the funeral for the Unknown Warrior: a space clearly demarcated for the "bereaved." Death itself is a transition; rites of passage are needed to guide the dead and the living through the liminal state that is death, and the monuments themselves reflect this. Memorials have borders, fences, stones, hedges, clear

boundaries indicating a special space set aside for mourners. This space, through the act of mourning, becomes a ritual space, sacred and transformed, even though it may be in the center of Whitehall, as the Cenotaph is, "making all of 'official' London into an imagined cemetery" (Winter 104). The names inscribed on the memorials point to those existing in the liminal space of the survivor, all the more so because without the proper burial and mourning rituals these people may never complete the necessary transition.

Many memorials incorporate traditional signifiers of death and nationhood: crosses, angels, brave-looking men, Saint George slaying the dragon. There is an aesthetic of war memorials, a rhetoric in their design. However, others represent an intersection between modern modes and tradition. Elements of both meet in the work of Sir Edward Lutyens, creator of, among other things, the Cenotaph, the Stone of Remembrance, an altar-like structure found in all British war cemeteries , and the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme. Lutyens sought a more Modernist aesthetic, using geometric lines and empty spaces. The Cenotaph itself is simply a plain white obelisk with the words "The Glorious Dead" engraved on it; there is here an intersection between a traditional aesthetic and a more Modernist aesthetic. Lutyens eschewed war-like or Christian images in favor of a stark design, yet he made a gesture toward traditional rhetoric with the words of the inscription. At the same time, the epitaph is incongruous with the memorial itself: there are no glorious dead in the Cenotaph. Likewise the Stone of Remembrance illustrates the opposition between traditional values and modernist attitudes. The Stone of Remembrance is a simple block-like structure, resembling an altar, a Christian symbol of community.

Yet one cannot help thinking as well of sacrifice, the pointless sacrifice of thousands upon thousands of young men. Finally, the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme is composed of three arches, the legs of one large arch resting each upon a smaller arch. While the arches are reminiscent of an Arch of Triumph, they are stark, plain blocks, surrounded by graves marked with plain headstones. There is no marching in victory here, only death. One cannot help feeling Lutyens' work, while employing traditional elements of war commemoration, is also making a slightly ironic comment as well. His work reinvents the rituals of commemoration to consider the new world created by the Great War, and the changed attitudes towards death which result.

Works such as those of Edward Lutyens show that the rupture between the traditional and the modern can never be complete. Moreover, the rituals which characterize the traditional, the past, may be reinvented, and continue to exist, as we have seen, in rituals which come to exist in times we may describe as "modernist." Jay Winter writes,

> The strength of what may be termed 'traditional' forms in social and cultural life, in art, poetry, and ritual, lay in their power to mediate bereavement. The cutting edge of 'modern memory', its multi-faceted sense of dislocation, paradox, and the ironic, could express anger and despair, and did so in enduring ways; it was melancholic, but it could not heal. (5)

Bernard Bergonzi argues that the Modernist period, whose qualities, many have claimed, result in part from the Great War, is a time defined by its lack of ritual; it is a time where ritual has come to be meaningless (198). It would seem, however, that

this time is in fact defined by searches for meaning which have become problematic. As traditional rituals come to have less meaning, new ones arise to take their place which are no less valid. Death rituals, are one of the tools people constructed to find that meaning.

In his seminal study of attitudes towards death, Philippe Ariès notes that there was once a "close relationship established between death and the biography of each individual life. [...] It was also believed that his attitude at that moment [the moment of death] would give his biography its final meaning, its conclusion" (Western 37). Death rituals give meaning to life as they help to construct a narrative for an individual biography. A life is celebrated at its end; events and memories are reconstructed. As Kelly Taylor argues, rituals like wakes are important because

> telling stories about someone who has just died is an exercise in the reordering of experience. In the minds of the tellers and hearers, the deceased passes from the profane realm of immediate experience to the more sacred realm of memory. Storytelling can serve as a means by which the disordered emotions surrounding grief can be sorted into an acceptance of loss. (105)

If there is no final, collective ritual, no deathbed ritual, if the final moment is devoid of meaning, where is the meaning in the biography? How can it be constructed? How can life be given meaning?

Funeral rituals abound with language – announcements, eulogies, epitaphs, condolence letters. Language orders experience and offers opportunity for

communication, both of which are essential to death ritual. These activities become "words against death":

> Mortuary ritual is viewed as the human adaptive response to death, with ritual language singled out as its crucial form of response. It is precisely because language is the very medium through which human beings obtain their sense of self-consciousness that it can serve so well as the basis of reaction to the awareness of death. We then argue that, having encountered and overcome this experience, both the individual and society are transformed and gain a sense of power which motivates ongoing life. (Davies 1)

However, this power was not available to those who were killed in the war, or who lost loved ones in the war. One of the significant controversies surrounding the creation of the war cemeteries by the Imperial War Commission was whether families would be able to choose individual, personalized epitaphs for the grave markers. It was finally decided that they would not be able to do so, and that all graves would be uniform, marked "A Soldier of the Great War/Known unto God." Thus the ability to commemorate the graves of the dead in words chosen by the survivors was removed.

Letters of condolence, another important part of funeral ritual in the last century, were also not possible during the war. Condolence letters were important because they kept memory alive in language and communicated sympathy to the survivors. An etiquette book from 1884 states: "It is a very dear and consoling thing to a bereaved friend to hear the excellence of the departed extolled, to read and re-read all of the precious testimony which is borne by outsiders to the saintly life ended

– and there are few so hard-hearted as not to find something good to say of the dead" (qtd. in Jalland 311). In the Great War, though, there were too many dead, too many missing, for any personalized expression of sympathy from the field; further, since some families were never sure what happened to their loved ones, condolence letters did not always seem appropriate. Letters of condolence became form letters and telegrams, allowing for no personalized expression. The best a family could hope for was a personal note from a comrade who may have known the dead and could provide details of heroism, bravery, and death: "Scrupulous attention to the way in which an incident was articulated and then interpreted was a common preoccupation among civilians agonizing over written accounts of front-line casualties, as they struggled to draw some meaning from the deaths of men they cared for" (Booth 27). We shall see this later in Vera Brittain's memoir when she searches for details of her lover's death. A family who may have observed and participated in the growth and development of a human being for his whole life, only to be deprived of the end of the story at his death, would rely heavily on any word from this last chapter. It was the only way they could finish the story, and possibly derive meaning from it.

This need for meaning is seen in an article about the burial of the Unknown Warrior. Entitled "The Unknown Warrior: What We Know of Him," the article creates a fanciful concoction in which the Unknown Warrior becomes Tommy Atkins, becomes Everyman. The author writes:

> The Unknown Warrior! Unknown? His name, indeed, and where he comes from now: such things, perhaps, we do not know, nor do we need inquire. But him we know, and did know well through four long,

terrible, and splendid years.

We knew him as he came home on leave, arriving tired and hump-backed with the burden which he bore, the stains of trench mud still upon his clothes, and the shadow of new and dreadful experience on his simple, wholesome face; rough he was and abrupt of speech, but with a curious gentleness that we had not known in him before and inarticulately glad to be for a breathing space among his own again. We knew him, too, as the leave-train left, drawing away from the packed platform which was a sea of tear-stained faces and waving handkerchiefs while he leaned from his carriage window, radiant and cheering, lest those he left behind should be too sad for him.

And we knew him over there, in his billets, grousing, but wonderfully tender and helpful to the peasants whom he incommoded, to the little children and the patient, hard-worked French "mother," who grew to love her clumsy, kindly English boys. We knew him at his sports, and on the road "going up" – tramp, tramp! tramp! tramp! [...] We knew him when he was wounded – one of his many wounds – and he came back, limping and blood-stained, roughly tied up with his own emergency bandage, in pain and shaken, but helping over the shell-pitted ground another more seriously wounded than himself [...] (15)

This fairy tale is a composite sketch of Tommy, the British *poilu*, that goes on for two columns in the London Times. By including recognizable details and familiar places

and anecdotes, the Unknown Warrior becomes everyone's; everyone has him in his or her experience. Yet he is not real. This is a narrative of England, of the war experience, but not of an individual. To make the Unknown Warrior real – mournable, if not buriable – a story needs to be constructed and attached.

The article concludes with how the soldier died, echoing the letters families received from the front in lieu of a body: he was running a message, he was carrying a stretcher, he was part of an advance or part of a flying attack or riding in a tank ("Unknown" 16). There is no way to know, and that is what is comforting to those left behind: the narrative could be theirs. The ending, so sorely missed for all of those lives, is finally found.

II.

The Literature of the Great War

Robert Graves' memoir Goodbye to All That, published in 1929, is also marked by the lack of an ending; the story peters out once the war ends. While the memoir covers Graves' life for more than a decade past the war's end, this period spans a mere sixty pages out of over three hundred. Graves himself, in the epilogue, writes, "Though often asked to publish a continuation of this autobiography, which I wrote in 1929 at the age of thirty-three, I am always glad to report that little of outstanding autobiographical interest has happened since" (344). It is as though after four years of witnessing violent ends, of living with the constant presence of death, Graves can only let the text gradually slow to a stop. From the early pages of Goodbye to All That, Graves is obsessed with ends. The ends of so many people he

knew were clearly demarcated by sudden, violent death. Their narratives ended abruptly, while it feels as though Graves is not quite sure where the meandering story that is his life will cease. This is the case for many people – nobody knows quite where his or her life will end – but for Graves it is problematic. Walter Benjamin writes, "It is [...] characteristic that not only a man's knowledge or wisdom, but above all his real life – and this is the stuff that stories are made of – first assumes transmissible form at the moment of his death" (84). Graves does not quite know what to do with this expanse of time and space that stretches out before him to be filled with story; so few people he knew had that time and space.

Death makes itself present early in Graves' narrative consciousness, as it does in Osbert Sitwell's. Unlike Sitwell, however, whose attitude is one of discovering the outlines of an awareness which seemed always to be present, Graves' early perception of death is marked by confusion and an idea that it is part of yet at odds with some sort of game – much the same way death is present for him throughout the war. Recalling the death of the parents of a school acquaintance, he writes,

> What surprised me most at this school was when a boy of about twelve, whose father and mother were in India, heard by cable that they had both suddenly died of cholera. We all watched him sympathetically for weeks after, expecting him to die of grief, or turn black in the face, or do something to match the occasion. Yet he seemed entirely unmoved, and because nobody dared discuss the tragedy with him he seemed oblivious of it – playing about and ragging just as he had done before. (20)

Graves' looks for a signifier of death, a sign of grief, a clue – but there is nothing. The arrival of death is sudden, unmarked. The world feels as if it should be changed, transformed, but in the recognition of the seeming absence of change, the world becomes different.

Like the death of this boy's parents, all the deaths in Goodbye to All That go virtually unremarked, uncelebrated. They seem to exist in a still moment where time freezes, where the earth stops spinning, but then in an instant later everything is moving once again, unchanged but yet different. The prose bears this out, as Graves peppers the text with off-hand references to death, often in appositives; by subordinating the clause mentioning the death he seems to be subordinating the death itself, but it is there. A similar subordination of the experience of death comes in Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse, in the famous parenthetical passage telling the reader of the death of Mrs. Ramsay.

Graves' first telling comes early in the book, in Chapter Four, the death of cousin Wilhelm, one of Graves' German relations: "Cousin Wilhelm – later shot down in an air battle by a school-fellow of mine – used to lie for hours picking off mice with an air-gun" (24). This is the first mention of a war death, and it intrudes on memories of idyllic holidays spent as a youth in Germany. Although Graves' other childhood memories are not as pleasant, death is nonetheless retrospectively present. He cannot recall the smallest detail without attaching death to it.

As Graves begins writing about his schooldays the list of casualties begins to grow. There was his friend Raymond: "In 1917, when he was with the Irish Guards, I rode over to his billets one afternoon, having by then become a complete agnostic,

and felt as close to him as ever. He got killed at Cambrai not long after" (48); a master: "This was the summer of 1914; he went into the Army and was killed the following year" (57). Remembering a school debate on compulsory military service, Graves writes, "Of the six noes [students who argued against service], Nevill Barbour and I are, I believe, the only ones who survived the war" (58). Graves describes a friend named O'Brien, and described how he had killed a cow with a slingshot and was expelled: "O'Brien was killed, early in the War, while bombing Bruges" (59).

In his reminiscences and reflections, Graves alternates between calculations, enumerations, and recalling individualized idiosyncrasies. He writes, "I used to speculate on which of my contemporaries would distinguish themselves after they left school. The War upset these calculations" (58). He goes on, calculating odds:

> At least one in three of my generation at school died; because they all took commissions as soon as they could, most of them in the infantry and Royal Flying Corps. The average life expectancy of an infantry subaltern on the Western Front was, at some stages of the War, only about three months; by which time he had been either wounded or killed. The proportions worked out at about four wounded to every one killed. Of these four, one got wounded seriously, and the remaining three more or less lightly. The three lightly wounded returned to the front after a few weeks or months of absence, and again faced the same odds. Flying casualties were even higher. Since the War lasted for four and a half years, it is easy to see why most of the

survivors, if not permanently disabled, collected several wound stripes. (59)

We see here a tension in dealing with death on such a scale, recalling what R. D. Blumenfeld wrote: eventually, the piling up of dead acquaintances and friends becomes simply numbing. There is a tension between "distinguishing" and "calculating." Graves cannot resist calculations; as Modris Eksteins notes, in a war of attrition, lives lost become calculations (144). The numbers are overwhelming, but they are all one has to make sense of the chaos and destruction. At the same time, to distinguish, to rescue the dead from anonymity, to provide a measure of the remembrance of a life which rituals like funerals are supposed to provide, one is tempted to reach for details, small personal idiosyncrasies that set the dead apart. Yet there is then the possibility of reducing the individual to interesting details; he or she ceases to be a person at all.

Graves finally gets to the battlefield after months of waiting "despondently," while men who joined up after him go off to the Front only to get killed shortly after (73). His telling of what happens to people he knows becomes more vague; we see nameless corpses pile up in the chaos of battle. Graves writes of two men under his command: "Bumford grew old enough by 1917 to be sent back to the Battalion, and was killed that summer; Burford died in a bombing accident at the base camp. Or so I heard – the fate of hundreds of my comrades in France came to me merely as hearsay" (93). Graves falters as a storyteller because he cannot know the end of the story. The deaths of these men remain in the realm of gossip; only death itself is sure.

Bumford and Burford are named in the telling, but, as Paul Fussell notes, they could just as easily be literary constructs, young and old, foils whose fates parallel one another (212). Others of the dead whom Graves encounters remain anonymous, the telling of their ends anecdotal. While Graves may have borrowed Bumford and Burford from literary convention, other tales borrow from form condolence letters and the lies and half-truths passed home to families. Graves relates finding one of his men dead:

> Going towards Company Headquarters to wake the officers I saw a man lying on his face in a machine-gun shelter. I stopped and said: "Stand-to, there!" I flashed my torch on him and saw that one of his feet was bare.
>
> The machine-gunner beside him said: "No good talking to him, Sir."
>
> I asked: "What's wrong? Why has he taken his boot and sock off?"
>
> "Look for yourself, Sir!"
>
> I shook the sleeper by the arm and noticed suddenly the hole in the back of his head. He had taken off the boot and sock to pull the trigger of his rifle with one toe; the muzzle was in his mouth. "Why did he do it?" I asked.
>
> "He went through the last push, Sir, and that sent him a bit queer; on top of that he got bad news from Limerick about his girl and another chap."
>
> He belonged to the Munsters – their machine-guns overlapped the left of our company – and his suicide had already been reported. Two

> Irish officers came up. "We've had several of these lately," one of them told me. Then he said to the other: "While I remember, Callaghan, don't forget to write to his next-of-kin. Usual sort of letter; tell them he died a soldier's death, anything you like. I'm not going to report it as a suicide." (103)

The comrades of the dead soldier conspire to construct a palatable story of the man's death, yet an ending is an ending. Suicide and "honorable" death are leveled. Neither means much of anything.

Dead men, the unburiable, haunt Graves throughout the text. Death rituals, as has been discussed, serve a purpose for both the dead and the living. Ghosts of dead men people Graves' text, lurking at moments where ritual should be present. However, they act as signs indicating ritual's absence. Any reaching towards ritual in the text fails; we shall see a similar failure in texts of the 30s, contemporaneous with Graves' memoir. In another anecdote, Graves describes a conversation the men have about lice, an ever-present fact of trench life whose importance has been well-documented elsewhere. Graves writes:

> Lice were a standing joke. Young Bumford handed me one: 'We was just having an argument as to whether it's best to kill the old ones or the young ones, Sir. Morgan here says that if you kill the old ones, the young ones die of grief. But Parry here, Sir, he says that the young ones are easier to kill, and you can catch the old ones when they go to the funeral. (Goodbye 104)

Bumford himself is dead, as has been related several pages earlier. Here he is a voice from the dead. He is the unburiable, who is now being accorded a pseudo-funeral in this discussion about killing lice. Bumford becomes a ghost who should have been given a funeral. Even the lice seem to be given funerals in this anecdote, but Bumford's death remains unritualized.

Bumford is one of the young soldiers sacrificed to the war. Graves is acutely conscious of such pointless sacrifices, as indicated, for example, in his attitude towards the battle at Loos, which was, as he writes, "a bloody balls-up" (151). Like other war poets, Graves sees the loss of young life as horrible sacrifice, Abraham holding the knife over Isaac and not being held back by God, or, in this scene, almost like Christ:

> When morning came we were relieved by the Middlesex, and marched back to Béthune, where we dumped our spare kit at the Montmorency barracks. The Battalion officers messed together in the château near by. This billet was claimed at the same time by the staff of a New Army division, due to take part in the fighting next day. The argument ended amicably with the Division and the Battalion messing together. It was, someone pointed out, like a brutal caricature of The Last Supper in duplicate. In the middle of the long table sat the two pseudo-Christs, our Colonel and the Divisional General. (147-8)

The Last Supper is the ultimate commemoration of death and sacrifice. It is repeated ritually in every Christian gathering as a symbol of remembrance and community. It is one of the ways in which Christians re-ritualize and thus remember the death of

Christ. Here, the soldiers are seen preparing for sacrifice and death in a ritual meal, albeit with the tone of blasphemy.

However, Graves does not stop there. After the battle, he continues; the Colonel and the Adjutant are eating a meat pie and drinking whiskey. Two second lieutenants come in to report casualties. The Colonel says, "So you've survived, have you?," and continues eating. The lieutenants are not offered any food or drink (160). It would be proper for the Colonel to offer the men food, especially in their state of distress, but he fails to do so.

This incident provides an interesting counterpoint to Graves' Last Supper a few scenes before. Both episodes represent a reaching for ritual. In the first scene, Graves creates a ritual moment in an attempt to give the sacrifice of the men meaning. However, in the second episode, it is clear that ritual is impossible. The failed meal is a failed ritual; the men are not permitted to find comfort or meaning in the sharing of food, and are left to deal with the death of their comrades themselves. After the battle, the failure of ritual is made even more explicit as the men cannot get to the innumerable corpses quickly enough to bury them:

> We had spent the day carrying the dead down for burial. [...] After the first day or two the corpses swelled and stank. I vomited more than once while superintending the carrying. Those we could not get in from the German wire continued to swell until the wall of the stomach collapsed, either naturally or when punctured by a bullet; a disgusting smell would float across. The color of the dead faces

> changed from white to yellow-grey, to red, to purple, to green, to black, to slimy. (161, 163)

Here the failure of ritual has come full circle. Not only are the men not able to bury all the corpses, the details of vomiting and collapsing stomachs are the inverse of the meals that were shared a few pages earlier. The unburied corpses represent the failure of the ritual meals, and the failure to ritualize death. As the ritual fails, the bodies cease to be human, and the narrative breaks down; the faces cease to be faces, and Graves' parallelism no longer works, as color deteriorates in seven stages into mere slime.

An important part of many rituals is food; meals shared are a crucial element of welcoming rituals, rituals to reinforce community, and funeral rituals. One would imagine that eating would be impossible in the trenches. Yet for Graves it becomes an important vehicle for death ritual. He describes a meal on the front in France:

> We were just having a special dinner to celebrate our safe return from Cuinchy – new potatoes, fish, green peas, asparagus, mutton chops, strawberries and cream, and three bottles of Pommard. Private Challoner looked in at the window, saluted, and passed on. (120)

Then Graves adds, "Challoner had been killed at Festubert in May." This is clearly a special meal; many of the foods eaten are spring foods, indicative of a season of rebirth. The meal itself is a celebration of safe return. Yet the occasion is marked by the wandering of an unburiable, unritualized dead man. As Ruth Richardson has pointed out, rituals for the dead are meant to prevent this wandering, and to protect the living: "A recurring characteristic of popular death customs is a janus-like ability

to be understood *either* as a friendly gesture of protection and help to the soul on its journey, *or* as an expression of dread – revealing a desire to hasten it thither, and prevent as far as possible its remigration" (28). The dead man whose end has not been ritualized can never return, and can never rest.

The presence of the living dead permeates much of the literature of the Great War, and complicates the issue of ritual while making it all the more necessary. One of the final episodes narrated by Graves is his own "death." In 1916, Graves was severely wounded in the lung and his death was widely reported. While convalescing in England he was forced to write to the newspapers to confirm the fact that he was still alive; his bank had refused to release his money until he proved to their satisfaction that he was not, in fact, deceased. Graves himself had become a sort of ghost. He even had a condolence letter to prove it:

> 22.7.16
> Dear Mrs. Graves,
> I very much regret to have to write and tell you your son has died of wounds. He was very gallant, and was doing so well and is a great loss.
> He was hit by a shell and very badly wounded, and died on the way down to the base, I believe. He was not in bad pain, and our doctor managed to get across and attend to him at once.
> We have had a very hard time, and our casualties have been large. Believe me you have all our sympathy in your loss, and we have lost a very gallant soldier.
> Please write to me if I can tell you or do anything.
> Yours sincerely,
> C. Crawshay, Lt-Col. (219)

This letter follows the mold of many condolence letters written to families of dead soldiers, using the same rhetoric and stock phrases. The lieutenant-colonel refers to Graves twice as "gallant," and insists that he did not suffer and was tended to

immediately. Yet through Graves' own telling we realize that the letter does not quite fit with what we know of him. This is a false ending, as so many letters of death were false endings. In Graves' case, the ending was truly false.

During the war, Graves published two books of poetry, Over the Brazier (1915) and Fairies and Fusiliers (1917). These war poems, which examine failed death ritual in a way that Goodbye to All That does not, were suppressed by Graves after the war because he did not feel they reflected either his work or himself: that man no longer existed. In a 1922 letter to Siegfried Sassoon he writes:

> You identify me in your mind with a certain Robert Graves now dead whose bones and detritus may be found in Over the Brazier, Fairies and Fusiliers and the land of memory. Don't. I am using his name, rank, and initials and his old clothes but I am no more than his son and heir and so it is as an old friend of my father that I want to meet you. (Broken 134)

We can note that this letter, speaking of forgetting a Graves now dead, was written before Goodbye to All That was published. It is the wartime Graves of that memoir, not of the poetry, that Graves wanted remembered – or, who he felt was a more valid construction. This is an attempt to gain control over his life story by reinvention. Graves wanted to write his own biography and create his own memory; the poems were not true to this desire.

Yet creating that biography was hard; Graves admitted difficulty in writing – and ending – his own life story. Much of his memoir is concerned with the

inevitability of death, and his own surprising survival. The poetry can look at failed rituals in a way that narrative cannot because, as Benjamin implied, narrative is constrained by death. Or, put another way by Garrett Stewart, death is essential for narrative form because it provides an ending (3). Graves never got his ending, but in the poetry he lives in the moment, a moment he wanted to forget. Poetry can encapsulate the ritual instant, or the instant the ritual fails; it can exist in ritual space, a space of concentrated energy and change.

Two poems in particular are worth examining. The first is the first part of two poems called "Nursery Memories" entitled "The First Funeral." It opens with a parenthetical note, "The first corpse I saw was on the German wires, and couldn't be buried." The poem goes on:

> The whole field was so smelly;
> We smelt the poor dog first:
> His horrid swollen belly
> Looked just like going burst.
>
> His fur was most untidy;
> He hadn't any eyes.
> It happened on Good Friday
> And there was lots of flies.
>
> And then I felt the coldest
> I'd ever felt, and sick,
> But Rose, 'cause she's the oldest,
> Dared poke him with her stick.
>
> He felt quite soft and horrid:
> The flies buzzed round his head
> And settled on his forehead:
> Rose whispered: "That dog's dead.
>
> "You bury all dead people,
> When they're quite really dead,
> Round churches with a steeple:
> Let's bury this," Rose said.

"And let's put mint all round it
To hide the nasty smell."
I went to look and found it –
Lots, growing near the well.

We poked him through the clover
Into a hole, and then
We threw brown earth right over
And said: "Poor dog, Amen!" (Poems 18)

The tone of the poem is childish, that of a nursery rhyme, yet the note makes the reader realize that it is not a nursery rhyme; it drags the poem out of the realm of memory into the present. The memory of the dog and the memory of the dead soldier are conflated into one moment when Graves realizes that the significance of life cannot be explained. Even as he tries to interpret his own memory of the ritual experience and apply it to his present in the war with the note, he sees that even such a basic ritual, a funeral invented and constructed from the barest essentials by children in a simple performance, is impossible on the battlefield.

The child speaker in the poem and "Rose" find the dog on Good Friday, again echoing the death of Christ. Yet the dog is far from God embodied as man – he is soft and rotting. The children seem to know instinctively that dead things are buried: " 'You bury all dead people,/When they're quite really dead,/ [...] Let's bury this'," says Rose. The children also show inventiveness by calling for mint to hide the smell. They see a need and fulfill it with practice: one covers a grave with flowers as remembrance, but one must also deal with the unpleasantness of the corpse. The ritual fulfills both elements of handling the dead. Finally, the children construct a simple text to accompany their actions: " 'Poor dog, Amen!'." Ritual requires both action and word, and here the children fulfill that requirement. Something, the

simplest benediction, needs to be provided for the corpse. Ruth Richardson has pointed out that even the most "decent Christian" burial is a composite. The children in this poem have provided a decent Christian burial for the dog. If we recall the note at the start of the poem, we see this is something that the dead soldier does not receive. His death can only serve as a reminder of the failure of ritual on the battlefield, and its necessity.

A second poem that illustrates this failure is "When I'm Killed":

> When I'm killed, don't think of me
> Buried there in Cambrin Wood
> Nor as in Zion think of me
> With the Intolerable Good.
> And there's one thing that I know well,
> I'm damned if I'll be damned to Hell!
>
> So when I'm killed, don't wait for me,
> Walking the dim corridor;
> In Heaven or Hell, don't wait for me,
> Or you must wait for evermore.
> You'll find me buried, living-dead
> In these verses that you've read.
>
> So when I'm killed, don't mourn for me.
> Shot, poor lad, so bold and young,
> Killed and gone – don't mourn for me.
> On your lips my life is hung:
> O friends and lovers, you can save
> Your playfellow from the grave. (Poems 39)

Here the speaker of the poem is the living dead, a projected voice from the grave: "You'll find me buried, living-dead/In these verses that you've read". The voice is commanding that those left behind not to mourn; commands are an interestingly dominant speech act in much of the poetry of death, as we shall see in Charles Sorley's work, and later in W. H. Auden's work. It provides a way for the speaker to assert control over death by directing the mourning process itself. Here the speaker

of the poem is directing that there be no mourning at all. The speaker is clearly stating that his death is inevitable, through the repetition of "when I'm killed"; however, mourning would be a way of acknowledging his death, a way of burying him. The speaker would prefer to be remembered in his own words, through his poetry, rather than for some battle action or through the empty words of others. This is in direct opposition to much of the memorializing that went on during the war, as we saw earlier. If that is the kind of mourning the speaker sees for himself, he does not want any part of it. He seeks to be remembered by "friends and lovers," the people who read and appreciate his poetry, not by rituals of death with no meaning, for the death itself has no meaning; only the poetry has meaning.

The poetry of the Great War by Graves and other poets provides a place to examine the problematics of ritual. While Goodbye to All That examined military rituals rendered absurd by the chaos of war, the narrative in many places is stymied by the failure of ritual. Graves examines this failure through his poetry, whereas his memoir remains a rather picaresque, albeit dark, tale. Other poets, such as Charles Hamilton Sorley (killed in 1915) and Isaac Rosenberg (killed in 1918), examine the presence of death ritual in war. While Sorley may be considered more "traditional" and Rosenberg more "Modernist," each poet examines ritual and its failures in the representation of death.

In a letter to Arthur Watts from August 1915, Sorley described no-man's-land as "the long graveyard," and wrote,

> Then death and the horrible thankfulness when one sees that the next man is dead: "We won't have to *carry* him in under fire, thank God; dragging will do": hauling in of the great resistless body in the dark, the smashed head rattling: the relief, the relief that the thing has ceased to groan: that the bullet or bomb that made the man an animal has now made the animal a corpse. (Letters 254)

Sorley here echoes the perception that the trenches were graves, the battlefield a vast graveyard, a far cry from the Elysian Fields for dead warriors of old. While the men make the effort to bury the dead, the ritual itself has ceased to have meaning and has become an activity wherein the living risk their own lives to give fallen comrades a "proper" burial. Further, the ritual has ceased to give humanity to the fallen; the man has become an animal, then a thing: a corpse, devoid of life and meaning.

Perhaps it is this stripping of sentiment and meaning, this transformation into a *thing*, that Sorley had in mind when he composed "All the hills and vales along," one of the poems from Marlborough, a posthumous collection published by his parents in 1916. The poems begins: "All the hills and vales along/Earth is bursting into song,/And the singers are the chaps/Who are going to die perhaps" (Poems 68). The poem has a traditional, conventional pattern that recalls a ballad form or a hymn; the rhythm parallels the rhythm of the soldier's walk. The setting is pastoral, in some ways a paean to the earth, yet it is in the earth that the soldiers will be buried. The countryside rings with singing, yet it is the singing of men whose death is, again, inevitable: Sorley has brought this to our attention in the first four lines.

Further, Sorley aligns the indifferent earth against the men; the earth seems not to care at all the men are about to die, and it has the knowledge the men will die, a knowledge the men are denied. We see this in the beginning of the third stanza:

> Earth that never doubts nor fears,
> Earth that knows of death not tears,
> Earth that bore with joyful ease
> Hemlock for Socrates,
> Earth that blossomed and was glad
> 'Neath the cross that Christ had,
> Shall rejoice and blossom too
> When the bullet reaches you. (68)

Sorley's allusion to Socrates and Christ aligns the soldiers with men who embraced sacrifice and death. At the same time, by extending the metaphor to "you" in the last line, he recognizes that death may not be entirely welcome. The earth will continue to bear life, to "blossom," long after the men – even you – have died. The earth will be part of the cycle of life, death and regeneration, after we are no longer a part of the cycle. The first stanza is composed of four verses and a refrain; the second of six verses and a refrain, the third and fourth stanzas of eight verses and a refrain. In these last two stanzas Sorley allows the march, and the singing, and the rancor against the earth for its uncaring, to build to a crescendo. They are made present in the valley by their voices, which will soon be stilled.

Sorley returns to this image of stilled voices in "When you see millions of the mouthless dead." The louder the singing, the greater the absence of all caring that the

men who are singing will die and be silenced. The poem is in direct contrast to a work like Lycidas and other elegies in which the world joins the bereaved in mourning:

> But O the heavy change, now thou art gon,
> Now thou art gon, and never must return!
> Thee shepherd, thee the Woods, and desert Caves,
> With wilde Thyme and the gadding Vine o'ergrown,
> And all their echoes mourn. (22)

In Lycidas, the voice of nature, the plants, woods, and earth and "all their echoes" join in mourning the dead. Sorley calls upon a certain tradition in his poem, but only to show how it fails when confronted with death on the scale of the Great War. The mourning expressed in the traditional elegy cannot be sustained when no one – the older generation, civilians, the earth itself – appears to care about the sacrifice.

The final stanza of the poem becomes louder, reaching that crescendo. The earth is in chorus with the men, joining in the singing:

> From the hills and valleys earth
> Shouts back the sound of mirth,
> Tramp of feet and lilt of song
> Ringing all the road along
> All the music of their going,
> Ringing swinging glad song-throwing,
> Earth will echo still, when foot
> Lies numb and voice mute. (69)

Yet the earth is in fact echoing the voices of the men; the echo will be all that remains when the men are dead. As in Lycidas, the echo of the earth becomes a dirge, the Echo itself referring to the voice of the dead. The series of progressive participles – "ringing swinging," adjectives and a gerund, "glad song-throwing" – contrast with the cessation of action, and of life, that is inevitable – "when foot/Lies numb and voice mute." The final two lines of the first part of this stanza, before the refrain, have a different rhythm than the rest of the stanza; they have fewer syllables, causing the effect of an abrupt end, paralleling the abrupt and violent end for the men which we are certain will happen, even though it may occur offstage, away from this pastoral scene.

In the final stanza's refrain, Sorley addresses the men directly: "Sow your gladness for earth's reaping,/[...] Strew your gladness on earth's bed." Here the soldiers are alluded to as farmers, keeping with the pastoral tone. Yet they are commanded in the final line of this refrain and in that of the previous stanza, "So be merry so be dead." The refrains are characterized by the commands of the speaker. In the first stanza, he says, "Give your gladness to earth's keeping,/So be glad, when you are sleeping"; he orders the men to be glad even in the face of death. In the second stanza, he continues, "So sing with joyful breath"; in the third, "On the road to death, sing!/Pour gladness on earth's head,/So be merry so be dead" (69). The commands indicate a power over the men; their own actions, their own deaths, are outside their control.

Interesting is the repetition of the word "glad" and its forms – the men are over and over again ordered to be "glad." The journey of the men over the road,

through the hills and valleys, becomes a metaphor for the journey towards death. The valley may be referring to the Valley of the Shadow of Death, or at least echoing it, or the journey that of Bunyan's Pilgrim. This road points to the liminal state of the dead. The road is a liminal place, a place between destinations, a place of change and flux. The men are in a transitional state; they are the living dead. The men are exhorted to be "glad" as they march to their deaths; however, "glad" comes from an archaic word in Scottish dialect, "gleg," which means "to close smoothly." Sorley was from the countryside in Scotland, and may have been aware of this. The repetition of "glad" in the poem may refer to the liminal state of death, movement through a door, a threshold, itself a liminal place that closes easily behind the men.

The silent dead reappear in what is probably Sorley's last poem, "When you see millions of the mouthless dead." Here they once again have their voices taken from them, leaving Sorley to speak for them, himself the living dead. He writes:

> When you see millions of the mouthless dead
> Across your dreams in pale battalions go,
> Say not soft things as other men have said,
> That you'll remember. For you need not so.
> Give them not praise. For, deaf, how should they know
> It is not curses heaped on each gashed head?
> Nor tears. Their blind eyes see not your tears flow.
> Nor honor. It is easy to be dead.
> Say only this, "They are dead." Then add thereto,
> "Yet many a better one has died before."

Then, scanning all the o'ercrowded mass, should you
Perceive one face that you loved heretofore,
It is a spook. None wears the face you knew.
Great death has made all his for evermore. (91)

In this sonnet, Sorley speaks directly to the audience, presenting an argument for why mourning must fail. One by one he rejects the traditional components of mourning in short, abrupt sentences: "Give them not praise." "Nor tears." "Nor honor." For Sorley, these elements of death ritual are meaningless, because the person one is trying to mourn no longer exists. Praise may be curses; mourning through words means nothing. Tears can not be seen nor appreciate, so why waste them? Mourning through action means nothing. Honor is rendered hollow; what honor is there in death?

Sorley's argument culminates in the order: "Say only this, 'They are dead.'" This is the only thing of importance. "Then add thereto,/ 'Yet many a better one has died before.'" Here Sorley violates another rule of mourning; he indicates that one dead man is pretty much the same as another, and therefore not really worth bothering to mourn. The dead are an undifferentiated "mass." He reveals the lie, the illusion, within the attempt to mourn all the dead. The Roll of Honour is no more than names, a mass of names with no personalized significance. As echoed in his diary, the dead person is a thing, a corpse, a ghost: "it is a spook." The loved person becomes an "it," a "spook," no longer a significant individual, and thus mourning can have no significance. A dead soldier is voiceless, faceless, a slimy thing; he has no identity.

How, then, can he be mourned? Sorley in this sonnet exposes the failure of death ritual and funeral tradition. There is no praise, there are no tears.

Isaac Rosenberg, in a poem entitled "Dead Man's Dump," examines the failure of death ritual. The poem, believed to have been composed in 1917, marks a departure from more traditional verse; it is written in free verse, with bleak imagery and dark irony. It describes a wagon riding through the battlefield surveying the dead that form the landscape: "The air is loud with death." The poem shows the failure of burial; the men are in a "dead man's dump," far from a cemetery where any ceremony might attend their death: they have become garbage.

Throughout the poem, Rosenberg notes the wagon's progress through the field: "The wheels lurched over sprawled dead/But pained them not, though their bones crunched,/Their shut mouths made no moan." The wagon and its driver pay no heed to the corpses beneath the wheels. Rosenberg continues:

> A man's brains splattered on
> A stretcher-bearer's face;
> His shook shoulders slipped their load,
> But when they bent to look again
> The drowning soul was sunk too deep
> For human tenderness. (109)

Here, as elsewhere in the poem, Rosenberg describes the moment when death comes and life has slowly slipped away. Throughout the text, the sense is one of a barely missed opportunity to save a life, but the wheels – a word repeated throughout the

poem – keep turning. The wheels become an important motif, a metaphor for the inexorable force that brings the inevitable death to the men.

For Rosenberg, as for Sorley, the road traveled becomes the road to death:

> They left this dead with the older dead,
>
> Stretched at the cross roads.
>
> Burnt black by strange decay,
>
> Their sinister faces lie
>
> The lid over each eye,
>
> The grass and colored clay
>
> More motion have than they,
>
> Joined to the great sunk silences. (109)

This stanza is distinct from the others in that it does have a partial rhyme scheme. The rhyme scheme – abcddcce – plus the shorter line lengths in the middle of the stanza creates an effect of speeding up. As the wagon leaves the dead at the cross roads, itself a symbol of liminality, we speed up our reading to keep up with the rhyme and shorter lines. This is amplified by the chiasmus effect in the fourth and fifth lines, the shortest: faces-lie, lid-eye. "Lie" and "lid" are joined by alliteration, while "faces" and "eye" are joined semantically in the sense that these are what is missing in the corpse, as we have seen in other poems. These lines have "motion" themselves, like the wagon. However, we are forced to slow down on the last line: "Joined to the great sunk silences." The "gr" sound, plus the sibilance of the two "s" and the two in "ces" slow us down as the wagon slows down to see the next body in

the beginning of the following stanza: "Here is one not long dead." The deictic "here" points us to another body as we slow down with the wagon.

In this stanza, and the final stanza, however, the focus is not on the dead body, but on the wheels. The body

> stretched weak hands
>
> To reach the living word the far wheels said,
>
> The blood-dazed intelligence beating for light,
>
> Crying through the suspense of the far torturing wheels
>
> Swift for the end to break,
>
> Or the wheels to break,
>
> Cried as the tide of the world broke over his sight. (109)

It would seem the wheels hold meaning, an explanation, "the living word." The wheels hold the word, while all the dying man can do is "cry." However, trying to reach that word is torture itself. All that is known is that the dying wish that the end would come. Finally, the tide "breaks." Like a wave breaking, the alliterative "d" of the final line of the stanza and the triple vowel repetition, cried-tide-sight, flows over the body: "Cried as the tide of the world broke over his sight."

However, the wave does not bring comfort; it brings the hellish wagon:

> And the rushing wheels all mixed
>
> With his tortured upturned sight,
>
> So we crashed round the bend,
>
> We heard his weak scream,
>
> We heard his very last sound,

And our wheels grazed his dead face. (109)

The speaker does not show us the comfort of death. Rather, death is torture, shown in the repetition of the word "torture" in this stanza and the previous. The wheels bring death, in all its hideousness. The dying man is preverbal, screaming, making sounds. Finally, the wheels graze his face, again, death is associated with the loss of a face, of individuality and humanity. The poem concludes on an ironic note as the very thing that was supposed to save the dying solider becomes an agent of his death. In their death the men become things, hoping blindly for some kind of salvation or comfort that can never come. *This* is the post-ritual world that Bergonzi is describing; what is striking is not simply that there is no ritual here, but that there is the reverse of ritual – dumping instead of burying. That ritual is missed and needed, its absence is marked.

As we have seen, writers of the Great War examine and make use of ritual, or miss it in its absence. This awareness problematizes Bergonzi's generalization that there is no such thing as ritual in the period during and after the Great War. In the death pageantry of the poetry of Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell Sitwell, we may observe the way ritual is present outside the literature of the war; the presence of the war, of death, and of rituals created to deal with these things is implicit, but there nonetheless. As Hynes writes,

> Though the war was not present in these journals, it was there, as a mood. One can feel it in the first number of Wheels, published in December 1916. That was the dark middle of the war (the Somme

> offensive had just come to a bloody and inconclusive end), and the poems in Wheels are full of that darkness, and of death. (War 237)

The poetry of the Sitwells, examined here from one of their first published endeavors Wheels (1916), has not received anywhere near the critical attention to match the vituperative response it garnered when it was first published, but their work deserves to be looked at for the ways in which it is infused with the pageantry of mortality.

The Sitwell children were part of a venerable English family whose ancestors went back at least as far as the seventeenth century, possible further. Yet in many ways the trio embodied, or tried to embody, the avant-garde; Cyril Connolly described them as "trail-blazers" (qtd. in Pearson 85). This awareness of the past and tradition, combined with a reaching after the new, composes what R. L. Mégroz, one of the first critics to examine the Sitwells, called "Sitwellism," – "continuously augmented tradition [...] married to this evanescent spirit of futurism which is so apt when left single to degenerate into incoherence and sterile nihilism"(104). However, it is tradition manifested as ritual which keeps the Sitwells' work from emptiness. The work is artificial, it is spectacle – like ritual itself, it is composite and created, a harlequinade invented from a repertoire of comedy and tragedy, sense and sound, image and color. It is performance and gesture and text, which reached its culmination in Façade, first performed in 1922. Here, as in so much ritual, masks and music and poetry come together to create meaning.

The germs of this idea of poetry as harlequinade, as ritual, appear in Wheels, where death is ritualized in an implicit and sensual way. However, even earlier than that, Osbert Sitwell recalls an awareness of mortality in the sensual and the everyday.

In the first volume of his memoirs, Left Hand, Right Hand!, he remembers coming to an awareness of death. This came simultaneously with an awareness of language; language and death will be linked in the poetry, as well. The first words he learned were "rags and bones":

> And so it came about that these words were the first I learned, and who knows that such countersigns to mortality, pronounced at an impressionable age, may not have influenced my mind, making me seek behind the flattering disguise for the mortal and immortal core. [...] "Rags and Bones!" the old man used sometimes to shout, sometimes to insinuate slyly, in a voice that was between a song and a whine, into the frozen air, beneath where the fleeces of the sky were now showing their flayed and bloody edges, "Rags and Bones!" ... And so, since I associated him with the first words I had taught myself to utter, I took an interest in him and can still see very clearly his figure as he was a few years later, his bearded face crowned by a battered top hat – the survivor, it seemed, of innumerable orgies, just as it had been the witness, too, of countless interments. (99-100)

Sitwell will recall this incident in the trenches of the Great War (Laughter 94); like Robert Graves, he carries an early memory of death with him into war as a way of attempting to order the chaos he finds on the battlefield, as a way of trying to integrate the horror into his experience.

Osbert Sitwell comes to an awareness of death not simply through an awareness of language, but also through sensory experience. A deep and detailed

consciousness of everyday surroundings, their sensations and their memory, is intertwined with a consciousness of mortality; Left Hand, Right Hand! is permeated with these kinds of *memento mori*:

> I recognized the use of all the detail on the table, the diamond and ruby horseshoe brooch, the gothic pendant that had been made for Lord Albert to give his wife, with its fantastic shape and its black pearls, the silver hairbrushes, the innumerable photographs, the bottles and jars; but I did not understand one thing, a loop of thick rope, a foot or two long, twisted in a knot round the head of the bed....Eventually, after many implorings, I was told what it was. "It's a bit of a hangman's rope, darling. Nothing's so lucky! It cost eight pounds – they're very difficult to get now." (121)

Sitwell shows the presence of death in the everyday, which will become important in Wheels. In Wheels, death is linked with sensory experience. There can be no experience of being in the world without a constant awareness of death.

At the same time, death is linked with beauty, with objects, with artificiality; it is a harlequinade. The Sitwells present death as pageantry. Perhaps part of this comes from their Victorian sensibility. As seen earlier, Victorian death ritual is characterized by its extravagant pageantry, and Osbert Sitwell remembers it well:

> All this Davis [their nurse] emphasized – for she possessed a naively morbid mind – by taking Edith and me every Sunday afternoon when in Scarborough for a walk in the municipal cemetery, to admire the white marble angels, with a touch of green mildew on their wings, and

> the damp-clotted, moldering chrysanthemums that adorned the graves of which they smelled....My father would have furiously angry with her for leading us on these mournful expeditions under dark, gray-blue northern skies, with the wind howling round the sharp-edged headstones; but he never found out. (197)

As in the earlier reminiscence about the bit of hangman's rope in his mother's bedroom, in this memory emblems of death are commingled with things of beauty yet it is all mixed in with signs of decay: mildew, damp, mold. We also see here the Victorian obsession with cemeteries, documented by James Curl, who writes, "The age required a dignified and beautifully landscaped setting for its dead" (26). The funeral rituals that became prevalent in the Victorian period were not so much communal, community-based, as they were spectacle inviting audience. This takes death out of the sphere of the community and family and places it more in the realm of theater. It is as though the Sitwells, in their poetry, return to the "disgusting theatrical exhibitions," the "vulgar meaningless parade" that G. H. Phillips characterized the Victorian funeral as when he called for its reform in 1875. While other poets were turning towards starker images, the Sitwells embraced pageantry.

It was, however, this sense of ritual and pageantry that bothered critics so much when Wheels first appeared. Osbert Sitwell quotes one as saying that Wheels was "conceived in morbid eccentricity, and executed in fierce, factitious gloom" (70). Yet Wheels picked up certain currents present in Modernism even before the war ended. Likewise, it reflected attitudes about death we have seen in poetry of the Great War. The Sitwells' use of ritual may have roots in a more traditional

sensibility, but the poetry has the quality of bricolage, what Lévi-Strauss called the "logic" of the "kaleidoscope" (35). The artificiality and inventiveness of their poetry, the ways in which their poetry is pageantry and performance show the intersection of tradition and the modern.

Osbert Sitwell's poem "20th Century Harlequinade" echoes sentiments which Ezra Pound would not come to until after the Great War: Pound's lines go "There died a myriad/And of the best, among them,/For an old bitch gone in the teeth,/For a botched civilization" (188). Osbert Sitwell, in "20th Century Harlequinade," shows a botched civilization as well, but here it is a pageant, a carnival marked by death, with Fate, "malign dotard," watching the spectacle. Osbert writes, "Now he finds the night too long and better cold/ – Reminding him of death; – the sun too hot./The beauty of the universe he hates,/Yet stands regarding earthly carnivals" (21). The procession of life goes on, but for Fate it is marred:

> The clatter and the clang of car and train
> The hurrying throng of homeward-going men.
> The cries of children, color of the streets,
> Their whistling and their shouting and their joy,
> The lights, the trees, the fanes and towers of churches,
> Thanksgiving for the sun, the moon, the earth,
> The labor, love, and laughter of our lives.
>
> * * *
>
> He thinks they mock his age with ribaldry. (21)

Fate sees the carnival of life before him as a mockery, either of his old age, or of his era which has passed; the line is ambiguous. Fate has always been present, a spectator, yet also an inexorable force – the wagon wheels that keep moving towards death. The people in the scenes of the poem live their lives, unaware of the presence of death among them.

As Fate looks on, the people, "the folk of Bergamo," are unaware of Fate's decision to "end the earth." Osbert's reference to "the folk of Bergamo" alludes to Verlaine's poem "Clair de lune" of 1869, a classic Symbolist poem that Osbert certainly knew. Verlaine's poem begins, "Votre âme est un paysage choisi/Où vont charmant masques et bergamasques." The poem continues, "Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur/L'amour vainqueur et la vie opportune,/Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur bonheur/Et leur chanson se mèle au clair de lune" (83). Yet while Verlaine describes a moment of beauty and ecstasy, Osbert Sitwell's poem, and the innocent folk within it, are about to experience an ecstasy of destruction. The world of the charming bergamasque is over, and Fate is about to bring death.

Osbert's "clown," his "dotard" Fate, wreaks destruction on the human carnival he sees before him:

> The pantomime of life is near its close:
> The stage is strewn with ends and bits of things,
> With mortals maim'd or crucified, and left
> To gape at endless horror through eternity.
> The face of Fate with other paint
> Than that incarnadines the human clown:

Yet still he waves a bladder, red as gold,

And still he gaily hits about with it,

And still the dread revealing lime-light plays

Till the whole sicken'd scene becomes afire.

Antic himself falls on the funeral pyre

Of twisted, tortured, mortifying men. (22)

It is worth recalling here that soldiers during the Great War were accustomed to call battles "shows." Here, Fate puts on his own show. The end of the world becomes a performance, a spectacle, and we are the audience. In the limelight of the play the true nature of Fate is revealed; the carnivalesque becomes a place of ritualized horror rather than of ritualized festivity. Josef Pieper claims that "[f]estivity lives on affirmation" (28). However, here the festivity, the affirmation that comes from living that we saw at the beginning of the poem, is gone. What remains in a horrible reversal of festivity, reflected in the stanzas that frame the poem at beginning and end. As we shall see later, festivity is often positioned as a site for the ritual encounter with death. Fate has become a caricature of a harlequinade, waving a balloon that he wields as a weapon. Finally he himself falls on the funeral pyre, a funeral for the end of humanity. Yet this is also an inverse of a funeral; there is no consolation, no mourning. Pieper claims that funerals themselves are festive, in a way: they provide consolation, which is a form of affirmation (28). Here there is no affirmation, only death and destruction, the end of a force which destroyed itself.

Osbert Sitwell forces the reader as audience to watch the destruction of humanity, of life as we know it as described in the first stanza of the poem; this could

be read, further, as a reference to the war, to a nation willing to sit by and watch as the carnage piles up, until all that is left is a heap of bodies. It is interesting to note the horrible pyre at the conclusion of the poem, and to recall McNair's description of a German funeral pyre; the absence of a "decent" funeral signifies the end of civilization and humanity.

There is also symbolic reference to the war in a poem by Osbert's sister, Edith. In her poem "Processions," Edith shows a spectacle, a Dionysian pageant of the end of the world:

> Within the long black avenues of Night
> Go pageants of delight
>
> With masks of glass the night has stained with wine,
> Hair lifted like a vine; –
>
> And all the colored curtains of the air
> Were fluttered. Passing there,
>
> The sounds seemed warring suns; and music flowed
> As blood; the mask'd lamps showed
>
> Tall houses, light had gilded like despair:
> Black windows, gaping there.

Through all the rainbow spaces of our laughter

Those pageants followed after:

The negress Night, within her house of glass

Watched the procession pass. (37)

Edith Sitwell here calls up images of religious ritual with the title – "Processions." The poem describes an almost Dionysian parade past Night. The parade is ritualized through the confluence of sensory experiences, including color and sound. Wine and blood mix, and opposites come together in night and sun, black and rainbow. There is music and laughter, "pageants of delight." Yet Night is watching; death is present at the pageants.

III.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined some causes for a change in attitudes towards death in the interwar period, causes whose roots may be found in the Great War. Now we will turn towards texts which may elucidate some of those attitudes and their consequences for death ritual. The Great War brought about tremendous changes in the ways people regarded death, and the ways in which death was ritualized. The very ideas of ritual and tradition, of meaningful activities and beliefs, were so deeply affected by the war that they had to be reinvented to meet new demands and new ways of life. Tradition is a way of trying to stay the same, but tradition itself changes.

In the next chapter, we will look at how the reinvention of ritual plays out in the work of Katherine Mansfield, Aldous Huxley, and Virginia Woolf. The vast violence and destruction of the war would cast a pall over the entire interwar period. This altered the way death is ritualized within the fictive space of narrative, a process that has implications for the use and subversion of genre, and for the writing and rewriting of life stories. In the memoir and fiction to be studied, secular elements and generic conventions come together to effect change in the creation and enactment of funeral rites.

Chapter Two: Memento Mori: The Sacred, the Secular, and the Subversion of Genre

Funerals are the occasion for avoiding people or holding parties, for fighting or having sexual orgies, for weeping or laughing, in a thousand different combinations.

– Huntington and Metcalf (11)

"Who are you going out with tonight, darling? Is it someone you want to die with?"

– from *Trapped*, BBC TV, 1992 (qtd. in Treglown, 136)

As we have seen, the worth of a person's life, and death, was a subject of question during and after the Great War. Once the war ended, the question of human value remained. For some, the answer was clear – human value is not high. For example, in the poem "Armistice Day," Robert Graves writes with great cynicism towards those for whom he supposedly fought:

What's all this hubbub and yelling,
Commotion and scamper of feet,
With ear-splitting clatter of kettles and cans,
Wild laughter down Mafeking Street?

O, those are the kids whom we fought for
(You might think they'd been scoffing our rum)

With flags that they waved when we marched off to war
In the rapture of bugle and drum
[...]
But there's old men and women in corners
With tears falling fast on their cheeks,
There's the armless and legless and sightless –
It's seldom that one of them speaks.

And there's flappers gone drunk and indecent
Their skirts kilted up to the thigh,
The constables lifting no hand in reproof
And the chaplain averting his eye... (Poems 70)

Here the veteran witnesses a celebration, but it is hollow and empty. Rather than affirming life, the celebration is at the expense of lives that were lost. This Armistice Day does not offer a space for commemoration that affirms the worth of the dead. The voice of the soldier – one of the living dead – empties the celebration of any kind of affirmation. Yet it is also a celebration – a party – for those who have survived, an opportunity for drunkenness, for licentiousness, laughter, and weeping.

The work of the poets of the Great War illustrates how funeral ritual may be reconstituted, revised, and transformed to accommodate and reflect changing circumstances and attitudes that surround violent death. In the first chapter we looked at the ways in which death practices are composite, a result of a bricolage of customs, sensibilities, and needs. In this chapter, we will see how these rituals are composed

of other elements: how the sacred and the secular come together. Death is brought into everyday life and moments of celebration, forcing a realization of its presence. Within the fictive space of the texts to be studied here, we will see how secular activities become moments and sites of ritual processes if we "step aside from the quotidian in order to enter" those sites (Grimes, Reading vii). This chapter will examine the mechanisms by which secular activity and fictive space are changed through the ritualization of the realization of death and the revision of generic convention and processes of life writing.

Secular activity may itself become sacred. We can find clues of ritual process and experience through the confluence of the practical and the symbolic, as Kenneth Burke argues. However, where Burke claims that the practical and the symbolic are separate and separable, it could be argued that ritual space is precisely that space where we see the union of the practical and the symbolic, and the secular and the sacred. Ritual operates on all levels of symbolic action – bodily, personal and familiar, and abstract (Burke 36-7). The space is one of fusion, where the practical and the symbolic meet and the boundary between the two becomes permeable. This is crucial to understanding the importance of secular ritual, for, as Anthony Giddens has claimed, "Many of the most subtle and dazzlingly intricate forms of knowledge embedded in, or constitutive of, the actions we carry out are done in and through the practices which we enact" (165). Ritual knowledge may be obtained through what Giddens calls "practical consciousness," an awareness of the time and space of the "mundane activities of day-to-day life" (167). The celebratory events of the fiction

under study operate within the bounds of ritual space, for they incorporate elements of the mundane, the secular, yet also create moments of "specialness," outside the everyday. These events are practice and performance, leading to consciousness through ritual in the texts of Mansfield, Huxley, and Woolf.

The incorporation of sacred practice into the fictive space permanently alters the "common-sense world" of the fiction, creating "a wider reality which corrects and completes it" (Geertz 122). Through the ritualization of death, both in the everyday world and in moments of celebration, the fictive spaces of Katherine Mansfield's stories are transformed.

Much of her work before the war, including her first collection In a German Pension (1911), focuses on Mansfield's experiences in Germany and the sense of isolation and loneliness she felt there. Critics who examine her work in relation to her biography, such as C. A. Hankin and Mary Burgan, have pointed out that this atmosphere of her stories reflects Mansfield's experiences of unhappy love affairs and a miscarriage. The stories that many consider to be her finest work, such as those included in the collections Bliss and Other Stories (1920) and The Garden Party and Other Stories (1922), come from a period of considerable productivity which includes two deeply saddening events in her life: the death of her brother and the diagnosis of her tuberculosis. As much as one hesitates to correlate biographical information with creative production, and the analysis of the products of this creativity, one cannot help but notice that the stories produced from 1915 to 1922 reflect a profound consciousness of the presence of death, and address that consciousness in a variety of ways.

Mansfield's brother, Leslie Beauchamp, or Bogey, was killed in 1915. Although Mansfield and her younger brother were not especially close as they were growing up, after his death in the war he grew more idealized in her mind, and more representative – and more a representation – of loss, a loss which came to permeate her personal life. Towards the end of her life, before her death from tuberculosis in 1923, she would often refer to her husband J. Middleton Murry by her brother's nickname, "Bogey." In her journal after her brother's death, Mansfield wrote, "A misty, misty evening. I want to write down the fact that not only am I not afraid of death – I welcome the idea of death" (Journal 35).

It could be argued that the war and the violent death that came with it is present in many of Mansfield's stories after 1915; critics such as Christine Darrohn have made this argument in examinations of "The Garden Party," for example. Mansfield herself claimed that writing – in fact, everything in life – needed to be radically altered as a result of the war. In a 1919 letter to Murry, she writes:

> I don't want (G. forbid!) the mobilization and the violation of Belgium, but the novel can't just leave the war out. There *must* have been some change of heart. It is really fearful to see the "settling down" of human beings. I feel in the *profoundest* sense that nothing can ever be the same – that, as artists, we are traitors if we feel otherwise: we have to take it into account and find new expressions, new moulds for our new thoughts and feelings. (Letters 147)

Mansfield believed that everyday practice as well as creative production needed to reflect the new reality created by the war, that this was the only way people – and

artists – could be honest and human. She demonstrates this sentiment explicitly in her story "The Fly," published posthumously in 1923. The story shows the failed attempt by a member of the older generation to go back to life after the war, a life of business and production and industry. Yet, simultaneously, it shows what Rhoda Nathan has called a failure of mourning – there is a need to mourn, yet mourning is impossible; a need to commemorate, yet a failure to do so.

"The Fly" begins with two men sitting in an office: Mr. Woodifield, an old man recovering from a stroke, and a man referred to only as "the boss," older than Mr. Woodifield, but still a man of industry in good health. We can see that "the boss" is pleased with himself and with his position in society, a man of business and a success in worldly affairs. He opens a copy of the Financial Times: "He was proud of his room; he liked to have it admired, especially by old Woodifield. It gave him a feeling of deep, solid satisfaction to be planted there in the midst of it in full view of that frail old figure in the muffler" (597). The boss shows Woodifield the new carpet, new heating, new furniture, "but he did not draw old Woodifield's attention to the photograph over the table of a grave-looking boy in uniform standing in one of those spectral photographers' parks with photographers' storm-clouds behind him. It was not new. It had been there for over six years" (598). The photograph is not new, and goes unmentioned. Yet the narrative is focalized through the boss, and we know he has not forgotten that the photograph is there. What the narrative will show, however, is that the boss has, in other ways, forgotten his son, the grave-looking boy in the picture. The photograph is an artifact, falsely constructed with the artifice of an artist, but the art cannot take the place of the real person, nor of a real memory.

The turning point of the story comes when Woodifield remembers that he had wanted to tell the boss that he had seen his son's grave in Belgium: "I thought you'd like to know. The girls were in Belgium last week having a look at poor Reggie's grave, and they happened to come across your boy's. They're quite near each other, it seems. [...] Beautifully looked after. Couldn't be better if they were at home" (599). The old man seems to have no awareness of the sacred nature of his subject matter, concerning himself solely with mundanities at the expense of remembrance and respect. Woodifield continues:

> "There's miles of it [...] and it's all as neat as a garden. Flowers growing on all the graves. Nice broad paths." It was plain from his voice how much he liked a nice broad path.
>
> The pause came again. Then the old man brightened wonderfully.
>
> "D'you know what the hotel made the girls pay for a pot of jam?" he piped. "Ten francs! Robbery, I call it. [...] It's trading on our feelings. They think because we're over there having a look around we're ready to pay anything." (599)

Whatever practice has been established for the commemoration of the death, whatever space has been set aside for the mourning process, has proved ineffective. The boss cannot respond at all to this mention of his son's grave, perhaps because of the apparently casual manner of his friend. However, it is also revealed that "for various reasons the boss had not been across" (599). Something has been holding him back. There is a feeling of loss, but what the boss is most acutely aware of is what *he* has lost – an heir, a partner, a part of himself. He sees the boy merely as a

reflection of himself. The photograph of the boy in uniform makes the boss uncomfortable; that is never how he envisioned his heir. This exchange reveals the profound ambivalence of the older generation towards the loss of its sons, and its inability to grieve. The young men were never mourned for themselves, as individuals, but as symbols for what was lost. It is difficult to mourn a symbol.

Once Woodifield leaves the office and the boss is alone, the boss "wanted, he intended, he had arranged to weep...." (600). The man's process of mourning is forced, hyperconscious, and stifled. His thoughts devolve into a narcissistic reflection on his loss, preventing any mourning. We learn he "never thought of the boy except as lying unchanged, unblemished in his uniform, asleep for ever." There is no awareness of death, nor of memorialization; the image of his boy is the one in the picture, which the man himself sees as unsatisfactory and inadequate (600-1). The man cannot weep: " 'My son!' groaned the boss. But no tears came yet. In the past, in the first months and even years after the boy's death, he had only to say those words to be overcome by such grief that nothing short of a violent fit of weeping could relieve him." The boss is aware of the physical nature of grief, but without a true process of commemoration and closure, he is trapped in his own narcissistic failure to mourn. He thinks

> Other men perhaps might recover, might live their loss down, but not he. How was it possible? His boy was an only son. Ever since his birth the boss had worked at building up this business for him; it had no other meaning if it was not for the boy. Life itself had come to have no other meaning. How on earth could he have slaved, denied

> himself, kept going all these years without the promise for ever before him of the boy's stepping into his shoes and carrying on where he left off? (600)

The boss' story does not turn out the way it was supposed to. The narrative of his life – and that of his son, as he had written it – meant for his son to take his place. The rupture of the narrative has reduced the boss' life to stasis. The boss reminds the reader of Dickens' Mr. Dombey: the son is denied personhood, and his own commemoration, by the father's failure to move beyond himself. In this failure we see thwarted emotion and resentment.

We also see Mansfield's belief that life cannot go on as it did before the war. The world of business, of everyday affairs, must be radically altered. A fly in the story represents that transformation, that presence of meaningless death that all must confront. Like the creature described in Virginia Woolf's "The Death of the Moth," the fly illustrates the futility of struggling for life, and the impulse, which Mansfield sees in so much of the postwar world, that prevents us from recognizing the sacred nature of life and death.

The fly lands in the inkpot sitting on the boss' desk. The boss rescues the fly, places it on his blotting-paper, and watches it clean the ink off its wings:

> Over and under, over and under, went a leg along a wing, as the stone goes over and under the scythe. [...] Now one could imagine that the little front legs rubbed against each other lightly, joyfully. The horrible danger was over; it had escaped; it was ready for life again. (601)

The danger is over, but the scythe is still there, a symbol of death. And indeed, the boss decides to drip more ink onto the fly, to watch it clean itself again:

> He's a plucky little devil, thought the boss, and he felt a real admiration for the fly's courage. That was the way to tackle things; that was the right spirit. Never say die; it was only a question of...But the fly had again finished its laborious task, and the boss had just time to refill his pen, to shake fair and square on the new-cleaned body yet another dark drop. What about it this time? (601)

The fly cleans itself yet again, weakly now. The body of the fly, cleaned and vulnerable, resonates with the boss' image of his dead son, unblemished; but he continues to drip the dark liquid, resembling blood, onto the cleaned body. At the same time, however, the fly signifies the corruption of the dead, and the presence of death.

The boss drips ink on the fly once more, but this is too much. The fly dies. "The boss lifted the corpse on the end of the paper-knife and flung it into the waste-paper basket" (602). The body of the dead fly is something ultimately to be thrown away by the old man. The corpse of the fly takes the place of the corpse of the boy that the boss refuses to commemorate by visiting his grave, or by even thinking about the loss the grave represents. The boss demands a new sheet of blotting-paper, and tries to remember what he had been thinking about before he had begun tormenting the fly: "For the life of him he could not remember" (602). The boss is unable to mourn his son, and the boy's memory is tossed away like the corpse of the fly.

"The Fly" presents the conflict between the Old Men left behind by their dead sons and the War Generation that suffered such loss. The postwar ambivalence towards these deaths interferes with remembrance, and prevents the awareness that death is always present. However, in many younger people, as we have seen, this presence of death must be grappled with. The constant awareness of death engendered by the war only grew once Mansfield was diagnosed with the disease that would kill her. She claims, in a 1918 letter to Murry, to have had a presentiment of her disease:

> I *knew* this would happen. Now I'll say why. On my way here [Bandol], in the train from Paris to Marseilles I sat in a carriage with two women. They were both dressed in black. [...] The big one, rolling about in the shaking train, said what a *fatal* place this coast is for anyone who is even threatened with lung trouble. She reeled off the most hideous examples, especially one which froze me finally, of an American *belle et forte avec un simple bronchite* who came down here to be cured and in three weeks had had a severe haemorrhage and *died.* [...] This recital, in that dark moving train, told by that big woman swathed in black, had an effect on me that I wouldn't own and never mentioned. I knew the woman was a fool, hysterical, morbid, *but I believed her*; and her voice has gone on somewhere echoing in me ever since.... (Letters 75-6)

The woman speaking is like Death herself, swathed in black. The voice of the woman in black talking about the death of the young woman remained with

Mansfield, a *memento mori* for a young woman herself confronting a fatal illness. She was living with death in life, writing to Murry, "I am (December 15, 1919) a dead woman, and *I don't care*" (Letters 147).

Death permeated Mansfield's existence, and her work, for much of the end of her life. Mansfield forces death on many of her characters, and these characters deal with that disruption in differing ways, if they deal with it at all. Françoise Defromont has pointed out that many of Mansfield's stories deal with the disruption of the sudden revelation of death, the withholding of mourning and of closure, and of the attempt to move on from an awareness of death. For example, in the story "The Stranger," a husband is thrilled to greet his wife on her return from a long trip, only to find that while she was away a man had died in her arms. The presence of death forever alters the way he feels about her, and changes their relationship. Where before he had felt able to be alone with her and to consider only her, after he hears that a stranger had died with her, he feels "they would never be alone together again" (458); death would always be between them.

In "The Wrong House" (1919), an old woman knitting is frightened by the arrival of a funeral coach at her door. The story relies on the everydayness of the setting and activities of the characters where death is present, even as its sudden appearance in personified form horrifies her. As she sits, knitting, dusk falls: "The clock struck three. Only three? It seemed dusk already; dusk came floating into the room, heavy powdery dusk settling on the furniture, filming over the mirror" (409). In Mansfield's funereal symbolism, the clock reflects the passing of time – itself a *memento mori*, but also connected with death because of the custom of stopping

clocks when someone had died. Dusk represents twilight, the end of life, and parallels the older woman's stage of life, falling over the furniture like sheets; again, this reflects the custom of covering furniture when a house is in mourning or shut up after a death, a kind of death shroud. Finally, the dusk covers the mirror, another custom in a house of mourning.

At first, the old woman, Mrs. Bean, is simply curious about the funeral. She looks to see which house has the blinds drawn. She is already situating herself as outside the death experience, looking for signs of mourning which would distinguish herself from the stricken family. As in other funeral customs, drawing the blinds would serve as a signifier to isolate the mourner from "normal" society.

Mrs. Bean feels that the men driving the funeral party are "horrible"; they are laughing, joking, and blowing their noses on their black gloves as they drive. For her, there is dual dismay: at the death, and at the cavalier way in which the funeral drivers treat the matter of death. Her genteel disapproval of the drivers is soon overtaken by horror as she watches the drivers stop at her own home:

> "No!" she groaned. But yes, the blow fell, and for the moment it struck her down. She gasped, a great cold shiver went through her, and stayed in her hands and knees. She saw the man withdraw a step and again – that puzzled glance at the blinds – then –
>
> "No!" she groaned, and stumbling, catching hold of things, she managed to get to the door before the blow fell again. She opened it, her chin trembled, her teeth clacked; somehow or other she brought out, "The wrong house!" (410)

The driver brings out a black notebook and checks the address, and indeed it is the wrong house. For a moment, Mrs. Bean dies; she grows cold, and almost falls over. For a moment, the driver is Death himself, carrying a black notebook and ready to call on the living with an invitation, reminiscent of the call in a medieval Dance of Death. The coach drives away with a "Clockety-clock-clock. Cluk! Cluk!" This recalls the clock from earlier in the story, another *memento mori*; the "cluk" echoes the chicken the maid will bring in at the end for dinner, "a lovely young bird!" (410-11). Mrs. Bean exists in a space between living and dead, as she realizes that her own home has been passed over, but also is a space simultaneously quotidian as everyday chores are carried on. The clock ticks off the moments until death, but the maid returning home with food – a young bird – indicates that life still continues, for now, although the bird, too, must die, for dinner. The story concludes with Mrs. Bean unwinding her knitting in a Penelope-like gesture, hoping to forestall the inevitable, and with the maid pulling down the blind in the kitchen – a final foreshadowing.

These disruptions, and the awareness they provoke, particularly in the young, are ritualized in "Her First Ball" and "The Garden Party," both stories set in New Zealand, with members of the Sheridan family as their protagonists. In "Her First Ball," Leila is the country cousin of the Sheridan girls, Laura, Meg, and Jose. With her sense of fleeting time, again and again, Leila thinks, "But, of course, there was no time" (513). The girls are young and beautiful, but in their own way ephemeral. They bring to mind the first stanza of Herrick's "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time": "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,/Old Time is still a-flying:/And this same flower that smiles to-day/To-morrow will be dying" (84). The momentum of the

story is fast; the sensory impressions come quickly and dissipate, talk and images flow past Leila, the focal point, and the reader. The use of serial commas, lists of images and progressive participles, contribute to this effect: "Dark girls, fair girls were patting their hair, tying ribbons again, tucking handkerchiefs down the fronts of their bodices, smoothing marble-white gloves. And because they were all laughing it seemed to Leila that they were all lovely" (513). Everything seems to be moving and quivering and shimmering around Leila. And everyone waits for the men to begin.

Leila's program fills up, and one of her partners is an old man, "fat, with a big bald patch on his head." As he writes his name on her program he says, "Do I remember this bright little face? Is it known to me of yore?" Then he disappears: "He was tossed away on a great wave of music that came flying over the gleaming floor, breaking the groups up into couples, scattering them, sending them spinning" (515). Again, the progressive participles create a feeling of fast-moving action as Leila begins to dance, and forgets the old man.

The interlude until he returns is filled with partners, music, flowers, and comments on how "beautifully slippery" the floor is (515). It is a superficial scene, yet most meaningful to Leila. She is thrilled by the sensory experience, by feeling *alive*. She leaves to get an ice, and when she returns the old fat man is waiting for her: "It gave her quite a shock again to see how old he was; he ought to have been on the stage with the fathers and mothers. And when Leila compared him with her other partners he looked shabby. His waistcoat was creased, there was a button off his glove, his coat looked as if it was dusty with French chalk" (517). The man's age – he claims to have been going to balls for the last thirty years – brings to Leila a sense

that time is passing, that her first ball is "only the beginning of her last ball after all." He says:

> Of course, you can't hope to last anything like as long as that. No-o, long before that you'll be sitting up there on the stage, looking on, in your nice black velvet. And these pretty arms will have turned into little short fat ones, and you'll beat time with such a different kind of fan – a black bony one. (517)

Leila's ball has become a funeral with the presence of the fat man, who becomes Death himself. He speaks of her as old, in black, carrying a funereal black fan, separate from all those who are dancing, who are living. He forces her to the awareness that she must die, and that the ball is virtually a mourning ritual to celebrate that inevitable death.

Leila is momentarily upset at the way the man has "spoiled it all," but only momentarily. When a new young man approaches, she gets up and dances. When he pushes her into the fat man again, she simply smiles: "She didn't even recognize him again" (518). She has recovered from her brush with death and continues her dance. The dance of death does not remain so for her.

In contrast, the next story featuring the Sheridans, "The Garden-Party," forces a realization of death through ritual that a young woman cannot ignore. The story echoes an earlier story, "Sun and Moon," in which two children watch the exciting preparation for a party, only to suffer disillusion when they see the aftermath, when they see everything used and spoiled. However, in both "Her First Ball" and "The Garden-Party," Mansfield goes further than simple disillusionment with a lovely

ideal. "The Garden-Party" features Laura, and begins with preparations for a garden party. The first thing the reader sees is the beautiful weather, and the multitude of flowers. Notably present are lilies, a flower often common at funerals.

In the middle of these arrangements, one of the girls sings of the weariness of life, and of hope dying. It seems incongruous, but the song becomes a dirge as the story unfolds. As her mother and sisters get ready for the party, Jose sings a song that seems terribly out of place, yet foreshadows the tragic event to come, and the transformation the festivities will undergo. She sings:

> This Life is *Wee*-ary
>
> A Tear – a Sigh.
>
> A Love that *Chan*-ges
>
> This Life is *Wee*-ary
>
> A Tear – a Sigh.
>
> A Love that *Chan*-ges,
>
> And then ... Good-bye!

The narrator continues: "But at the word 'Good-bye,' and although the piano sounded more desperate than ever, her face broke into a brilliant, dreadfully unsympathetic smile. 'Aren't I in good voice, mummy?' she beamed." Jose then continues with the next verse, "Hope comes to Die..." (539).

The girls get ready, and sample the food to be served at the party. The washing and dressing, while obviously necessary when getting ready for a party, are also important elements in preparing the dead for a funeral. Providing food and drink, particularly sweets and liquor, is also a necessary funeral custom. As the girls

go to check on the preparations in the garden, they come across the cook gossiping with the bakery's delivery man. He is standing in the door; the door becomes an key symbol, a threshold into the liminal space that is the awareness of death (541). He is telling the story of how a carter was killed that morning when his horse threw him. The presence of the dead man – the dead worker – has infiltrated the party and altered it.

Yet Laura, as yet the only one aware of the conversion, insists that the party be stopped out of respect for the dead. Her sister responds, "Stop the garden-party? My dear Laura, don't be so absurd. Of course we can't do anything of the kind. Nobody expects us to. Don't be so extravagant" (541). Jose maintains that the party should not be stopped simply for the death of a working-class man; as her mother says, "People like that don't expect sacrifices from us" (543). Jose and Mrs. Sheridan believe that life must go on. Jose says, "If you're going to stop a band playing every time some one has an accident, you'll lead a very strenuous life" (542). What Jose and her mother do not realize is that death is always present in life.

To take her mind off the death, Mrs. Sheridan gives Laura a black hat that she wears throughout the story, a funeral emblem, the way the fan in the fat man's imaginings became one for Leila. The party goes on, and Laura forgets about the family who lost the dead man; they are outside the reality of the party, seeming to Laura "blurred, unreal" (544). Yet when the party is over, Mr. Sheridan reminds them all of what happened. Mrs. Sheridan decides that the leftover food should be taken as an offering to the family.

Laura, in her black hat, takes the food to the family's cottage, and so creates a funeral there. This is her quest, but it is not a quest to vanquish death but rather to find it. A "woman in black" answers the door and leads Laura down a passageway into the cottage; the passageway becomes another liminal space into a world of death and mourning. She then draws Laura into the room to look at the corpse. "'E looks a picture," she says, echoing what Laura's mother said to her when she placed the black hat on her head: "I have never seen you look such a picture" (543, 548). Mansfield here reminds us of the modern custom of photographing the dead, while also linking Laura to the dead man. Laura, like Persephone, has left the springtime world of the garden and traveled into the underworld to encounter death. She thinks of the corpse, "He was wonderful, beautiful. [...] But all the same you had to cry." Death remains an image to her, a figure, but the experience is beyond words. She feels she has to say something, but can only manage, "Forgive my hat," before weeping (548).

She runs out of the dark cottage, back into the world of the living, where she meets her brother who had been sent to "rescue" her. Again, she is past words, beyond verbalizing her experience: " 'Isn't life,' she stammered, 'isn't life – ' But what life was she couldn't explain" (549). The "green world" (Frye 182) of the garden, of the party – of life and rebirth – has not been cleansed of death; rather, death has been made present, and cannot be erased. Life for Laura has been transformed because she has encountered death. The moment of epiphany is the moment of the realization of death, and in Mansfield's story it is a ritual moment.

Christopher Ames, employing Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque, argues that the festive functions as a site for the "ritual encounter with death," leading to the affirmation of life (10). As we shall see in the ways the authors under study use romance, the genre of rebirth, death is not always something to celebrated as part of life. Rather, it is something to be struggled against once it is made present.

While attending a luncheon party described in A Room of One's Own, Virginia Woolf is haunted by the dead, and by something else that is missing. She discovered that it is romance that is missing: "Shall we lay the blame on the war? When the guns fired in August 1914, did the faces of men and women show so plain in each other's eyes that romance was killed?" (14). The party is haunted by the loss of romance. Too many writers look to the idea of tragedy to explain the loss of the postwar period. Tragedy is only possible when the individual matters and can stand in for society in his or her importance. We should look instead at the use of other genres, their revision and subversion – particularly the subversion of romance – as a mechanism to manage the failure of renewal and the new reality created by this failure. Paul Fussell has talked about this, but in an examination of *war* literature, not *postwar*. Writers such as Mansfield, Huxley, and Woolf include elements of funeral ceremony in their writing to deal with death, but they also deal with the presence of death by revising a genre – and the rituals key to that genre – meant to show the thwarting of death and earning of eternal life. In these reworkings of the romance archetype or genre, the thwarting of death is itself thwarted, and the chance for eternal life is lost.

About romance, its elements and how it functions as mythos and ritual, Frye argues, "As structure, the central principle of ironic myth is best approached as a parody of romance: the application of romantic mythical forms to a more realistic content which fits them in unexpected ways" (223). However, I would argue that the works under discussion here to which this claim applies actually benefit more from examination as works of subverted romance, rather than satire or parody. Romance is characterized by the innocence and chastity of the hero and heroine living in a "green," idyllic, pastoral world, by the adventures of the questing hero which end in disappearance or death, and reappearance and resurrection. In Frye's schema, romance is the mythos of summer (186); youth and love are all-important. Above all, romance is governed by the victory over death. The hero faces fear, darkness, and evil, and triumphs. He may confront his own death, but after the moment of discovery or epiphany (*anagnorisis*) at the end of the adventure and conflict he lives on in a reborn world.

In romance, death is defeated and transcended through the quest. At the conclusion of the quest when the hero has conquered death and achieved immortal life, all are reconciled into a new, better society. This is why romances often end with feasts and parties; these events are spaces in which this reconciliation and renewal can be created and celebrated. We need only return to our discussion of Mansfield's "The Garden Party" to see how some of the mechanisms of romance are subverted in postwar literature. Laura goes on a quest, but it is a quest to find death, and it is a quest where she is forced to deal with death with no possibility of conquering it. There is only a realization of mortality. The parties in these

subversions are not spaces of reconciliation but of fragmentation. They are not spaces where a new happy society is created, free from death, but a place where death will always be a guest. In The Cocktail Party (1949), T. S. Eliot has the Unidentified Guest say, "Ah, but we die to each other daily" (329). This Unidentified Guest, representing death, reminds the other guests that death is always present.

In this way, the ritualization of death through the trope of the party results in these texts in a subversion of the genre of romance and its elements. This development begins with their mundane quality; the texts lack magic. Through the ritualization process, the mundane, the secular, becomes special and sacred. However, this course is one wherein death is made present, not where death is conquered.

Parties – the festive – are supposed to establish a new world. But in many parties this new world is not to be had; laughter is "cut down to cold humor, irony, sarcasm. It cease[s] to be joyful and triumphant hilarity. Its positive regenerating power [i]s reduced to a minimum" (Bakhtin 38). This is the world of Aldous Huxley's novel Crome Yellow (1921). Huxley's world does not have the funereal and carnivalesque pageantry of the Sitwells' poetry. The house party of Crome Yellow is not a festive celebration but a place where the emptiness of life, and how close that emptiness is to death, is revealed. George Woodcock has described Huxley as "the novelist who in the Twenties watched the gold tarnishing and the crystal cracking in a new nightmare of disillusionment" (24).

The novel opens with Denis arriving at Camlet, the train station. Denis wants to write a novel. It will be a typical first novel of every young man who went to a good public school and decided to drink, have affairs, and become a writer. The fact that Denis has this conventional idea points to his ineffectuality, his thwarted artistic ambitions, and the thwarting of every other ambition he has by his own indecisiveness. Naturally, the novel will never get written. The name of the "hero" echoes Dionysus, but ironically Denis never fully participates in the party, and can never act on his passions and desires. The name may also echo that of Saint Denis, the beheaded martyr; Saint Denis was often depicted with his head in his hands, and Huxley's use of the name may point to his protagonist's excessive cerebration, coupled with his inability to make up his mind about anything. The name of Camlet, the village in which Crome Yellow is located, echoes Camelot, the idyllic setting of Arthurian romance, but it also echoes Hamlet. Both resonances are crucial. Crome Yellow, an anti-romance, takes place in the country, but it is not the green world of romance, pastoral and innocent. Crome Yellow is a place of youth, like the green world, but here youth is too conscious of its own emptiness and mortality: yellow, fading, and dying, rather than green and new. Nor is Denis an Arthurian hero; he is more a Hamlet figure, a "vanishing hero,"as described by Sean O'Faolain. He seeks the love of Anne, but is rebuffed in his haplessness. His quest for Anne never gets started, just as the novel he is always writing yet not writing is creation that never really gets born.

Denis' desire for Anne drives him to despair when he sees her in the arms of the artist Gombauld, the monster Denis has to slay in order to gain the woman he

loves. Of course, he does not take up the challenge. For a moment he sees Gombauld kiss Anne, and he runs away and thereby does not see Anne push the unwanted suitor away. In his flight, Denis bumps into another guest, Mr. Scogan, who is obsessed with philosophical fads, and who is possibly based on Bertrand Russell. Mr. Scogan takes one look at Denis and knows exactly what his problem is:

> You look disturbed, distressed, depressed. [...] Worried about the cosmos, eh? [...] I know the feeling. It's a most distressing symptom. "What's the point of it all? All is vanity. What's the good of continuing to function if one's doomed to be snuffed out at last along with everything else?" Yes, yes. I know exactly how you feel. It's most distressing if one allows oneself to be distressed. But then why allow oneself to be distressed? After all, we know that there's no ultimate point. But what difference does that make? (309-10)

Mr. Scogan is a remarkable anticipation of Woody Allen's Dr. Flicker, the psychiatrist in Annie Hall who tells the young Alvy Singer, concerned about the universe expanding, that "we've got to enjoy ourselves while we're here." Yet, Mr. Scogan also echoes the first chapter of Ecclesiastes: "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. [...] There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after." This echo reminds us not only that "all is vanity," including all that comes before in the novel, and all that is to come, but that there is to be no remembrance of former things, and no remembrance of things to come. The kinds of memory and

commemoration, the attempts to narrativize lives and experiences that are lost and problematic, will come to naught. Mr. Scogan may be Huxley's representation of the wise old man, a key figure in romance. Yet rather than dispense wisdom to guide Denis on his way and provide answers to lead him to a right course of action, Mr. Scogan misreads the situation completely, and, like Sterne's Uncle Toby, rides his hobby-horse over Denis' despair about Anne and Gombauld.

At the same time, however, Mr. Scogan's disquisitions on the cosmos point to a central theme in the book: there really is no ultimate point, which is why there can be no real hero. After listening to Mr. Scogan for a moment, Denis, described as a somnambulist, "awakens" and runs off (310), one of the living dead, whose despair will lead to his symbolic "death" at the end of the novel. Once Denis leaves Mr. Scogan, he goes to his room to drink gin and go to sleep. This is Denis' ritual encounter with death, his *anagnorisis*, and he is virtually "buried" in the coffin-like tower room of Crome Yellow. However, this is a false moment of discovery. Unlike in the conventional romance, this encounter will not lead to the conquering of death or the hero's attainment of immortality. It will lead to a more profound symbolic death from which there is no escape.

After some time he awakens and leaves his room. He moves down the hallway to stairs which will allow him to ascend the tower of the house. Here Denis enters his own coffin:

> Arrived at the servants' quarters under the roof, he hesitated, then turning to the right he opened a little door at the end of the corridor. Within was a pitch-dark cupboard-like boxroom, hot, stuffy, and

> smelling of dust and old leather. He advanced cautiously into the blackness, groping with his hands. (311)

Denis then climbs up onto the tower. A crucial moment in romance, for Frye, is the "point of ritual death." Frye writes, "Thus the romance expresses more clearly the passage from struggle through a point of ritual death to a recognition scene" (187). In Frye's formulation of romance, the tower is the place of *anagnorisis*, or discovery. This should be the "point of epiphany" (Frye 203) once Denis has passed through the point of ritual death, which is his drunken sleep and passage through the coffin-like room. Denis has his brief moment of epiphany:

> Why had he climbed up to this high desolate place? Was it to look at the moon? Was it to commit suicide? As yet he hardly knew. Death – the tears came into his eyes when he thought of it. His misery assumed a certain solemnity; he was lifted up on the wings of a kind of exaltation. (312)

The moon acts here as a crucial symbol, as it often does in romance, yet it is not the symbol of chastity that, Frye notes, is prevalent in romance (152). It is Anne's seeming lack of chastity, and Denis' desire to be unchaste, that is the problem. The moon is cold and remote, and symbolic of the death Denis will endure, and of the cold woman for whom he imagines he wishes to die. Denis assumes the posture of a daemonic, Manfred-like hero, but even in this he is thwarted and incapable of action.

Denis is "saved" from suicide by Mary Bracegirdle, one of the other guests. Mary "intercedes" on Denis' behalf to "save" him, but at the same time she is the Duessa figure of romance, a deceptive woman. She listens sympathetically to Denis'

plight, then comes up with a scheme to remove him from Crome Yellow, and from the source of his misery – Anne and her non-romance with Gombauld. Mary convinces Denis that he should send a telegram to himself indicating that he must return to London immediately on urgent family business. He will thereby be able to withdraw with the utmost social decorum, while saving face. With this scheme, Mary also withdraws any hope of decisive action from Denis. He lets her talk him into her plan, thus losing his own will. He returns to his room, where "the candle had long ago guttered to extinction" (316). He is about to face his second, symbolic death.

The next morning, the whole party gathers for breakfast. As he waits for his telegram, Denis says to Mr. Scogan, "One is only happy in action" (318). His comment to Mr. Scogan is deeply ironic; telegrams are meant conventionally to announce death, but here it will announce Denis' own death, a symbolic death which results from not being able to take action. This action is not his own, but has been plotted and forced by Mary. Even Priscilla Wimbush, his hostess, has had a hand in the plan, saying she had an astrological "presentiment" of Denis' leaving (323). Denis' every move is dictated by others.

It is this which leads to Denis' "death." This symbolic death is the final subversion of the romance in that it is ironic, false, and yet does not result in any kind of reappearance or resurrection. Denis has emerged from the ritual encounter with death in the tower, only to scuttle back to London, hopes and humanity dead. Death and funeral imagery provide a key metaphor to the close of the novel. Mary, as she waits with Denis for the telegram they know is inevitably coming, says, "There's a very good train at 3.27, and it would be nice if you could catch it, wouldn't it?"

Denis imagines he is making arrangements for his own funeral: "Train leaves Waterloo 3.27. No flowers...." The allusion to Waterloo indicates the defeat Denis knows he has suffered. He continues: "No, he was blowed if he'd let himself be hurried down to the Necropolis like this" (320). Symbolically, the house party has been Denis' slow death and now it is his funeral. To him, London is the city of the dead, and a cemetery where he will be buried.

The funereal metaphor continues until the last line of the book, with no redemption or resurrection. Once the telegram comes and Denis has to leave, Anne reveals herself to be upset at his departure – a moment of discovery, of truth, but too late. Denis "abandoned himself hopelessly, fatalistically to his destiny. This was what came of action, of doing something decisive. If only he'd just let things drift!" (324). Yet Denis has not done anything decisive, but let others dictate his fate, and he is now trapped in an inevitable tide of events. Mary's behavior marks the inevitability of the happenings as she continually looks at the clock: "[She] looked at the clock again. 'I think perhaps you ought to go and pack'" (324). She pushes events along, but her attention to the clock also represents the progress of Denis' "death," clocks symbolically evocative of death. As Denis goes up the stairs to lay his clothes in his suitcase, he thinks, "It was time for him to lay himself in his coffin." Then, "The car was at the door – the hearse." (324). Denis leaves, and the party prepares to continue without him. The final line of the novel is "He climbed into the hearse" (325). Huxley pushes the funeral metaphor to the end as Denis prepares to enter the world of the dead, symbolically dead himself. Unlike the hero of a romance, he will not return; he cannot be resurrected. At the same time, his "death" is deeply

ironic. He dies over nothing, a mistake, as a result of his own very unheroic failure to act.

Vera Brittain gives a very different representation of youth and death in her memoir Testament of Youth (1933), in which many of the elements of romance are used and thwarted, yet one still holds out hope for a new world through the ritualization of death. Revising this practice and the genre of romance, Brittain frames her memoir with celebrations – one thwarted wedding, one true and achieved wedding – to create spaces of mortuary ceremony and of renewal. There is not a celebration of life, but a struggle against death through rewriting a genre and thus writing a life. The memoir tells the story of her romance with Roland Leighton, a young man who fought in the Great War and was killed, her nursing efforts, her years as a student at Somerville College at Oxford, and her postwar life as a pacifist and journalist. Titled a "testament," a bearing witness to history, the memoir also functions as a narrativizing of loss, an attempt to provide meaning to loss.

In Testament of Youth, part of the experience Brittain examines is the revelation of death to youth. Brittain herself, her brother who was killed, and their friends, all of whom were killed, are forced to come to terms with death, their own mortality, and the loss of innocence that ensues. Throughout the text, this revelation is ritualized through the use of ceremony, narrative, and generic conventions, as Brittain uses elements shared with romance and comedy to make sense of the death encounter.

The story begins in Brittain's childhood homes of Macclesfield and Buxton. However, these are not the green worlds of romance; in fact, Brittain makes clear that she found Buxton, where she spent her adolescence, to be confining and trivial. Rather, the green world for Brittain is Oxford, an idyllic place and time she shared with her brother, Edward and her lover, Roland. Here, her lover wrote verses to her beauty and to the joyfulness of their future union; Brittain's description of these days bring to mind days of chivalry and troubadours. (Although Roland is the name of the hero of the medieval romance Chanson de Roland, too much should not be made of the coincidence.) Brittain and her betrothed shared long talks on literature and art, and walks through the countryside. Yet Brittain is fully aware of the conflagration raging outside her green world:

> It is not, perhaps, so very surprising that the War at first seemed to me an infuriating personal interruption rather than a world-wide catastrophe. [...] What really mattered were not these public affairs, but the absorbing incidents of our own private lives – and now, suddenly, the one had impinged upon the other, and public events and private lives had become inseparable. (93, 98)

The consciousness of the intersection of public and private becomes critical for Brittain's narrative of her self, and the formation of her autobiography.

Brittain's desire to be a student at Oxford parallels Roland's quest – finally to be permitted to go to the front. She confronts the hurdles of Greek and mathematics exams and history essays in order to be accepted at Somerville, while Roland undergoes training and watches as his comrades are all shipped to France before him.

Although she cannot appreciate why Roland would want to go to the front, she finally decides to share his quest with him, leaving Oxford so she can nurse the wounded in London, and thus somehow share Roland's experience of the war once he is sent to France.

Vera Brittain became a nurse on June 27, 1915. She writes, "The same date, exactly ten years afterwards, was to be, for me, equally memorable. Between the one day and the other lies the rest of this book" (164). What would happen ten years later would be Brittain's marriage to a man she calls "G. ," an American academic named George Catlin. Weddings, as in a romance or comedy, are meant to act as instruments of reconciliation and renewal, and the beginning of a more ideal society. Brittain's narrative is framed by ceremony, a thwarted wedding that becomes a thwarted funeral, and a true wedding that functions simultaneously as a true funeral. The final wedding/funeral is necessary for Brittain to rejoin society and look to the future, and to find closure with the dead.

From the beginning, Brittain's proposed marriage to Roland is associated with death. When Roland is about to go to the front, during Passion Week, a time where Christians recall Christ's suffering, he says to his mother, "*Je suis fiancé; c'est la guerre!*" (135). Roland is linked to suffering, and his engagement is linked to the violence and death of the war. Roland was sent to France on March 31, 1915. He was killed on December 23, 1915, just as he was about to come home for Christmas leave. As Brittain waits in the days before Christmas for him to come, she daydreams about eloping with Roland, and even prays for a child:

> "Oh, God!" my half-articulate thoughts would run, "do let us get

> married and let me have a baby – something that is Roland's very own, something of himself to remember him by if he goes....It shan't be a burden to his people or mine for a moment longer than I can help, I promise. I'll go on doing war-work and give it all my pay during the War – and as soon as ever the War's over I'll go back to Oxford and take my Finals so that I can get a job and support it. So *do* let me have a baby, dear God!" (234)

The combination of Brittain's prayers and the Christmas season fill with sacred practice the pages describing the days before she learns of Roland's death. As Christmas Eve passes and Christmas Day arrives, she goes to church for the first time in two or three years, listening to the music and hearing the words of the service: "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Again, Roland is linked with Christ, and Brittain's anticipation of her lover's return is linked with Christ's death. Simultaneously, Roland's family is sharing Christmas dinner and holding a vigil waiting for his return: "In their dramatic, impulsive fashion, they drank a toast to the Dead" (236). Their action foreshadows, or highlights the absence of, the death ritual their son will not have.

The presence of death – and the hope of life and resurrection – are here in these pages, but the discovery that Roland has been killed comes as a shock to Brittain and destroys all hope in eternal life associated both with Christ and the romance:

> The expected message came to say that I was wanted on the telephone.

> Believing that I was at last to hear the voice for which I had waited for twenty-four hours, I dashed joyously into the corridor. But the message was not from Roland but from Clare; it was not to say that he had arrived home that morning, but to tell me that he had died of wounds at a Casualty Clearing Station on December 23rd. (236)

The toast to the Dead of Roland's family is as close to a funeral as their son will have, and that they will have.

This absence of ritual, of a space or process in which to give this death meaning, and to allow the mourners an opportunity for commemoration, gives Brittain a great deal of pain. Funeral practice is meant not merely for the dead but for the living. Brittain gathers the facts from those who had been in the trenches with Roland: "Gradually the circumstances of Roland's death, which at first I was totally unable to grasp, began to acquire coherence in my mind" (241). He had been shot while repairing some wiring in No-Man's-Land. His last words were, "Lying on this hillside for six days makes me very stiff" (242). He was buried in a military cemetery at Louvencourt.

It is crucial to Brittain to piece together the evidence in an attempt to create a narrative of the death, as she did not have the opportunity to have meaning created for her through her participation in a funeral. Brittain finally says, "That was all. There was no more to learn." Asking why, she thinks,

> Hardest to bear, perhaps, was the silence which must for ever repudiate that final question. The growing certainty that he had left no message for us to remember seemed so cruel, so baffling. [...] It

> seemed as though he had gone down to the grave consciously indifferent to all of us who loved him so much. [...] I knew I had learnt all that there was to know, and that in his last hour I had been quite forgotten. (244)

Brittain is left with her memories, but without a sense of meaning and without the opportunity for remembrance that comes from being able to mourn. The only way she can provide Roland's death with a sense of meaning, and thus find an end to grief for herself, is through the writing of her memoir.

After losing Roland, Brittain begins a new life in "a regular baptism of blood and pus," first as a nurse in Malta, then in a German Ward in France (375). Yet this is not the renewal she seeks; she finds that in the thought of another marriage. Ten years after her experiences during the war, and confronting another engagement, she thinks:

> So long, I knew, as I remained unmarried I was merely a survivor from the past – that wartime past into which all those whom I loved best had disappeared. To marry would be to dissociate myself from that past, for marriage inevitably brought with it a future. [...] Should I, then, submit myself to the pain of a future so completely out of tune with the past? Should I, who had once dedicated myself to the dead, assume yet further responsibilities to the living? (651)

Without the renewal that would be brought about by a wedding, and the closure which would come from a funeral, Brittain would never truly be in the land of

the living. It is necessary for her to revise what she believes a marriage would be – to transform it into a funeral – in order for her to proceed with the future. She writes

> I'll carry, not lilies nor white heather, but the tall pink roses with a touch of orange in their coloring and the sweetest scent in the world, that Roland gave me one New Year's Eve a lifetime ago. When the wedding is over, I'll give them to Roland's mother; I know G. will understand why.

In a letter to Brittain, G. concurs: "That it is I who shall stand there is but the end of a long story" (658-9). Brittain's interior practice of telling her own biography parallels the exterior practices she has created by reimagining her wedding. By combining the ceremonies of wedding and funeral – and perhaps even the ritual of testimony, of storytelling – she buries Roland, and releases herself from her past and her loss.

Vera Brittain uses ritual in Testament of Youth to come to terms with death; through her conflation of weddings and funerals she achieves the commemoration that other men's stories and a tale of a small military funeral at a provincial church could not provide. On and off the battlefield, before and after the war, ritual needed to be revised, even invented, in order to allow people to find meaning in death.

The transformation of the secular into the sacred, into the "special" space of ritual, provides a continuation of the revision of ritual we examined in the first chapter. These creations of ritual space reflect a need for meaning in the face of death. The novels of Virginia Woolf, works such as Jacob's Room (1922), Mrs Dalloway (1925), and To the Lighthouse (1927) are noted for their attempts to deal

with the violence and destruction of the war, the loss of "romance," as noted in A Room of One's Own.

In "The Death of the Moth" (1942), Woolf attempts to find meaning in death; written on the eve of the Second World War, and in the face of her own mental troubles and her suicidal drives of the time, it may be seen as an search for meaning in a world filled with death. Watching the moth fly around in the sunlight, the author is struck by its energy, its life-force: "He was little or nothing but life." She continues:

> Yet, because he was so small, and so simple a form of the energy that was rolling in at the open window and driving its way through so many narrow and intricate corridors in my own brain and in those of other human beings, there was something marvelous as well as pathetic about him. It was as if someone had taken a tiny bead of pure life and decking it as lightly as possible with down and feathers, had set it dancing and zig-zagging to show us the true nature of life. (Collected 360)

The moth is pure life, and in that is both wonderful and pathetic. Yet, it is life without meaning. The moth lives in and of and for itself, but with no real purpose, other than its own aliveness.

Just as remarkable – and pathetic – is the death of the moth. The author watches as the moth grows "tired by his dancing," becomes stiff and awkward, helpless. He lies on the windowsill and cannot right himself. Woolf writes, "It came over me that the failure and awkwardness were the approach of death" (Collected

360). The moth, like human beings themselves, dies in "failure and awkwardness," not for some great cause or in some heroic blaze of glory. We are reminded of Mansfield's fly, and the lost young man it signifies; in composing "The Death of the Moth," Woolf is confronting another war. In death there is effort and helplessness, exhaustion and uselessness, and then quiet and stillness. At the moment of the moth's death, she writes,

> Again, somehow, one saw life, a pure bead. [...] The unmistakable tokens of death showed themselves. The body relaxed, and instantly grew stiff. The struggle was over. The insignificant creature now knew death. As I looked at the dead moth, this minute wayside triumph of so great a force over so mean an antagonist filled me with wonder. Just as life had been strange a few minutes before, so death was now as strange. The moth having righted himself now lay most decently and uncomplainingly composed. O yes, he seemed to say, death is stronger than I am. (Collected 360)

The moth, given human qualities, reminds Woolf of humanity's own fruitless struggle against death. In a moment of mundanity she encounters death and realizes that the only meaning to life is life itself, life which must eventually be extinguished.

Woolf in her own life seemed to associate parties and death. The luncheon in A Room of One's Own is haunted by ghosts of the war; more than a decade before the war, as an unwilling participant with her sister in her half-brother's attempts to introduce her to society, she wrote in a letter to Emma Vaughan, "We can't shine in society. I don't know it's done. We ain't popular. We sit in corners and look like

mutes who are longing for a funeral" (qtd. in Nicolson 12). This awareness of death – in fact, the awareness that we are continually dying – is present and ritualized in Woolf's work. Numerous critical studies of Woolf address the use of meals and parties as sites for the ritual encounter with death in such novels as Mrs Dalloway and To the Lighthouse; however, critics for the most part have neglected such tropes in The Waves (1931).[1]

The germination of The Waves began with an episode of what Woolf calls "the horror," in a diary entry for 15 September 1926:

> Woke up perhaps at 3. Oh its beginning its coming – the horror – physically like a painful wave swelling about the heart – tossing me up. I'm unhappy unhappy! Down – God, I wish I were dead. Pause. But why am I feeling this? Let me watch the wave rise. I watch. Vanessa. Children. Failure. Yes; I detect that. Failure failure. (The wave rises). Oh they laughed at my taste in green paint! Wave crashes. I wish I were dead! I've only a few years to live I hope. I cant face this horror any more – (this is the wave spreading out over me). (Diary 110)

The index of this volume of Woolf's diary mentions the beginning of The Waves as being two weeks later; however, the dominant themes and metaphors of the novel are

[1] For example, Christopher Ames devotes considerable attention to Mrs Dalloway and the ways in which her party functions as a funeral, and as a site for the ritual encounter with death. In another discussion of death and mourning processes in Woolf's work, Mark Spilka studies the absence of mourning in Woolf's texts, the "futility" and "nullity" of grief (4), focusing particularly on To the Lighthouse. Mary Ann Caws provides a noteworthy exception; she does give consideration to meals as motifs in Woolf's work.

here, in the depths of Woolf's own despair, and her own encounter with both the desire for and horror of death.

The title of The Waves was originally The Moths, and it was to be a "very serious, mystical poetical work" (Diary 131). She describes the motif of the moth which, although abandoned for this book, would become important once again in "The Death of the Moth." Finally, "A man & a woman are to be sitting at table talking" (Diary 139). Despite Woolf's revision of much of her original idea for the book, the crucial symbol of the table – a site of communion and change – remains. The real is constantly made strange (Banfield 60); the table is a symbol of the real and quotidian, but also of communion and ritual.

In this novel, meals serve as a central space for the ritualization of death, particularly the idea of an endlessly recurring death. Louise Poresky notes that in The Waves, characters are "actually dying, emotionally and spiritually," and that the symbol of the waves functions to represent an eternal process of death and renewal (64). Meals as well continually recur throughout the novel in order to ritualize this eternal process. Woolf uses secular, everyday elements to create the death rituals that recur throughout her novel. As Barbara Myerhoff argues,

> The alternation between sacred and personal or secular elements in rituals is profoundly useful and common, endowing the particular nonrecurrent features with a transcendent quality, traditionalizing what is new and revivifying the timeless and collective elements by endowing them with deeply felt personal experiences. (130)

This timeless quality of the most mundane happenings is essential for Woolf. Death is endlessly recurrent, as represented by the waves and the cycles that are present throughout this "elegiac" novel (Banfield 53). The meals act as a sort of series of crests of the waves, moments of heightened sacred sensitivity, and moments of heightened awareness of mortality.

The Waves, a series of monologues delivered by six characters, is divided into nine parts. Each part corresponds to a stage of life both private and public, interior and social, much the same way ritual incorporates aspects of multiple elements: childhood, school life, college/young adulthood, adulthood/marriage, work/pregnancy, end of young adulthood, middle age, and finally old age and death. Notably, the middle section, section five, is preoccupied solely with the death of a heroic figure, Percival, a school friend of the characters Bernard, Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny, and Rhoda. In addition, each part corresponds to a moment in the day, beginning with dawn and moving towards night. Finally, each section is prefaced by a description of waves and the shore, a movement of tides and cycles which highlights significant themes and metaphors for the novel as a whole. The sea is a place of decay as well as renewal. Beginning with the third section, which is the section in which the characters become conscious of leaving childhood, a progression of decay is evident in these prefatory descriptions. This progression of images of decay and death correspond to the characters' growing awareness of their own mortality. However, these images are also juxtaposed against the images of the waves, which signify eternal renewal.

Furthermore, against these images there are working images of fissure and fusion. The ritual space is one of fusion. Woolf uses the opposition of fissure and fusion to show how her characters come apart and move together in and out of this space. These processes take place at meals, which in turn are used to commemorate death. Meals "are the gathering places of Woolf's tableaux, but [...] also serve as the conveners of the elements in memory [...] the unique and united moment" (253). Within the fictive space of the meals, the six characters come together – experience fusion – around the ritual encounter with death.

The first section begins with the characters' awareness of nature, and also of difference. This awareness of difference, the first fissure of one character from the other five, takes place at breakfast, a moment of beginning. Louis notices that the others have gone into breakfast without him. He thinks in his aloneness, "I am the stalk. My roots go down to the depths of the world, through earth dry with brick, and damp earth, through veins of lead and silver. I am all fibre" (11-12). This is one of the few times when a character is seen separate from the others while a meal is taking place, and it serves to heighten the knowledge that meals are a communal activity. To be excluded from the meal, or to exclude oneself, creates the consciousness that one is exiled from a community. Louis, for the moment outside the ritual space, feels himself entirely alone, and rooted in his aloneness. At the same time, however, he knows himself to be a fully living being.

The second meal in the first section, which takes place towards the end – in the afternoon, and towards the symbolic end of early childhood – is tea-time. During

this meal, in contrast to Louis' earlier meditation, Susan comes to an awareness of cycles, oppositions, and death that is barely articulated. She thinks

> I am not afraid of the heat, nor of the frozen winter. Rhoda dreams, sucking a crust soaked in milk; Louis regards the wall opposite with snail-green eyes; Bernard moulds his bread into pellets and calls them "people." Neville with his clean and decisive ways has finished. He has rolled his napkin and slipped it through the silver ring. Jinny spins her fingers on the table-cloth, as if they were dancing in the sunshine, pirouetting. But I am not afraid of the heat or of the frozen winter. (25-6)

Here we see each boy and girl much as they will remain through the course of the novel, and through their lives. In many ways they are each eternal, even as we see them change. In this moment of communion, during the meal, Susan is aware of her connection with the others. Yet at the same time she expresses a consciousness, possibly brought about through the ceremony of sharing a meal, that she does not fear death, which is represented by the demonic imagery of heat and ice.

In the next section, the six children go to school and meet Percival. Neville thinks, "He sees nothing; he hears nothing. He is remote from us all in a pagan universe. But look – he flicks his hand to the back of his neck. For such gestures one falls hopelessly in love for a lifetime" (35). In a way, all the characters fall in love with Percival, for he is their youth. This section is characterized by fusion, for in their love of Percival the six come together. The gesture to the back of the neck recurs throughout the novel, as does the kiss Jinny placed on Louis when they were

children, and the smell of violets. Such is the creation of memory, the attempt to give coherence to narrative. Memory is something all the characters share, and their memories are intertwined and reflect each other.

Observing Percival, Louis thinks,

> Look now, how everybody follows Percival. He is heavy. He walks clumsily down the field, through the long grass, to where the great elm trees stand. His magnificence is that of some mediaeval commander. A wake of light seems to lie on the grass behind him. Look at us trooping after him, his faithful servants, to be shot like sheep, for he will certainly attempt some forlorn enterprise and die in battle. (37)

Woolf alludes in the figure of Percival to the Arthurian knight, a pure fool, pure in heart. Although Percival is never given voice the way the other characters are, and we only come to know him in the slightest way through their comments, he becomes the center of their youth and all that is good about it. When later they mourn Percival they are mourning their youth, the loss of their own purity, innocence, and promise. Yet, as we shall see, Woolf also subverts some of this romance through the death of Percival.

The youth that the characters love in Percival will die. The slow, continuous process towards death and decay begins in section three, which opens with images of birds circling a scene of decay:

> Now glancing this side, that side, they looked deeper, beneath the flowers, down the dark avenues into the unlit world where the leaf rots and the flower has fallen. Then one of them, beautifully darting,

> accurately alighting, spiked the soft monstrous body of the defenseless worm, pecked again and yet again, and left it to fester. Down there among the roots where the flowers decayed, gusts of dead smells were wafted; drops formed on the bloated sides of swollen things. The skin of rotten fruit broke, and matter oozed to thick to run. (74-5)

Decay, and a sense of despair at the end of youth and purposelessness of life, characterize this section of the novel. Further, this is a section marked by a sense of fissure, and another of the few scenes of a character eating alone. Again, it is Louis. As he eats alone in a tea shop, he is conscious of decay and degradation. He thinks, "The circle is unbroken; the harmony complete. Here is central rhythm; here the common mainspring. I watch it expand, contract; and then expand again. Yet I am not included." The tea shop is filled with common humanity, people sharing a meal, but Louis is aware of his separateness. He continues: "What the fissure through which one sees disaster?" (94). The space of ritual is one of fusion, and Louis is not experiencing this. There is a gap where human connection should be, and in that gap is death. Rather than experiencing a moment where death is ritualized in a communal space, death is made present to Louis as disaster.

This sense of disaster prefigures the death of Percival. The dinner party in the next section is a farewell party for Percival on the eve of his departure for India. It is also his symbolic funeral. The section opens again with images of decay, this time tied directly to images of food, "the fumes and steams of the greasy kitchen vapour; the hot breath of mutton and beef; the richness of pastry and fruit; the damp shreds and peelings thrown from the kitchen bucket, from which a slow steam oozed on the

rubbish heap" (109). The joining of the images of food and decay signifies the presence of death within life, and the cyclical element of human existence which the novel ultimately puts forward.

This is a section characterized by fusion, as all the characters come together for a farewell dinner for Percival. Neville thinks, "This table, these chairs, this metal vase with its three red flowers are about to undergo an extraordinary transformation. [...] Things quiver as if not yet in being" (118). The fictive space is marked by "specialness," by something outside the ordinary that transforms it into a ritual space. Bernard thinks,

> But here and now we are together. We have come together, at a particular time, to this particular spot. We are drawn into this communion by some deep, some common emotion. Shall we call it, conveniently, "love"? Shall we say "love of Percival" because Percival is going to India? No, that is too small, too particular a name. We cannot attach the width and spread of our feelings to so small a mark. (126)

Each character is aware of the bond that holds the group together, and of what they are learning about their lives and each other from this ritual experience. As Rhoda says, "These moments of departure start always in your presence, from this table" (139). The table is always present, the "your," all her friends, themselves always present as well.

And death is always present, making this farewell dinner a funeral. The section ends with Neville thinking, "Now Percival is gone" (147); the next section

begins with him thinking, "He is dead" (151). At dinner, Louis thinks, "Death is woven in with the violets. [...] Death and again death" (141). Violets, which signify love but whose scent fades quickly, suggest the deep love and fading of youth that comes with Percival's death. As Laertes says in Hamlet as he buries Ophelia, "From her fair and unpolluted flesh/May violets spring!" (5.1). Percival's death is foreshadowed by Louis here through the violets. That death comes to pass and is remembered with violets by Rhoda in the fifth section: "This is my tribute to Percival; withered violets, blackened violets" (161). As the fresh violets mark youth and beauty, the dying violets symbolize the end of Percival, and of the end the characters must look to for themselves.

Percival's death is the beginning of the end of life. The six survivors feel themselves aging and decaying as Percival stays young in their memories. The romance of youth ends in the anti-romance death of Percival. While he is named for the hero who sought immortality through his quest for the Holy Grail, Woolf's Percival is unheroic in his death, an anti-romantic figure. In our world, quests and searches for immortality must fail; there can be no thwarting of death. In this Woolf also creates the kind of subversion of romance we saw in Huxley's work. Percival dies in the most unheroic, unromantic way. Neville says, "He is dead. He fell. His horse tripped. He was thrown" (151). This is not an epic or poetic or romantic death. This is a death brought to us by telegram, in choppy, prosaic sentences, a prosaic death.

An ordinary death with no explicit funeral practice: Bernard, observing a world without Percival, says, "This is my funeral service. We have no ceremonies,

only private dirges, only violent sensations, each separate" (157). Again, this section is characterized by fissure. Each character deals with Percival's death alone. There is no coming together, no funeral, no corpse to mourn. They experience the loss of Percival without a communion among themselves. As Madeline Moore writes, "Community is experienced symbolically or in moments of ecstatic longing. These moments alternate with the neverending experience of social alienation" (240). All they have is the memory of the last time they were all together, sharing a meal in a dinner that becomes the only funeral they can have for Percival. This is the purpose of funerals: people die; their loss is felt; people come together to mourn, and in the communal acknowledgement of loss they feel a bond, a unity together. They are all missing a piece. However, that loss makes them feel all the more connected and part of something, and so they all realize that they are a piece of a larger whole. Yet here a death only reminds them all that they are *not* parts of something, that everything is breaking apart, that nothing is real because everything falls away and nothing stays together.

This separation among the characters continues through the next two sections. As the sun sinks lower in the sky, and day becomes late afternoon and evening, the characters are alone in their lives. Bernard says, "This is my funeral service." It is the only service he gets to have for Percival, but it is also his own funeral service; the moment of his own death, and the death of his friends comes ever closer. Thus in section eight, the penultimate section, they come together again for a moment of fusion – another meal, their own funeral. This is the last section in which all the characters are together. In a sense, it is in this section that they die, and this meal is

their death ritual. In this section, the sun sinks lower, the corn is cut (207). It is a time of harvest and preparing for death, an autumnal time.

The six have reached middle age. Neville asks what they feel, "before we break these rolls, and help ourselves to fish and salad"; the answer is "Sorrow" (211). Bernard notes, "It was different once. Once we could break the current as we chose. How many telephone calls, how many post cards, are now needed to cut this hole through which we come together, united, at Hampton Court?" (216). He worries over a perceived failure of communication. Yet, simultaneously, Hampton Court, the restaurant where they meet, is a space where transformation is possible through the ritual of the meal. Louis says, "But where is death tonight? All the crudity, odds and ends, this and that, have been crushed like glass splinters into the blue, the red-fringed tide, which drawing into the shore, fertile with innumerable fish, breaks at our feet" (231). This is their last meeting, a sacred act against a death that it is as inevitable and continuous as the tide. Louis evokes the ocean, a symbol of decay and also of renewal and life. This image, and the ritual in which they all participate, alters the awareness of death into a transformative knowledge.

There is a funeral for Rhoda, whose death is revealed in the final section, but which is a funeral for them all. In the final section, Bernard's final monologue, which occupies the entire section, is a final attempt to tell the story that has been continually told since youth by many voices. He seeks coherence, while recognizing that there can be no coherence, and no ultimate meaning. The only meaning, as we saw in the life and death of the moth, is life and death itself.

Bernard thinks back over his life: his marriage, his first child. He says, "Into this crashed death – Percival's. [...] But for pain words are lacking. There should be cries, cracks, fissures" (263). These moments of epiphany must be fused and ritualized, and this cannot happen through words, through the construction of one man's narrative. Bernard realizes, "Life withers when there are things we cannot share" (265). It is in communion with others, not with his "phrases," that he achieves understanding and cohesion. With this knowledge, he resolves: "Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!" (297).

The Waves employs a multitude of metaphors, constructing a fictive space wherein the processes of the ritualization of the death encounter may be created. As the characters pass from youth to old age, they are constantly reminded: Remember you must die. Rilke, in the Duino Elegies (begun in 1912 and finished in 1922), writes of the experience of existing on the threshold between life and death:

> that's how we live
>
> always
>
> saying goodbye. (Eighth Elegy, 76)

We live in the liminal space between life and death, and we are always there. We are always confronting our own death. This awareness is conveyed by Woolf in an endless *ricorso* of epiphanies. She wrote in her diary after attending Thomas Hardy's funeral, "Over all this broods for me, some uneasy sense, of change, & mortality, & and how partings are deaths" (Diary 174). The encounter with mortality is ritualized through moments of communion, moments of breaking apart and coming together.

Ritual space is where disparate elements are fused. However, in spaces where this process fails, the elements break apart. Energy is still produced, but the transformation takes place in the absence of a fully synthesized sacred process of mourning.

Chapter Three: Necessary Morbidities: Funeral Rituals, Ritual Failures in the 1930s

Narrating equals living.

–Todorov (73)

I've got rather a turn for corpses.

– Lord Peter Wimsey (Sayers, Unpleasantness 27)

Representations of death – and of failed death ritual – become key tropes to examine what is seen as a loss of meaning: in the violence of murder mysteries, in the domestic brutality and fatal sacrifices in Ivy Compton-Burnett's novels, in the cold irony in the poetry of Stevie Smith, and in the epic displays of futile mortality dramatized in W. H. Auden's works. The thwarted deployment of funeral practice in these texts force a revaluation of the processes of finding meaning.

Death is everywhere in the thirties; it permeates a generation too young to have fought in the Great War, but who will live with its aftermath, as we saw particularly in the parties, and the representation of youth, in the previous chapter. The carnage and destruction of the Great War is part of collective memory. Death and fear of violence is part of the collective present, a "pall of death which had hung so sorrowful, stagnant, and static over Britain between 1918 and 1939" (Cannadine 233). Death becomes a key trope to examine what is seen as a loss of meaning. Valentine Cunningham writes:

> The '30s – it was a common allegation – was extraordinarily possessed by death. Nobody, of course, was so naïve as to suppose earlier periods hadn't also had their necessary morbidities. [...] But it is at least arguable that the consciousness of no period – not even the medieval and Reformation mind, soaked in the Last Things of Christian doctrine – had been so taken up with death as was the imagination of the '30s. [...] The period's writers address death, they sing about it, they offer it overtures, they dance with it, they visit funerals, they make journeys to wars, they watch dying and killing. [...] Death comes constantly to the '30s pen, and in every kind of guise. (British 57)

What "necessary morbidities" is Cunningham referring to? These are the processes in which people engage when they attempt to deal with death and to find meaning. In every possible way, authors of the period address death, through various actions, through rhetorical and textual modes, through gesture and imagination. In the face of death, they seek to narrate life; and, through the endless production of language, of texts, these authors hunt meaning.

Authors of the 30s sought to control death in a myriad of ways through texts, and through fictive ritual within those texts, because there was no other way to control, interpret, understand, or come to terms with death. For example, think of the death of Miss Runcible, another bright young thing in Evelyn Waugh's novel Vile Bodies (1930). Like the bright young things of Henry Green's novel Party-Going, she encounters death; here, it is her own. After suffering a dreadful car accident

while racing, Miss Runcible goes into delirium and finally, just before a nameless war is declared, dies in an asylum. For the duration of her illness she is lost in an endless nightmare of cars, going around and around with no destination and no purpose until they crash, symbolic of a life without meaning that can only end in a pointless and violent death. Waugh referred to the failure of meaning in death earlier in a biography of Rossetti: "The corpse has become the marionette. With bells on its fingers and wires on its toes it is jigged about to a 'period dance' of our own piping; and who is not amused?" (12). In the poetry of the Great War the corpse was sacred and worthy of respect as forces around the body brought destruction upon it. However, for Waugh – and for other post-war writers – death is a jig, the corpse is a toy.

Significantly, Waugh's novel ends in another pointless war, the war that most of the 30s generation spent the whole decade waiting for. The men and women who were too young to remember the Great War lived in its shadow throughout their young adulthood, while simultaneously living under a different shadow, a cloud of fear that war would come again. John Lehmann, at the conclusion of a poem entitled "As the Day Burns On" (1934), writes:

> How splendid a texture, but woven so thin in places
> Tearing to gape on darkness, gulfs of cold,
> Where a white-cheeked mother holds by flaring windows
> Her ulcered child in arms of ice,
> And boys in shuddering shadows of the planes
> Stray numb beyond the stab of hope's imposture,

When sudden ambulances clang returning

From blood-wet streets and cries that rack a suburb,

Or telegrams report

A sentry's death by sniping on the frontier,

The jealousy of empires howling vengeance

And dense behind barbed wire the guns and helmets. (32-3)

Lehmann speaks of a society once splendid, now rent – its "thunder of trains," "electric blaze of squares," "ovens for roasted nuts and sweet-smelling trays of fruit," "posters of new circuses and films" (32). As Louis MacNeice would do in his later poem Autumn Journal, Lehmann sees violence and the possibility – even the inevitability – of war beneath the details of everyday life. "As the Day Burns On" is about the Great War, but was written as postwar conflict spread across Europe. War finally came, first in Spain. Spain was a multivalent symbol for many writers of the 1930s, a way to participate in war for those who had been too young for the Great War. It was a way to act on political commitments, to make a grand and heroic gesture on the part of the Left, to strike a blow against Fascism. It was also a way of realizing the inevitable. War had to come; violence was all.

This shadow of impending war hung over everything. In his memoir Enemies of Promise (1938), Cyril Connolly, aged thirty-five (an old man among thirties writers), comments, "My own predicament is – how to live another ten years. [...] Another way to keep alive is not to get killed" (17). Not getting killed was on the minds of many at the time: "This necessity of choosing between the perils of war and physical extermination and the dangers of an ostrich peace and spiritual stagnation,

between physical death and moral death is another predicament" (Connolly 17). One does not have the choice not to die; one can only choose *how* one will die.

Political choice is cast in terms of having to choose one's own death, an interwar Scylla and Charybdis. This choice could only result in violence; there would be no escape. As George Orwell writes at the end of Homage to Catalonia, (1938),

> Down here it was still the England I had known in my childhood: the railway-cuttings smothered in wild flowers, the deep meadows where the great shining horses browse and meditate, the slow-moving streams bordered by willows, the green bosoms of the elms, the larkspurs in the cottage gardens; and then the huge peaceful wilderness of outer London, the barges on the miry river, the familiar streets, the posters telling of cricket matches and Royal weddings, the men in bowler hats, the pigeons in Trafalgar Square, the red buses, the blue policeman – all sleeping the deep, deep sleep of England, from which I sometimes fear that we shall never wake till we are jerked out of it by the roar of bombs. (232)

Orwell begins by thinking of peace, a landscape that encompasses the countryside and the city with equal nostalgia for a time of tranquility, unmarred by strife and violence. Yet the dash at the end of the long sentence, a sentence which seems to flow along like memory itself, punctuates the reverie. We are ourselves jerked out of Orwell's thought by the prophecy of war. Anticipation of war, of mass destruction on a grand scale, characterized the period; the preoccupation with individual death, with

the concept of death reflected the awareness of the possibility of, once again, the vast carnage of war.

As Janet Montefiore argues, the process of constructing memory, of writing the self as a historical subject, characterizes much thirties writing. The attempt to give meaning to individual life, to structure the narrative of an individual life by connecting it to the narrative of history, and thus to try to make some sense of the forces acting on both, is revealed in Louis MacNeice's poem Autumn Journal (1938). MacNeice described his project to his editor at Faber and Faber, T. S. Eliot, as follows:

> Not strictly a journal but giving the tenor of my intellectual & emotional experiences during that period. It is about nearly everything which from first-hand experience I consider significant. [...] It contains rapportage, metaphysics, ethics, lyrical emotion, autobiography, nightmare. [...] I think this is my best work to date; it is both a panorama and a confession of faith. (qtd. in Stallworthy 232-33)

MacNeice sought to juxtapose his personal biography and the story of the public world happening around him through his own lifewriting:

> And when we go out into Piccadilly Circus
> They are selling and buying the late
> Special editions snatched and read abruptly
> Beneath the electric signs as crude as Fate.
> And the individual, powerless, has to exert the

Powers of will and choice

And choose between enormous evils, either

Of which depends on somebody else's voice.

The cylinders are racing in the presses,

The mines are laid,

The ribbon plumbs the fallen fathoms of Wall Street,

And you and I are afraid. (128)

Here he seeks to construct and give meaning to his own narrative, and to the political and historical narrative happening simultaneously. By examining and re-examining his own biography, the speaker attempts to situate himself in a history that seems to be moving inexorably, carrying him on its tide. The presses race, creating history immediately and ephemerally. However, the poet tries to create his own history. It may be futile but he does not fully accept the history imposed upon him. He seeks to assert his own voice, his own biographical, confessional, storytelling voice, not succumb to "somebody else's voice."

Texts such as MacNeice's Autumn Journal, the explosion of thirties memoirs, the endless self-reflection and self-revision of these authors indicates a need to find meaning in an individual life in the face of history, as Montefiore has pointed out. Yet this attempt to write and interpret the individual life in the thirties was intertwined with the need to understand death. Cunningham's comment about "necessary morbidities" raises the issue of the necessity of dealing with death. It is significant that the periods that most come to mind for him as a literary historian as fixated on death are the Middle Ages and the Reformation. These may be, as

Philippe Ariès has argued, the last time death had true meaning as a crucial moment in a human biography. Death was crucial to narrative, to recall Walter Benjamin. Life was narrativized through death. Death provided the form, the structure, the meaning, the interpretation of a life: "Narrating equals living" (Todorov 73). Ariès describes this as the "close relationship established between death and the biography of each individual life. [...] It was also believed that his attitude at that moment would give his biography its final meaning, its conclusion" (Western 38); he continues to claim that this belief brought about "the individual's knowledge of his own biography. [...] Death became the occasion when man was most able to reach an awareness of himself" (Western 45-6). However, Ariès contrasts this earlier time with the modern era, saying that "death, despite the apparent continuity of themes and ritual, became challenged and was furtively pushed out of the world of familiar things" (Western 105).

In contrast, in the 1930s we see death permeating the world of familiar things, the world of the "practical consciousness," to return to the words of Anthony Giddens. What is more, as Cunningham writes, this permeation is "necessary." Yet whether that transformative moment exists remains an open question as we examine diverse texts from the period. Cunningham provides an important counterargument to Ariès; he points out that authors struggled with language in order to come to terms with death. There is a proliferation, an abundance, of language about death in the 1930s, what Davies calls "words against death" (1), as though the creation of texts would take the place of the failure of the creation of biography – and individual meaning – in the face of death.

In some cases, as in the work of Dorothy L. Sayers – dramatist, writer of detective fiction, translator of Dante – the text becomes not simply "words against death," not simply a proliferation of language about death, but the text becomes a space where mortuary ceremony itself takes place. If we can accept that this may be composed of the secular and personal, as we have seen, and if meaning is made in the fictive space of the text, then we may consider as ritual detective fiction, and the processes and performances of detection. We may also consider how these practices become rituals of death, as fictional detectives seek to bring meaning to murder.

It seems to be a commonplace among those who write about detective fiction that the 1930s were a "Golden Age" for the genre. In their book on the interwar period The Long Week-End, Robert Graves and Alan Hodge write:

> In Great Britain, though a few score murders and acts of grand larceny take place every year, not more than two or three of these had features in the least interesting to the criminologist as regards either motive or method. [...] Yet from the middle Twenties onward some thousands of detective novels were annually published, all of them concerned with extra-ordinary and baffling crimes, and only a very small number gave the police the least credit for the solution. These books were designed not as realistic accounts of crime, but as puzzles to test the reader's acuteness in following up disguised clues. It is safe to say that not one in a hundred showed any first-hand knowledge of the elements that composed them – police organization, the coroner's

> court, finger-prints, firearms, poison, the laws of evidence – and not one in a thousand had any verisimilitude. The most fanciful and unprofessional stories (criminologically speaking) were the most popular. (300-1).

Death, particularly violent death, is present throughout texts of the thirties, detective fiction being only one example. However, only in British 1930s detective novels is death so highly regulated. Death has rules in detective fiction, rules of the game and ethical rules. As death came to be seen as having problematized meaning, or no meaning at all, meaning through rules and ritual could be discovered in detective fiction, which perhaps may account for its popularity.

The regulation of death in detective fiction is a response to the violence of the postwar world. Violence, the kind of violence that writers of the 1930s might have witnessed in their youth, the kind of violence described by many 1930s memoirists, is given order and resolution in these novels. The detective stories of the thirties follow a very specific pattern, with highly structured rules; These rules were actually codified by the Detection Club in 1928, a group of writers founded by, among others, Dorothy L. Sayers. These rules include: the criminal must be mentioned early on, the detective may not be the criminal, the supernatural must be ruled out, and the solution may not be presented through accident. The Detection Club even had its own oath: to "well and truly detect the crimes presented to them without reliance on Divine Revelation, Feminine Intuition, Mumbo-Jumbo, Jiggery-Pokery, Coincidence, or the Act of God" (qtd. in Symons 2).

I propose that the regulated form of these stories comes from the ritualized nature of the fiction. These stories put forth a way of sacralizing death. The purposes behind these death rituals are to escape the mystery and chaos of death, and come to the order of meaning through narrative. Detective novels are worth examining in a study of the thirties because they provide a view of the "negotiations," to use Stuart Hall's terminology, that readers and writers were making with what might have appeared to be a dominant, global momentum towards violence. The ceremony of ratiocination in detective fiction functions as an act of faith that order can be found and arranged into a meaningful narrative pattern.

The characteristics of funeral ritual include placing the dead and the survivors into a liminal state until the performance is completed, putting each in its proper place. Mortuary acts, such as wakes and eulogies, and the writing of epitaphs, are meant to commemorate, to create memory, and thus to give meaning through narrative. Funeral rituals depend on the presence of the corpse. As Valentine Cunningham has pointed out, there is quite a lot of "corpse-mongering" (British 71) in these novels; Peter Wimsey, amateur detective and aristocrat, says, "I've got rather a turn for corpses" (Unpleasantness 27). Finally, mourning gestures provide closure. Fictive detection processes place the survivors in an uncertain, liminal state, and then restore the survivors at the conclusion. The methods of detection provide meaning, they provide narrative, and finally they provide closure. All of these elements of funeral ritual are present in the detection processes in the fiction of Dorothy L. Sayers, whose novels Clouds of Witness (1927) and The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club (1928) will be examined here.

Death begins as a mystery, one of the great mysteries confronting the human condition. Part of the nature of humanity is being forced to live with a consciousness of death, and the fact that death can never be known. Yet detective fiction is dedicated to eradicating the mystery of death: "Everything mysterious that it introduces, it makes coherent" (Caillois, "Detective" 10). There is complete faith on the part of the detective that if rules are followed, order will emerge, and meaning will be found.

These revelations come as the result of the highly ritualized nature of the fiction. W. H. Auden, himself an avid detective-fiction fan (he called it an "addiction like tobacco or alcohol" (Dyer's 146)), argues that detective fiction provides a ritual whereby "harmony between the aesthetic and the ethical" is restored, and atonement and order is brought back to the small society in which the murder had taken place; the detective is the agent through which this occurs (Dyer's 152). Our ability to control certain situations may be limited, our ability to control death is limited, but in detective fiction we are permitted access to understanding our limitations through the agency of the detective. The rules of this ritual, like others, according to Kenneth Burke, bring together a variety of levels of symbolic action: physical, in the examination of the corpse and clues; personal and familiar, in the roles the various participants play and the importance of the mundane; and abstract or ethical, in the determination of the worth of individual life and the making of meaning..

Jacques Barzun has written that the physical world, in addition to the aesthetic and the ethical, is key to the ritual of detective fiction, for it is only through the physical world that mystery is revealed ("Detection" 11). Yet, he continues, "an

exact measure of levity in detection shows the master's hand for [...] the true tone of the genre springs from the alliance of murder and mirth. The laughter is a touch sardonic and must never degenerate into hilarity. The joke of death is on us" ("Detection" 22-3). Sayers uses mirth, through the character of Peter Death Bredon Wimsey. "Death" is an actual name, of Scottish or Irish origin, normally pronounced "Deeth," but here it acquires a highly symbolic meaning, as does the name "Bredon"; the latter may be an echo of A. E. Housman's poem "Bredon Hill," which itself addresses a highly idealized death:

> [...]
> But when the snows at Christmas
> On Bredon top were strown,
> My love rose up so early
> And stole out unbeknown
> And went to church alone.
>
> They tolled the one bell only,
> Groom there was none to see,
> The mourners followed after,
> And so to church went she,
> And would not wait for me. (43)

This romantic death is ironic considering Peter Wimsey's profession – the uncovering of sordid motive and violent death. Death is joined with "Wimsey," or whimsy, in a way similar to the linking of death and the harlequin figure in the poetry of the

Sitwells. Sayers' stories are, in the words of Robert Kuhn McGregor, "conundrums for the long week-end." But more than puzzles, these novels are sacralized gestures. Lord Peter Wimsey is, therefore, the agent of revelation and reconciliation. He is discussed by Robert Dunn in terms of "whimsical vision": "a paradoxical recognition of human limitation within historical existence and of human access to a transforming spiritual reality that revalues and (if allowed) reshapes all one's endeavors" (202). In Sayers' work, comedy, and restoration, come from a reconciliation of paradoxes, of competing elements, within the ritual space.

In addition to her detective fiction, Dorothy Sayers wrote many popular and critically acclaimed religious dramas. In 1937, she composed The Zeal of Thy House for the Canterbury Festival, the same event for which T. S. Eliot had written Murder in the Cathedral two years earlier. Other plays by Sayers, including He That Should Come (1938) and The Man Born to be King (1942), were produced for the BBC; they were noted for employing colloquial language and modern dialects (as did her translations of Dante). All of Dorothy Sayers' work, both her fiction and her religious drama, rely heavily on ritual, yet these rituals are situated in the everyday world.

The awareness of ritual present in her drama is clear in her earlier texts. Sayers' fiction takes place within a highly ritualized space, not simply those rituals involving death, but a variety of rituals signifying that the reader is entering a transformative fictive space. In Clouds of Witness, Wimsey's brother the Duke of Denver is accused of murdering his sister's fiancé, Dennis Cathcart. First, the Duke endures an inquest, itself a legal ritual necessary for constructing meaning and

interpretation, and maintaining social order. As a result of the inquest, the Duke is charged with murder. As a peer, he is placed on trial in the House of Lords, as is his right. Here secular and legal ritual replaces the death ritual necessary to uncover the meaning behind Cathcart's death. Sayers writes:

> Then the peers, two by two, beginning with the youngest baron. Garter King-of-Arms, very hot and bothered, fussed unhappily around the three hundred or so British peers who were sheepishly struggling into their robes, while the heralds did their best to line up the assembly and keep them from wandering away when once arranged. [...]
>
> The Certiorari and Return followed in a long, sonorous rigmarole, which, starting with George the Fifth by the Grace of God, called upon all the Justices and Judges of the Old Bailey, enumerated the Lord Mayor of London, the Recorder, and a quantity of assorted aldermen and justices, skipped back to our Lord the King, roamed about the City of London, Counties of London and Middlesex, Essex, Kent, and Surrey, mentioned our late Sovereign Lord King William the Fourth, branched off to the Local Government Act one thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight, lost its way in a list of all treasons, murders, felonies and misdemeanors by whomsoever and in what manner soever done, committed or perpetrated and by whom or to whom, when, how and after what manner and of all other articles and circumstances concerning the premises and every one of them and any of them in any

> manner whatsoever, and at last, triumphantly, after reciting the names of the whole Grand Jury, came to the presentation of the indictment with a sudden, brutal brevity. (Clouds 221)

As Lord Attenbury says, "Of all the farces!" (Clouds 219). The elements of this ritual include components speaking to national identity, the past of the nation and society, and legality.

However, this highly ritualized sequence is undercut by the lies the Duke tells, and becomes meaningless. The secular performances of the inquest and trial are replaced by the new, composite, secular ritual of detection with its elaborate rules, composed of Wimsey's show and gestures of aristocrat-about-town/intellectual/ chattering imbecile who says things like, "Poor old Gerald arrested for murder. Uncommonly worryin' for him, poor chap" (Clouds 3). Although Wimsey appears to be completely helpless, dependent on his servant, he plays a highly active role in the case. He flies across the Atlantic – in 1927, a risky trip, the same year as Lindbergh's trip – to find evidence to save his brother. Much of his behavior is pure spectacle designed to distract attention from the work of detection he is doing; his physical, surface performance is joined with necessary deeper ethical action. Further, the ritual depends, as so many rituals do, on an awareness and utilization of the material world, on physicality. Only the ritual of detection undertaken by Wimsey on his brother's behalf reveals the truth, reconstructs events, and restores the family and the small society of the aristocracy so shaken by the crime.

In The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club, mortuary custom is more explicit, yet even more meaningless as the processes of detection come to take the place of and

serve as true funeral ritual. The club becomes a fictive space where ritual is very important, and the whole novel is suffused with the memory of the Great War. The novel begins on Armistice Day, a day characterized by public gestures commemorating death. There are Armistice dinners, themselves a species of funeral, albeit a corpseless one; men and women are wearing the memorial poppy. Already we are aware of the presence of death, the importance of death rituals. The Bellona Club is described as a morgue, a funeral parlor, full of corpses (Unpleasantness 1). Bellona was the Roman goddess of war, and these old men, and the Great War veterans that come to the club, are the living dead. When General Fentiman is discovered dead in his armchair at the club, his nephew shrieks out, "He's been dead two days! So are you! So am I! We're all dead and we never noticed it!" (Unpleasantness 4). Without fulfilled death ritual, the relationship between the living and the dead cannot be differentiated; the survivors need the ritual to remove them from the liminal state of those left behind. As Wimsey's investigation commences, the lives of those left behind are in chaos, in-between. Further, the public death of General Fentiman provides a *memento mori* to all those present. Sayers writes, "The planet's tyrant, dotard Death, had held his gray mirror before them for a moment and shown them the image of things to come" (Unpleantness 7). Mirrors signify the vanity of life, and are emblems of the revelation of painful truth (Richardson 27). Thus the case must be solved; it is Wimsey's duty to the living and to the dead so that life may continue.

Only the ritual of detection functions as the true ritual of death. The case in The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club hinges on the time of General Fentiman's

death and the unrelated death of his sister, both having occurred within a short time of each other, and both victims having left problematic wills behind. If the General had died even a moment before his sister, his sister's companion would inherit the bulk of the estate, while the General's nephews Robert and George would have received a pittance. If the General died any time after his sister, the companion and George receive very little, while Robert receives a fortune.

First it is discovered that Robert found the General's body at the club before everyone else did. While everyone was outside observing the two-minute Armistice Day silence, Robert secreted the body in a cabinet to be removed later, in order to disguise the time of death to ensure his own inheritance. Wimsey believed that something was wrong with the body when he realized the leg of the corpse had been bent and moved, circumventing the process of rigor mortis. He also noticed that the General was not wearing his poppy, leading him to conclude that the General actually had died the night before. In this way, the physicality of the body is crucial to understanding and reconstructing the crime; as Barzun writes, the "corpseside manner," the awareness of the body, is crucial; physicality is key to meaning (Energies 314). The body – the corpse – is a clue. Not simply a carcass, it has signification.

Next, the commemoration of the Armistice Day silence is thwarted – another failure of death ritual, a failed burial, a travesty of a funeral – the body is stuffed into a cabinet instead of being seen off with a proper ritual. Next, it is determined that it is necessary to exhume the body to discover whether General Fentiman was poisoned – the reversal of a burial. As the body is removed from the coffin the autopsy is

performed, with the doctors keeping a running commentary of observations of body parts. This procedure echoes the horrors of exhumation and dissection in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries described by Ruth Richardson: "Dissection represented a gross assault upon the integrity and identity of the body *and* upon the repose of the soul, each of which – in other circumstances – would have been carefully fostered" (76). Here, again, is a failed burial.

However, General Fentiman's funeral ritual had to fail, for he had been the victim of a violent death. Only the practice of detection could give the meaning and narrative his death needed. What allows for the restoration of a true funeral is the detection process undertaken by Peter Wimsey. By fitting together the elements of the crime to arrive at the true events, meaning is given to General Fentiman's death. Wimsey deduces that the General's own doctor was responsible; the doctor had planned to marry the companion and share in her inheritance. He could not wait for General Fentiman to die naturally. Therefore, greed and the idea that an individual life is worthless meet the ethical problem of murder and the belief that life is significant.

Through the ritual of detection, Wimsey re-establishes the ethical point that all life is worthwhile, and that individual life and death should have meaning. In this way, the ritual of detection that provides this meaning becomes a true death ritual. The dead man is finally allowed to have his proper place, and the survivors are restored to their lives and permitted to move on. As long as the death had remained unresolved, time could not go forward and community was threatened. By removing the perpetrator and constructing a narrative of the crime, order and meaning are

restored. This, then, is the nature of Sayers' "whimsical vision," and the vision of ritual. Further, the detective literature of the 1930s and its popularity serve to show how readers negotiated the violence wrought by the Great War and the chaos of postwar life.

Yet sometimes the creation of meaning, and the creation of the transformative moment, the moment of change and fusion described by Clifford Geertz (113), does not happen. The rituals of Ivy Compton-Burnett, Stevie Smith, and W. H. Auden are, in the words of Ronald Grimes (borrowing from J. L. Austin's How to Do Things with Words), infelicitous (Ritual 204). In Compton-Burnett's novels, the ritual is marred by misframing, wherein a ritual takes place – that of sacrifice – but it is the wrong kind, and thus an infelicitous performance. There is a failure to produce an appropriate atmosphere within the ritual space in Stevie Smith's poems. In Auden, there is an infelicitous "gloss": the funerals of the play are used to disguise the meaningless of the proceedings, rather than to create meaning. These rituals do not do what they are meant to, and fail.

In the work of Ivy Compton-Burnett, the impulse towards reconciliation is overtaken by the ritual urge towards sacrificial violence. This, and the rituals that arise from it, are meant to preserve difference and power, rather than create the kind of *communitas* described by Victor Turner.[1]

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[1] *Communitas* results from participants in ritual coming together as they move through the space of betweenness or becoming that is the liminal space of ritual, from the common-sense world to the ritual world and back again (V. Turner 96).

However, it is not the creation of *communitas* that concerns Compton-Burnett, but violence and the stasis of a world without ritual alteration. Instead, there is the preservation of a rigid order and difference through sacrifice. Alison Light sees Compton-Burnett's "fiction as speaking directly to the reshaping of English cultural life after the war" (24). This is life, both within the fictive space of the novels and for so many English people after the Great War, including Compton-Burnett herself, that never came to terms with death, with the violent sacrifice that was the war. The devastation of the First World War, and the fear of a possible Second, color Compton-Burnett's novels, as do the preoccupations with death and power we have seen already which so permeated the post-World War One period. Ivy's sister Vera said, "Ivy lived rather under the shadow of death" (qtd. in Spurling 100). The family was destroyed by death, first the death of her father, then the death of two beloved brothers, one from disease and one from the Great War, then finally the suicide of two sisters (some believe to escape their older sister Ivy's tyranny). The children from the moment of their father's death in 1901, when Ivy was sixteen, were never out of mourning. The youngest were made to wear black, kiss their dead father's photograph and weave daisy chains for his grave in remembrance. Even after Ivy no longer had to wear mourning for her father, she continued to wear black for her brothers' deaths. When her last brother Noel was killed in battle, all she could say was, "There is no ordinary comfort, you see" (qtd. in Spurling 229). In her life as in her novels, death was so everpresent, so raw, as to resist all attempts at ritualization.

The rituals of death and reconciliation in novels such as More Women Than Men (1933) fail because they are pure show, because the gestures themselves have no

integrity and the rules are not followed. Relationships among the participants, and between participants and the outside world, go unchanged. Weddings fail because they are funerals, and funerals fail because they are sacrifices. There is no transformation, only a preservation of static power. None of the participants follow the rules, none perform within the ritual space without looking outside that sacred moment and drawing attention through asides and murmurings and half-references to almost forgotten truths and rumors, to the lies and hypocrisy that cannot be obliterated. There is, in the words of Theodore Jennings, a failure of "ritual knowledge," knowledge "gained through the alteration of that which is known" (116).

In the fictive space of Compton-Burnett's novel, themselves constructed as dramas, mortuary performances of closure and commemoration lead into and are accompanied by rituals of reconciliation. A community may be disrupted by a death, but the opportunity is provided to resolve the disruption, restoring the *communitas* of the fictive space. However, these resolutions and restorations never take place. The fictive space is constantly, violently disrupted, and never fully restored. The meaning of the ritual dissolves in the gaps between the said and the unsaid, the purpose of the performance and the reality of the participants.

Rituals may provide closure, commemoration, conciliation but they may also be used to preserve order. As René Girard has argued, ritual violence is necessary to preserve the order predicated on distinctions which are present in any society. He claims that violent sacrifice is necessary to keep participants from perpetrating violence one another (4). This speaks directly to Ivy Compton-Burnett's experience of the Great War, and to the sometimes physical but more often psychological

violence that permeates her texts. The title of More Women Than Men is an abbreviation of a nineteenth-century song (a song quoted by Stephen Dedalus' mother in the "Circe" episode of Ulysses (15.4183)). After the Great War, there *were* more women than men – almost a million young Britons were killed, leaving almost a million British women without husbands or lovers. The possibility of love and family stability was ripped away by the war; all that remained was emptiness and the memory of violence. We can speculate that the presence of death in Compton-Burnett's life, like that in Katherine Mansfield's life in the destruction of *her* beloved brother in the Great War, affected her fiction. While Mansfield offered new constructions of implicit funeral ritual, and created a fictive space in which moments of realization engendered by death ritual in its many forms could take place, Compton-Burnett's work is characterized by failed rituals, except for those rituals of sacrifice meant to preserve the will to power that so concerned her.

More Women Than Men takes place in a girls' school run by Josephine Napier, an environment conducive to rumors, secrets, and lies. Josephine is a frightening character, a woman of seemingly indomitable strength who gets what she wants out of everybody and makes them think it is for their own good. Early in the novel, an old friend, Elizabeth, known by both Josephine and her husband Simon, comes to the school, bringing her daughter, Ruth. Elizabeth needs help, and Josephine offers her the position of housekeeper. One may imagine at first that Josephine does this out of kindness, yet there is more to it than that. It is revealed that Elizabeth and Simon were involved romantically, but Elizabeth married someone else. Shortly afterward, her husband died, and she wrote to Simon to tell him so. By

then, however, he was involved with Josephine, who made sure to intercept the letter and keep the truth from Simon until the two of them were safely on their own honeymoon. Like so much of what happens in Compton-Burnett's novels, this turn of events is only revealed through oblique references and half-accusations.

Elizabeth recognizes that her fate and that of Simon are in the hands of Josephine. She says to Simon, once the truth has come out, "It was best for you to go to the chosen life, chosen, I am sure, so wisely for you, undistraught by anything that might lead you aside; or it was thought best. We are in the hands of – what shall we call it? Fate? Let us call it Fate. That is the best word, or shall we say the wisest?" (48).

Josephine arranges lives the way she arranges the schedules of her schoolmistresses, and Elizabeth knows it. Yet even as she tries to confront Josephine about it, she meets with resistance. She tells Josephine that she has never had "innocence," even in youth. Josephine responds:

> My dear, it was when you were the widow of another man, that you wrote to me, or thought you wrote. If Simon and I were blind to anything outside each other – perhaps we should admit we were for a time; well, we will both admit it – and a letter got passed over or put aside, it could have meant very little. It was when your future was dawning [with the birth of Ruth], that you wrote the letter to be answered, that could be answered by people of our state of mind. [...] But the things you have said would give even me a wrong impression, if I let them. But I will not let them; do not fear; do not let your hard

> experience warp your judgment. Tell me your troubles, and lean on me. I am so used to being leant on. (50).

So much is revealed about Josephine in this exchange. She justifies her behavior and works on the mind of her accuser slowly to show that she, Josephine, had always been right in her course of action. It was only right that she respond to Elizabeth about the birth of her daughter, not the death of her husband. Furthermore, Elizabeth was at fault, even "warped," for insinuating that Josephine had done anything wrong. Yet Josephine would forgive. Forgiveness only functions if the person who has committed a wrong is aware of that wrong, and apologizes with integrity, but Josephine has managed to switch positions completely so that she is the one who is "forgiving" Elizabeth, rather than being the one who should be asking forgiveness.

In this exchange, Josephine seeks to bury the past, to reject Elizabeth's version of it and keep it hidden. However, the past refuses to stay buried, and it kills both Simon and Ruth. One evening, when Simon and Elizabeth are in the study together, he on a ladder retrieving something from a shelf and she sitting waiting for him, she confesses to him that the present feels "possessed" by the past. Simon says, "It is in the present that we live. Shall we let the dead past bury its dead, and deal with it in the better way?" A moment later he is dead, fallen from the ladder which was shaken by Elizabeth's hand in fright when she heard Josephine's footsteps at the door of the library. As he lay dead on the floor, "the truth was flung upon" the two women (101). Is Elizabeth responsible for his death? Is Josephine? The reason for Josephine's power over Elizabeth for all these years – her winning of Simon – is destroyed by her machinations to keep power. Why would Josephine take her

husband's former lover to be her housekeeper? To watch over her, to keep an eye on the two of them. Simon, ultimately, is sacrificed to Josephine's will. The past, however, never dies; there is only violence, punishment, retribution. The living can never have their own life. As one character says, "We have to be on our guard in our dealing with the dead" (182). There is no burial, and no closure. Josephine does not go to Simon's funeral. She demands "simply the deepest mourning that is made for a widow," yet does not go (104-5). The funeral does not mean anything; the *appearance* of mourning is all.

Compton-Burnett structures More Women than Men with parallel funerals and weddings. Yet the funerals do not provide closure, and the weddings do not provide reconciliation or restoration. The two rituals overlap, and are ultimately overtaken by Josephine's need to sacrifice all to preserve her power and her own sense of order. Josephine never again appears out of mourning, and she makes sure to wear deepest mourning at her adopted son's wedding to Ruth, Elizabeth's daughter. This is excessive and uncalled-for, even in Victorian custom, which Compton-Burnett draws on in all her novels, and with which she would have been intimately familiar; her own mother never appeared out of mourning after the death of her husband, and Hilary Spurling notes that this was considered excessive (100). It was customary for women in mourning to lessen the severity of their "weeds" for weddings; gray or purple would have been perfectly acceptable. Yet Josephine refuses. She disapproves of the wedding; she cannot let go of her adopted son, Gabriel, and cannot abide the idea of Ruth, her rival's daughter, as her own daughter-in-law. Gabriel objects:

> [Josephine] had made no difference in her usual dress, and wore simply her better outfit of widow's weeds. Her bonnet, with its crape and veil, lay ready at the side, indicating that her toilet was complete.
>
> [Gabriel says,] "You are surely going to appear in something more festive than that? [...] I did not know that people went to weddings, dressed so completely as widows."
>
> "I suppose widows dress as widows, just as bridegrooms dress as bridegrooms."
>
> "It is quite a long time, nearly six months, since Uncle Simon died."
>
> "Five months, twenty-three days and nineteen hours," said Josephine, with her voice dying away and her eyes on space.
>
> "Haven't you anything less funereal? Surely you got something new for the occasion?"
>
> "My dear, it was for you that I got things, not for myself. You are the instigating character of this festival, not I. And I had not personally thought of it as a festival, if you remember."
>
> "I took it for granted that you would dress in a suitable manner. You might be going to a burial in those garments." (136)

Josef Pieper believes that the root of festivity lies in the presence of the affirmation of life. Weddings, thus, in their festivity, are spaces of ritual affirmation and reconciliation. Yet, in the ironic, deathly world of Compton-Burnett, Josephine's ensemble actually turns out to be highly appropriate in a macabre way, for the wedding of Ruth and Gabriel will become Ruth's funeral. The wedding *is* a burial, a

parallel, present ritual to Simon's non-funeral, a funeral which occurs offstage. Further, the presence of the funeral in the wedding negates the wedding itself, and, Ruth's funeral itself will be negated because it is, in reality a sacrifice. There is merely the appearance of death ritual – the outer covering of widow's weeds – but the elements necessary for a true death ritual do not exist.

Ruth's death occurs shortly after her marriage to Gabriel, and it does so at the hand of Josephine. Ruth develops an illness which requires her to stay in bed away from draughts. As Ruth becomes delirious, she asks to be brought to Gabriel, who has been sent away by Josephine. Josephine, sitting at Ruth's bedside, helps her out of bed to stand by an open window. The girl dies of exposure at the height of her sickness to the cold night air. On one level, the murder of Ruth is Josephine's revenge for what she may perceive as Elizabeth's responsibility for Simon's death. However, as Girard writes, rituals of sacrifice can be explained only partly by the need for vengeance (13-5); one must take into account the need to re-establish and preserve order in rituals of sacrifice. Josephine must maintain her position in the house, in Gabriel's life, and she must take away the power that Elizabeth has gained through disposing of Simon and finding a place through marriage in Josephine's household. When, later in the novel, two other characters marry, Josephine refers to the ceremony as a "sacrifice" (205). One wonders to what extent she may be thinking of Ruth.

More Women Than Men ends with another death of a minor character and a marriage between two more; these are shadows of the parallel funeral and wedding of the earlier part of the book. The book concludes with a third marriage of sorts: that

of Josephine and another of her schoolmistresses, Miss Rosetti. Miss Rosetti is Gabriel's birth mother, and the witness to Josephine's murder of Ruth. Josephine asks her to become a partner with her in running the school when she realizes that Miss Rosetti saw her with Ruth; the teacher says no. Miss Rosetti says, "It is wise of you to make the offer. It is clever as well as wise. [...] I will tell you that I would accept it, if the choice were mine. But the choice is no longer mine" (166). She realizes that the offer comes from Josephine's desire to maintain her power in the small society she controls; in a word, it is a bribe, not a gift freely offered or a reward for merit. Yet when Josephine discovers that Miss Rosetti is Gabriel's mother, and offers her the position again, Miss Rosetti accepts. She says, "You and I have each looked at the other's hidden side, and looked away; and that is much." Josephine responds, "Then you are my partner, and I am yours; and we will live our partnership in our lives, observing it in thought and word and deed." Finally, "Miss Rosetti knew that on some things there would be silence" (198). In a sense, this is the truest marriage in the book. It is the only one in which there is a true understanding about the nature of the relationship and the function it serves.

So much of the novel occurs in the "dark spaces" of which Nathalie Sarraute speaks: "that element of indetermination, of opacity and mystery" (111). People observe "doings," yet do not speak of what they have seen. They refer to pasts which should be buried but never are. The presence of these "dark spaces" permit the characters to continue in the present of the novel while refusing a true consciousness of the past. These are the spaces where rituals of sacrifice take place, where barely articulated motivations rise to the surface briefly, resulting in devastating rituals that

can never be made right by the kind of performances we have seen in other texts. Death ritual is meaningless in texts where the dead do not stay buried and the living are trapped in the eternal moment of the past.

Ivy Compton-Burnett's use of ritual to show failure of community depends on appearance. The weddings, the funerals, have the appearance of functioning rituals, but the reader, as he or she observes, sees that the ritual falls apart. Stevie Smith's poem "Silence and Tears" (1938) also says something about concern for appearances in unsuccessful ritual, for spectacle without meaning. The poem examines a funeral as a failed ritual; the performance is a meaningless show devoid of the sacred.

The poem reveals that ritual without a personal component cannot have meaning. While some anthropologists argue that ritual cannot have a personal component, that ritual needs to be traditional and social and eternal, "Silence and Tears" illustrates what happens in a ritual where the personal is removed. In this illustration of death ritual, the relationship between the living and the dead, a needed personal and social relationship, is removed. There exist in the text social norms, customs, and manners, but these are simply show. The poem begins with an epigram from a church outfitter's catalogue: "A priestly garment, eminently suitable for conducting funeral services in inclement weather" (Collected 110). Smith presents in the first stanza a funeral scene with the proper customs: a weeping widow, the right religious phrase, "dust to dust." That very line shows something is wrong with the performance: "Dust to dust, Oh how frightful sighed the mourners as the/rain began" (Collected 110). It is just that, a performance. One does not know if the mourners

are saying that death is frightful, or if the weather is frightful. As the epigram prefigures, accoutrements and appearances are more important than the transformative moment.

Smith further indicates that something is amiss in the ritual space with the uneven metrical patterns within the poem. The rhyme scheme is consistent (aaa-bbb-ccc-ddd-eee), but the meter and varying line lengths throw the reader off. The last lines of the first, third, and fourth stanzas are longer; these lines refer to the illusion of the ritual, the "solemn moment," the absence of "scandal." However, the last lines of the second and fifth stanzas are shorter, with fewer syllables; these shorter lines puncture the illusion, with reference to the birds singing "pee-wee," nonsense, and the final chilling statement: "Silence and tears are convenient."

Smith writes, "But the grave yawned wide and took the tears and the rain,/And the poor dead man was at last free from all his pain,/Pee-wee sang the little bird upon the tree again and again" (Collected 110). The grave takes everything; it does not matter what rituals are performed before it. As Valentine Cunningham says, "Stevie Smith [...] buil[t] a career of macabre wryness with rosters of sickly jokey poems about deaths of all sorts" (British 57). Stevie Smith uses irony to puncture the significance of ritual, but behind the jokes and the macabre persona she created, death is the most important, most certain thing in her work. The grave swallows all. The grave, the hole in the ground, the darkness, is important, but the corpse is absent; the conventional ritual is more important than the physicality of the dead body. Yet death ritual cannot exist without the body, neither for the dead nor the living. The meaning of the performance breaks down in the final two lines of the stanza. The

cliché of the "poor dead man" freed "from all his pain" is combined with the nonsense of the bird singing "pee-wee." The performance is empty without meaningful language. Language is reduced to cliché and nonsense.

The next stanza shows the continuing breakdown of meaning in the ritual as "priestly custom" becomes more important than a significant act for the dead: "Is it not a solemn moment when the last word is said,/And wrapped in cloak of priestly custom we dispose our dead,/And the earth falls heavy, heavy, upon the expensive coffin lined with lead?" (Collected 110). The moment is solemn only because custom dictates it be so. The coffin is a receptacle, itself a symbol of custom and superficial status. As Ruth Richardson has pointed out, a heavy lead-lined coffin was a key indicator of social status (273); the more expensive the coffin, the more the body within was thought to be worth. Smith shows this to be nothing more than a sham. The coffin is simply an artifact, but the body to be ritualized, the individual to be commemorated, are absent.

Tears make a "good show" in the fourth stanza, but they are performance without commemoration. Smith writes, "And may the coffin hold his bones in peace that lies below,/And may the widow woman's tears make a good show,/And may the suitable priestly garment not let the breath of scandal through" (Collected 110). The repetition of "and may" echoes a liturgical performance, yet it is an ironic echo because the ritual actually does not mean anything; the funeral is composed of show and costume, an ironic enactment of a failed ritual. Later in life, Stevie Smith wrote, "I often try to pull myself together, having been well brought up in the stiff-upper-lip school of thought and not knowing whether other people find Death as merry as I do"

(Me Again 113). The jokes Smith makes at Death's expense seem to be those one makes at the expense of an old and well-known friend. However, she reserves her contempt in her poems for people who do not see the deeply ironic nature of death, and who fail to recognize that all the rituals in the world will not ward it off or reveal its mystery. The ritual has failed because the story of the individual never matters. The dead do not receive the rite of passage, and the living do not experience transformation; there is only the yawning grave. In the final stanza, Stevie Smith writes, "For the weather of their happening has been a little inclement,/And would people be so sympathetic if they knew how the story went?/Best not put it to the test. Silence and tears are convenient" (Collected 110). The last sentence of the last line is abrupt and cutting; it provides the end of the ritual, a funeral in which the weather was more important than the dead or the living. For we do not know the story. There has been a failure of biography, narrative, remembrance. Without the story the ritual is meaningless. The ceremony must fail, because there can be no words against Death.

Like the work of Stevie Smith, much of W. H. Auden's poetry is deeply ironic towards death. Auden was heavily influenced by another poet who made important use of ritual, T. S. Eliot. Auden, and those of his circle, read Eliot while at Oxford; after reading The Waste Land, Auden said, "I now see the way I want to write" (qtd. in Hynes, Auden 27). Eliot employed fertility myth and ritual in The Waste Land, a subject that has been extensively studied; however, the first section of The Waste Land, "The Burial of the Dead," is notable for the funerals that never take place, the

dead that are never buried. Ghosts haunt the text, and the living, as they do in the writings of the Great War. The living themselves are the living dead: "I was neither/Living nor dead, and I knew nothing/Looking into the heart of light, the silence" (38). Those who are alive – and those who are dead – are trapped in a liminal space, a purgatory, by a collapse in ritual connection, and by a denial of past yet all-too-real and present horror. Auden and his contemporaries saw Eliot's poem as a key statement of the postwar world, where the "Unreal City" is a necropolis: "That corpse you planted last year in your garden,/Has it begun to sprout?" (39). In life there is always death: we cannot tell the difference in Eliot's poem, and the burial of the dead fails as they refuse to stay in their place. As Stephen Spender wrote, "He [Eliot] thought that when these rituals [between the living and the dead] were disrupted – and when, indeed, the observance of them was not the foremost aim of the living – there would be no connection of the living with the dead, of the present with the past" (7).

Auden himself employs ritual in his own work, and his use of funeral rites shows the ramifications of this disruption, this breakdown in connection. In an uncollected poem from 1937, "Blues," Auden personifies death in a popular song typical of the kinds of songs he wrote throughout the thirties. While "Blues" was never set to music, it has characteristics of the other poems Auden generally classified as "songs" – light verse, satire, qualities in common with cabaret and popular songs of the day such as those by Cole Porter (Spears 107-8).

In "Blues" there is death in the life all around, rendering the life happening mere show. It is, in a way, reminiscent of the scene at the end of Monty Python's The

Meaning of Life, when Death, dressed in a black cloak and skull mask, joins a bourgeois dinner party carrying the requisite scythe. Or perhaps it may remind one of Nat Ackerman's encounter with Death in his lovely Kew Gardens home in Woody Allen's short play Death Knocks. Auden's poem begins by addressing the audience, perhaps a typical cabaret audience: "Ladies and gentlemen, sitting here,/Eating and drinking and warming a chair,/Feeling and thinking and drawing your breath,/Who's sitting next to you? It may be Death" (English 209). This first stanza creates an immediacy with the deictic "here," drawing the reader into the moment where the presence of death is first brought to awareness. Many progressive participles are employed to show how life is always happening, even while death is hovering over all: sitting, eating, drinking, warming, feeling, thinking, drawing a breath. Life is in process here, yet Death is at hand.

Death is personified as being in control. "Death looks at you" (English 209). The individual is caught in the gaze of Death and cannot escape. Death is a G-man, an agent of law and order; it is a doctor and a teacher, an expert; a real-estate salesman, one who imposes value on things, including one's own life, and it is clear the value is not that high. Auden situates Death in the world of the professions as a way of showing how truly mundane Death is. Death presides over the world of the ordinary, the banal. John Fuller writes that the text of "Blues" is "weak," and "the US slang [...] sorts uncomfortably with idiom that is plainly British" (296). Perhaps Auden elected to use American slang because some of the slang ("sugar-daddy," "G-man," "hot-seat") is clearly from American gangster and crime movies. In many *noir* films of the period, violence is prevalent; death often comes violently. This

juxtaposes with the mundane bourgeois world that Auden creates in the poem and shows ironically that underneath all life there is death, and that life can be suddenly, even violently, taken away.

The final stanza is understated in its resignation of Death's presence: "So whether you're standing broke in the rain,/Or playing poker or drinking champagne,/Death's looking for you, he's already on the way,/So look out for him to-morrow or perhaps to-day" (English 210). Fuller again criticizes this poem for its understatement (296), but it would seem that the poem concludes this way because there is no other way to end. The poem, in fact, seems to end simply because it is tired; the last line peters out with "perhaps." Auden makes us aware of the presence of Death, but refuses us any way of dealing with that presence. Death simply is – it is there.

Another of Auden's poems that considers the place of death in the world is "Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone," known as "Funeral Blues" in the Collected Poems. Here the problem of death ritual is much more explicitly addressed, but again, to no end. In "Funeral Blues," the poet considers a variety of death rituals, beginning in the realm of the public. He writes:

> Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
> Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
> Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
> Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.
>
> Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead

Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,

Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,

Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves. (English 163)

The two opening stanzas of the poem place the mortuary performance firmly in the public sphere. The first line has an echo of traditional domestic mourning practices. As Ruth Richardson has noted, stopping the clocks of a house when a death has occurred was common: "Clocks mark worldly temporal existence [...] as if the machine was somehow identified with the allotted span of a particular human life" (27). Yet the mourning display in a home is just as much for the neighbors as for those who live there, as further shown by the command to "cut off the telephone," the instrument of communication with the outside world.

The poem is filled in the first half with commands, imperatives: stop, prevent, silence, bring, let, put. The speaker of the poem commands others to take part in the mourning rituals, which themselves are concerned mainly with outward signs like crepe and black gloves. The poem begins in the home, with the piano and the dog, two emblems of bourgeois domestic life. Then with the mourners, the public face of grief enter, and the action of the poem moves outward into the street, into the public sphere: airplanes, public doves, traffic policemen. The death must be announced, both figuratively with these signs, and literally in the sky: He Is Dead.

Yet in the second half of the song there is a turn inward: "He was my North, my South, my East, my West,/My working week and my Sunday rest,/My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;/I thought that love would last for ever: I was wrong" (English 163). The use of imperatives has ceased, and the pronoun "I" has entered,

marking the personal relationship to the dead person. The mourning ritual of the poem has passed the stage of physical appearance, signifiers and gestures, and moved into the realm of text as the bereaved tries to give a eulogy. This stanza, and the final fourth stanza, are both characterized by hyperbole: "The stars are not wanted now; put out every one,/Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun,/Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;/For nothing now can ever come to any good" (English 163). The poem has finally moved from the interior world of the house, to the street, to the cosmos itself. The grieving is meant to become universal, as the stars, sun, moon, ocean are taken into the loss. Yet the poem ends, "Nothing now can ever come to any good." The cosmos is indifferent, and the sadness of the poem is that while the speaker asks it to join in mourning, we know it must be silent. The imperative of mourning ritual in the poem is futile in the face of an indifferent world.

Auden exposes the futility ritual in another form, that of the drama. In collaboration with Christopher Isherwood, and under the auspices of the Group Theatre, of which he was one of the founders in 1932, Auden wrote several plays between 1933 and 1938. The Group Theatre conceived of itself as a "community," rather than a company. It was meant to be completely participatory, including the efforts of painters, technicians and other crew members, writers, musicians, and the audience itself. Its 1933 manifesto says, "Because you are not moving or speaking, you are not therefore a passenger. If you are seeing and hearing you are co-operating" (Plays 491). The audience was meant to be a necessary part of the

productions, which involved singing, the use of a type of Greek chorus, commentators from the sidelines, masks, and masques.

Auden and Isherwood had developed ideas about what they thought drama should do. In a preliminary statement, dated about 1929, the two writers claimed that "Dramatic action is ritual. [...] Ritual is directed towards the stimulation of the spectator who passes thereby from a state of indifference to a state of acute awareness" (Plays 459). This stimulation is the objective to having the audience participate. By construing drama as a ritual, the authors call for the audience to become a participant in creating a moment of transformation. In a later text, from a 1935 program, Auden writes, "Drama began as the act of a whole community. Ideally there would be no spectators. In practice every member of the audience should feel like an understudy"; he also refers to the drama as "an art of the body," thus refusing to privilege text over gesture (Plays 497). Here Auden addresses not only important concepts of the drama, but important concepts of ritual. In ritual, as Geertz has pointed out, both the practical and the symbolic are important. While Geertz maintains they are separate, in Auden's idea of drama as ritual, they are fused, as metaphor, text, gesture, and performance come together. The audience is a vital participant. One does not simply observe a ritual – one becomes part of the process, creating communitas.

The artificiality of drama is important to Auden's articulation of its components. Much of this comes from Bertolt Brecht's idea of epic theatre. Auden was probably aware of Brecht's work as early as the 1920s, when Auden visited Germany. As Walter Benjamin notes, epic theatre has resonances, traces of the

"ritual origin" of drama (154). Brecht's notions of epic theatre focus more on political motivations, which were never systematically implemented by Auden, although these traces are visible in Auden's work. Eric Bentley's reference to Auden as "imitation" Brecht (184) is not completely accurate. What Auden's conceptions of theatre share with Brecht's are the notion of theatre as process, the importance of the "gestic" (Benjamin 151), the involvement of the audience, and the alienation produced by the awareness, as theatrical illusion is stripped away, that the drama is artificial.

Auden uses the true ritual of the drama to reveal the futility of funeral ritual in his 1936 play The Ascent of F6. The play tells the story of a famous mountain climber, Michael Ransom, who is convinced by the Government to attempt the dangerous ascent of F6, a mountain situated on the border between the fictitious lands of British Sudoland (or Pseudoland, or Sudetenland) and Ostnian Sudoland, colonial possessions whose imperial masters are involved in a struggle for power. It is believed in the region that the first white man to ascend F6 will rule over all of Sudoland. Ransom's brother James, a Government official, and his mother convince him to make the trip with his party of trusted climbers. However, from the beginning Ransom knows the trip is doomed because he is making it for the wrong reasons – he is motivated by a will to power, a will to conquer, to achieve an hubristic greatness.

Throughout the play, this ideal is undercut. Ransom says early on, considering the corrosive nature of power, "Virtue. Knowledge. We have heard these words before: and we shall hear them again – during the nursery luncheon, on the prize-giving afternoon, in the quack advertisement, at the conference of generals

or industrial captains: justifying every baseness and excusing every failure" (Plays 295). Ransom considers various secular rituals of everyday life, and the ways in which they are false. They propagate old lies and platitudes. Cliché has rendered them meaningless.

The thoughts and actions of Ransom and his mountainclimbing team are interspersed with a chorus of a lower-middle-class married couple who follow his exploits up the mountain. Mr. and Mrs. A. spend the play in stage-boxes to the right of the stage, separate from the action yet commenting on it, along with a radio announcer in the left box. They view Ransom's heroism as an inspiration in their banal, empty lives. Mr. A. says, in one of Auden's sections of verse, "Cut out the photos and pin them to the wall,/Cut out the map and follow the details of it all,/Follow the progress of this mountain mission,/Day by day let it inspire our lowly condition." Mrs. A. replies, "Many have come to us often with their conscious charms,/They stood upon platforms and madly waved their arms,/At the top of their voices they promised all we lack,/They offered us glory but they wanted it back." Yet Mr. and Mrs. A., as they are known, are not there to represent the point of view of the audience. They are as clichéd and hackneyed as the rituals Ransom is criticizing at the beginning of the play. Mr. A. continues, "But these are prepared to risk their lives in action/In which the peril is their only satisfaction./They have not asked us to alter our lives/Or to eat less meat or to be more kind to our wives" (Plays 316). The audience is meant to feel as alienated from the A.'s as they do from Ransom and his philosophical pontifications about the sensitive man. In the world of

the play, the A.'s are merely spectators, and thus exist outside the drama; however, the audience, in viewing the play and coming to "acute awareness," are participants.

Act Two of The Ascent of F6 begins with a death ritual performed by the monks on the mountain with whom the climbers stay before they begin. The ritual foreshadows the deaths of the men in the climbing party, yet the men themselves have no understanding of the ritual. The audience sees, and understands, this play within a play, this ritual within a ritual, but the climbers, rather than gain ritual knowledge, remain in ritual ignorance. The ritual begins with a chant:

> Go Ga, morum tonga tara
>
> Mi no tang hum valka vara
>
> So so so kum mooni lara
>
> Korkra ha Chormopuloda
>
> Antifora lampisoda
>
> Kang ku gar, bari baroda
>
> Ming ting ishta sokloskaya
>
> No rum ga ga, no rum gaya
>
> Nong Chormopuloda saya. (Plays 322-23)

To the climbers, this is nonsense; the chant does not even exist on the level of meaningful language. Of course, it does not mean much to the audience either. However, as the scene continues, the meaning of the ritual becomes clear. The monks carry a coffin, symbolic of death. Yet the men continue to refuse understanding:

> DOCTOR. From the way they walk it might be a funeral.

LAMP. I believe it *is* a funeral. Look what they're carrying.

GUNN. A coffin! Gosh, did you see?

DOCTOR. Cheer up, David; there's only one! Perhaps they won't choose you.

GUNN. It's most likely some wretched traveler they've murdered.

DOCTOR. Very curious, those masks. A pity it's too dark for photographs. (Plays 323)

This inane exchange ends with Gunn saying, "Anyway, I hope they're won't be any more! Phew! This place is about as cheerful as Woking Cemetery!" (Plays 323). The men, like Mr. and Mrs. A, function as spectators who refuse to enter into an understanding of the ritual before them. The funeral is for them, and the death they have chosen by their will to climb the mountain.

The men die one by one as they climb. The first to go is Lamp, and he is eulogized by the Press and the public, represented by Mrs. A. She says, "Death like his is right and splendid;/That is how life should be ended!" (Plays 336). Mrs. A. echoes the Big Lie Wilfred Owen attacked bitterly in "Dulce et Decorum Est," the lie that it is sweet and right to die for one's country. Yet Mr. A., himself a veteran of the Great War, puts the Big Lie to rest:

Do you think it would comfort Lamp to know
The British Public mourns him so?
I tell you, he'd give his rarest flower
Merely to breathe for one more hour!
What is this expedition? He has died

To satisfy our smug suburban pride..." (Plays 337)

The ritual of public mourning for a hero is here revealed by Mr. A. in his stage-box – an epic theatre device – to be false. Mr. A. deflates the rhetoric of elegy and reveals the commemoration to be mere cliché.

As the play approaches its final scene, there is no one left of the party but Ransom himself. The others die, but without the public rhetoric of mourning which surrounded the first death; death ritual loses its meaning as the play continues. Further, ritual becomes useless as death becomes inevitable. The foreshadowing of the monk's funeral, which the audience understands as a sign of the inevitability of death, comes as a crushing blow to those representing the public in the stage-boxes. They chant:

LEFT BOX.	RIGHT BOX.
No news	Useless to wait
Too late	Their fate
	We do not know
Snow on the pass	Alas
Nothing to report	Caught in the blizzard
Fought through the storm	Warm in our beds we wonder
Thunder and hail	Will they fail? Will they miss
	their success?
Yes. They will die	We sigh. We cannot aid
They fade from our mind	They find no breath

But Death. (Plays 345)

Here information about the expedition is recited like an incantation ending in Death. The passing on of news takes the place of the eulogy offered for Lamp earlier in Act Two. The will of the individual no longer matters as fate takes control, bringing death, which was the lesson of the monk's ritual: remember you must die.

At the end of the play only Ransom is left. Even his brother James is dead. He, too, was forced to succumb to the will of death, leaving his own will to power to fail. Yet the death ritual which commemorates James is a failure itself, a failure the audience understands. A blues is sung. The first two stanzas are the same as the first two stanzas of "Funeral Blues," which originally came from this play. Auden revised the song for the Collected Poems, but in the play the stanzas after the first two are:

Hold up your umbrellas to keep off the rain
From Doctor Williams while he opens a vein;
Life, he pronounces, is finally extinct.
Sergeant, arrest that man who said he winked!

Shawcross will say a few words sad and kind
To the weeping crowds about the Master-Mind,
While Lamp with a powerful microscope
Searches their faces for a sign of hope.
And Gunn, of course, will drive the motor-hearse:
None could drive it better, most would drive it worse.
He'll open up the throttle to its fullest power

And drive him to the grave at ninety miles an hour. (Plays 351)

According to John Fuller, "The ironic effect of the hyperbole is much changed when the song is sung by a single singer lamenting the death of her lover" (280). However, as we have seen, the lament sung to an indifferent universe must fade into silence, "for nothing now can ever come to any good." Here, the hyperbole of the imagery of the lament has an ironic effect, as does the ritual itself: James does not deserve the commemoration offered in the song by his collaborators in forcing the expedition, Stagmantle and Isabel, and the song degenerates into absurdity, with Gunn speeding James to the grave like Miss Runcible in her racing car. Even the public displays of mourning in the first two stanzas are empty, as was James' public displays of authority and good government.

Finally Ransom himself will die, at the summit of F6. In the second edition of the play, published by Faber and Faber in 1937, Ransom's dead body is seen at the peak of the mountain, after a dream sequence in which his mother sings to him as she did when he was a child. Ransom's death goes unremembered, uneulogized, uncommemorated. All the death rituals in the play are failures; no death is granted meaning or significance through ritual, but is stripped of significance through cliché and irony. In later versions of the play, Auden sought to revise the ending. The first edition of the play, published in 1936, and the 1939 version are especially worth looking at briefly, for these versions contain prose epilogues following the death of Ransom. In the 1939 version, a radio announcer offering commentary and explanation says, "The mountain took its toll of four young lives. They died like soldiers at their posts. Their names are the latest, but not the least in that long roll of

heroes who gave their lives for the honor of this country..." (Plays 649). The radio announcer attempts to provide meaning and interpretation to the deaths of Ransom and the other climbers, but this ending does not free the deaths from pointlessness. The word "ransom" is cognate with redemption; but there is no redemption.

Auden's play is set in a liminal space, a borderland, a frontier. Yet this ritual space must fail. The play "cannot decide where the redemptive power lies, outside the individual, inside it, or in its communion with others" (Emig 45). However, the experience of *communitas* which Auden denies the participants onstage through the constant ironic undercutting of meaning is achieved by the audience through the performance of epic theatre. The ritual of the drama is altered to create a sort of "anti-ritual," a ritual that consists in recognizing the failure, in participating in coming to that awareness, and thus coming together. Even though meaning is undermined in the play, the audience is able to come together in awareness of the failure of ritual occurring before them.

The death that seems meaningless resists ritualization; it resists all efforts at creating meaning around it. The "necessary morbidity" of death ritual is just that – necessary – but sometimes even those necessary morbidities are not enough. As we saw in the first chapter, violent death, pointless death, makes ritual impossible. Such deaths are resistant to the processes of integration and reconciliation that are part of ritual. As much as participants and poets of the Great War sought to invent and construct rituals of death, these rituals often failed. In the work of Dorothy Sayers, Ivy Compton-Burnett, and W. H. Auden, war, violence, and the ensuing revaluation

of the individual result in the problematic nature of the commemoration of death in the 1920s and 1930s revealed in these texts. The relationships between the dead and the living will become more complex in the work of James Joyce, as the living seek reconciliation – and meaning – in the face of resistant ritual.

Chapter Four: Last Rites and Resurrection: The Ritualization of Death in the Fiction of James Joyce

Death is a source of life. Every death makes available a new potentiality for life.

– Bloch (8)

There is no reason why one should look upon the grave as more sacred than the dung-heap.

– Waugh (Rossetti 152)

In the previous chapters, we have examined how death ritual is represented and deployed in fiction, poetry, drama, and memoirs of the period between the two world wars. We have looked at the necessity of death ritual, and the ways in which death ritual is invented and reinvented. Words and gestures are crucial in the performance of any ritual, and the funeral rituals deployed within the fictive space of the texts at hand are composed of words and gestures directed against death – not simply the concept of death, but its physical reality and its real possibility. Jacques Derrida said, on the occasion of the death of Paul de Man, "Speaking is impossible, but so too would be silence or absence or a refusal to share one's sadness" (72). Silence is impossible; words are difficult but necessary in the face of loss.

EPIPHANIES AND DUBLINERS

For Joyce, words are all. However, first he begins with loss: personal loss, imagined loss, universal loss, yet with loss came laughter. For Joyce, joy follows sadness, and comedy comes in a coffin: Joyce did not believe in comedy until he believed in resurrection, until he could laugh at death. When Joyce wrote that comedy is "the perfect manner in art" because it urges us towards joy (Critical 144), he was merely theorizing, a hay-headed philosopher. It was living through death and then through love and fatherhood that brought Joyce to an awareness of the universality of experience, of death and life, of the sacred and the profane, and of endless renewal. This awareness was reflected in his art, from the epiphanies and Dubliners, to Stephen Hero and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, to Ulysses and Finnegans Wake.

The work of Joyce sums up and synthesizes the elements of this ongoing discussion. Beginning with a look at Joyce's early life, we shall see that the commemoration of death – or lack of commemoration – was crucial to his writings throughout his career. First there was Dubliners, and that is where we shall begin. Dubliners – and the Dublin of the stories – is a site of failed ritual, of mourning that is thwarted, of commemoration that cannot take place. The composition of Stephen Hero, and the process of revising that text into A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, further reveals Joyce's attempts to come to terms with the representation and deployment of death ritual. From Portrait to Ulysses we see another crucial turn in Joyce's work with death – the turn towards an awareness of the possibility of resurrection, and with it, the turn towards comedy, a crucial generic move. Finally,

with Finnegans Wake, there is a joyful acceptance of resurrection brought about by the most successful funeral ever – or is it a most spectacular failure, considering that through the funeral the dead are brought back to life, negating the need for mourning? In the Wake, there is resurrection through death ritual, and comedy through resurrection.

Arthur Power recalls a conversation he had with Joyce in the 1920s. Power writes of pushing Joyce to state his beliefs on the afterlife:

> His determined silence on the subject of religion and on man's survival after death, a subject which I often confronted him with, so intrigued, and even annoyed me, that one day, the subject having arisen between us as we were walking past the Odéon Theatre, I pushed him into a corner of the street, and I asked him the straight question,
>
> – Do you believe in the next life?
>
> Embarrassed by my sudden seriousness he quickly disengaged himself and with a shrug of his slim shoulders he answered,
>
> – I don't think much of this life – and closed the conversation, so that I realized that I would never get a direct answer on this subject from him. (60)

Power saw the conversation as "closed." Yet Joyce did not close the door on the possibility of resurrection. In fact, the dead never really died for him. Biographers and critics have made much over the fact that after Joyce's mother died he never

mentioned her again. This is to ignore Joyce's own writings; his mother, his brother George, even dead strangers, haunt his work. He wrote, and rewrote and revised them, back into life.

Another word about biographers and critics: much has of course been made of the importance of Joyce meeting and eloping with Nora Barnacle in 1904. This is certainly a turning point in his life and a central point in his work. However, some of the most important events which would influence Joyce's writing had already happened by the time he met Nora.

Joyce's brother George died of peritonitis in 1902. The death makes an appearance among Joyce's epiphanies, and is then reused in Stephen Hero, with George changed to a fictional sister, Isabel. As we shall see, it may be argued that the appearance of Rudy Bloom in the "Circe" episode of Ulysses is also based on the figure of the dead boy. Joyce, in his epiphany, writes:

> They are all asleep. I will go up now.....He lies on my bed where I lay last night: they have covered him with a sheet and closed his eyes with pennies...Poor little fellow! we have often laughed together – he bore his body very lightly....I am very sorry he died. I cannot pray for him as the others do.....Poor little fellow! Everything else is so uncertain! (Workshop 30)

There is a concern here with the body, with the very physicality of the corpse. In the work of Joyce, the tension between the *corpus* and the corpse is significant: between the sacred body of ritual and physical matter of decaying flesh. This opposition – which is not really an opposition but a dialectical synthesis of key tensions in Joyce –

points toward larger concerns surrounding the relationship between the sacred and the profane. We see here also Joyce's rejection of the prayer and ritual surrounding the dead. He cannot pray for his brother; Stephen Dedalus – and Joyce himself – was unable to pray for his dying mother.

The epiphany written about George's death shows the inadequacy of religious ritual when confronted with death, as well as the kind of internal ritual which prayer composes. A slightly later epiphany shows the inadequacy of the public, social ritual surrounding death:

[Dublin: in the National Library]

Skeffington – I was sorry to hear of the death of your brother...sorry we didn't know in time.....to have been at the funeral.....

Joyce – O, he was very young....a boy....

Skeffington – Still....it hurts.... (Workshop 32)

The epiphany takes place in a public space, highlighting the purely social quality of the exchange. There are certain rules that must be followed in such an exchange, certain social codes to express sorrow with the proper decorum. Joyce plays his part carefully; he withholds any expression of feeling as Skeffington articulates the failure of mourning such a young death. Joyce captures this failure of meaningful, transformative language with the use of ellipses: the words say nothing, and within these gaps lies the unsayable.

The absence of meaningful language about the death is coupled with the physical failure of absence at the funeral. Joyce hated funerals, yet they continually appear in his work (S. Joyce, 231). One of the earliest instances is another epiphany:

> Two mourners push on through the crowd. The girl, one hand catching the woman's skirt, runs in advance. The girl's face is the face of a fish, discoloured and oblique-eyed; the woman's face is small and square, the face of a bargainer. The girl, her mouth distorted, looks up at the woman to see if it is time to cry; the woman, settling a flat bonnet, hurries on towards the mortuary chapel. (Workshop 31)

It does not seem that the beautiful death exists in Joyce. The horror of his own brother dying of peritonitis, the slow and agonizing death of his mother from cancer – these reappear in the gruesome deaths and descriptions of corpses in Dubliners and Ulysses. Furthermore, it does not seem possible that successful, fulfilling mourning can take place at the sites of conventional death ritual. Joyce points out here that a child, one of the mourners, does not even know when it is time to cry and, like the much-maligned keeners for hire at old Irish wakes, needs a socially acceptable cue for her role. Meanwhile, the older woman seems unaffected, and more concerned with following the social rule of punctuality by hurrying to arrive on time.

Harry Levin writes, "It turned out in Joyce's case that, having left the church, he could never bring himself to participate in any other communion – religious, literary, or social" (24). In the epiphanies of Skeffington and of the mourners, Joyce shows the failure of communion through already existing social rituals. However, this does not mean that Joyce rejected ritual. This attitude described by Levin did not prevent him from seeking to create moments of universal communion through ritual, from showing the confluence of the sacred and the mundane in everyday life. Frederic Lang has argued that Joyce renders ritual meaningless by "divorc[ing] it

from language" (115). Yet Joycean ritual is not meaningless. It is new, a reinvention through language and gesture, a transformative bricolage incorporating the sacred and the profane.[1]

The accepted religious rituals surrounding death proved inadequate for Joyce's experience of his mother's death in 1903. Stanislaus Joyce recalls the death-bed scene which would prove so vital when revised into Ulysses:

> Amongst those around her death-bed at the end, besides her husband, the elder members of her large family, and the sister-in-law who had nursed her untiringly and unselfishly for long months, there was also an elder brother of my mother's, whom my father hated so intensely that only events of this kind could induce him to tolerate his presence. [...] When my mother lapsed into unconsciousness and it became apparent that her last moments had come, Uncle John knelt down with all the others and began to pray in a loud voice. Then, seeing that neither my brother nor I was praying, he made an angry, peremptory gesture to us to kneel down. Neither of us paid any attention to him; yet even so the scene seems to have burnt itself into my brother's soul. (230-31)

Stanislaus Joyce does point out here the failure not only of religious gesture during death; he also notes the inadequacy of the "beautiful death," the death-bed scene so

[1] Many critics have already examined Joyce's use of religious elements; see Davison, Lang, McNelly, Morse, Nadel, Reizbaum, Schlossman. However, I do not equate religion and ritual, and therefore do not give any space to the ongoing and far-reaching critical discussion on Joyce's use of Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist elements.

carefully detailed by Philippe Ariès in his work on the history of attitudes towards death. May Joyce did not have a beautiful death; even her death-bed scene was tormented by family strife.

According to some family accounts, May Joyce's death was so troubled that she walked the earth after death. Margaret ("Poppie"), Joyce's sister who later became a nun in New Zealand, has spoken of keeping midnight vigils with her brother Jim after their mother's death, looking for a vision of her: "Suddenly, her mother had appeared, standing silently at the bedroom door in her brown shroud" (Jackson and Costello 259). After witnessing this vision with his sister, Joyce read Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death, by Frederic W. H. Myers (1903), and wrote of having been visited by "the skull" in dreams (Jackson and Costello 259-60). This "rising from the dead" of his mother, it would seem, proved to be a crucial moment in Joyce's accumulation of material for his work.

Joyce used the death of his mother as an important source not only later in Ulysses but in Dubliners as well, which he began work on shortly after her death. The first story to be published from the collection, "The Sisters," appeared in Irish Homestead on the first anniversary of his mother's death. "Eveline," published later, also has echoes of her death:

> She knew the air. Strange that it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could. She remembered the last night of her mother's illness; she was again in the close dark room at the other side

> of the hall and outside she heard a melancholy air of Italy. The organ-player had been ordered to go away and given sixpence. [...]
>
> As she mused the pitiful vision of her mother's life laid its spell on the very quick of her being – that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness. She trembled as she heard again her mother's voice saying constantly with foolish insistence:
>
> – Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun! (40)

There is no place in this deathroom for music, nor for peace. This death scene echoes the horrors of Joyce's mother's death scene and the visions he and his sister had of their mother after her passing. Further, its realism negates any ideal put forth by the *ars moriendi.* Prayer is absent here; there are no words against death save an Irish phrase, which may mean "the end of pleasure is pain," "there is one end: maggots," "certain is the furnace," "the only end is westwards."[2] The ambiguity of the mother's last words mark the impossibility of interpreting the end, but the possibilities of meaning point to the inevitability and corruption of death.

Work on Dubliners took place from 1903 to 1907. Work was begun on Stephen Hero in 1904, and continued through the revisions into Portrait until 1914. Preparation for Ulysses began in 1907. We can infer that the early deaths in Joyce's life provide key source material for his works. This was a man who disliked funerals, who seemed not to especially mourn the deaths of those around him as a young man, yet these events appear in various forms throughout his work. Joyce's writing serves

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[2] Nobody knows what "derevaun seraun" means. Many commentators believe it may be garbled Irish, in which case it might mean "the end of pleasure is pain." It might also mean any of the possibilities above, respectively: *deireadh amháin, deirbh an sorn,* and *deireadh amháin siarain.* (Dubliners Illustrated 32).

as a form of commemoration, and the appearance and reappearance of those long dead are themselves a kind of resurrection through Joyce's "words against death."

However, perhaps drawing on his experience of the difficulties of mourning his brother and sister, Joyce's early fiction is marked by failed death ritual. "The Sisters," "Clay," "A Painful Case," and "The Dead" all wrestle with the inadequacies of funeral rituals. Christopher Ames has examined the way parties function as sites of ritual encounter with death in "Clay" and "The Dead," while Kevin Dettmar has pointed out wake elements (or lack thereof) in "The Sisters."[3] However, it is worth spending some time in examination of how the mechanisms of death ritual fail in these stories.

"The Sisters" presents a failed wake that offers no opportunity for commemoration. As a result, the search for meaning behind Father Flynn's life and death must fail. A wake is a space in which meaning is sought and found through the communion of sharing food and drink and storytelling. On the surface, this space exists within the story, yet Father Flynn's wake is an utter failure, and his death is left a pathetic mystery. The story depicts an attempt to discern meaning in Father Flynn's death, to interpret his words, his life, his passing. However, without the necessary ritual practices, the death is left without meaning.

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[3] Dettmar, in his consideration of postmodernism in Joyce, looks also at the "Hades" episode of Ulysses and Finnegans Wake. He specifically examines how funerals function as sites for the carnivalesque I will refer to his ideas in this chapter, and found his work on this subject valuable. See especially his chapter "JJ and the Carnivalesque Imagination."

Joyce includes a variety of elements of death practices throughout the story. None of them succeed, and we are left to wonder at their purpose. It would seem to be that they are left as a sort of insistence, an insistence on their inevitable failure. There can be no meaning to the death, no transformation or understanding for the survivors, so the recurrence of death ritual elements becomes a sick joke, clues that point nowhere.

"The Sisters" begins with the boy narrator noticing the candles burning at Father Flynn's house. It is night, a time of death, and of watching and waking the dead:

> Night after night I had passed the house (it was vacation time) and studied the lighted square of the window: and night after night I had found it lighted in the same way, faintly and evenly. If he was dead, I thought, I would see the reflection of candles on the darkened blind for I knew that two candles must be set at the head of a corpse. He had often said to me: *I am not long for this world*, and I had thought his words idle. Now I knew they were true. (9)

Father Flynn, from the moment of his acquaintance with the narrator, provided a *memento mori* for the boy, a reminder of the presence of death in the everyday, and in youth. The boy has an awareness of death customs, and knows which signifiers to look for, such as the change in light indicating the presence of candles burning for the dead – signifiers indicating death.

The opening meal in "The Sisters," like the meal in Woolf's The Waves, is a site for the ritual encounter with death. In "The Sisters," it is also a place for a literal

encounter with death: it is at supper at the beginning of the story that the boy learns about Father Flynn's death. It is also here that the reader learns that there was something strange about Father Flynn, although not at first. As the boy walks in to supper, he hears Old Cotter say, "No, I wouldn't say he was exactly...but there was something queer...there was something uncanny about him [...] I have my own theory about it. I think it was one of those...peculiar cases....But it's hard to say...." (10). We don't know who Old Cotter is talking about; neither does the boy. We do not even know who the dead man is until a few lines farther down, and even then the boy is not completely sure: "Well, so your old friend is gone, you'll be sorry to hear. – Who? said I. – Father Flynn. – Is he dead?" (10). There are some gaps and confusion around the news, which prevents an acknowledgment of the death at this meal. The boy's aunt responds "piously," "God have mercy on his soul" (10). The response is automatic, a cliché, and adds nothing to the understanding of the death.

Joyce's use of the meal as a site for encountering death is also significant when one considers the use of confession, the space of the confessional, and the sacrament of penance, throughout the story. Sin and death are joined throughout the text, as the confessional is linked to the grave. Likewise, during the meal, Joyce uses the tradition of the "sin-eater" to link sin and death. In some funeral traditions, the sin-eater is a person who eats something, a bit of cake or a biscuit, that represents the dead person's sins. By eating on behalf of the dead person, the sin-eater takes on the sins of the dead so that the departed can move on to the afterlife. As the adults talk of Father Flynn, the boy eats his stirabout. Stirabout is porridge, but "stirabout" is also a figurative expression for a state of confusion; it signifies the boy's confusion about

the events surrounding the priest's death. Later, after eating, before sleep, the boy thinks of the priest:

> I imagined that I saw again the heavy grey face of the paralytic. I drew the blankets over my head and tried to think of Christmas. But the grey face still followed me. It murmured; and I understood that it desired to confess something. I felt my soul receding into some pleasant and vicious region; and there again I found it waiting for me. It began to confess to me [...]. (11)

The boy becomes a confessor, and a sin-eater, for the dead priest. He takes on symbolically the sins of the priest in the priest's death.

The morning after learning of the death, the boy walks to Father Flynn's house, and remembers his conversations with the priest. He thinks of all he learned from the priest, and how priestly duties "towards the secrecy of the confessional seemed so grave" (13). The play on "grave," signifying that the confessional is a place of death, points to the end of the story when people realize something is wrong with Father Flynn. At the end of the story, the priest's sister Eliza tells the story of the night no one could find him:

> So then the clerk suggested to try the chapel. So then they got the keys and opened the chapel and the clerk and Father O'Rourke and another priest that was there brought in a light for to look for him....And what do you think but there he was, sitting up by himself in the dark in his confession-box, wide awake and laughing-like softly to himself? (18)

It is in the midst of the story of the priest in the confessional that the boy suddenly thinks of him in his coffin. The confessional and the coffin are linked, and sin and death are joined. It was the episode in the confessional that made people believe the priest was not right in the head, and it was this condition that his sisters think led to his death.

Yet the boy remains confused. The "stirabout" surrounding the priest's death only grows as the adults continue to speculate about the passing. The boy has no model for mourning. Like the young girl in Joyce's epiphany, he keeps looking to the adults to see what he should do, but they provide no guide for the commemoration of the death. He passes the house and sees the card pinned to the crape:

July 1st, 1895

The Rev. James Flynn

(formerly of S. Catherine's Church, Meath Street),

aged sixty-five years.

R.I.P.

He thinks, "The reading of the card persuaded me that he was dead" (12). The boy needs the death marked with a physical convention, a ritual of social decorum – the pinning of the card to the front door with a black ribbon that lets the neighborhood know there has been a death. However, the social custom, which may be a ritual itself, is a superficial sign since it is not followed by a more transformative commemoration.

The wake takes place that evening and, as Kevin Dettmar has pointed out, it is a failure. It is indeed shallow and empty, a decorous charade of piety and cliché. The body is put away in a coffin in the "dead-room," alone. The sisters have a stranger come in to wash the body. They do not prepare it – their own brother – themselves; Eliza says, "All the work we had, she and me, getting in the woman to wash him" (16). They do not sit with the body, as one would do during a wake. The body is left alone, which is counter to the whole idea of waking. In a traditional wake, the body is never left alone. As Seán Ó Súilleabháin writes:

> Thus the wake originally concentrated on showing sympathy for the dead, not for his relatives. It was an attempt to heal the wound of Death, and to do final justice to the deceased while he was still physically present. After the burial, the opportunity to do so would be absent. That is why both relatives and friends strove to show that Death was but a trivial occurrence, which could be alleviated by all the features of the wake: the feasting and drinking, the attendance at the wake-house, the fun and amusements, and even the keening. The great occasion was in honor of the deceased alone, and he was the one and only guest. (171-72)

Granted, much of the wake activity Ó Súilleabháin describes had passed out of practice by the time of Joyce's writing. However, the tradition was part of collective memory. Here, the wake is an empty husk. The absence of the corpse at its own wake and the way the sisters ignore the body only indicates the extent to which the commemoration fails.

We can see this in the way the sisters can mark the death only with pious clichés: "He's gone to a better world"; "He had a beautiful death"; "He was quite resigned"; "It must be a great comfort for you to know that you did all you could"; "He's gone to his eternal reward." Eliza speaks more of what she and her sister did for their brother while he was alive than she speaks of anything that would commemorate or give meaning to his life. A key aspect of waking, of any funeral ritual, is speaking against death to life: telling stories, offering eulogies, sharing memories. Here these necessary linguistic practices are missing. Rather, Eliza speaks about her brother's "queerness," and the stories she tells of his life are of his last days of weakness and disappointment. The story concludes with her comment, "That made them think that there was something gone wrong with him...." (18). Yet nobody seems to know just what that "something" was. Like the death at the end of "A Painful Case," the death of the priest goes without understanding, and the life without commemoration. "The Sisters" is the story of the death of a priest, but it is also an examination of how funeral ritual fails.

As the meal in "The Sisters" becomes a site for the ritual encounter with death, so do the festivities in "Clay" and "The Dead." In "Clay," there are the elements of festivity missing from "The Sisters." In fact, the party in "Clay" almost serves as a wake for Maria, as she is the one whose death is foretold in the game. Maria looks forward to the Hallow Eve party as she prepares to leave work at the beginning of the story. She purchases cakes and thinks of the other guests. The children plan a game where items are placed in saucers and blindfolded players pick an item to predict what will happen to them in a year: a ring signifies a wedding, a

prayer-book, the convent. In a jest, the children put clay in Maria's saucer. Clay universally signifies death, yet Maria is unaware of the meaning of the play:

> She felt a soft wet substance with her fingers and was surprised that nobody spoke or took off her bandage. There was a pause for a few seconds; and then a great deal of scuffling and whispering. Somebody said something about the garden, and at last Mrs Donnelly said something very cross to one of the next-door girls and told her to throw it out at once: that was no play. Maria understood that it was wrong that time and so she had to do it over again: and this time she got the prayer-book. (105)

The event, told from Maria's point of view in indirect discourse, shows that she has no idea what is going on. The style is purposely vague: "somebody said something," and all that Maria knows is that something is "wrong." Yet the choice of the prayer-book is also accurate. In fact, the whole purpose of the party is to maneuver Maria into a convent to die: the family does not want to take care of her. Maria, in choosing the prayer-book, has chosen death; that choice has not been thwarted after all. The party is disrupted by the presence of the premonition of death. The narrative remains focalized through Maria while there is drinking, and "reminiscences" (105) and songs. Yet these are also wake activities; death, the Unidentified Guest, is still there, and he belongs to Maria.

In "The Dead," although we do not learn of the death of Michael Furey until Gabriel Conroy does, at the end of the story, the dead are present throughout the party that comprises most of the text. Early in the story, the reader is informed that one of

Gabriel's uncles is dead; then we learn that Gabriel's mother is dead. Although the party is a festive occasion, the dead populate the celebratory moment.

The dinner is a rich and vital affair, full of food of all kinds and talk: "There was a great deal of confusion and laughter and noise, the noise of orders and counter-orders, of knives and forks, of corks and glass-stoppers" (197). It is a communal event, and a kind of communion as everyone is brought together. In the middle of dinner, the party members begin to talk about the monks of Mount Melleray, as Freddy Malins' mother mentions his plans to visit there:

> [Mr Browne] was astonished to hear that the monks never spoke, got up at two in the morning and slept in their coffins. He asked what they did it for.
>
> – That's the rule of the order, said Aunt Kate firmly.
>
> – Yes, but why? asked Mr Browne.
>
> Aunt Kate repeated that it was the rule, that was all. Mr Browne still seemed not to understand. Freddy Malins explained to him, as best he could, that the monks were trying to make up for the sins committed by all the sinners in the outside world. The explanation was not very clear for Mr Browne grinned and said:
>
> – I like that idea very much but wouldn't a comfortable spring bed do them as well as a coffin?
>
> – The coffin, said Mary Jane, is to remind them of their last end. (201)

Even in the festive moment, death is present; the image of the coffin rises up in "The Dead," the way it does in "The Sisters." Yet, while in "The Sisters" there is one death that is failed by the unsuccessful wake, in "The Dead" there are so many dead that they can never all be waked.

These dead crowd the final pages of the story. After the party their presence becomes all the more palpable. Gabriel's wife Gretta remembers her dead lover Michael Furey at the party, and he grows in importance as the story reaches its climax.

> – I suppose you were in love with this Michael Furey, Gretta, [Gabriel] said.
>
> – I was great with him at that time, she said.
>
> [...]
>
> – And what did he die of so young, Gretta? Consumption, was it?
>
> – I think he died for me, she answered.
>
> A vague terror seized Gabriel at this answer as if, at that hour when he had hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him gathering forces against him in its vague world. (220)

Dead; but in the final moments of the story Michael Furey is more important to Gretta, and ultimately to Gabriel, than the living. Even after Gabriel's minor successes at the party, his carving of the meat and his speech, he learns that it is the "vague world" of death that triumphs.

Gabriel's efforts at sympathy force his wife to mourn for the death of her lover, but then Gabriel cannot participate: "She stopped, choking with sobs, and overcome by emotion, flung herself face downward on the bed, sobbing in the quilt. Gabriel held her hand for a moment longer, irresolutely, and then, shy of intruding on her grief, let it fall gently and walked quietly to the window" (221). Yet this mourning brings home to him the presence of death, and the necessity of acknowledging it. In the last five paragraphs of the story, the word "death" and its variants appear six times. The symbol of the snow, and of winter and night, continues the motif signifying the end of life, as do the references to the "journey westward," and "farther westward," the direction in which the sun sets. Gabriel thinks: "One by one they were all becoming shades" (222); the living were becoming the dead. The snow falls on them as it falls "upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones" (223). He envisions the dead, becomes part of their landscape.

Gabriel comes to experience what Richard Ellmann calls the "mutual dependence of living and dead" (James Joyce 252). Yet, even as Gabriel comes to recognize the intimacy and the interdependence of living and dead, he sees that it is beyond human capacity to make meaning of this relationship through commemorative ritual. He thinks to the future and imagines the death of Aunt Julia:

> Soon, perhaps, he would be sitting in that same drawing-room, dressed in black, his silk hat on his knees. The blinds would be drawn down and Aunt Kate would be sitting beside him, crying and blowing her nose and telling him how Julia had died. He would cast about in his

> mind for some words that might console her, and would find only lame and useless ones. Yes, yes: that would happen very soon. (222)

The customs and accoutrements of funeral ritual will prove ineffective. Gabriel had been proud of his speech given earlier at dinner, but he now realizes that it was a hollow, empty triumph, and that words against death must fail. When we are all always already dead, ritual becomes pointless. Yet the connection between the living and the dead is a crucial, albeit mysterious, relationship necessary to life, to the past and to the future.

STEPHEN HERO AND A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

The relationship to the dead was necessary to Joyce's past, and to his writing. He fictionalized his autobiography into Stephen Hero, and revised Stephen Hero into Portrait. In Stephen Hero, the death of his brother George – transformed into the fictional Isabel – and the rejection of death ritual which must necessarily fail play an important role in the development of "Stephen Daedalus." Yet, this material is cut from the final published draft of Portrait; the death of Parnell is much more important to the young Stephen Dedalus of Portrait than the death of a brother or sister. In Stephen Hero, Stephen is conscious of the meanness of the unlived life, nasty, brutish, and short, and of the pointlessness of ritual designed to commemorate such an existence, and he seeks to embrace the life of an artist as escape. Nevertheless, in Portrait, he sees for himself an heroic future, and, as a child, imagines an heroic death. The death – and resurrection – of the hero will be a key concept later in Finnegans Wake.

However, in Stephen Hero, Joyce writes in great detail of the funeral of "Isabel." Some of the details come from the epiphanies mentioned earlier. He sees Isabel as having "existed by sufferance; the spirit that dwelt therein had literally never dared to live" (165). At the funeral, "Stephen heard the coffin bumping down the crooked staircase" (167); the body is treated roughly. The service lasts a perfunctory few minutes, is over, and life returns to normal:

> When the grave had been covered in the grave-diggers laid their shovels upon it and crossed themselves. The wreaths were put on the grave and after a pause for prayer the mourning party returned through the trim alleys of the cemetery. The unnatural tension of condolence had been somewhat relieved and the talk was becoming practical again. (168)

The dead are a burden. They force people to speak in tense pieties, of the sort in the Skeffington epiphany, and as used in Stephen Hero as well, with this addition: "The acme of unconvincingness seemed to Stephen to have been reached at that moment" (169). In Stephen Hero, Stephen views the funeral, and the death ritual itself, as trivial, mean, and false.

His rejection is seen not only as disrespect to family, to his sister and her passing, but as rejection of socially appropriate customs. As his father says later, angry over his son's refusal of help from the Jesuits,

> Didn't I see you the morning of your poor sister's funeral – don't forget that? Unnatural bloody ruffian. By Christ I was ashamed of you that morning. You couldn't behave like a gentleman or talk or do

> a bloody thing only slink over in a corner with the hearsedrivers and mutes by God. (228).

Yet Stephen is not merely refusing to be a "gentleman"; he refuses to participate, as he will later refuse to participate in prayer at his mother's bedside, in order to deny the necessity to acknowledge death in a banal or trivial way.

Joyce, through Stephen in Stephen Hero, looks to reinvent ritual. In addition, Joyce seeks to give death his own meaning, not a meaning imposed upon it by accepted ritual, as seen in the pieties of "The Sisters." This view of death, and the new view of ritual that surrounds it, is the death that little Stephen in Portrait envisions for himself when he is sick in the infirmary after getting pushed in a ditch full of water by another student, Wells. This imagined death is notable in its difference from the deaths in "The Sisters," "Eveline," and Stephen Hero, as well as deaths that have been described from Joyce's own life: it is a beautiful death. In Portrait, little Stephen sees the rituals that would accompany his passing as aesthetically powerful. This consciousness of the aesthetic nature of the ritual is part of Stephen's development as an artist. He thinks:

> He wondered if he would die. You could die just the same on a sunny day. He might die before his mother came. Then he would have a dead mass in the chapel like the way the fellows had told him it was when Little had died. All the fellows would be at the mass, dressed in black, all with sad faces. Wells too would be there but no fellow would look at him. The rector would be there in a cope of black and gold and there would be tall yellow candles on the altar and round the

> catafalque. And they would carry the coffin out of the chapel slowly and he would be buried in the little graveyard of the community off the main avenue of limes. And Wells would be sorry then for what he had done. And the bell would toll slowly. (24)

Stephen, the future novelist, imagines and narrates his own death and funeral. He assigns roles to others and sets the scene. At this point, Joyce has Stephen realize that the "dead mass" is a performance. It is markedly different from Stephen's narration of Isabel's funeral in Stephen Hero, which is a token ceremony followed by a trip to the pub.

Furthermore, if the individual must die, the death must be heroic: only through the heroic death can there be immortality, and Stephen certainly regards himself as heroic. It is this heroic death, this immortality ultimately through resurrection, that Joyce will ritualize in Finnegans Wake. Portrait provides us with a first depiction of the heroic death, signified by Charles Stewart Parnell. Parnell refused to step down from his leadership position in Parliament when his adulterous relationship was revealed, even when the majority of his party was aligned against him. Finally, the strain of fighting his personal battles against the Irish public and the Church lead to his death at the age of forty-five. Besides the use of Parnell in Portrait, the figure of Parnell is used in the story "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" and in Finnegans Wake. His death in "Ivy Day" is commemorated in trivial rituals. Joyce uses the triviality of the men eulogizing their dead king on the anniversary of his passing to critique the banality of the burgher and his meaningless customs. The

rituals are rendered all the more meaningless since it was these very men and their sort who rejected Parnell in his "disgrace."

In Portrait, unlike "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," Parnell is the emblem of the heroic death. The commemoration rituals that surround him are powerful and invested with meaning. Little Stephen, while imagining his own death, links it to Parnell in a dream while he lies in the infirmary. He dreams:

> He saw [Brother Michael] lift his hand towards the people and heard him say in a loud voice of sorrow over the waters: – He is dead. We saw him lying upon the catafalque. A wail of sorrow went up from the people. – Parnell! Parnell! He is dead! They fell upon their knees, moaning in sorrow. (27).

At the Christmas-day dinner in Portrait, the death of Parnell is commemorated and mourned. Yet it is not commemorated with the banal, formulaic rituals of the men in the committee room. Stephen's father and his friend Mr. Casey, and a family acquaintance Mrs. Riordan, or Aunt Dante, argue explosively about Parnell, and about his betrayal by the priests and his former friends which brought his downfall and death. It is a commemoration filled with fiery passion, and its performance remains permanently with the terrified Stephen. The words of his father and Mr. Casey create in him the idea of the heroic death, the death worthy of commemoration. Mr. Casey says, "Let him remember [...] the language with which the priests and the priests' pawns broke Parnell's heart and hounded him into his grave. Let him remember that too when he grows up" (34). The repeated injunctions to "remember" are a necessary part of the performance of commemoration. Likewise, Mr. Casey's

and Mr. Dedalus' tears at the end of the episode as Mr. Casey cries, "Poor Parnell! My dead king!" (40) are a necessary part of the collective process of mourning. This becomes Stephen's experience with death and death ritual, a performance that surrounds the death of a hero.

The mourning for Parnell, and the aesthetics of ritual, play a part in young Stephen's development as an artist. However, at the end of Portrait, Stephen quotes Christ's words, "Let the dead bury the dead. Ay. And let the dead marry the dead" (248). Stephen rejects his past, his nation, and the dead that crowd the collective memory of family and Ireland. In Ulysses, death and funeral ritual are central to the novel (and to marriage, as we shall see). As R. M. Adams writes, "Ireland is a land of walking ghosts and barely vitalized corpses. [...] The Dublin dead constantly control the Dublin living, if not directly, at least through the complex patterns of memory and association" (100). Yet comedy is also central, and death is central to this comedy. In writing Ulysses and, later, Finnegans Wake, Joyce links the comic genre and "the mutual dependence of living and dead," in the words of Ellmann, to create a regenerative ritual of death centered on resurrection.

ULYSSES

Joyce believed that death ritual was pointless when there was no hope for resurrection. He sought to create death ritual in which there could be an opening for resurrection. This is why the death ritual in Dubliners and Stephen Hero fail. In Ulysses he was seeking to find a way to ritualize death, and to find a way for resurrection. Barbara Myerhoff writes, "Simple biological death is no death at all.

Ceremonies must transform the corpse into a properly deceased person; death is only the necessary condition for departure from the world of the living" (109). The dead haunt Joyce's text because of unsuccessful death ritual; the failure wills the dead back to life, and then they must be buried again. The living finally bury their dead and the dead accept their deadness.

In Ulysses Joyce uses the genre of comedy to open the way for resurrection and a new death ritual. The comic employs the possibility of reconciliation and regeneration, and through these elements Joyce creates a new kind of death ritual, allowing the dead to be buried, though mourning goes on. There are many thwarted mourning processes. However, because Bloom and Stephen are forced to deal with death – through the ultimate funeral in "Circe" (at least until we get to Finnegans Wake) – Ulysses approaches comedy.

Søren Kierkegaard writes, "Listen to the newborn infant's cry in the hour of birth – see the death struggles in the final hour – and then declare whether what begins and ends in this way can be intended to be enjoyment" (qtd. in Alvarez 119). Joyce in Ulysses is at least saying that what begins and ends in this way – life – is fully intended to be funny, if not enjoyed. Leopold Bloom's existence begins and ends with "the cry in the hour of birth" and "the death struggles in the final hour." His son Rudy's birth began with a cry, and the death struggles are those of his father, Rudolph. Bloom's inheritance is suicide and mourning. He must reconcile himself to the death of the two Rudolphs before he can be the complete man Joyce envisioned him as being (Budgen 16). Before, when we had met Stephen in the Martello tower, he is in mourning as well, for his mother's death, but it is a bitter, thwarted mourning.

Each man needs to find closure in death ritual, and each dead person he mourns needs that closure, too.

However, it is not my intention to provide a schema for understanding Ulysses, nor do I wish to construct a totalizing interpretation. I bear Fritz Senn's judgment on critics who, with "ritual solemnity" seek "ultimate affirmation," who "tend to approach a prominent scheme within the text with no undue levity" (61). Rather than coming to Ulysses with "ritual solemnity," I propose to examine the text as an anatomy of ritual mourning that comes to a new way of using the comic genre.

Jacques Derrida writes, "One should not develop a taste for mourning, and yet mourn we *must*" (110). Ulysses is an anatomy of mourning, an exploration of inevitable and necessary mourning from every perspective.[4] There is the emotional perspective: bitterness, regret, remorse, loss, resignation. There is the physical perspective: decay, corruption, rot, corpse. But there is also the sacred element – *corpus*, and with it resurrection and rejuvenation. Bodies pop up throughout the text. There is need for a death ritual which will keep them buried. Corpses are willed to resurrection until the ritual can succeed, when a comic resurrection is achieved.

The "Telemachiad" – the first three episodes, focusing on Stephen Dedalus – are an exploration of a failure to mourn. As a result of this failure, Stephen's mother wanders and haunts her son. Next, we meet Bloom, and witness his own failure to mourn both his father, Rudolph, dead from suicide years before, and his son, Rudy, who had died eleven years ago when he was only eleven days old. "Hades," the

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[4] Another reading of mourning processes can be found in Ramsey's psychoanalytic/feminist analysis of mourning situating Molly Bloom's maternal body at the center of the thwarted grieving over Rudy's death.

episode in which Bloom attends the funeral of his dead friend Paddy Dignam, is the culmination of Joyce's anatomy of mourning. Corpses continue to haunt the text until, in "Circe," we have the final resurrection, the necessary funeral, and a comic rejuvenation.

In William Gass' description of an anatomy, "The parade has a settled order of march; the word 'anatomy' signifying its dissected analytical layout, its deployment of commentary descending through partitions, sections, members, into subsections, and adding to those body parts appendices, poetic addresses, a daunting synopsis" (x). The genre of anatomy is compared to the human body in its completeness and diversity of function. Ulysses is such an anatomy, and this use of the genre of anatomy is linked to Joyce's obsession with the body. Edmund Epstein writes, "Joyce considered that the most important functions of the soul – creation and destruction – were intimately associated with the growth and decay of the body" (73). The body is born, dies, decays, and is reborn. It is disgusting in its physicality, but Joyce also sees the body as sacred. Bodily dissolution and bodily resurrection are both vital parts of the creative process. Joyce seemed to see this almost literally: over and over again he killed people off and then brought them back to life.

We begin with the "Telemachiad" – "Telemachus," "Nestor," and "Proteus" – and Stephen's failed mourning for this mother's death. Many critics have examined the refusal of Stephen to kneel and say the Prayer for the Dying at his mother's deathbed. This is seen as proof of his unfeelingness towards his family, his rejection of Catholicism or religion, his stubborn, unflinching refusal to bend. However, if we

examine Stephen's mourning throughout the day, we see that he moves among many stages of grief. He is haunted by his mother, and mourns her death impotently and alone. Stephen does not deny his mother, or his grief. Rather, he rejects empty expressions of mourning; he rejects meaningless death ritual and social convention. He needs something new in order to be able to mourn his mother's death in a way that is fulfilling to him.

Stephen wears mourning clothes, but wants no part of mourning etiquette. Buck Mulligan, like so many others in the novel, misunderstands Stephen when he offers Stephen a pair of gray trousers, only to be rebuffed: "He can't wear them. Etiquette is etiquette. He kills his mother but he can't wear gray trousers" (1.121-22). Mulligan is wrong. Stephen's decision to maintain mourning costume has nothing to do with etiquette. Stephen has no interest in etiquette or social convention. He maintains his mourning clothes because he wishes his outside to be marked as his inside is; like Hamlet, Stephen wants his exterior to reflect the interior.

Stephen holds a grudge against Mulligan: the medical student had said to his aunt: "O it's only Dedalus whose mother is beastly dead" (1.198-99). If we believe that Stephen does not care about the death of his mother, this does not make sense. Mulligan makes a show of telling Stephen death does not mean anything. He says:

> And what is death, he asked, your mother's or yours or my own? You saw only your mother die. I see them pop off every day in the Mater and Richmond and cut up into tripes in the dissectingroom. It's a beastly thing and nothing else. It simply doesn't matter. [...] You crossed her last wish in death and yet you sulk with me because I don't

> whinge like some hired mute from Lalouette's. Absurd! I suppose I did say it. I didn't mean to offend the memory of your mother. (1.204-15)

For Mulligan, the body – the corpse – is beastly, not human. It is something to be cut up and buried, not something sacred, an object of ritual. Yet he also thinks that social convention should be adhered to. Last wishes should be granted, even if they are meaningless. Etiquette is etiquette. Mulligan insists on judging Stephen, declaring him guilty for "killing his mother." Stephen refused to say the Prayer of the Dead, and Mulligan taunts him with the idea that this killed her.

However, Stephen cannot say the Prayer of the Dead, because he cannot abide the tension between the corpse and the *corpus*. For Mulligan, there is only the body. For Stephen, there must be the soul, but he fails to see how it can exist in the midst of such decay and horror. The ritual as it is does not address this opposition, and thus is meaningless to him. So Stephen continues to see the rotting body of his mother. She haunts him because he could not say the prayer that would make the corpse sacred. He sees her as a "lemur" (15.4176), a specter of the dead, a set of bones with bits of flesh attached (Gifford 517). In Stephen's memory of the death-scene, there are details from Joyce's own visions of his mother:

> Silently, in a dream she had come to him after her death, her wasted body within its loose brown graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, that had bent upon him, mute, reproachful, a faint odour of wetted ashes. [...] A bowl of white china had stood

> beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver by fits of loud groaning vomiting. (1.102-10)

In "Telemachus," she comes to his mind from beyond the grave. At this point, she does not speak, for there are no words against death. She wanders because the living have not done their duty to the dead, but the duty as it is can never be sufficient. The vision sparks a memory of her painful, disgusting death: bile, vomiting. This creates tension with Stephen's memories of her happier days: "Her secrets: old featherfans, tasseled dancecards, powdered with musk, a gaud of amber beads in her locked drawer" (1.255-56). In mourning ritual there is both life and death, a celebration of the life that has passed, and solace for the living who remain. Stephen does not find the sacred, nor does he find solace, in the tension between the memory of his mother and the vision of her horrible end. Likewise, there needs to be remembrance of, and comfort for, the dead.

In the early chapters of Ulysses, the prayer, for Stephen, is a spell that does not work. It does not help her and it does not help him:

> Her glazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul. On me alone. The ghostcandle to light her agony. Ghostly light on the tortured face. Her hoarse loud breath rattling in horror, while all prayed on their knees. Her eyes on me to strike me down. *Liliata rutilantium te confessorum turma circumdet: iubilantium te virginum chorus excipiat.*
>
> Ghoul! Chewer of corpses!
>
> No, mother! Let me be and let me live. (1.273-79)

The Latin prayer means: May the glittering throng of confessors, bright as lilies, gather about you. May the glorious choir of virgins receive you (Gifford 19). But the spell does not work. The "chewer of corpses" is a wrathful God (Gifford 250), "an omnivorous being which can masticate, deglute, digest and apparently pass through the ordinary channel with pluterperfect imperturbability such multifarious aliments as cancrenous females emaciated by parturition" (14.1287-90). The "chewer of corpses" is also a *croque-mort*, an undertaker's assistant. Stephen's mother becomes an agent of death, but the vision is ironized through the use of the ghoulish French slang term. The words against death fail. Stephen can only move towards the possibility of the creation of a new ritual. While Joyce's brother George and his mother were dying, he sang "Who Goes with Fergus?" to them; he uses this moment in Ulysses, and the words to the poem alternate throughout the text with the Prayer for the Dying – competing ritual moments. As Kenner suggests, this becomes Stephen's prayer (129). This is a valid point, although we must also note that this does not bring Stephen any closer to reconciliation with his mother's passing.

Death haunts Stephen throughout the rest of his episodes until the "Circe" chapter. He travels throughout the day in mourning clothes, marked by grief. In "Nestor," in the school where he teaches, the boys ask to hear a "ghoststory," and one student recites Milton's "Lycidas: "Weep no more, woful shepherds, weep no more/For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,/Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor" (2.64-66). This is an important echo, for it reminds Stephen that his mother is in fact not "dead," as she continues to wander and cannot be put to rest. Further, throughout the "Telemachiad," strong associations are made between Stephen's

mother and the sea. For example, Mulligan points out the "snotgreen sea" as Swinburne's "great sweet mother" (1.77-78). Stephen then recalls the green vomit of his mother's dying moments. In "Proteus," Stephen standing by the sea thinks of his mother, and of death:

> Bag of corpsegas sopping in foul brine. A quiver of minnows, fat of a spongy titbit, flash through the slits of his buttoned trouserfly. God becomes man becomes fish becomes barnacle goose becomes featherbed mountain. Dead breaths I living breathe, tread dead dust, devour a ruinous offal from all dead. (3.476-80).

Stephen thinks of himself living and of himself dead, but there is no reconciliation. The sea and mother represent both life and death, birth and decay, and the cycle of human existence. The reconciliation among these elements is the necessary climax of the construction of ritual in the text.

Stephen declares in "Scylla and Charybdis," "There can be no reconciliation if there has not been a sundering" (9.397-98). Death has sundered Stephen and his mother, but through mourning ritual he will work towards some kind of reconciliation. There is a gap between his words – which are detached and cold – and his feelings expressed inwardly about his mother's death. In "Proteus," looking at the sea, he thinks: "I could not save her. Waters: bitter death: lost" (3.329-30). Stephen had refused to say the Prayer for the Dying, not, or not only, out of disrespect, but because he knew it would not ward off death and loss. She is not the only one who is lost; he speaks of himself as well. In "Scylla and Charybdis," he returns to thoughts of his own impotence and a grief that can not be shared:

"Mother's deathbed. Candle. The sheeted mirror. Who brought me into this world lies there, bronzelidded, under few cheap flowers. *Liliata rutilantium.* I wept alone" (9.221-24). The lines of the prayer are made ironic in the context of the pathetic tokens of mourning, and the unrestrained grief of a son who has made detachment a way of life. For Stephen, grief cannot be shared. He cannot enter into a community of mourners through ritual; he is impotent and alone.

Like Stephen, Leopold Bloom is also marked by mourning clothes as he spends the early part of the day at the funeral of his friend Dignam, and also grieving a death – two deaths – that for which ritual has no meaning. Kevin Dettmar has pointed out that Dignam's death may have been meant to form the center, the heart, of Ulysses (189); indeed, the heart was meant to be the corresponding organ for "Hades" (Gifford 104). However, while "Hades" is a complete anatomy of mourning, and of the corpse, there are echoes of death and the dead throughout the episodes covering the wandering of Bloom.

Bloom spends the day in mourning for his friend Dignam; we learn shortly after our first encounter with him in the "Calypso" episode that he is planning to attend the funeral. However, Bloom's true grief is over the death of his infant son eleven years before, and the death of his father from suicide when Bloom was a young man. As Bloom eats his breakfast and thinks of his daughter Milly, who is away from home working as a photographer's assistant, his thoughts turn from his child who is living to his child who is dead: "Remember the summer morning she was born, running to knock up Mrs. Thornton in Denzille street. Jolly old woman.

Lot of babies she must have helped into the world. She knew from the first poor little Rudy wouldn't live. Well, God is good, sir. She knew at once. He would be eleven now if he had lived" (4.416-20). On this summer morning, a time of rejuvenation and life, Bloom's thoughts continually return to death. Despite the years that have elapsed since the death of his son, he is still in mourning.

His movements through town also remind him of the death of his father, Rudolph Virag. He thinks of the theater: "*Leah* tonight. Mrs. Bandmann Palmer. Like to see her again in that. Hamlet she played last night. Male impersonator. Perhaps he was a woman. Why Ophelia committed suicide. Poor papa!" (5.194-97). Bloom's train of thought leads him back to death, the two deaths that have framed his life. He thinks, "That day! O, dear! O, dear! Ffoo! Well, perhaps it was best for him" (5.208-09). One would think that with these words Bloom puts the suicide of his father behind him. Yet the recurrences of thought and memory keep the father alive. He haunts Bloom, brought back from the dead through a failure of mourning. Unlike Stephen, who is aware that his grief is his own burden that cannot be laid down, Bloom believes that his life has moved on when it is in fact at a standstill.

Others see this about Bloom even though he himself cannot, or will not, admit it. Bloom keeps his grief private, but in public it constantly emerges. In the "Lestrygonians" episode, Davy Byrne the pub-keeper, referring to Bloom's mourning clothes, says, "I never broach the subject if I see a gentleman is in trouble that way. It only brings it up fresh in their minds" (8.947-48). Byrne is polite; he refuses to discuss death and mourning. Yet although people might not bring Bloom's sorrows up to his face, they are always beneath the surface, wounds that do not heal. In

"Cyclops," customers in Barney Kiernan's speak of Bloom: "Isn't he a cousin of Bloom the dentist? says Jack Power. – Not at all, says Martin. Only namesakes. His name was Virag, the father's name that poisoned himself" (12.1638-40). Then the men move on to talk about Rudy: "You should have seen Bloom before that son of his that died was born" (12.1650-51).

There is a slippage between the signifier of Bloom's mourning clothes and the reality of his grief. The mourning clothes mark him as a man in grief, yet they are a false signifier; they do not signify his real grief. That is the grief that Bloom dare not speak of, but it is constantly articulated by everyone else. Bloom would rather no one notice, but in his mourning clothes he speaks grief, a grief he prefers to keep silent, a grief no one will leave alone.

The grief Bloom harbors over the unmourned deaths of his son and father combines in the "Sirens" episode with the grief he feels over the loss of his wife Molly to Blazes Boylan in an adulterous encounter. "Sirens" is the episode Joyce structured around music, as well as the section in which Boylan arrives at 7 Eccles Street for his meeting with Molly. However, there is an undercurrent of mourning in the episode as Bloom conflates his various losses and grieves over them all; he becomes Orpheus, the poet-musician who lost his wife to the world of the dead. According to the Linati scheme, "Sirens" is the only episode to have as one of its correspondences the person of Orpheus (Ellmann, Ulysses). Orpheus was the poet-musician who tried to lead his wife Eurydice from Hades; he was told that in order to take her from the world of the dead he could not look back at her, but he did and Eurydice disappeared back into Hades forever.

The musical objects in "Sirens" are associated with death; a piano becomes a "coffin" (11.291), a tuningfork makes a "dying call" (11.316). Joyce apparently told Stuart Gilbert that Bloom was meant to be the episode's tuning fork (Ellmann, Ulysses 103). Bloom sets the pitch of the episode, but his contribution to the music is a "dying call," a lamentation. He hears death in the songs; they are a keening for his loss. While some funerals have mutes, Bloom has Miss Douce and Miss Kennedy, as well as Simon Dedalus, an echo of the other character of the text immersed in mourning. Bloom thinks:

> Thou lost one. All songs on that theme. Yet more Bloom stretched his string. Cruel it seems. Let people get fond of each other: lure them on. Then tear asunder. Death. Explos. Knock on the head. Outtohelloutofthat. Human life. Dignam. Ugh, that rat's tail wriggling! Five bob I gave. *Corpus paradisum.* Corncrake croaker: belly like a poisoned pup. Gone. They sing. Forgotten. I too. (11.802-07)

Bloom's thoughts of death always return to pain and cruelty, to corruption. The body of Ulysses is not the *corpus paradisum*; it is the bloated rat. Bloom reflects on the violence and cruelty of death; he also struggles with the seemingly meaningless nature of death and suffering. Terry Eagleton writes that pain is "is just not part of the order of meaning. It is rather a disruption of meaning, a garbling of sense" (113). Bloom's pain is what disrupts meaning, what creates an "instability of reference" (Scarry 120). He is made and unmade through his attempts to deal with his pain, a pain which constantly escapes language even as so much language

surrounds it. Joyce's language is created to deal with Bloom's pain, and ritual is created to deal with it, but it is never fully resolved. This instability is reflected in Joyce's use of syntactical disruption, yet it is also what gives meaning to Bloom's story and ultimately what allows him to come home more whole than when he left.

The rat comes back: "Priest with the communion corpus for those women. Chap in the mortuary, coffin or coffey, *corpusnomine*. Wonder where that rat is by now" (11.1034-36). Communion is a place where people are brought together, a place of reconciliation, but it is also a place where death is commemorated. This is a sacred death, a sacred body – the *corpus* – but this sacredness is joined with the corpse, with corruption. Bloom explicitly remembers death, "coffin or coffey," and thinks of death as something that happens to everyone. He also recalls with "coffey" and "belly like a poisoned pup" Father Coffey who officiates at Dignam's funeral in "Hades" (6.599), another echo from the morning's ritual. *Corpusnomine* is the "name of the corpse": it could be anyone's name. It could be Rudy's: "No son. Rudy. Too late now" (11.1067), as Bloom thinks of his lost son, and the son he will never have. It could be Bloom himself: "Those are names. Rudy. Soon I am old" (11.1069). Yet the corpse remains unnamed, and, as are all the corpses in this book, uncommemorated.

Even at the moment of Mina Purefoy's giving birth to her son in "Oxen of the Sun," Bloom's loss is brought back into our consciousness, and his:

> He still had pity of the terrorcausing shrieking of shrill women in their labour and as he was minded of his good lady Marion that had borne

> him an only manchild which on his eleventh day on live had died and no man of art could save him so dark is destiny. (14.264-68)

There is no escaping this death, even in new life: "Name and memory solace thee not" (14.1074). Death ritual is meant to commemorate a name and give meaning to a memory; however, both of these are missing for Bloom. At the same time, Bloom's thoughts of death in relation to his marriage and to the birth of the Purefoy baby situate his grief in spaces of reconciliation and rebirth.

Until this reconciliation, and resurrection, can be incorporated into the death ritual of the text, Bloom will be haunted throughout his day by the corpse. This is represented by the popping up of Dignam, the corpse, and his counterpart, Death, the man in the brown mackintosh. The center of this haunting is "Hades," an anatomy of death, and culminates in "Circe," the funeral for the ghosts that are tormenting Stephen and Bloom.

Bloom spends his morning marking time until eleven, the hour of the funeral. As he begins his wanderings, the bells of St. George's church toll, and Bloom thinks, "Poor Dignam!" (4.551). Despite the time and season – morning, summer, both symbols of renewal and life – Bloom's day in June begins with death. He is constantly aware of the time, counting down until the funeral, which represents also a counting down towards death.

As Bloom arrives at the funeral, the weather changes, and there is a bit of rain. In this way, Joyce's anatomy of death begins, with a symbol both of sadness and of cleansing and renewal. Joyce has constructed "Hades" to incorporate every aspect of

death, grief, and mourning; Bloom's thoughts follow the events of the episode, the stages of the ritual. These are:

- grief: Bloom's mourning for Rudy and Rudolph Virag; the Dignam family; Simon Dedalus' mourning for his wife
- types of death: the benefits of quick versus slow death; suicide; murder
- superstitions and songs
- customs and etiquette: mourning stationery; mutes; coaches; types of coffins; announcements; monuments
- religious practices in death: Catholic; Protestant; Hindu; Jewish
- death beliefs: resurrection; reincarnation
- sacred elements: funeral ritual
- corruption: stages of decay

Furthermore, the use of the genre of anatomy correlates with the focus on anatomy itself, and the tension between the sacred *corpus* and the corrupted corpse. In particular, there is a motif of "meat" running through the episode. Bloom's preoccupation with meat draws the reader's focus towards corruption and decay – towards the corpse – and away from the sacred ritual of the funeral, and the *corpus*. As the funeral cortège moves towards the cemetery, Bloom notices a drove of cattle and sheep headed for the slaughterhouse. He thinks, "Tomorrow is killing day." He considers the "dead meat trade": "roastbeef for England," "byproducts of the slaughterhouse," "dicky meat," or bad meat. He says, "I can't make out why the corporation doesn't run a tramline from the parkgate to the quays [...]. All those could be taken in trucks down the boats." He continues a moment later: "And

another thing I often thought, is to have municipal funeral trams like they have in Milan, you know. Run the line out to the cemetery gates and have special trams, hearse and carriage and all" (6.392-407). Bloom conflates the carrion of animals with the corpses of humans, desacralizing the death of the individual even in a supposedly sacred ritual space. The priest is "whitesmocked" like a butcher, and "a corpse is meat gone bad" (6.590, 981-82). The elements and performance of death ritual cannot disguise the fact, for Bloom, that human life is nasty, brutish, and short, that, dead or alive, all of us are meat.

Despite the sacred space of the cemetery, and Father Coffey's performance of the death ritual, there is nothing sacred about the dead in "Hades." Yet the grief is real. In Glasnevin Cemetery, Bloom revisits mentally the deaths of his son, his father, even his father's dog. He remembers the care of his dead son's body: "Then getting it ready. Laying it out. Molly and Mrs Fleming making the bed. Pull it more to your side. Our windingsheet. Never know who will touch you dead. Wash and shampoo. I believe they clip the nails and the hair. Keep a bit in an envelope. Grows all the same after. Unclean job" (6.16-20). The body of Rudy is "it," and the work with his corpse is unclean. The ritual which surrounded the death of his son did nothing more for Bloom than show him that his son was just a small corpse. The ritual of laying out the dead holds no meaning here for Bloom; this is another example of Joyce's taking an accepted ritual and rejecting it. Something needs to take its place, but the space of Hades is not where we are going to find it.

However, Rudy is alive in Bloom's fantasy: "If little Rudy had lived. See him grow up. Hear his voice in the house. Walking beside Molly in an Eton suit.

My son. Me in his eyes. Strange feeling it would be. From me. Just a chance" (6.75-77). Bloom holds on not to the memory of his infant son, but to an almost narcissistic vision of what he would have been. It is hard to commemorate the boy, because he never had a life. He never had his own story – he was merely Bloom's sequel. Bloom thinks, "A dwarf's face, mauve and wrinkled like little Rudy's was. [...] Our. Little. Beggar. Baby. Meant nothing. Mistake of nature. If it's healthy it's from the mother. If not from the man" (6.326-30). Bloom wonders if Rudy's death came "from him." Perhaps the death meant nothing: nothing was wrong with him, it was not his fault. Perhaps the death signifies nothing: the death itself is meaningless, as the life was meaningless having had no time to live.

Or perhaps all death is meaningless because, as Eagleton says, all suffering is meaningless. Bloom does not seek meaning in ritual, a purpose ritual is meant to serve. Meaning cannot be found here as long as suffering and death themselves are meaningless; the ritual must find a way to bring its participants to a space that transcends death – to resurrection – and thus to meaning. It is this space we shall find in Finnegans Wake.

Joyce uses funeral customs and conventions to show how empty the ritual is as it is conceived here. Bloom looks at the paper, listing the deaths. We see how cliché makes a poor attempt at commemoration:

> Callan, Coleman, Dignam, Fawcett, Lowry, Naumann, Peake, what Peake is that? is it the chap was in Crosbie and Alleyne's? no, Sexton, Urbright. Inked characters fast fading on the frayed breaking paper. Thanks to the Little Flower. Sadly missed. To the

> inexpressible grief of his. Aged 88 after a long and tedious illness. (6.157-62)

The names of the dead are given in a list, with no significance attached. Bloom attempts to find significance for one – Peake – but cannot, and keeps moving over the names. There are fragments of words against death: thanks to saints, expressions of sadness, cause of demise. However, they are all characters fast fading. We are all characters fast fading, as is Bloom, on frayed breaking paper. Words against death, cliché, fail in the face of utter meaninglessness.

Monuments and other signifiers of death are shown to be equally empty of meaning. As the cortège arrives at Glasnevin Cemetery, Bloom sees the monuments:

> Last lap. Crowded on the spit of land silent shapes appeared, white, sorrowful, holding out calm hands, knelt in grief, pointing. Fragments of shapes, hewn. In white silence: appealing. The best obtainable. Thos. H. Dennany, monumental builder and sculptor. (6.459-62)

These shapes are not grieving mourners, not human participants in ritual. Rather, the cemetery is transformed into a marketplace, an advertisement; Thomas Dennany's stonecutter's yard and his display of wares was located just outside the cemetery, convenient for customers (Gifford 115). Thus symbols of death are emptied of their meaning through their incorporation into commerce.

Bloom is not impressed with the funeral; he sees it as empty. "Paltry funeral: coach and three carriages. It's all the same. Pallbearers, gold reins, requiem mass, firing a volley. Pomp of death" (6.498-99). Every death ends an individual life that is meant to be commemorated; in death an individual's story is told. Yet Bloom notes

that all funerals are the same; the individual is awarded no particular distinction through the rules of custom. He thinks later, "Makes them feel more important to be prayed over in Latin. Requiem mass. Crape weepers. Blackedged notepaper. Your name on the altarlist" (6.602-03). For Joyce, the ritual is not sufficient for either the living or the dead, because it neglects to offer anything to the living; nor does it take into account the bodily death.

Corruption is part of bodily death, and Bloom engages in detailed fantasies of decay: "saltwhite crumbling mush of corpse: smell, taste like raw white turnips" (6.993-94). He imagines Paddy Dignam's coffin falling off the carriage and popping open in the road: "Red face: grey now. Mouth fallen open. Asking what's up now. Quite right to close it. Looks horrid open. Then the insides decompose quickly. Much better to close up all the orifices. Yes, also. With wax. The sphincter loose. Seal up all" (6.423-26). Bloom gets to the bottom (literally) of the component of laying out in death ritual. The body must be readied for the part it will play in the performance of the funeral for the mourners. It cannot be disgusting. But Bloom's fantasies are disgusting:

> I daresay the soil would be quite fat with corpsemanure, bones, flesh, nails. Charnelhouses. Dreadful. Turning green and pink decomposing. Rot quick in damp earth. The lean old ones tougher. Then a kind of a tallowy kind of a cheesy. Then begin to get black, black treacle oozing out of them. Then dried up. (6.776-80)

Bloom speaks of the soil of the cemetery. The cemetery is no longer a sacred space to be revered but a breeding ground for maggots. Yet Bloom is also considering a

significant stage of the life cycle: the death cycle, the return of the body to the earth in all the stages of corruption. In a sense, "Hades" is not a celebration of an individual's life in death, but a celebration of the life *of* death itself, in all its parts and phases.

Death ritual, as scholars such as Ruth Richardson have claimed, cleans up the corpse. As Robert Hertz has argued, three things are necessary for death ritual to function: the soul of the dead, the living mourners, and the corpse to be buried (qtd. in Metcalf and Huntington 62-3). The corpse is present, but in a way that makes the process of dying and decay easier for the living to bear. Ritual breaks down and needs to be recombined and recreated without the corpse, as we saw in our discussion of World War One poetry. Yet for Joyce, the mere presence of the corpse is not enough; mere burial is not enough. The corpse needs to be present in all its physicality and corruption. To deny this is to deny the efficacy of death ritual as Joyce conceived of it. Further, there needs to be the possibility of resurrection. In Finnegans Wake we will see how Joyce makes a place in his conception of death for resurrection through a reinvention and successful deployment of death ritual. There is literal resurrection as HCE comes back from the dead – over and over again – thus bringing about the possibility of rejuvenation and victory over death for all humankind. In Ulysses, however, this death ritual is not yet constructed. There are only the faintest allusions to resurrection: there is really only haunting.

It is in "Hades" that Bloom first sees the man in the brown macintosh. Vladimir Nabokov believed the man in the macintosh was Joyce: "Bloom glimpses his maker." Yet the man could be the Unidentified Guest, death: Bloom glimpses his

Maker. He is the Unidentified Guest at the funeral, misnamed in the paper as M'Intosh. Bloom notices him at the funeral: "Now who is that lankylooking galoot over there in the macintosh? [...] No. The chap in the macintosh is thirteen. Death's number. Where the deuce did he pop out of?" (6.805, 825-26). Bloom associates the man with death, with absence. (*Galut* is also Hebrew for "exile.") The association continues as the man appears shortly after we see Paddy Dignam's son dressed in mourning in the street in "Wandering Rocks" (10.1271). Then again in "Cyclops": "The man in the brown macintosh loves a lady who is dead" (12.1497-98). Here he is associated with death, and there is perhaps a resonance again with Orpheus, who also loved a lady who was dead, and who traveled into the world of Hades. Finally, Mackintosh appears in "Oxen of the Sun," "walking Mackintosh of lonely canyon"(14.1552-53). Could it be that he walks through the valley of the shadow of death? This is the man's last appearance before "Circe," when he joins the rest of the ghosts of the novel for the ultimate funeral.

Bloom is surrounded by ghosts in the land of the dead: "Every mortal day a fresh batch: middleaged men, old women, children, women dead in childbirth, men with beards, baldheaded businessmen, consumptive girls with little sparrow's breasts" (6.623-26). In this catalogue of corpses, Bloom almost gives the dead ones an element of individuality. He thinks of their individual, unique characteristics – all of which, notably, come from their bodies, from elements of their physicality. These dead people haunt the text. Bloom boisterously rejects the idea of resurrection:

> Once you are dead you are dead. That last day idea. Knocking them all up out of their graves. Come forth, Lazarus! And he came fifth

> and lost the job. Get up! Last day! Then every fellow mousing around for his liver and his lights and the rest of his traps. (6.677-80)

Bloom considers the whole idea a joke; so did Joyce, as Arthur Power has said. Joyce's idea of resurrection had to include the physical body, liver and lights and all.

The funeral given to Dignam was not the right kind of funeral – a failed funeral, according to Dettmar – and he continues to haunt the text with Rudy and Virag, just as Stephen's mother continues to haunt him. Throughout the day's mundane activities, Dignam continues to pop up, refusing to stay in the grave in which he was so recently placed. The men at the funeral themselves feel a lack of closure over Dignam's death, so they obsess over announcements in the paper, lists of who attended the funeral. The lists in the paper of who attended the funeral are more real to these men than their own actual physical presence at the cemetery was; this indicates the unreality, the dreamlike quality of Hades, and the inadequacy of the ritual for both living and dead. An announcement appears in the Freeman's Journal in "Aeolus": "This morning the remains of the late Mr Patrick Dignam" (7.80). The entry is unfinished, as though the ritual did not even exist. In "Lestrygonians," as he eats his lunch, Bloom thinks again of Dignam: "Dignam's potted meat" (8.744-45). This echoes Bloom's imaginings of Dignam's rotted corpse.

Meanwhile, in "Wandering Rocks," the other members of the funeral party try to decide how to care for Dignam's wife and children. They encounter the Subsheriff, Long John Fanning, who does not even recall who Dignam was: "What Dignam was that? [...] Long John Fanning could not remember him" (10.1017, 1030). Already "A MOST RESPECTED DUBLIN BURGESS" (7.78-79) is slipping

from memory, an inked character fast fading. This appears again in "Cyclops," as the men in Barney Kiernan's pub try to figure out what happened to Dignam:

> – I don't know, says Alf. I saw him [Willy Murray] just now in Capel street with Paddy Dignam. Only I was running after that...
>
> – You what? says Joe, throwing down the letters. With who?
>
> – With Dignam, says Alf.
>
> – Is it Paddy? says Joe
>
> – Yes, says Alf. Why?
>
> – Don't you know he's dead? says Joe
>
> – Paddy Dignam dead! says Alf.
>
> – Ay, says Joe.
>
> – Sure I'm after seeing him not five minutes ago, says Alf, as plain as a pikestaff.
>
> – Who's dead? says Bob Doran.
>
> – You saw his ghost then, says Joe, God between us and harm.
>
> – What? says Alf. Good Christ, only five...What?...And Willy Murray with him, the two of them near whatdoyoucallhim's...What? Dignam dead?
>
> – What about Dignam? says Bob Doran. Who's talking about...?
>
> – Dead! says Alf. He's no more dead than you are.
>
> – Maybe so, says Joe. They took the liberty of burying him this morning anyhow (12.314-33).

This absurd exchange among the men at Barney Kiernan's illustrates how news is passed and stories created through gossip, a process brought to comic heights in Finnegans Wake as the death and resurrection of HCE is endlessly talked over. These men struggle to get at the reality of Dignam's passing; they were not at the funeral and do not know the story, and their confusion shows the breakdown of communication and community, a unity that is supposed to be engendered by death ritual. This is a nonstory. Nothing is told, nothing is revealed; its absurdist conclusion is that Dignam, dead or no, was buried that morning. It is easier for the men to believe his ghost is haunting the streets of Dublin.

Which, in a way, it is, as Dignam appears to Bloom as he continues on his wanderings. He thinks of Dignam three times after he masturbates on the beach in "Nausicaa." The episode has done him good, he thinks: "Off color after Kiernan's, Dignam's. [...] Washing child, washing corpse. Dignam" (13.939, 956). This is another echo of Rudy joined with thoughts of Dignam. His awareness of his own detumescent body, cold and clammy, of the corpses of his son and of his friend are conflated as he stands on the beach. He thinks again: "Houses of mourning so depressing because you never know" (13.1226). His own house remains a house of mourning, and in "Nausicaa" he acknowledges for a moment his own grief: "Metempsychosis. They believed you could be changed into a tree from grief" (13.1118-19). All day Bloom has been marked as a man touched by death and loss by his mourning clothes. Yet here he imagines a state where one's grief manifests itself as a change of body. In death, and as a result of death, we become something new. This demands a new form of ritual, one we approach in "Circe."

"Circe" is a funeral, a ritual performance that relies completely on the physical presence of the dead. It is the living whose role in the performance is problematic. Stephen's mother, Bloom's father and son – all rise from the dead and present themselves. The man in the brown mackintosh, the Unidentified Guest, appears at the moment a crowd of Dublin sightseers dies: "*Morituri te salutant. (they die) (A man in a brown mackintosh springs up through a trapdoor)*" (15.1557-58). He reappears, transformed into the ghost of Bloom's grandfather. Paddy Dignam, too, appears, in all his putrefied glory: "The beagle lifts his snout, showing the grey scorbutic face of Paddy Dignam. He has gnawed all. He exhales a putrid carcasefed breath" (15.1204-06). He says, "It is true. It was my funeral. [...] I am Paddy Dignam's spirit. List, list, O list!" (15.1210, 1218). The dead are made present so they may be buried again, this time for good. Father Conmee puns on Paddy Dignam's name: *Vere dignum et iustum est* (10.4). Therefore, Dignam's name signifies worthiness: is he worthy to be received into the kingdom of Heaven? Is he worthy of sacred death ritual? Is anyone? Only then may mourning cease. As we shall see, however, mourning never ceases; Bloom and Stephen move on, continually trying to integrate the dead into their lives.

Bloom arrives in Nighttown from the maternity hospital. He is at a low point; he cannot appreciate new life while the ghosts of the dead haunt him. He sees his father, with his dog Athos, the animal that his father in his suicide note asked Bloom to care for. Bloom does not have a welcoming, fond vision of his father. Rather, he sees a threatening, ghastly apparition: "A stooped bearded figure appears garbed in the long caftan of an elder in Zion and a smokingcap with magenta tassels. Horned

spectacles hang down at the wings of his nose. Yellow poison streaks are on the drawn face" (15.249-51). Bloom's father asks him, "Have you no soul? [...] Are you not my son Leopold? (15.259-60). Virag does not recognize his son; however, Bloom has lived for so long with the ghost of his father, and the remorse and guilt engendered by the haunting, that he recognizes Rudolph immediately.

Likewise, Bloom recognizes his son, Rudy. He sees Rudy at the end of the episode, "a fairy boy of eleven, a changeling, kidnapped, dressed in an Eton suit with glass shoes and a little bronze helmet" (15.4957-58). Bloom speaks the name of his son, calling to him, but the ghost boy does not acknowledge his father. What he is cannot be named by the living. He does not even see Bloom; he

> gazes, unseeing, into Bloom's eyes and goes on reading, kissing, smiling. He has a delicate mauve face. On his suit he has diamond and ruby buttons. In his free left hand he holds a slim ivory cane with a violet bowknot. A white lambkin peeps out of his waistcoat pocket. (15.4964-67)

The fact that he now appears to be eleven years old, the age he would be had he lived, shows that he is removed from his father's life, and from the life his father would want for him. Since there was no life to commemorate, his father has constructed a fantasy, but the fantasy was false.

"Circe" is framed by this recognition/nonrecognition. The living recognize the dead, while the dead are removed from relationship with the living. The living – Bloom, Stephen – have maintained a relationship with the dead through their grief. Their mourning has not transformed the relationship into one that would allow them

to find closure. The ritual space of "Circe" is not one of commemoration; it is not a place where memory is constructed and situated in its proper place in order to allow the living to move on. The experience of the living and the dead are divergent. Mourning ritual is meant to establish a place where those experiences can begin to diverge once a loved one has died and the living need to move on. This has not happened, and it is only in "Circe" that Bloom and Stephen realize it.

Stephen's mother, too, appears as a rotting corpse, to the sounds of the Prayer for the Dying:

> *Stephen's mother, emaciated, rises stark through the floor, in leper grey with a wreath of faded orangeblossoms and a torn bridal veil, her face worn and noseless, green with gravemould. Her hair is scant and lank. She fixes her bluecircled hollow eyesockets on Stephen and opens her toothless mouth uttering a silent word. A choir of virgins and confessors sing voicelessly.*
>
> THE CHOIR
>
> Liliata rutilantium te confessorum...
>
> Iubilantium te virginum.... (15.4157-85)

The Prayer for the Dying – the prayer Stephen refused to say at his mother's bedside – has failed. May Dedalus does not rest peacefully in her grave. The juxtaposition between the wandering corpse and the prayer signifies the failure of conventional death ritual and custom. "Circe" is haunted because the dead cannot rest without a new kind of commemorative ritual.

Stephen feels "fright, remorse and horror" (15.4186). He says, "They say I killed you, mother. He [Buck Mulligan] offended your memory. Cancer did it, not I. Destiny" (15.4187-88). Stephen is searching for a way to fulfill his responsibility to the dead. His mother gives the answer: "You sang that song to me. *Love's bitter mystery*" (15.4189-90). This echo again of "Who Goes with Fergus?," the song Stephen sung to his mother as she was dying, indicates that Stephen in fact did fulfill his responsibility to his dead mother. He prayed for her as he thought she should be prayed for.

Yet Stephen seeks to disengage himself from the dead. Life is for the living, and he will not let the dead drag him down to the grave. The ghost of his mother tries to grab him: "Beware God's hand! (*A green crab with malignant red eyes sticks deep its grinning claws in Stephen's heart.*)" (15.4219-21). Threatened with cancer, he shouts, "*Non serviam!*" (15.4228): I will not serve. Stephen refuses to serve the dead and their memory, even as he is trapped by them. He cries, "*Nothung!*", and "lifts his ashplant high with both hands and smashes the chandelier. Time's livid final flame leaps and, in the following darkness, ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry" (15.4242-45). With this act of destruction, Stephen creates a liminal moment, outside of time and space. In this moment, the dead are banished and Stephen and Bloom are left with the whores and the rest of the cast of minor Dublin characters from the novel; in short, they are left with the living.

However, the dead are not gone. It is God's surrogate, Corny Kelleher, the *croque-mort*, the undertaker's assistant who "providentially" rescues Stephen from arrest (15.4858), while simultaneously reminding Bloom that the dead are all around.

As Bloom offers to take care of Stephen, Kelleher says, "Ah, well, he'll get over it. No bones broken. Well, I'll shove along. (*he laughs*) I've a rendezvous in the morning. Burying the dead. Safe home! [...] Night." (15.4896-905). Kelleher affirms that Stephen is of the living, not of the lemurs. Though Stephen and Bloom still have night ahead of them, home, and the space of the living – not death – is the final destination. Life has been reaffirmed in Stephen's cry that he will not serve, but the dead have not been buried yet. As Bloom and Stephen prepare to head towards Bloom's house, Stephen sings to himself the words from "Who Goes with Fergus?": "Who...drive...Fergus now/And pierce...wood's woven shade..?" (15.4932-33). When Bloom stands over him as he lay doubled up on the floor, dead drunk, Stephen becomes the person who needs to be resurrected. This is his prayer for the dead, and the dead is himself as he struggles back towards life.

After Bloom has brought Stephen to 7 Eccles Street and nursed him back to sobriety, Stephen leaves. His last thought, in "Ithaca," is the Prayer for the Dead: "*Liliata rutilantium. Turma circumdet./Iubilantium te virginum. Chorus excipiat*" (17.1230-31). The question is raised over whether, for either Bloom or Stephen, the death ritual of "Circe" was successful. They are left with their grief, but they are also left with the potential for life without mourning as the dead are laid to rest. Stephen lives with the ghost of his mother, but now it is a ghost for whom he can pray.

Likewise, Bloom, now alone, lives with the ghost of his father. However, the experience of "Circe" has left him with a renewed ability to confront memory and create the possibility for commemoration. In "Ithaca," he searches the drawer in which he has, in effect, buried his father. In the second drawer of his dresser lies a

document giving a change of name: "I, Rudolph Virag, now resident at no 52 Clanbrassil street, Dublin, formerly of Szombathely in the kingdom of Hungary, hereby give notice that I have assumed and intend henceforth upon all occasions and at all times to be known by the name of Rudolph Bloom" (17.1869-72). The father is named and identified, a key moment in commemoration. There is a photograph – also key to commemoration – and a prayer book for Passover. There is also an envelope, with a touching letter from his father: "Tomorrow will be a week that I received...it is no use Leopold to be...with your dear mother...that is not more to stand...to her...all for me is out...be kind to Athos, Leopold...my dear son...always...of me...*das Herz...Gott...dein...*" (17.1883-86). It is his father's suicide note, and it brings to mind reminiscences of Virag's death. Although throughout Ulysses there are hints and echoes of Virag, it is only at the end of the novel, in "Ithaca," that we get the true story. It is only at the end of Bloom's wanderings, after traveling to the underworld and to Nighttown, that he is able to commemorate his father's death, to tell his story.

This is a vital part of death ritual, but the novel remains ambivalent about whether ritual can succeed. We shall see, in Finnegans Wake, that in order for death ritual to succeed, there needs to be some possibility of resurrection; renewal for the dead, not just the living, needs to be incorporated into the ritual. In Ulysses the dead cannot rest; death ritual has failed. The living and the dead remain conflicted in their relationship to one another. Even after they are put in their place in "Circe," the dead haunt the living, and the living can make only the smallest steps towards moving on. As we saw in "The Dead," the living and the dead come to a state of mutual intimacy.

In Finnegans Wake, however, there is joy, not sadness, in this intimacy. In Finnegans Wake, Joyce makes resurrection a vital part of death ritual, ensuring its success. Christopher Ames points out that "[a]s Joyce rewrites the scene of death at the party in various contexts, the vision of festivity and community grows more positive" (39). This allows for comedy, as well, as a necessary component of the ritual process.

FINNEGANS WAKE

Roger Caillois writes, "The sacred period of social life is precisely that in which rules are suspended, and license is in order" (Man 100). It might be more accurate to say that, in Joyce, within the sacred period – which is simultaneously as profane as it is sacred – anything goes, as long as certain rules are followed. These rules seem to exist solely to create disorder. Yet, in the ritual space of Finnegans Wake, there is profound order. There are rules just as there are in any ritual performance, but these rules exist to allow for chaos, and, leave space, in the words of Robert Polhemus, for a "comic faith."

The rules upon which Joyce built his Wake include Irish funeral tradition, with its own rules for mourning and game-playing, and a system of history laid out by "a practical roundheaded Neapolitan," Giambattista Vico (Beckett 4). There has been a great deal of critical attention to Joyce's use of Vico;[5] for our purposes, Joyce's use of the Viconian idea of *ricorso*, of return and renewal, is worth studying. The structure of Finnegans Wake follows Vico's philosophy of ages:

[5] See, for example, the collection Vico and Joyce, edited by Donald Phillip Verene.

- Book One: the Divine Age corresponding to the institution of religion, an age of birth, passed in shadow (also parallels *morning*)
- Book Two: the Heroic Age corresponding to the institution of marriage, an age of maturity, passed in love (also parallels *afternoon*)
- Book Three: the Human Age corresponding to the institution of burial, an age of corruption, passed in sleep (also parallels *night*)
- Book Four: *ricorso*, the beginning-again, Generation through Providence (also parallels *dawn*)

While keeping the system in mind, however, it is important to note that Joyce hangs a great deal of linen on this line: folklore, mythology, popular culture, the history of the world. The individual is universal, and the universal can be seen in one man and one woman: HCE and ALP. My discussion will focus on the many deaths of HCE – and the many burials – and how Joyce uses the Viconian idea of renewal and the tradition of wake and burial ritual to come to an idea of comedy built on the possibility of resurrection.

I do not mean to construct a final reading of Finnegans Wake. As Michael Begnal writes, "We arrive at Wake meaning through a process of accrual, so that each new element or piece of plot makes sense only as it reminds us of what has gone before and as it restates a basic crux or situation" (16). I propose to examine certain accumulations, certain hot spots, where wake activity and allusions are illuminated with the possibility of resurrection. HCE dies once in each part of the book; each part of the cycle Joyce has constructed has as one of its foci a death of HCE, whether he appears as Tim Finnegan, Finn MacCool or Parnell, who embodies all of humanity as

well as his three children. After each one of these deaths he is waked by his wife ALP and the twelve citizens, who are also customers at his pub, and also jurors at the trial for the unknown crime that led to his fall. HCE is buried, only to rise again, only to die again, only to rise again. The absurdity of the repetition culminates in a joyous resurrection through reconciliation – this is Joyce's comic vision.

Games, stories, drinking, and fighting are necessary elements of Irish wake tradition. Seán Ó Súilleabháin describes how storytelling and storytellers played a crucial role in the performance of a wake: "It was not difficult to get some good narrators of tales in most districts in former times. [...] They were welcome at wakes, as the stories helped while away the long night hours and kept the listeners from becoming drowsy or falling asleep towards dawn" (27). HCE's story is told over and over again, with many permutations by many different storytellers. Furthermore, like a story told at a wake, Finnegans Wake is itself a story that ends at dawn.

The representations of HCE's endless risings also have their roots in wake tradition. Ó Súilleabháin writes of corpses bent with arthritis who had to be tied down during a wake in order to straighten them, only to be untied by some trickster, causing the corpse to spring up (67). There was even a funeral game called "lifting the corpse," where a heavy man would lie on the floor while four young men tried to raise him with their thumbs. During the festivities of a wake that surrounded the corpse, it was often given a part. If there was food, it was given a plate, and if there were games it was given a hand of cards. The body might even be given a pipe and

taken out on the dance floor (32). Resurrection in these games and pranks could become quite literal, as the body was raised and brought to rejoin the living.

This tradition of raising the dead through festivities is seen in one of the originary tales of Finnegans Wake, the ballad of Tim Finnegan. Finnegan got drunk on whiskey and fell from a ladder and died. The neighbors wake him, and festivity and chaos ensue:

> [...]
>
> They rolled him up in a nice clean sheet
>
> And laid him out upon the bed,
>
> A gallon of whiskey at his feet
>
> And a barrel of porter at his head.

There is "tay and cake/Then pipes, tobacco and whiskey punch." The wake is a cheerful party until one mourner, Biddy O'Brien, begins to cry. This display of grief is offensive to the wakers: "Arragh, hold your gob said Paddy McGhee![...]And then the war did soon engage/'Twas woman to woman and man to man,/Shillelagh law was all the rage/And a row and a ruction soon began." Food, drink, smoking, and fighting – all the elements of a traditional wake are present. One thing that must not be present is grief; the wake is meant to be a party to honor the dead person, and to heal the pain of loss.

Finally, Finnegan is raised from death. In the course of the fighting, someone throws a bottle of whiskey all over the body: "The corpse revives! See how he raises!/Timothy rising from the bed,/Says, 'Whirl your whiskey around like blazes/Thanam o'n dhoul! Do you think I'm dead?'." Whiskey, or *usquebaugh*, is

etymologically the water of life. It is the drink that kills Tim Finnegan, and HCE, but it is also the drink that keeps the mourners going at the wake, and that brings Finnegan and HCE back to life.

Tim Finnegan is a central figure in Finnegans Wake, and in fact the source of the title. He is only one of the manifestations of HCE, Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, Haveth Childers Everywhere, "Hunkalus Childared Easterheld" (480.20). The Easter hero who will rise again begins by falling in disgrace and drink: "the fall [...] of a once wallstrait oldparr is retaled early in bed and later on life down through all Christian minstrelsy"; this is the "pftjschute of Finnegan, erse solid man," the fall of Finnegan, and HCE (3.15, 17-18, 19-20). The fall is both heroic and disgraceful; HCE is hero and fool and criminal. One thinks also of Yeats' solid man, the wanderer who is better than the bishop, lover of Crazy Jane, for whom she cannot stop mourning (259). The story will be told again and again throughout the day and night of the Wake.

Book One establishes the character of HCE, and, in his representations as Parnell and Finnegan, prepares us for the first death, burial and resurrection: "Hohohoho, Mister Finn, you're going to be Mister Finnagain! [...] Hahahaha, Mister Funn, you're going to be fined again!" (5.9-12). Laughter is essential here, as Finn is Finn, again, dead and then risen, alive once more. He is also fun, a fun we will continue to find throughout the text. HCE is also Finn MacCool, the Irish hero: "Macool, Macool, orra whyi deed ye diie? of a trying thirstay mournin? Sobs they sighdid at Fillagain's chrissormiss wake, all the hoolivans of the nation, prostrated in their consternation, and their duodisimally profusive plethora of ululation" (6.13-17).

There is mourning and sobbing, ululation and singing. There is also drinking, as the mourning is thirsty, and the whiskey will fill Finnegan again. The wake is Christmas, a place of death but a site where rebirth can still take place. Joyce provides a catalogue of mourning here, a dismal Dewey Decimal system of funeral practices:

> There was plumbs and grumes and cheriffs and citherers and raiders and cinemen too. [...] Agog and magog and the round of them agrog. [...] Sharpen his pillowscone, tap up his bier. [...] With a bockalips of finisky fore his feet. And a barrowlead of guenesis hoer his head. (6.17-19, 23-24, 26-27)

There is food in the form of Hooligan's Christmas cake: plums and prunes and cherries and raisins and currants and cinnamon (MacHugh 6). The giants Gog and Magog are there, but Finnegan and HCE are giants, too. And, of course, there is drinking: beer at the tombstone, whisky and Guinness. This wake is the beginning and the end, the alpha and omega, Apocalypse and Genesis. Death becomes the beginning of life, and life does not end with death.

The second chapter of Book One ends with "The Ballad of Persse O'Reilly," or *perce oreille*, or earwig, or Earwicker. This is part of the creation of the history of HCE; a key part of this process is gossip and storytelling, which is also a principal aspect of funeral ritual as the community comes together to construct a collective memory of the dead. The ballad encapsulates the story of the Wake, and ends: "And not all the king's men nor his horses/Will resurrect his corpus" (47.26-27). Yet HCE's resurrection has been foreshadowed throughout the text, and

foreordained by the rules Joyce himself has laid out for the narrative – "that fishabed ghoatstory" (51.13) – and the ritual, as we shall see in the next chapter.

In the third chapter, HCE is facing death. He is on trial, has already been condemned, for a mysterious incident in Phoenix Park that may or may not have involved him exposing himself, or perhaps watching some little girls peeing in some bushes. He defends his life even as he is always already dead:

> Life, he himself said once, (his biografiend, in fact, kills him verysoon, if yet not, after) is a wake, livit or krikit, and on the bunk of our breadwinning lies the cropse of our seedfather, a phrase which the establisher of the world by law might pretinately write across the chestfront of all manorwomanborn. (55.5-10)

Life is a wake, a movement towards death. It is also a celebration of life that is the real purpose of the wake festivities. We are, furthermore, continually telling our stories as we live, as others piece together and share our stories after we die. Living is the construction of narrative as we are alive; after we die, our biography is created and commemorated through funeral ritual. Joyce makes this connection between death and biography: "his biografiend kills him verysoon." The process of writing life ends life. We live, we grow, but as we are the "cropse of our seedfather," we are also a corpse. HCE's telling of the "taling" (213.12) will doom him in the eyes of the court because all of Dublin thinks he is guilty, but the telling of his story will also kill him because biography is necessarily writing the end of life. At the same time, telling the story, like Scheherazade, will keep him alive, "that overgrown leadpencil which was soon, monumentally at least, to rise as Molyvdokondylon to, to be, to be his

mausoleum" (56.12-14). The pencil (a lead pencil, or a *molyvdokondylon* [MGr.] (MacHugh 56)) that writes his story will create his tomb, his memorial, but it also creates him. The individual is his biography, and the pencil will rise in death. To recall Todorov: "Narrating equals living" (73).

For now, HCE is guilty and must die: "Oho, oho, Mester Begge, you're about to be bagged in the bog again" (58.16-17). HCE is dead and will be buried in Lough Neagh. Yet his death is heroic even in his moment of disgrace:

> As hollyday in his house so was he priest and king to that: ulvy came, envy saw, ivy conquered. Lou! Lou! They have waved his green boughs o'er him as they have torn him limb from lamb. For his meurtification and uxpiration and dumnation and annuhulation. With schreis and grida, deprofound souspirs (58.5-9)

There is death, murder, and mourning in this passage: muertification, or *muerte* [Sp.], expiration, damnation, and annulhulation – annihilation, but also the ululation of grief. With the ululation of grief, we find also *schreis* [Ger.] and *grida* [It.] (MacHugh, 58) shrieks and cries of mourning, as well as *souspirs* [Fr.], sighs from the deep. But it is important also to note the allusions to the ritual murder and sacrifice of kings: they have waved green boughs over him as they have torn him limb from limb, but he is also the lamb of sacrifice. One should also note that not only is this king and priest expiring, but there is also "uxpiration," or uxoriousness: the excessive love of a husband for his wife. This, along with an allusion to ivy – Joyce's own story "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" – leads us to the conclusion that here, HCE is being compared to Parnell. Parnell, too, was a heroic figure who

died in disgrace, only to be "resurrected" by his followers as their lost king. Joyce himself made reference, in Ulysses, to the idea that Parnell might rise again (6.24).

Joyce was also aware of another text that incorporated wake games with the rising of the dead, and that may also have been alluding to the bringing down of Parnell: John Millington Synge's play The Playboy of the Western World. He had met Synge in Paris in 1903 and was very aware of his work; while Joyce was critical of Playboy upon first reading it, after the riots at the Abbey Theatre in 1907 he conceded the play's originality (Ellmann, James Joyce 124, 267). Synge's play tells the story of Christy Mahon, a boy who arrives in a village of Mayo telling everyone he had killed his father. The villagers treat him as a hero, "the playboy of the Western World," until his father reappears, cut and bruised but definitely alive. Angry at the deception, the villagers turn on Christy and run him out of town.

The play is not only set against Christy's story of patricide, but also against an actual wake: the wake of Kate Cassidy. We never see the wake, as it takes place entirely offstage and is only referred to in passing. However, the roughhousing and games of the third act of the play parallel the kind of games that would be played at a wake, and in fact serve as a kind of wake for Christy's father whose "death" has provided the impetus for the festivities and for Christy's self-fashioning as a hero. Everyone wants to see the playboy of the Western World act out his heroics again. When Christy's father comes back and the ruse is revealed, Christy falls from grace. He is not the "wonder of the Western World" (57), but a flawed boy. The villagers plan to kill him, but ultimately let his father take him home. Christy then strikes down his father for the second time, again, not fatally. Even though Christy

eventually leads home his bewildered father, Christy has been damaged by the villagers' anger at their own betrayal. As the father says, "My son and myself will be going our own way, and we'll have great times from this out telling stories of the villainy of Mayo, and the fools is here" (74). The villagers believed Christy to be heroic, just as the Irish believed Parnell was a hero. It is Christy the hero who "dies"; the wake was for him. The realization that each man is only human was enough to turn the masses against Parnell, and Christy, and destroyed them both.

The death of Parnell is an important reference for Synge. It is so for Joyce as well as he composes Stephen's imaginings of his own illness and death in Portrait, and as he constructs his parallel to HCE. Parnell serves as a significant trope of heroic death, which is important to the conception of HCE, even in his moments of disgrace. The third chapter of the first book sees the death of HCE, but his resurrection is prefigured: "he skall wake from earthsleep, haught crested elmer, in his valle of briers of Greenman's Rise O, (lost leaders live! the heroes return!) and o'er dun and dale the Wulverulverlord (protect us!) his might horn skall roll, orland, roll" (74.1-5). The use of the Danish "skall" for "shall" (MacHugh 74) echoes the presence of Scandinavian heroes, as do the exhortations "lost leaders live! the heroes return!". HCE, or "haughty crested elmer," shall arise from his burial in the earth, or Lough Neagh, which is to come in the fourth chapter. Joyce's constant reference to HCE as a hero is of course to a certain extent ironic, given the sordid nature of his crime and his lowly status; he is merely a publican, but he is raised to the level of Everyman, and of mythological hero, of legend, through the gossip and historymaking which surrounds him.

In Chapter Four, we have the construction of the coffin. This begins what William York Tindall notes is a long disquisition on death and burial (83). Here Joyce relies on funeral tradition, but also the figure of the Master Builder, a man who creates something great. As HCE is great, he needs a great coffin for his heroic burial Yet because he is also a citizen of Dublin, and a builder of the city, there is much bureaucracy that needs to be gone through in order to effect the ceremony:

> The teak coffin, Pughglasspanelfitted, feets to the east, was to turn in later, and pitly patly near the porpus, materially effecting the cause. And this, liever, is the thinghowe. Any number of conservative public bodies, through a number of select and other committees having power to add to their number, before voting themselves and himself, town, port, and garrison, by a fit and proper resolution, following a koorts order of the groundwet, once for all out of plotty existence, as a forescut, so you maateskippy might to you cuttinrunner on a neuw pack of klerds, made him, while his body still persisted, their present of a protem grave in Moyelta of the best Lough Neagh pattern. (76.11-22)

While the body is celebrated in its wake, the town officials look at the *grondwet* [Du.] (MacHugh 76), or constitution, and see if HCE can be buried in the wet depths of Lough Neagh. The coffin will be teak, fitted with panels by Pugh and Co., Dublin glassworkers (MacHugh 76), and will be the end of HCE's "plotty existence" as he is laid to rest in his final plot, even as the plot of the Wake continues. The language of sailing is present here – mateskippy, cuttinrunner – as it is a bit later in Joyce's

catalogue of funeral elements: "allaboardshoops!" (77.27). This again calls up HCE's connection to a heroic past, represented by Joyce's many allusions to Scandinavian or Nordic or Viking legends.

HCE is getting a watery grave, but yet it is the kind of composite funeral ritual that any man in early twentieth-century Europe might have: "Show coffins, winding sheets, goodbuy bierchepes, cinerary urns, liealoud blasses, snuffchests, poteentubbs, lacrimal vases" (77.27-29). In addition to the usual funereal accoutrements, urns for ashes and tears, there is also the essential drinking – "bier," or beer, and "poteentubbs" – and tobacco, and "liealoud" storytelling. Still, there will be an "explosion and reexplosion," "rise afterfall" (78.4, 7). The resurrection – "wresterected" (99.30) – of HCE is foreshadowed even at his funeral, "[c]rackajolking away like a hearse on fire" (94.4), and this resurrection is linked with comedy, crackerjacking, crack-a-joking away, as the hearse carries off the body. He will die twice more – interestingly, also in the third chapters each of Parts Two and Three as in the third chapter of Part One – before the final *ricorso*, "from golddawn glory to glowworm gleam" (99.1), the glory of birth and the sacred corpse, the beginning and the end, together.

In the third chapter of Book Two, HCE dies again. He is back in his pub, where once again he is put on trial through the gossip of the pub customers, and the attack of his children. After his murderous children leave, he drinks the dregs of everyone's drinks and passes out, after singing merrily: "*I've a terrible errible lot todue todie todue tootorribleday*" (381.23-24). His time is due: it's time to die. At this "death," there are funeral games once more:

> Finnish Make Goal! [...] And kick kick killykick for the house that juke built! Wait till they send you to sleep, scowpow! By jurors' cruces! Then old Hunphydunphyville'll be blasted to bumboards by the youthful herald who would once you were. He'd be our chosen one in the matter of Brittas more than anarthur. But we'll wake and see. [...] A grand game!. (374.21, 375.3-8, 22-23)

The traditional funeral games here are replaced by football, as Finn MacCool the resurrected hero is conflated with goal-making, and as the chosen one – a king, MacCool, Christ, Arthur – is chosen for the team. He might be blasted to the boards, drunk from the dregs, but the team will wait and see at Finnegan's wake: "Fly your balloons, dannies and dennises! He's doorknobs dead!" (378.1-2). Yet even as HCE lies dead drunk in the pub, "overwhelmed as he was with black ruin like a sponge out of water," we are reminded "From Liff away. For Nattenlaender. As who has come returns" (381.17-18, 382.26-27). HCE sails away on the river Liffey/Lethe, but will come back.

He reappears in the third chapter (again) of Book Three as Yawn, a figure through which his children and wife speak, and who once again must defend himself as he faces death. Death will come with reconciliation in the fourth chapter of Book Three as he and ALP return to the marriage bed at night and attempt to make love, and will be followed by resurrection in Book Four as dawn breaks again.

In Book Three, Chapter Three, the four old men – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the writers of the Gospels and the history of Ireland – are holding a "starchamber quiry" on Yawn (475.18-19). They try to rouse him, accusing him of

"rehearsing somewan's funeral" (477.9). After lengthy questioning, he revives and says, "Of a wonday I shall wake" (481.7-8). Hunkalus Childared Easterheld will rise again, though he struggles to defend himself with all of his voices. One of his accusers speaks the twenty-nine deathwords to him, and he is revealed to be the hero who will rise:

> And all his morties calisenic, tripping a trepas, neniatwantyng: Mulo Mulelo! Homo Humilo! Dauncy a deady O! Dood dood dood! O Bawse! O Boese! O Muerther! O Mord! Mahmato! Moutmaro! O Smirtsch! O Smertz! Woh Hillill! Thou Thuoni! Thou Thaunaton! Umartir! Udamnor! Tschitt! Mergue! Eulumu! Huam Khuam! Malawinga! Malawunga! Ser Oh Ser! See ah See! Hamovs! Hemoves! Mamor! Rockquiem eternuel give donal aye in dolmeny! Bad luck's perpepperpot loosen his eyis! (Psich!).
>
> – But there's leps of flame in Funnycoon's Wick. (499.4-13)

In Latin, Dutch, Irish, German, Breton, Spanish, French, Arabic, Polish, Russian, Hungarian, Finnish, Greek, Czech, Cambodian, Laotian, Japanese, and other languages, HCE's death is made universal as it is spoken of in every language (MacHugh 499). This is a Tower of Babel to remind him that he is no god. Yet, there is lots of fun at Finnegans Wake, and a flame continues to leap in the funny man. He burns and comes back to life, a phoenix who falls and rises in Phoenix Park. And he is "finny. Vary vary finny" (3.3.519).

* * * *

The comedy of Finnegans Wake, and to a lesser extent that of Ulysses, is the comedy that Joyce came to after Dubliners and Portrait; it comes from a presence of the possibility of reconciliation and resurrection. Critics such as Roy Gottfried, Zack Bowen, Robert Bell, and Robert Polhemus have attempted to account for the emergence of Joyce's comedy. One thinks of the scene in Annie Hall where Diane Keaton turns to Woody Allen in bed and says, "Were you always funny?" Was Joyce always funny? Where did Joyce's comic sense come from? One can argue that Portrait is saved from seriousness by its sense of irony towards Stephen Dedalus. But this is not the raucous absurdity, the silly farce, or the comic joy of parts of Ulysses and much of Finnegans Wake. Where did it come from?

The answer can be found, as so many answers can be found, by returning to something indispensable to both Woody Allen and Joyce: bed. More specifically, we find it by returning to sex. Joyce in his own writings claimed that he thought comedy was the perfect art; it took him a lifetime to write the comic Wake. For Joyce, comedy comes from a "sense of negotiating the reconciliation of forces" (Ellmann, Ulysses xi). We find this in the systems and rules he establishes in the Wake. Yet, as Polhemus writes, Joyce's comedy is "miraculous," transformative, "the blending of the particular and universal." It is a comedy that "can transform, mock, and consecrate almost anything" (295). As Frye points out, comedy is regeneration, the building of a new world through renewal, through the joining of lovers (164).

So is sex. Comedy must come from sex. This is partly why Ulysses does not quite reach the comic heights of Finnegans Wake. Bloom and Molly do not have sex, except in a comic posterior form. HCE and ALP, finally, do have sex, however

unsatisfactorily. Without sex there can be no reconciliation, no regeneration, no resurrection – no comedy. There may be satire, and there is in both novels, but there cannot be the complete fulfillment of the comic genre without sex. Furthermore, the sex must occur within marriage. Marriage is the site of reconciliation and renewal necessary for Joyce's comedy of resurrection; it enables resurrection to take place.

It is his marriage and sexual union with ALP that enables HCE to rise again, literally and figuratively. It always has been; even in the depths of his disgrace, it was always "the solid man saved by his sillied woman" (94.3). They are like Yeats' Crazy Jane and her "solid man," Jack: "We lived like beast and beast," but "Love is all/Unsatisfied/That cannot take the whole/Body and soul" (Yeats 256-57). The physicality – the bodiliness – of both sex and death are essential to Joyce. We can even find roots in Irish wake tradition for this relationship between marriage, death, and resurrection. Marriage travesties, games such as Fronsy Fronsy, where marriageable young people were paired off, were significant parts of wake festivities (Ó Súilleabháin 97). These marriage games were a way to remind mourners of the link between death and life, and create a ritual space for renewal and regeneration.

Marriage is critical to comedy; it provides a ritual space for reconciliation and the possibility of renewal. Bloom and Molly's marriage is a space of loss and ultimately sterility. Molly's sex with Blazes Boylan is unproductive, and adulterous; Bloom's masturbation is by its nature fruitless. As we saw in the "Sirens" episode, Bloom views his marriage as part of his mourning process. In the "Lestrygonians" episode, he thinks of a time when they made love in the woods not with lust but with

longing, with sadness for what is past: "Kissed, she kissed me. Me. And me now" (8.916-17).

Yet the union of HCE and ALP is a site of renewal, and a source for Joycean comedy, comedy which should exist as "the realm of faith, hope and love in a fallen world" (Cowan 9), a space of endurance and regeneration. The marriage is the *ricorso*, and the union is the focus of Chapter Four in Book Three. HCE and ALP wake in the night because they hear one of their children having a nightmare. After comforting him, they return to bed to make love: "prick this man and tittup this woman, our forced payrents, Bogy Bobow with his cunnyngnest couchmare, Big Maester Finnykin with Phenicia Parkes" (576.26-29). There are sexual references here, leading to the rising again of both HCE – Finnegan – and ALP – Phenicia, or Phoenix. The body is thus no longer merely a corruptible and corrupted object, but also, at the same time, a sacred site for renewal through erotic union. Through their union both will find new life, "for they met and mated and bedded and buckled and got and gave and reared and raised" (579.27-28). There are sexual gymnastics here, but also the products of a long, mature, married life, and all are necessary: "all that is still life with death inyeborn" (585.17-18).

We are constantly born with death as we move always continually towards our end. Yet we are still life, even with death. As both Frye and Ames have pointed out, the ritual encounter with death is critical for comedy as something to be reckoned with. Finnegans Wake is an endlessly recurring ritual encounter with death, even in the sex between HCE and ALP, where HCE "dies" again as he achieves the *petit mort* of orgasm and goes back to sleep. (It would seem, alas, that HCE is the only one to

achieve satisfaction in this encounter: ALP says in disappointment, "O yes! O yes! Withdraw your member. Closure. [...] You never wet the tea!" (585.26-27, 31)).

Book Four shows us the resurrection that has been made possible through the union of the end of Book Three. As Beryl Schlossman writes, "The spoken wake lead[s] from the mourning and grief of death to the joyful clamor of resurrection" (142). There is a calling at dawn: "Calling all downs. Calling all downs to dayne. Array! Surrection! Eireweeker to the wohld bludyn world. O rally, O rally, O rally! Phlenxty, O rally! [...] Guld modning, have yous viewed Piers' aube?" (593.2-4, 9). All of us on earth are called to the day for a resurrection: a rraysurrection. Earwicker, Persse O'Reilly, has risen like the phoenix in the dawn (*aube*) and we are rallied to witness. There is "lovesoftfun at Finnegan's Wake. [...] Dayagreening gains in schlimninging. A summerwint springfalls, abated. Hail, regn of durknass, snowly receassing, thund lightening thund" (607.16, 24-26). *Daggryning* and *skymningen* [Sw.] are the dawn and the dusk (MacHugh 607); at the wake we move through all the seasons in a microcosm of the life cycle we have already been through in the Wake.

We revisit these cycles again and again: "Passing. One. We are passing. Two. From sleep we are passing. Three. Into the wikeawades warld from sleep we are passing. Four. Come, hours, be ours! But still. Ah diar, ah diar! And stay" (608.33-36). We move from wakefulness to sleep to wakefulness, from life to death and back. Time has stopped at the wake as past and future are conflated, continually moving in a vast cycle. "What has gone? How it ends? Begin to forget it." (614.19-

20). There is no beginning, no end. With the successful waking, the dead become truly dead, and then arise.

Finally, we are left with the voice of ALP, the one who has watched and waked her husband all those times, only to begin again: "How glad you'll be I waked you! My! How well you'll feel!" (625.33-34). As she turns into the Liffey and washes away, we are left with "Finn, again!" We begin again, *fin*, again: "A way a lone a last a loved a long the" (628.14-16).

Chapter Five: Epitaphs and Epilogues: Conclusion

The dead are considered to be still part of the community, but they are not permanent residents. Even the most beloved one is only a guest, to be treated with honor, consideration, and a bite to eat, in return for which the dead person is expected to behave as a good guest should, and go home when the party's over.

– Atwood (160)

In Chapter Four, we considered the representation of failed death ritual and thwarted mourning processes in Dubliners, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, and Ulysses. In these books, the presence of death is not dealt with by the living, and a resolution with the dead is not found. This comes from a failure of reconciliation, and results in a failure of the possibility of resurrection. It is only in Finnegans Wake that Joyce comes to terms with this failure, and opens the ritual space of the text to the possibility of resurrection. Then he creates the comedy he believed was the perfect form of art. This possibility comes from the renewal and reconciliation engendered by sexual union and by marriage, and joins the successful deployment of death ritual with the reinvention of comedy found in Finnegans Wake.

This study began with an argument for the place of ritual in the study of Modernist and 1930s literature. The deprivation of meaning in death for the living, and the objectification of the living and the dead, are concerns of the interwar period and deserve study. Rituals are constructed to give meaning to, and to resist the

objectification of, the individual. Their presence are clear in the texts of the period under study, as is the need for them.

The funeral of Thomas Hardy provided our starting point. It reflects the multivalent nature of the construction of memory both national and personal. It also allows us to point to Hardy, and his own use of ritual, as a Modernist precursor. We end with Joyce, whose texts are considered the pinnacle of Modernism, and whose revision of ritual is key to the Modernist project of the radical reconstruction of meaning. Joyce's own death ritual was fittingly problematic. As Bloom said, "Hard to imagine his funeral. Seems a sort of a joke" (6.794-95). Richard Ellmann tells the story of a deaf old man at Joyce's funeral. He asked, " 'Who is buried here?' The undertaker said, 'Herr Joyce.' The old man did not understand, and asked again, 'Who is it?' 'Herr Joyce,' the undertaker shouted" (Ellmann, James Joyce 742-43). The scene would fit in Ulysses or Finnegans Wake. The identity of the dead is questioned, making commemoration difficult, and of course a *croque-mort* plays a key role in the comedy. It might be worth noting that Ellmann himself quotes extensively and in gruesome detail from the medical examiner's report on Joyce's death, like his brother decades before, from peritonitis (James Joyce 741-42). The physical body – the corpse itself – remains crucial, even to the "biografiend." Death, and the body, are necessary to the construction of a life story.

When Lucia Joyce found out about her father's death, she said, "What is he doing under the ground, that idiot? When will he decide to come out?" (Ellmann, James Joyce 743). Joyce was buried, unburied, and buried again (Benstock 74). Perhaps death ritual can never succeed; we always want the people we miss to come

out of the ground. Burial can never be any good. Then again, perhaps resurrection is always a possibility, and that's something to laugh about.

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