<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>&quot;I have nothing to say, only to show&quot;: appropriation in the poetries of Trevor Joyce, Alan Halsey, and Susan Howe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>O’Mahony, Niamh Marie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publication date</strong></td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Original citation</strong></td>
<td>O’Mahony, N. M. 2015. &quot;I have nothing to say, only to show&quot;: appropriation in the poetries of Trevor Joyce, Alan Halsey, and Susan Howe. PhD Thesis, University College Cork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of publication</strong></td>
<td>Doctoral thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rights</strong></td>
<td>© 2015, Niamh M. O’Mahony. <a href="http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/">http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item downloaded from</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10468/2101">http://hdl.handle.net/10468/2101</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Downloaded on 2021-05-29T19:33:01Z
“I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY, ONLY TO SHOW”:

APPROPRIATION IN THE POETRIES OF TREVOR JOYCE,

ALAN HALSEY, AND SUSAN HOWE

SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF PHD AT THE SCHOOL OF
ENGLISH, COLLEGE OF ARTS, CELTIC STUDIES, AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, CORK, BY

NIAMH MARIE O’MAHONY

DOCTORATE OF PHILOSOPHY

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, CORK
SCHOOL OF ENGLISH

JANUARY 2015

HEAD OF SCHOOL: PROFESSOR CLAIRE CONNOLLY

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR GRAHAM ALLEN
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration .......................................................................................................................... 2  
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... 3  
Abstract ............................................................................................................................. 4  
Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 5  
  i. Contextualizing Appropriation in Literary Criticism .................................................. 7  
  ii. Resolving Restrictive Definitions of Appropriation .................................................. 17  
  iii. The Structure of the Thesis ...................................................................................... 25  
Chapter One: “Lawful heirs” or “Imitators”: Defining Appropriation and 
  Distinguishing it from Conceptualist Anti-subjectivity ................................................. 29  
  1.1 Defining Appropriation and Distinguishing it from Alternatives .............................. 31  
  1.2 Appropriation and 'the Alluding Poet' ...................................................................... 43  
  1.3 From Appropriation to Individualism ....................................................................... 55  
  1.4 Reconciling Authorship and Appropriation ............................................................. 64  
  1.5 Advancing Appropriation in Contemporary Poetry ................................................ 75  
Chapter Two: “Releasing the chaos of energies”: Communicating the Concurrences 
  in Trevor Joyce’s Appropriative Poems ........................................................................... 88  
  2.1 Sourcing Joyce’s Appropriative Practice .................................................................. 91  
  2.2 Decoding the Declarative in Joyce’s Appropriations .............................................. 99  
  2.3 Joyce’s Poetic Declarations ..................................................................................... 113  
Chapter Three: “Salvage or Creative Demolition”: Appropriation and English 
  Literary History in Alan Halsey’s The Text of Shelley’s Death ..................................... 134  
  3.1 Understanding Halsey’s Appropriations in The Text of Shelley’s Death ................ 137  
  3.2 Tradition and The Text ............................................................................................ 149  
  3.3 Halsey’s Challenge to Literary Tradition .................................................................. 160  
  3.4 The Text of Shelley’s Death, or, Tradition in Ruins ................................................. 170  
Chapter Four: “Was there ever an original poem?”: Refashioning Authorship in 
  Susan Howe’s A Bibliography of the King’s Book, or, Eikon Basilike ................................ 184  
  4.1 Appropriation versus Authorship in Eikon Basilike .............................................. 186  
  4.2 Authorship and the Enclosure of the Commons ...................................................... 200  
  4.3 Howe’s Feminist Refashioning of Authorship ......................................................... 211  
Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 231  
Appendix I: “De Iron Trote” (Section 1) .......................................................................... 234  
Works Cited ....................................................................................................................... 239
Declaration

The thesis submitted is my own work and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere.

Signed:____________________

Date:____________________
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Irish Research Council, Fulbright Ireland, and the William J Leen Fund for supporting this doctoral research project.

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Professor Graham Allen, for the inspiration, instruction, and support he provided over the past four years of doctoral research, and throughout my undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Professor Allen has been an enabling force in my research, and throughout my years as a student, and both have been richer for his presence.

I would like to thank Professor Keith Tuma from Miami University, Ohio, who made such an important contribution to my research during my 2012-2013 term as Fulbright Student, and long after my return to Cork. I also greatly appreciate the generous insights and encouragement of Dr. Lee Jenkins and Professor Alex Davis. Thanks are due too to the School of English staff, especially Anne Fitzgerald and Elaine Hurley, and to the students, Donna Alexander, Katie Ahern, Sarah Hayden, Kirsty March Lyons, and Michael Waldron.

I wish to give special thanks to my sisters, Aileen and Maeve, for providing advice, encouragement, and distraction as required. Thanks to Marie and Caoimhe for their friendship and good humour, and to Osh for his love and patience.

This is for my parents, whose love and support made this project possible.
Abstract

This thesis studies contemporary poetry’s innovations in textual borrowing and the range and scope of its appropriative practices. The restrictions of the inherited definitions of appropriation include a limited capacity for expression and meaningfulness, a partial concept of appropriation’s critical capacity, and an inadequate sense of the poet’s individual and unique practice of appropriation. This thesis resolves the problematic constraints limiting contemporary definitions of appropriation by tracing the history of the practice to reveal an enduring relation between appropriation and poetic expression.

Close readings of Trevor Joyce’s, Alan Halsey’s, and Susan Howe’s poetry serve as evidence of contemporary poetry’s development of appropriation beyond the current ascriptions and offer some direction on how the critical understanding of appropriation might be extended and redefined. Here, appropriation is recognized as another source of lyric expression, critical innovation, and conceptual development in contemporary poetry. This thesis encourages a new perspective on the purpose and processes of poetic appropriation and the consequences of its declarative potential for both poet and poem.
Introduction

The practice of appropriation sits at the juncture of literary influence, authorial originality, and cultural inheritance, and it has long maintained a conflicted and productive place in the process of poetic composition. Appropriation is a contested term and is often replaced with allusion, reference, or adaptation as the cultural, historical, and political specificities of a particular moment in time reconfigure the critical perception of textual borrowing. Appropriation gained new prominence among the modernist and postmodernist schools and movements of the twentieth century where it was feted for its anti-lyrical, anti-expressive, and anti-authoritarian imperatives. The practice has a history much longer than either of these aesthetics. Appropriation is often attributed to the Latin poetry of the late second century B.C.E. and it extends up to the present day. The modernist, and later postmodernist predilection towards rupture with past literary forms and styles, modes of expression, and political ideology have made appropriation a popular practice for many decades, and yet it is worth remembering that these characteristics are not implicit within the practice. Appropriation has enjoyed something of a resurgence in recent years with the emergence of American conceptualist poetry; however, far from relinquishing the practice of these inherited definitions, conceptualism elaborates these strictures on the meaning and definition of appropriation in poetry.

Conceptualist poetry presents itself as the teleological consequence of modernist and postmodernist appropriative practices, and yet contemporary invocations of appropriation by late-modernist poets such as Trevor Joyce, Alan Halsey, and Susan Howe demonstrate that received understandings no longer befit the practice. These poets and their poetry reflect the inability of inherited definitions of appropriation to accommodate contemporary innovation. The failure to critically
reredefine appropriation in accordance with poetic developments is significant because it reflects a lack of knowledge and awareness about the range and scope of textual borrowing in contemporary poetry. This failure also conveys the critical neglect of broader patterns, practices, and processes of appropriation that shape literature, culture, and society.

In order to resolve this problem, I trace the poetic innovations in appropriation by Joyce, Halsey, and Howe and show how their poetry productively extends the critical definition of appropriation. By tracing the practice from the Classical era, through the Renaissance and Romantic poets, and up to contemporary conceptualists, I demonstrate the critical development of the practice and the possibility for alternative definitions of appropriation. Each poet pursues appropriation in distinct and different ways. From the block text paragraphs of Joyce’s altered borrowings, which verge on lyricism, to Halsey’s scholarly poetic variorum of P.B. Shelley’s death, and on to Howe’s deriving from a patriarchal lineage of literature and authorship in The King’s Book a feminist redefinition of authorship, these poets broach the critical redefinition of appropriation, its role and function in poetry, and its consequences for our understanding of literary interrelation and reference. This process of redefinition asserts the declarative force of these poets’ engagements with appropriation in their poetry. Appropriation has long maintained a central role in the reading and the composition of poetry, but in order to understand the significance of this critical redefinition of the practice, it is necessary to consider this phenomenon within its broader aesthetic and critical parameters. In the following pages, I will outline the contemporary understanding of appropriation as it has developed, and, in so doing, demonstrate the significance of this project of redefinition.
i. Contextualizing Appropriation in Literary Criticism

In his 2011 essay, “Towards an Open Source Poetics,” Stephen Voyce situates appropriation at the centre of artistic and poetic innovation over the last two centuries. Reflecting on the distinguishing features of aesthetic advancement in recent decades, Voyce asserts that “The history of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century avant-garde is a history of plundering, transforming, excavating, cataloguing, splicing, and sharing the creative output of others” (408). Fredric Jameson explains the movement from modernism to postmodernism as resulting, at least in part, from Roland Barthes’s 1967 essay, “Death of the Author,” which he says constitutes “the end of individualism as such” (114). From Pablo Picasso’s collage aesthetic to T.S. Eliot’s cultural restitution of tradition in The Waste Land, and Ezra Pound’s appropriative engagement with cultural transmission in the Cantos, appropriation maintains a pivotal place in the modernist panoply of aesthetic practices, and yet, for Jameson, both Eliot and Pound appropriate text in a manner that is wholly recognizable and distinct. The postmodern critic is explicit about the individuality of the artists’ and poets’ appropriative practices, stating that:

The great modernisms were … predicated on the invention of a personal, private style, as unmistakable as your fingerprint, as incomparable as your own body … [T]his means that the modernist aesthetic is in some way organically linked to the conception of a unique self and private identity, a unique personality and individuality, which can be expected to generate its own unique vision of the world and to forge its own unique, unmistakable style.

(114)
For Jameson, the twin imperatives of postmodern art manifest a radical divergence from modernism’s faithfulness to a purportedly Romantic conception of individual authorship. The first of these postmodern ideals is a reaction against the “formerly subversive and embattled styles” of high modernism “felt to be the establishment and the enemy” by artists and critics of the early eighties (111-12). The second of Jameson’s postmodern ideals is “the effacement … of some key boundaries or separations” within modernism, namely the oppositions of high and low culture and originality and appropriation (112). Read this way, appropriation finds new purchase in the postmodern period by relinquishing the bonds of authorial originality which is “expected,” and indeed obliged, to “generate its own unique vision of the world and to forge its own unique, unmistakeable style” (114).

Marjorie Perloff’s response to Jameson in her 1999 essay on “Language Poetry and the Lyric Subject” is indicative of the poetic and critical instability of appropriation and its on-going redefinition across different eras and aesthetics. Perloff is clear in asserting that “One of the cardinal principles ... of American Language poetics ... has been the dismissal of ‘voice’ as the foundational principle of lyric poetry” (405). Language Poetry consciously dissociated itself from the “‘simple ego psychology in which the poetic text represents not a person, but a persona, the human as unified object. And the reader likewise.’” By the close of the 1990s, Perloff says that this shared poetic commitment to effacing the poet’s subjective self had begun to lose its force. This effacement which constituted a significant tenet of Language poetry, with which Susan Howe has often been associated, was no longer palpable as a unifying force among this broad group of experimental American poets, and the differences that emerge between them become more emphatic. By 1999, Perloff says, these differences “strike us as more significant than similarities or
group labels” (410). Irrespective of the effacement of the self, “asyntacticality or the disappearance of the referent, or even the materiality of the sign,” she states, “we can easily tell a Charles Bernstein poem from one by Steve McCaffery, a Tom Raworth sequence from one by Allen Fisher, a Maggie O’Sullivan ‘verbovisivocal’ text from one by Susan Howe.” Appropriation is as important to these poets in 1999 as it was when Jameson was writing in 1985, and yet, as Perlloff demonstrates, the practice of appropriation need not disable or reduce the distinctive and recognizable characteristics of the poet writing. In more recent texts such as Conceptualisms Old and New (2007) and The Sound of Poetry / The Poetry of Sound (2009), Perloff might be said to reverse this position because conceptualist poetry presents itself as appropriating text as a means of effacing the author. These divergences in the application and interpretation of appropriation serve as evidence of the problems of defining the term and the proclivity to practice appropriation from a variety of conflicting and often contradictory standpoints. In order to understand the critical history of appropriation and the restrictive engagements with it as rejecting or effacing individuality and expression, it is worth considering the broader history of appropriation and its consequences for the proposed redefinition of the practice in this thesis.

The conflicted nature of a practice such as appropriation may make it an unusual choice as the subject of a thesis, and indeed literary criticism has tended to relegate appropriation both as a practice and as a symptom of more established critical concepts. Linda Hutcheon’s seminal work on adaptation in literature and film incorporates appropriation as a feature of the broader concept of adaptation, and this pattern is reflected across critical invocations of the term. In A Theory of Adaptation, Hutcheon defines her primary concept, adaptation, from three distinct but
interrelated perspectives. The three different but overlapping definitions of adaptation in Hutcheon’s *Theory* are, adaptation as “formal entity or product,” adaptation as a “process of creation,” and adaptation as a “process of reception” (7-8). The second of these definitions invokes appropriation, though it is worth considering her tripartite definition to understand the critical relegation of appropriation. Defining adaptation as a “formal entity or product” means that “adaptation is an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works” (7). According to Hutcheon, such “transposition” or “transcoding” usually involves a “shift of medium (a poem to a film) or genre … or a change of frame and therefore context” (7-8). The second perspective on adaptation as a “process of creation” suggests that adaptation will “always involve[ ] both (re)-interpretation and then (re)-creation,” and, more importantly for our purposes, “this has been called both appropriation and salvaging” (8). The third definition of adaptation as a “process of reception” reflects the intertextual nature of the concept as it provokes connections and recollections in the mind of the reader between earlier and later readings and works. It is significant to the proposed redefinition of appropriation in this thesis that Hutcheon situates appropriation as the creative capacity within adaptation, and yet the critic does not explain her couching of appropriation within adaptation, or indeed how or why appropriation achieves this creative capacity.

Hutcheon’s *Theory of Adaptation* does much to elaborate the processes of textual borrowing and transformation, the effects of adaptation on the art work and art criticism, and the broader legal, cultural, and aesthetic ramifications of adaptation. I will return to this secondary status of appropriation later, but for now it is worth considering the important questions that Hutcheon’s text raises regarding appropriation. In her discussion of adaptation, Hutcheon outlines the problem of
responsibility in the practice of textual borrowing. Just as the screenwriter “‘Charlie Kaufman’” in the 2002 film *Adaptation*, “faces an anguished dilemma” regarding his responsibility in the process of adaptation, so too is responsibility a potent issue for the appropriating poet (18). Kaufman is anxious about adapting as a “process of appropriation, of taking possession of another’s story, and filtering it … through one’s own sensibility, interests, and talents.” Hutcheon ascribes a concern with responsibility to Kaufman’s adaptations, but palpable within her account of his concerns are the problems of ownership, in “taking possession” of another’s text, and authority, in “filtering” that text in accordance with one’s own practice and poetics. These issues of responsibility, authority, and ownership attend to adaptation and appropriation equally, and they become more serious when Hutcheon outlines the legal ramifications of these problems.

When *A Theory of Adaptation* was published in 2006, the “literary copyright infringement standards” were still limited to the “literal copying of words” (89). An author only had a viable copyright infringement case if he or she could prove “financial damage through unauthorized or unremunerated appropriation” (90). Seeing as most cinema adaptations boost sales of the adapted novel, authors often struggled to prove copyright infringement. The legal questions of copyright and fair use recur in the poetic interrogation of appropriation, and court cases on appropriation compound these issues with the result that copyright law is in a constant state of flux.¹ Michael Geist analyses the on-going transformation of

¹ *Rogers v. Koons* (1992) set historical precedent in the US by demonstrating the ambiguity within the ‘fair use’ defence. In this case, the photographer Art Rogers sued the artist Jeff Koons for copyright infringement after Koons created statues mirroring Rogers’s ‘line of puppies’ photo and sold them at a profit. Koons’s lawyers argued that the artist’s reproductions are parodies of Rogers’s originals, and while Koons lost and was compelled to pay a settlement, the trial instilled the principle, inherited from the *Salinger v. Random House* trial of 1987, that an appropriative artwork which is “substantially similar” to its predecessor is not protected by ‘fair use’ (*Rogers v. Koons* n. pag.). The ramifications of *Rogers v. Koons* are still felt in contemporary court cases such as *Cariou v. Prince* (2011).
copyright in his reports from the December 2011 Canadian Supreme Court hearings on *Alberta (Education) v. Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency (Access Copyright)*. The issue at hand, the legality of copying materials for use by students in school classrooms, diverges from the more creative, poetic appropriations that preoccupy this thesis, however Geist’s report is indicative of the progressive development of copyright law. Reflecting on the second day of hearings on the case, Geist states that:

> One of the most interesting exchanges occurred late in the day, as Chief Justice McLachlin discussed the creative process and noted that works often involve bringing together several other works into a new whole. When counsel responded that this was a compilation, the Chief Justice replied that it might actually be an entirely new work, bringing the issue of remix and transformative works to the Supreme Court of Canada. (n. pag.)

Justice McLachlin’s comments reflect the awareness among certain legal jurisdictions of the difficulty of defining fair use and copyright, and the impact that creative works such as poetry can have on transforming the language and rhetoric of the law. The problem of copyright law reflects the anxieties over responsibility, authority, and ownership in appropriation, not solely concerning the legality of certain borrowings, but also through the plethora of legal cases taken against poets and artists.

> The etymological history of appropriation prefigures these questions of law and legality which manifest themselves in contemporary practices of poetic appropriation. Hutcheon’s text reflects the critical subordination of appropriation under or within conceptual schema such as adaptation. The secondary status of the
practice in literary criticism supports the primacy of conceptual rhetoric. Here, appropriation is an artistic practice which necessarily eschews the rigor and scholarly objectivity of literary criticism. Bernard Sharratt calls this distinction into question in his essay on the literary critical transformation of T.S. Eliot from modernism to postmodernism. Considering the critical problematic that opposes the new wave of biographical accounts of Eliot since Peter Ackroyd’s *T.S. Eliot* (1984) to Eliot’s pronouncements on poetry, Sharratt questions his own invocation of Eliot in his essay. Reflecting on the critical propensity towards concept rather than practice, Sharratt asks, “Is the relation between my text and Eliot’s a matter of quotation, or of pastiche, or even parody?” (224). In this reflexive analysis, the critic considers the extent to which his use of Eliot is intended to “authorize … [his] own text.” In his essay, Sharratt argues that Eliot has been “constructed and reconstructed according to the ways in which his work is received.” The critic’s argument about the progressive reconstruction of the poet contravenes Eliot’s poetics of depersonalization even while his poetry garnered respect and authority with the progressive institutionalization of English literature in the academy. Sharratt presents his “echoing of Eliot” as serving “simply to get … [his] own writing under way,” where Eliot’s is “a shadow voice … [he] can adopt.” The author is also conscious of the poet’s decreased authority in contemporary criticism, asking “how persuasive, now, is that very tone and mode of writing, and with it Eliot’s own criticism?” Sharratt’s comments indicate the difficulty of critically relegating or reifying appropriation as a poetic practice distinguished from scholarly rigor and objectivity. This analysis also calls into question the propensity to prioritize concept over practice in the critical analysis of textual borrowing.
The questions Hutcheon raises regarding responsibility, authority, and ownership in practices of textual borrowing are as relevant to appropriation as they are to adaptation, and yet appropriation is often subordinated conceptually. The sole reference to appropriation in Thomas Leitch’s 2007 text, *Film Adaptation and its Discontents*, takes the opposite approach to Hutcheon’s ‘appropriation as creativity’. Leitch defines adaptation as the replication of given texts or tropes, and yet the subjugation of appropriation remains the same. Leitch cites Lindiwe Dovey’s distinction between adaptation and appropriation to demonstrate his point. The author outlines Dovey’s distinction as follows:

[A]n ‘appropriational’ mode of adaption … ‘involves simply borrowing plot and characters’ … [while] her [Dovey’s] own ‘pro-creative’ approach, [is] ‘an interpretive mode’ that analyzes rather than borrowing plot and character and also ‘foregrounds the way in which the film constructs a self … and expresses the desire of the adapter’. (19)

According to Dovey, “‘pro-creational adaptation claims a kind of freedom for itself, but does not assume dominance over the text.’” In Leitch’s text, appropriation retains the same restricted status that Hutcheon attributes to it but in the opposite direction, such that Dovey’s “‘pro-creational adaptation’” denies the creativity that Hutcheon attributes to appropriation. Not all critics support the subsidiary status of appropriation, and these alternative analyses provide an insight into the critical interrogation of the practice.

Julie Sanders affords appropriation a more central position than either Hutcheon or Leitch in her 2006 book, *Adaptation and Appropriation*. Sanders echoes Hutcheon in arguing that “Studies of adaptation and appropriation invariably conjure
up questions of ownership and the attendant legal discourses of copyright and property law,” however she is also conscious of the significant differences which exist between the two terms (4). For Sanders, the most pointed of these differences regards the extent of the new text’s engagement with the old. Sanders argues that adaptation “constitutes a more sustained engagement with a single text or source than the more glancing act of allusion or quotation, even citation, allows.” Appropriation shares with adaptation a “sustained engagement” with its contributing texts, however it “frequently adopts a posture of critique, even assault.” Sanders is not alone in attributing violence to the practice of appropriation, and this violence is reflected in the prevalence and potency of the term in critical studies of cultural appropriation.

The “posture of critique” and “assault” attributed to appropriation is reflected in a range of cultural studies titles where the word is used to reflect the violent usurpation of country and culture. In The Appropriation of Native American Spirituality (2011), Suzanne Owen argues that “Appropriation’, ordinarily a value-free term to mean ‘to make one’s own’, ‘to annex’, or ‘to assign’, in this context has become a negative signifier” (14). While the etymological history of the word undermines Owen’s assessment of it as a “value-free term,” her use of the word in the investigation of Native American spirituality emphasizes the negative implications of the term as an “act of using something in a way that was not intended.” Among the many insightful and diverse assessments of appropriation in Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation (1997), Bruce Ziff and Pratima V. Rao reference UNESCO’s 1976 declaration of “‘cultural property ... [as] a basic element of a people’s identity’” as evidence of the negative consequences of appropriation (9). Working from UNESCO’S declaration “in support of the
restitution of tangible cultural property,” Ziff and Rao see appropriation as having “corrosive effects on the integrity of an exploited culture because appropriative conduct can erroneously depict the heritage from which it is drawn.” Deborah Root reflects on the empirical support which emerged for cultural appropriation through history in her 1996 book, *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation, and the Commodification of Difference*. Here, Root states that “At a certain point in history, the old smash-and-grab colonial mentality merged with notions of scientific expertise” (22). In this way, the institutions of Western civilisation became weapons to enable and approve the appropriation of “native experiences” (225). Violence, assault, and usurpation offer one reason for the critical relegation of appropriation, and yet these connotations are replete within the forms and themes of poems by Joyce, Halsey, and Howe, and in the societies within which they are writing. Rejecting the word appropriation because of its more nefarious connotations delimits the range and scope of the poem in representing and responding to the more nefarious characteristics of contemporary society, or at least of our reading and understanding of those representations and responses. Incorporating the question of violence into the critical definition of appropriation and considering its implications for traditional concepts of authorial individuality, textual ownership, and legality which prove problematic too in poetry offers more to our reading of contemporary appropriative poems. The social, critical, and legal contexts of appropriation reflect the conflicted nature of the term and yet this term has retained a central role in avant-garde poetry over the past two centuries. Having outlined the diverse contexts shaping appropriation and indicated its enduring popularity among innovative poets, the following section will consider the problem that this thesis addresses and its
significance to poetry and criticism, and the broader social and cultural ramifications of the proposed process of redefinition.

ii. Resolving Restrictive Definitions of Appropriation

In her 2010 book, *Unoriginal Genius*, Perloff distinguishes the appropriative practices of Oulipean and Concretist poets as “a recovery of the past—both as source material and as foundational text” (83). The enemy of Oulipean and Concretist appropriation is “the Romanticist expressivist lyric,” Perloff says, although it is also opposed to art in the Surrealist tradition because of Surrealism’s commitment to “‘the unconscious as a means to transcendence.’” In both instances, later conceptualists, or at least conceptualist critics, oppose the expressive potential of appropriation, presenting their poetry as achieving the “fabled Death of the Author” which Perloff says has, “in recent poetry, … become a fait accompli” (18). By practising appropriation to avoid “express[ing] unique, coherent, or consistent individual psychologies and that, moreover, refuses familiar strategies of authorial control,” conceptualism assumes a very limited and specific meaning to appropriation (Dworkin xliii). This understanding of appropriation does not befit the poetries of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe which practice appropriation to explicitly declarative effects. If the received understanding of appropriation is too restrictive for the range and scope of contemporary poetic practices, then criticism must extend its definition of appropriation in order to reflect the innovations within the practice and the poetries that perpetuate these innovations.

This thesis demonstrates the need for a new definition of appropriation in poetry, reading Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s poetries as case studies whose poetic innovation demands that the traditional parameters of appropriation be extended and the received understanding of appropriation redefined. Redefining appropriation is
important because it enables a new critical perspective on three poets who have received relatively little critical attention, particularly Joyce’s and Halsey’s work. This transformation is also important because it fosters a deeper understanding of the processes of borrowing, influence, and exchange that structure communication across cultures and societies. Each of these poets approaches appropriation in distinct and different ways, and attending to their innovations encourages a close comparative reading of their poems, their practices, and their engagements with appropriation.

This study aims to catch up with contemporary poetry’s innovations in textual borrowing and the range and scope of its appropriative practices. The restrictions of the inherited definitions of appropriation include a limited capacity for expression and meaningfulness, a partial concept of appropriation’s critical capacity, and an inadequate sense of the poet’s individual and unique practice of appropriation. This thesis resolves the problematic constraints limiting contemporary definitions of appropriation by tracing the history of the practice to reveal an enduring relation between appropriation and poetic expression. Close readings of Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s poetry serve as evidence of contemporary poetry’s development of appropriation beyond the current ascriptions, and offers some direction on how the critical understanding of appropriation might be extended and redefined. The importance of this project of redefinition emerges in the elaboration of the conceptual schema of contemporary criticism so critics are better equipped to read and understand poetic appropriation. This thesis encourages a new perspective on the purpose and processes of textual borrowing, its consequences for both poet and poem, and its declarative potential such that the form and style of appropriation
is recognized as another source of lyric expression, critical innovation, and conceptual development.

In order to demonstrate contemporary poetry’s advancement beyond conventional definitions of appropriation, I align three poets from distinct cultural and poetic communities who variously engage practices of appropriation. These poets have received little attention to date, and so this analysis advances critical engagement with their poetry. Critically aligning Joyce, Halsey, and Howe benefits each poet by setting their poetry within a broader international context, comparing and contrasting their practices, and thus extending critical understandings of the similarities and differences that distinguish their work. These three poets each write out of a late-modernist tradition where appropriation is both a means of reconciling art and life and of avoiding the restrictive subjectivity of confessional poetry. In his 1991 essay, “Picasso and Appropriation,” Timothy Anglin Burgard explains the artist’s appropriative practice “as a way of coming to terms with, and regaining control over, the ‘unknown hostile forces’ of nature and man” (484). Burgard’s crediting of Picasso’s appropriative practice to his father’s relinquishing painting, his young sister’s death, and his friend Carles Casagemas committing suicide, serve as evidence of the personal imperatives that motivate his appropriations. These three events were “traumatic and linked by the related themes of death and artistic and sexual impotence.” Picasso’s appropriations are motivated by explicitly personal imperatives, even as his practice produces highly abstract representations of the world. The contradiction or inconsistency between the personal imperatives of Picasso’s appropriative practice and the abstract nature of his art manifests itself too in the poetry of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe, where it constitutes a productive and potent response to the “‘unknown hostile forces’” invoked through the poems.
Joyce has been writing and publishing poetry in Ireland since 1967 and yet it was only in the mid-nineties that his work began to receive attention from scholars and literary critics. By this time, Joyce was already well-acquainted with the practice of appropriation: his third collection, *The Poems of Sweeney, Peregrine* (1972), carries over the story of Buile Suibhne from the eighth-century Irish myth. Joyce is aligned with Halsey and Howe in this thesis because his practice of appropriation shares their declarative effects. Joyce’s poetry is usually read and analysed in the context of the Irish lyric tradition where the poet’s penchant for formal complexity makes him and his work something of an oddity. In an interview I conducted with the poet in 2011, Joyce discusses the limitations that the traditional parameters of Irish poetry impose on the reading and criticism of his 1998 poem, *Syzygy*. Joyce uses the Excel spreadsheets he was working with in his day job as a Business Systems Analyst for Apple in the construction of the poem. His frustration with the limited responses to this compositional practice is evident in the following lines:

I use spreadsheets a lot with the awareness of their background in financial analysis and in banking and such things. It’s not accidental that I use them … it’s not whimsical. It’s not attention-seeking, although it appears that the most interesting thing a lot of people can find to say about *Syzygy* is, “Oh, it’s written using an Excel spreadsheet. Oh, how interesting.” (O’Mahony n. pag.)

By incorporating Joyce’s poetry, and especially his appropriative practices, into a broader international discussion of textual borrowing, it is possible to extend the critical parameters for reading and analysing his poetry.

Halsey, like Joyce, has received very little critical attention, despite publishing at least twenty-two books of poetry since 1979, nine collaborative works,
three graphic works, and showing his art at four separate art exhibitions between 1980 and 2005. Like Joyce and Howe, Halsey has also published prose and criticism. Irrespective of this long and productive history of poetry and writing, Halsey’s work is the subject of just over ten individual essays and reviews, the most notable of which, Gavin Selerie’s “‘Tracks across the Wordland’: The Work of Alan Halsey, 1977-‘96,” was published nearly twenty years ago in 1996. Along with informative and enlightening interviews by Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino and Martin Corless-Smith, the remaining essays and reviews provide insightful readings and perspectives on Halsey’s oeuvre. The analysis of Halsey’s *Text of Shelley’s Death* in the third chapter of this thesis retains the nationalist parameters of English literary tradition that shape most of the criticism of Halsey’s poetry, but by aligning his practice with Howe’s and Joyce’s, it is possible to perceive the connections and cross-currents that exist between the three poetic contexts and communities. Halsey’s practice of appropriating tradition to rupture tradition in *The Text of Shelley’s Death* echoes Susan Howe’s engagement with literary tradition in her poetry, although Howe puts appropriation to very different uses in her work.

Howe’s poetry has received the majority of the critical attention directed towards these three poets. Her work is the subject of essays by noted critics such as Perloff, Peter Nicholls, Rachel Blau du Plessis, Fiona Green, Ming-Qian Ma, and Mutlu Konuk Blasing. There are also a number of monographs on her work including *The Poetry of Susan Howe* (2010) by William Montgomery, *Through Words of Others* (2007) by Stephen Collis, and *Led by Language* (2002) by Rachel Tzvia Back. Montgomery asserts that “those who write on Howe have often, with good reason, noted her poetry’s allegiance to silenced social groupings: women, the marginalized, and the nonconformists of various sorts” (xv). These approaches to
Howe have “frequently been aligned with arguments about the revision of the
canon,” and yet Montgomery is interested in Howe’s “commitment to the texts that
are central to the canon–Shakespeare, Milton, the Bible, Yeats, Eliot, and Stevens.”
By aligning the “powerful anti-authoritarian currents in the work” with her
“ambivalent investment in notions such as voice, literary tradition, autobiography,
and lyric,” Howe’s appropriative practice achieves a critical capacity that belies the
abstractness attributed to appropriation. Howe is certainly not the only contemporary
American poet who incorporates appropriative practices into her poetry, and yet her
poetics overlap in productive and revealing ways with Halsey’s and Joyce’s.

The selection of these three poets for inclusion in a thesis on poetic
appropriation reflects a number of commonalities among their poetries and practices.
Ostensibly, the comparison of Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s appropriations align
the English and American poets and situate the Irish poet as a point of contrast,
however this does not always follow through. Howe’s Eikon Basilike and Halsey’s
Text are historically-oriented poems, and both have a historical persona at their
centre. Charles I and Shelley are depicted as Christ-like figures; Howe makes this
association herself when she describes comparisons between Charles and the
Crucifixion in her introduction to the poem, while Halsey’s source texts confer a
Messianic character on the drowned Shelley. Eikon Basilike and The Text could be
considered ‘books of death’, with the Eikon attributed to the executed King Charles I
and the Text of Shelley’s Death recounting the poet’s drowning at sea. The two
poems also address the impossibility of recovering the lost figure at the centre of the
text from the aggregation of documentary parts and archival sources that make up
the poems. Another similarity which again distinguishes Joyce’s poetry is that both
Halsey and Howe situate themselves, and their poems, as the inheritors of a long
tradition of literary criticism about their respective subjects, and both texts are presented as the latest contribution to that tradition. Joyce and his poetry are not wholly at odds with the texts of Halsey and Howe and their appropriative practices; Joyce’s “Trem Neul” shares with Howe’s poem the image of thread, or in Joyce’s case, “rope,” which weaves together the many words, phrases, and texts that constitute each poem (Satris “Voices” 35). This focus on thread, or rope, is revealing of Joyce’s and Howe’s sense of the relations between the texts aggregated in the poem, and of the activity of gathering materials towards the constitution of the poem.

While several similarities emerge between Howe’s poem and those of Halsey and Joyce, many other American poets also incorporate appropriative practices in their work, and Howe occupies a number of quite distinct poetic positions from her English and Irish counterparts. Howe has been anthologized and critiqued as a Language poet and as a conceptual poet with poems included in *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book* (1984) and *In the American Tree* (1986), and in the conceptualist anthology, *I’ll Drown my Book* (2012). Language poetry and conceptual poetry both diverge from Halsey’s and Joyce’s poetics while still making appropriation a dominant feature of their practice, and yet this is not the first time that these three poets have been aligned. In Nate Dorward’s 2002 review of *The Text of Shelley’s Death*, the critic identifies Halsey’s *Text* with a scholarly poetics uniquely reminiscent of Howe. In introducing Halsey, Dorward acknowledges his status as “an independent scholar of the Romantic period,” and as “a noted poet,” roles which he says are “equally drawn on” in *The Text* (n. pag.). The resultant poem is a work “virtually *sui generis* in its exploration of a territory between scholarly inquiry and modernist poetics,” Dorward says, naming Howe as the only relevant

---

2 This anthologizing of Howe as a conceptual poet appears despite her assertion in a 2008 interview with Christian Bok, Craig Dworkin, Kenneth Goldsmith, and Cole Swenson, all major figures in conceptualist poetry, that she “do[esn’t] know what conceptualist poetry is” (Guthrie n. pag.).
contemporary to Halsey’s practice (n. pag.). This alignment of scholarship and
poetry which has become a defining feature of Howe’s oeuvre manifests itself too in
several of Joyce’s poems. The bibliography of texts that make up “De Iron Trote” is
dominated by medical textbooks from the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries, with a particular focus on descriptions of breathing, respiratory problems,
and child development. The five medical books which contribute to the poem
consolidate themes of breath and hearing which are reflected in the Eye, Ear, and
Throat Hospital referenced in the poem’s title. “Trem Neul” demonstrates a similar
scholarly form with the right hand column of each page comprised of the quotations
from “primers, phrasebooks, and dictionaries ... that translate into English the
languages of those native to the many areas of the globe colonised by the British”
(Satris “Voices” 41). These primers were compiled “for future visitors, colonists, and
missionaries” to the colonies and serve as evidence, in Joyce’s poem, of “a history of
global imperialism, hybridity, and the erasure and change of native cultures.” Such
scholarship links Joyce’s poem with Halsey’s and Howe’s historically-oriented
poetics, and particularly with Howe’s poetic attempts to recover those voices and
experiences effaced by the dominant historical narratives.

The work of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe constitute three diverse poetries
written out of distinct social, political, and cultural communities, and yet they share a
personal commitment to appropriation as an explicitly declarative practice. Their
poetry addresses the conceptual opposition between saying and showing, using
appropriation declaratively to assert, to propose, or otherwise communicate with the
reader. Carys J. Craig, an Associate Professor of Law, acknowledges the
“significance of appropriation as communication” and proposes a relational theory of
copyright law (25). Craig’s assertion that the communicative capacity of
appropriation is “lost beneath the commodified object of copyright,” suggests that the legal system is better acquainted than literary criticism with the declarative force of appropriation in contemporary poetry. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has argued that “the court ... is not at the vanguard of social change” (n. pag.). That is the job of the poet; hence P.B. Shelley’s assertion that “Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world” (“A Defence” 508). In order for critics to challenge and interrogate this poetry with all the necessary attentiveness and rigor, a suitable definition of appropriation is required. By redefining appropriation in accordance with contemporary developments in poetic innovation, it is possible to offer a more critically and poetically faithful response not only to Joyce, Halsey, and Howe, but also to the many other poets who incorporate appropriation into their practices in alternative and conflicting ways.

iii. The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter traces the historical development of appropriation in poetry and demonstrates the limitations of contemporary definitions of the practice. The following three chapters address Joyce, Halsey, and Howe respectively and read their poetries as exceeding the current critical understanding of appropriation. One limitation of the close reading methodology is that it reduces the number of poems it is possible to read. The relative diversity of the three poets’ national, cultural, and poetic backgrounds is intended to help resolve this problem by demonstrating the simultaneous developments in appropriation across different contexts.

The thesis proceeds as a series of poetic case studies which progressively reveal the restrictions of the current meaning of appropriation and indicate directions for a new critical definition of the word. In the first chapter, I trace the etymology
and history of appropriation and contemporary concerns about the negative
connotations of the word. After defining appropriation, the chapter proceeds by
distinguishing it from a range of critical alternatives including allusion, adaptation,
accidental confluence, *topos*, and intertextuality. This process of definition and
distinction provokes questions concerning the relation between appropriation and
authorial originality. By tracing the historical development of this relation between
the poet and his or her practice, appropriation is recognized as another feature of
poetic communication or expression.

If Latin poetry from the Classical to the Renaissance period celebrated
appropriation as a productive feature of poetry, things would look very different by
the mid-1700s. Chapter one continues by challenging the “heroic individualism”
which contemporary critics still attribute to the Romantic era and which belies the
endurance of appropriation, allusion, and adaptation during this period (Drucker n.
pag.). While the “heroic individualism” attributed to Romanticism opposes
individual authorship to textual appropriation, the affirmation of textual borrowing in
Romantic poetry in this chapter serves to reconcile these two concepts. The chapter
concludes by studying this conflation of late Romanticism and heroic individualism
in conceptualist poetry, which has imposed new restrictions on the contemporary
understanding of appropriation. Conceptualist poetry presents itself as the
teleological consequence of modernist depersonalization, but this delimitation of
appropriation neglects its enduring history as an expressive and declarative practice.
This first chapter ends by articulating a growing sentiment in the criticism of
innovative poetry regarding the restrictions of the critical opposition of formally
complex practices such as appropriation and its potential as an explicitly expressive
and meaningful practice. In the following three chapters on Joyce, Halsey, and
Howe, I read their poetries as evidence of the critical necessity of redefining appropriation to accommodate their writing. This poetry demonstrates the critical obligation to redefine appropriation by revealing time and again the provocative and powerful declarative force of these densely appropriative poems.

The second chapter on Joyce’s poetry begins with a definition of the declarative force attributed to appropriative poetry in this thesis. From dictionary definitions to scholarly invocations of the term, I explain the declarative force of appropriation as reflecting the articulate and expressive potential of the practice in poetry. After outlining the Surrealist precursors to Joyce’s collage-style appropriations, I study the techniques and effects of Joyce’s appropriative practice that make more recent poems from *with the first dream of fire they hunt the cold* (2003) and *What’s in Store* (2007) particularly articulate and expressive. Having delineated the declarative nature of Joyce’s appropriative practice, I move then to a close reading of two of these poems, “De Iron Trote” and “Trem Neul.” The process of close reading reveals some of the major themes of Joyce’s poetry; however, this analysis also demonstrates Joyce’s appropriative practice as reinvigorating the lyrical codes and conventions that dominate Irish poetry. Chapter two concludes by reconciling the opposition of formal complexity and lyric expression problematized in the first chapter and asserting the declarative force of Joyce’s appropriative practice.

The third chapter attends to the English poet Alan Halsey and his 1995 poem, *The Text of Shelley’s Death*, as another example of the poetic extension of the critical concept of appropriation. In this chapter, I pursue Halsey’s poetic reformulation of tradition through his appropriative practice in this poem. In delineating Halsey’s appropriations in *The Text*, I point to the poem’s rejection of
traditional concepts of narrative and individual subjectivity. Halsey’s appropriations reveal a poem deeply concerned with the narratives of literary tradition and textuality. The poet’s textual rewriting of tradition is directed against the inherited Eliotic literary model of tradition. The chapter proceeds by reading Halsey’s poem with and against the many cultural and ideological critiques which emerged in a response to Eliot’s definition of tradition. Halsey’s appropriation of literary history in his poem constitutes a poetic reformulation of tradition. The poet’s textual approach exchanges the fragments and ruins of Eliot’s inheritance into a textually aware, democratic, and powerfully declarative redefinition of tradition.

The fourth and final chapter in this thesis addresses the American poet Susan Howe’s appropriative poetry through her 1989 poem, A Bibliography of the King’s Book, or, Eikon Basilike. The chapter begins by articulating the uniquely material nature of Howe’s appropriative practice which distinguishes her appropriations from Halsey’s and Joyce’s poetics. Howe reflects on the anxiety that surrounds appropriation in her poem, making appropriation itself the topic of Eikon Basilike. Howe’s appropriation of the patriarchal lineage of historical texts that surround The King’s Book paradoxically encourages their antithesis, a feminist redefinition of authorship which exchanges the whole for the fragment, singularity for multiplicity, and originality for creative repetition and recycling. Howe’s appropriative redefinition of authorship proceeds via the critique of enclosure which provides a parallel for her own investigation of etymology, morality, and authority in textual appropriation. Eikon Basilike asserts a female ancestry of writing and authorship which contravenes the authority of traditional patriarchal definitions of authorship. Here, Howe extends the definition of authorial originality to include appropriation, thus revealing the declarative critical power of the practice in contemporary poetry.
Chapter One: “Lawful heirs” or “Imitators”: Defining Appropriation and Distinguishing it from Conceptualist Anti-subjectivity

In his 2011 essay on the possibility of “open source poetics” in the twenty-first century, Stephen Voyce affirms the central role of appropriation to contemporary poetry and poetics. The historical importance of appropriation is well established, with critics tracing its influence on “modernist, dada, fluxus, pop, conceptual, and bio artists,” on “situationist filmmakers; visual and sound poets” and on “affiliates of the New York school, Oulipo, [and] Language Poetry” (408). Appropriation describes the avant-garde techniques and practices that distinguish twentieth-century art and literature, and it also applies to contemporary poetics and practices. In his essay, Voyce outlines appropriation’s relevance in articulating the “social production of literature” and “advanc[ing] … [a] defense of a shared cultural commons” in contemporary poetry and poetics (409). Voyce’s arguments reflect the resilience and mutability of appropriation in a changing poetic and cultural climate, and the insight and innovation it affords to contemporary poets. Trevor Joyce, Alan Halsey, and Susan Howe have spent a good deal of their writing lives appropriating the works and text of other writers in the process of composition. From their earliest poems to their most recent, Joyce, Halsey, and Howe have used appropriative practices in composing their poetry, finding in literary history the letters and lines necessary for the composition of a poem. This thesis investigates their engagement with textual history and their ability to appropriate text in a manner that is uniquely declarative. In asserting the declarative power of appropriative practices, this thesis is at odds
with the contemporary approach to appropriation as the binary opposite of poetic expression.

Before elaborating on the unique approaches to appropriation by Joyce, Halsey, and Howe, it is worth pitting this term, appropriation, against alternatives in critical discourse such as allusion, adaptation, reference, collage, and intertextuality. By differentiating appropriation from these other terms, I will clarify my definition of appropriation, explain my intentions in selecting and using this term, and acknowledge the problematic inferences and connotations that the word retains. Each of the various concepts of textual borrowing asserts a specific orientation to poetic intentionality, and appropriation maintains the figure of the poet against intertextual approaches which prioritize textual free play. Having established the centrality of the poet writing to the concept of appropriation, I move then to trace the historical development of authorship which contributes to the critical opposition of authorial expression and appropriation. By tracing the history of the changing definitions of authorship and the endurance of appropriative practices, it is possible to propose an alternative interpretation of appropriation. After demonstrating the endurance of appropriation, even at the height of the Romantic concept of the author as genius, the chapter will turn to consider the contemporary interpretations of appropriation as represented by conceptualist poetics. This poetry has already come under scrutiny because of the opposition it constructs between appropriation and the author. Andrea Brady’s critique is particularly helpful for problematizing this opposition. The chapter concludes with a newly extended concept of appropriation which acknowledges its declarative expressive powers. This redefinition of appropriation allows for a more insightful reading of the practice in Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s writing and affords a more powerful standpoint from which to analyse their poetries.
1.1 Defining Appropriation and Distinguishing it from Alternatives

Defining Appropriation

Contemporary literary criticism comes equipped with words and concepts to describe the various practices of reference, adaptation, incorporation, and invocation which manifest themselves in poems and books whether or not an author is conscious of the process. Appropriation may not be the most popular or the most contemporary of these terms, but it carries connotations and resonances which are productive in the analysis of contemporary poetry. The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers an elaborate definition of the term which spans several centuries and recognizes a series of deviations and developments in ensuing words and definitions. The *OED* definition begins as follows:

1. The making of a thing private property, whether another’s or (as now commonly) one’s own; taking as one’s own or to one’s own use; *concr.* the thing so appropriated or taken possession of.

2. *Ecclesiastical.* The transference to a monastic house, or other corporation, of the tithes and endowments intended for the maintenance of religious ordinances in a parish; *concr.* the benefice or tithes so appropriated.

3. The assignment of anything to a special purpose; *concr.* the thing so assigned, *esp.* a sum of money set apart for any purpose.

   Appropriation Bill *n.* a Bill in Parliament, allotting the revenue to the various purposes to which it is to be applied.

4. Special attribution or application; specialization; *concr.* a special attribute. *Obs.*

DRAFT ADDITIONS OCTOBER 2001
Art (orig. U.S.). The practice or technique of reworking the images or styles contained in earlier works of art, esp. (in later use) in order to provoke critical re-evaluation of well-known pieces by presenting them in new contexts, or to challenge notions of individual creativity or authenticity in art. (n. pag.)

The *OED* emphasizes the relation between appropriation and property from the outset, unlike the *Collins Dictionary* which limits the definition to “setting apart or taking for one’s own use,” and the *Longman’s Dictionary* which prioritizes the financial connotations of the word. The *OED* focus on property reflects the etymology of the term, and both this etymology and the history of word use will be important to the analysis of Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s poetry. In the *OED*, the term is traced to the Latin, *appropriare*, and by pursuing it through the verb, *appropre*, we learn that the original Latin verb conjoined the prefix, *ad* with the “idea of ‘rendering’” and *proprius*, “to own.” This social and legal etymology of the term supports a critical analysis of Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s appropriative poetries as distinctive and socially engaged, while the artistic “draft addition” to the definition reflects the practice of textual borrowing in question here. This “addition” reinforces the dual imperatives of the fragment and the whole in appropriation. In the oppositional approach to appropriation, the fragment designates the lines and excerpts pieced together from different sources towards the constitution of the poem, while the holistic approach describes the process by which a text is imported to provide a background or organizing schema to a new poem. Gérard Genette defines the framing text in the holistic approach as a “hypotext” which provides the narrative foundation upon which the new poem “is grafted in a manner which is not that of commentary” (5). This opposition of the fragment and the whole plays itself out
across Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s poetics, and critics such as Sanders illuminate this opposition by comparing appropriation with more holistic practices of textual borrowing such as adaptation. I will return to this question of appropriation and adaptation later, but first it is necessary to further elaborate the current understanding and use of appropriation.

Stephen Prickett begins his investigation of appropriation by tracing the history of the word to “pre-Reformation ecclesiastical law” when it “was the legal word used to describe the transfer of tithes or endowed benefices from a parish to a monastic house” (26-7). He follows this etymology to its later usage in the English Reformation where appropriation became “a euphemism” for the “looting of those same monastic houses with well-rewarded zeal by a member of Henry’s newly Protestant merchant-aristocracy” (27). In the French history of the word, the synonyms of the “reflexive form of the verb s’approprier is usurper, ‘to usurp,’” Prickett says. The French term, like the English, carries the “inevitable suggestion that such transfers … were often morally dubious … [with] implications that fell something short of respectability.” ¹ This question of respectability becomes more problematic when appropriation is compared with its antonyms, misappropriation and expropriation.

**Appropriation in Context**

Misappropriation and expropriation complicate rather than clarify the meaning of appropriation and its relevance for Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s poetic practices. Appropriation first appears in John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* of 1393, expropriation follows in the mid-1400s, and misappropriation emerges nearly three

¹ Hereafter, each reference to the “morally dubious” character of appropriation, or its “moral … dubious[ness]” as a practice, is drawn from the same source, page twenty-seven of Prickett’s *Origins of Narrative*. 
hundred years later. Expropriation dates back to Randall Cotgrave’s *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* which translates the French word, *Exproprié*, as “Expropriated; put from the proprietie of,” or “depriued of all proprietie in” (n. pag.). Expropriation differs from appropriation and misappropriation in that it infers renunciation of one’s own property rather than the taking of someone else’s property. The *OED* refers readers to the *Middle English Dictionary* which defines “expropriation” as “the Renunciation of worldly goods” or a “vow of voluntary poverty taken by members of certain religious orders” (n. pag.). That said, expropriation still retains some sense of the appropriation of property; hence Richard Ellman’s assertion regarding Yeats and the modernists that “the best writers expropriate best, they disdain petty debates in favour of grand, authoritative larcenies” (8). Expropriation diverges from appropriation through its renunciation of property; however, the difference between the three terms becomes more vexed when misappropriation is brought to bear on the definition.

The word misappropriation first appeared in Edmund Burke’s speech against Warren Hastings in the trial of 1792. Hastings was accused of high crimes and misdemeanours during his reign as Governor-General of Bengal in India by Burke who held the post of Chairman of the House of Commons Committee on East Indian affairs. The committee was formed to investigate East India Company mismanagement, and yet Prickett suggests that the stakes were much higher than Hastings’s misdemeanours. In *Origins of Narrative*, Prickett proposes that “We might say that what was at stake in that trial was not just Hastings’s dubious conduct of affairs [of which he would be acquitted], but the whole legal legitimacy of the idea of appropriation–specifically as it had previously been understood in the colonial context, but also more generally throughout British legal history” (27). As
well as identifying the legal conflict which generated misappropriation, Prickett also asserts an “ironic twist” in the linguistic history of appropriation and misappropriation which has consequences for literary critical uses of the term. The critic argues that “the negative form of the word, “‘misappropriation,’” “signally failed” to “legitimiz[e] the idea of appropriation itself,” and thus the “morally dubious character” of appropriation endures in contemporary usage (27).

Misappropriation is “not so much the opposite of appropriation,” Prickett explains, but is instead a “peculiarly extreme form [of it], in which the latent injustices of appropriation have become as blatant as to be clearly against the law” (28). This complex definition and differentiation of terms may make competing concepts such as allusion, reference, and intertextuality seem more appealing. Given these difficulties, it might be surprising that I have selected this term for the analysis of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe and their poetics. Comparing appropriation with these alternatives will help to explain and justify the use of this term in my study.

Distinguishing Appropriation

Among the many alternatives to appropriation in the vocabulary of contemporary poetry criticism are adaptation, allusion, reference, and intertextuality, as well as older concepts such as “topos” and “accidental confluence” (Hinds 34). There are also a range of practice-based concepts referenced in the OED “draft addition” from 2001 such as collage and montage. These practice-based concepts are relevant to the work of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe, however they emerge with twentieth-century Cubism, Dada, and Surrealism, and thus efface the longer history of textual borrowing which I hope to elucidate.² Sanders offers an insightful account of the

² The Tate Gallery Online Glossary states that collage was “first used as an artists’ technique in the twentieth century,” while the MOMA Glossary of Art Terms makes the same connection, attributing
distinct meaning of appropriation in her 2006 text, *Adaptation and Appropriation*. The primary difference between adaptation and appropriation regards their orientation to the fragment and the whole in the process of textual borrowing. For Sanders, the process of adaptation manifests itself in “reinterpretations of established texts in new generic contexts or … with relocations of an ‘original’ or sourcetext’s cultural and/or temporal setting” (19). Appropriation, meanwhile, reflects “a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain” (26). In adaptation, artworks rely on a primary source or “hypotext” which provides the framing narrative or context for the new work. If adaptation carries the whole source text over into the new work, appropriation proceeds via the fragment, “encourag[ing] interplay between appropriations and their sources” even when “the gesture towards the source text(s) … [is] wholly more shadowy” (32). Sanders draws a distinction between the two practices on the basis that the “shadowy” nature of appropriation “brings into play, sometimes in controversial ways, questions of intellectual property, proper acknowledgement, and, at its worse, the charge of plagiarism.” If adaptation engages a singular text in the process of composition, appropriation invokes a multitude, and the new text is not beholden to any of them. This multiplicity is as productive as it is problematic in asserting the declarative force of Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s appropriative practices.

Allusion, intertextuality, “accidental confluence,” and *topos* all feature in Hinds’s study of the “dynamics of appropriation” in Roman poetry in his 1998 book, *Allusion and Intertext* (100). Hinds traces the history of appropriative practices from antiquity through to contemporary scholarship by aligning Latin philology with more modern critical concepts such as intertextuality. Incorporating Hinds’s study of the

---

collage to 20th-century art, “in which it has often served as a correlation with the pace and discontinuity of the modern world” (n. pag.).
poetic practices of ancient poets into the analysis of contemporary appropriative poetry extends the remit of critical analysis and provides a rigorous interrogation of the critical vocabulary of appropriation.

Hinds’s text revolves around the dual concepts of allusion and intertextuality and his analysis compares and contrasts the two on the basis of their contribution to the study of textual borrowing in Roman poetry. Hinds sets out the opposition as follows:

A Cold War exists between those who study ‘allusion’ and those who study ‘intertextuality’, and each term is a shorthand for a complex web of affiliation to, or distaste for, particular critical and methodological assumptions and those who hold them. (3)

Here, allusion is defined as “the relationship between author and reader which can involve indirection as much as direction, concealment as much as revelation” (25). The play of concealment and revelation which characterizes allusion makes it a problematically “frivolous” concept for some philologists, Hinds says, and this play sets allusion at odds with the heavy legal undertones of appropriation (21). Some scholars of Latin poetry prefer reference to allusion, but the critical practice of tracing the history of these poems is so well established that Sira Dambe claims that “identifying and analyzing the deliberate allusion of an author to the words of another has consistently been one of the principal preoccupations of Latin philology” (133). Allusion may be the most prominent term in the criticism of historical poetic borrowing, but it is certainly not the only word available, and the alternatives discussed by Hinds are revealing of the particular intentions and ideologies both of the critic writing and of the text under consideration. First, I will discuss the
alternatives to allusion in Roman poetry and then move on to intertextuality as a contemporary alternative to appropriation.

Alongside allusion, philologists studying Roman poetry also make use of the concept of “accidental confluence” which has a very different set of connotations than the more prevalent allusion (Hinds 19). Hinds develops the phrase “accidental confluence” from the following statement in Richard F. Thomas’s 1986 essay, “Virgil’s Georgics and the Art of Reference”:

By ‘parallel’ I mean an accidental (and inevitable) linguistic confluence, occasioned by the fact that certain phrases, metaphors, and the like are merely a part of a society’s or language’s parlance and to that extent defeat any attempt to prove that a given poet’s usage is motivated by any other instance of the phenomenon.

(Thomas, quoted in Hinds, 17)

Thomas was emphatic about the difference between allusion as a clearly defined concept and “accidental confluence” which he says is an “inevitable” consequence of poetry written in a “shared or related language” (Hinds 19). Allusion is an avowedly literary concept while “accidental confluence” refers to a more unintentional borrowing, and yet neither terms offer much to the description of the nature and function of the word-for-word excerpts from other texts that appear in the poetries of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe. Alongside “accidental confluence,” one of the oldest and most distant concepts in this critical panoply is topos. Hinds uses the Latin word *topos* as exchangeable with the English word “commonplace” as another alternative to “allusion” (34):

As normally defined, the *topos* is an intertextual gesture which, unlike the accidental confluence, is mobilized by the poet in full self-
awareness. However, rather than demanding interpretation in relation to a specific model or models, like the allusion, the *topos* invokes its intertextual tradition as a collectivity, to which the individual contexts and connotations of individual prior instances are firmly subordinate.

(34)

The *topos* constitutes a stock of phrases and apophthegms passed down through history which Quintilian describes as rhetorical “‘storehouses of trains of thought’” (Huhtamo 29). An author’s borrowing of *topoi* in his or her writing does constitute an appropriative practice, though the development of *topoi* as “‘clichés’” manifests a distinct difference between ancient poetics and the practices of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe.

Perhaps the most relevant concept to the practice of these contemporary poets is that which Hinds aligns with allusion in Latin philology, intertextuality. The concept of intertextuality is generally traced to Julia Kristeva’s 1966 essay, “Word, Dialogue, and Novel,” and has been redefined and developed over the following decades of post-structuralist, postmodernist, and new historicist criticism. Hinds describes intertextuality as a more “spacious” term than allusion, which reflects intertextuality’s more expansive concept of reference (xi). Kristeva’s intertextuality “replaces” the “notion of intersubjectivity” such that the word or text “occup[ies] the status of mediator” rather than the author (Kristeva 37). In describing intertextuality as “spacious,” Hinds reflects the movement away from allusion’s author-centred approach towards a more pliable, open concept where text and textuality dominate. The difference between allusion and intertextuality is clearly significant to Hinds’s study of Latin philology, but this distinction blurs and fades in more recent critical applications of the concepts. In a 2012 essay on plagiarism in Nella Larsen’s writing,
Erika Williams uses the two words, allusion and intertextuality, interchangeably. Williams references the South African novelist, Zakes Mda, in arguing that “the presence of a literary allusion depends upon its being recognized by the reader” (208). “For intertextuality to function successfully,” Mda explains, “it is important that those readers who are familiar with the original text should be able to identify its influences as it interplays with the new text” (208). Here, intertextuality is made a symptom or process of allusion. This interchangability may reflect the progressive redefinition of intertextuality since Kristeva’s 1966 essay through Roland Barthes’s *S/Z* (1974), Harold Bloom’s *A Map of Misreading* (1975), and Graham Allen’s *Intertextuality* (2000). Such conflation also reflects technological advancements such that intertextuality is necessarily extended by hypertextuality and digital writing in contemporary criticism. Either way, the development of intertextuality in literary criticism sometimes problematizes clear distinctions between intertextuality and allusion, and yet the two concepts emerge with two distinct critical histories and different patterns of use.

Hinds is attentive in problematizing the firm critical distinctions between allusion and reference in Thomas’s writing, and allusion and *topos* in Charles Martindale’s, and he is also aware that the differences between intertextuality and allusion fade in and out of view depending on the context. It will be clear that the definitions of allusion, accidental confluence, *topos*, and intertextuality invoked here are relatively rudimentary and do not reflect the many insightful and important critical developments of each concept. With contemporary critics such as Williams using intertextuality and allusion interchangeably, Hinds is right to ask why critics

---

3 Hinds argues that the similarities that emerge between the study of reference and allusion in Thomas’s work “collaps[e] his distinction between the two” (25). Meanwhile, Ovid’s *Tristia* is said to “force ... us to break down Martindale’s confident distinction between the interpretative procedures respectively appropriate to commonplaces [*topoi*] and to allusions” (44).
do not “abandon the apparatus of allusion altogether, and embrace intertextualism”? (47). The answer he provides raises another essential question for this interrogation of appropriation and its relevance for Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s poetics. The reason critics retain allusion alongside various alternatives is that it “privileges the interventions in literary discourse of one intention-bearing subject, the alluding poet.” 4 The “alluding poet” is the individual responsible for the borrowing of texts towards the constitution of the poem, and to relinquish allusion for intertextuality would mean losing allusion’s focus on the author and the surety of authorial intentionality. Hinds puts the issue plainly in the opening pages of his book, when he asserts that “certain terms embrace intentionality, [while] others deny or occlude it” (xii). Having established this inconsistency in the various concepts of textual borrowing, Hinds warns that it is “impossible to adopt a wholly neutral position or to find wholly neutral terms in embarking upon an inquiry such as this.” With the etymology of appropriation embroiling critics in a history of “morally dubious” legal battles and the annexation of land, it would be hard to present appropriation as being in any way neutral. Instead of absolving myself, and appropriation, of these difficulties, I want to carry as many of them as possible through to the analysis of Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s poetries.

I have selected this complex and beleaguered term because it retains a commitment to the “alluding poet” and is not beholden to covert referencing which does not befit the more explicit, collage styles of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe. 5 Appropriation is also more suitable because it is not indebted, as allusion is, to the

---

4 Hereafter, each reference to the “alluding poet” derives from the same source, page forty-seven of Hinds’s Allusion and Intertext.

5 Hinds makes the difference between appropriation’s more explicit nature and adaptation’s surreptitiousness clear when he invokes the OED definition of adaptation as “a covert, implied, or indirect reference” (22).
elite group or readership educated enough to recognize the references and trace the
inferences. Michael H. Whitworth is explicit about allusion’s dependence on a
reader’s ability to identify the allusion as such. Allusion requires “a reader with the
appropriate sort of education,” that is, “an appropriately versed reader” who can
“recognize the allusion” (87). Several critics have extended the definition of allusion,
arguing for an alternative, covert approach to allusion and reference in poetry. In his
allusions often give way to more covert references. I will return to this opposition of
overt and covert allusions and the conflict it provokes in Wordsworth’s poetics later,
but allusion’s dependence on an audience’s sophistication remains an important
distinction between allusion and appropriation.

Before investigating the appropriative practices of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe,
it is necessary to consider the figure of the “alluding poet” who occupies such a
conflicted position among the many concepts of textual borrowing. By focusing on
the historical development of the “alluding poet” we gain a clearer sense of the
definition of authorship which is applied to these three contemporary poets writing
out of a tradition of late modernism. The critical interpretation of the poet writing
has changed considerably since the Roman poetry Hinds analyses was written, and
yet appropriation has maintained an important place in poetry from the Romans
through to the Romantics and on to contemporary poets today. By tracking the
changing definitions of authorship and the endurance of various appropriative
practices through history, I hope to reconcile authorship and appropriation, which are
positioned as opposites both by the inherited definitions of authorship and by the
prevailing definitions of appropriation. In the following pages, I trace the changing
critical conceptions of the author, moving through generations and centuries to bring
this analysis up to date with twenty-first century conceptions of the poet appropriating text towards the constitution of the poem.

1.2 Appropriation and the ‘Alluding Poet’

Whether a critic chooses appropriation, allusion, reference, *topos*, or accidental confluence to describe the practice of textual borrowing, he or she is obliged to account for the poet writing. Each of these concepts reflects a different perspective on the role and authority of the poet and either supports or undermines poetic intentionality. Hinds’s study is useful again here because of the range of terms he incorporates in his analysis and his unwillingness to be cornered by the individual imperatives or perspectives of a particular concept. The conceptual multiplicity that characterizes *Allusion and Intertext* enables the author to perceive the ideological shifts behind these appropriative concepts; these shifts are important in understanding contemporary attitudes to appropriation. In assessing the critical alternatives to allusion, Hinds explains that “the bracketing out of the author” which is symptomatic of intertextuality “is often hailed as a liberation of meaning from the private into the public realm” which itself denotes a specific ideological era in literary and art criticism (48). The celebration of this “liberation of meaning” is reflected in the tone and titles of many of the essays establishing intertextuality. From Beardsley and Wimsatt’s 1946 pronouncement that “Critical inquiries are not settled by consulting the oracle” (487), to Barthes’s triumphant announcement in 1968 of the “Death of the Author,” and Foucault’s 1969 assertion that “today’s writing has freed itself from the theme of expression” (206), there is a keen sense within literary criticism of the effacement of the author as a liberating idea in the twentieth century. These critics and their ideas are wildly different, and yet the relations that exist between them serve as evidence of the complex question of poetic
intentionality in appropriation. The New Critics, Wimsatt and Beardsley, were intent on prying critical analysis away from author-centred models, arguing that “the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art” (468). Devotees of the New Criticism were committed to reading a poem for evidence of ‘how it works’. The intentions of the poet, along with his or her social, political, cultural, and economic background, even if they are accessible, are irrelevant as shaping influences on the poem under New Criticism.

Hinds records Barthes’s and Foucault’s divergence from the New Critical position in his assertion that “the intertextualist critic reacts to the impasse on the poet’s intention by de-emphasizing the irretrievable moment of authorial production” (144). The New Critics and the post-structuralists serve as evidence of the oppositional accounts of authorial originality and appropriation that informs contemporary criticism. Here, the traditional preoccupation with the creative process which the New Critics also rejected is undermined, not because it is irrelevant to the poem but rather because “in practice, meaning is always constructed at the point of reception” (48). Hinds’s qualifier that, “in practice” meaning is constructed by the reader, comes under scrutiny with the introductions that Halsey and Howe append to their poems. Halsey’s The Text of Shelley’s Death and Howe’s A Bibliography of the King’s Book, or, Eikon Basilike both include introductions which frame their texts and provide hints and suggestions for how to read the poems. These introductions put pressure on the post-structuralist belief that “meaning is always constructed at

---

6 This New Critical approach reflects Archibald MacLeish’s assertion that “a poem should not mean / but be” (106-7).
the point of reception,” even, and perhaps especially, in Howe’s case where the poet explicitly disavows the relevance of poetic intentionality.7

The prose of the New Critics and post-structuralists reflect some of the most dominant permutations in critical readings of the “alluding poet,” though both standpoints reject one essential point according to Hinds’s study of older poetries. Irrespective of the many complicated and conflicting accounts of poetic intentionality, Hinds insists that “there is no getting away from the fact that the production of a poetic text is in some very important ways a private, self-reflexive, almost solipsistic activity” (49). Poems composed of borrowed text are still composed or constructed by an individual author, he argues, and “even the poet’s dialogue with the work of other poets can be a … solipsistic kind of dialogue.” The question of “the alluding poet” is at the centre of critical debates concerning textual borrowing, whether the critic celebrates the poet’s selections or prioritizes the independent play of texts. Hinds ends his study by arguing that “not even ... [through] the most apparently objectively verifiable allusion ... can access ultimately be gained to what an alluding poet at any given moment intended,” and yet, he is clear that this is no reason to “lose our curiosity about what poets mean to do when they allude” (144). Part of retaining this curiosity means attending to the changing configurations of “the alluding poet” through history and their implications for a critical understanding of appropriation both at a particular time in history and as an antecedent for Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s contemporary negotiations with appropriation. The necessity of attending to the “alluding poet” through history is heightened by the fact that contemporary poets often present appropriation as the antithesis of declarative, meaningful poetry. This opposition becomes particularly

7 In her introduction, Howe argues that “Only by going back to the pre-scriptive level of thought process can ‘authorial intention’ finally be located, and then the material object has become immaterial” (58).
disabling for these three poets whose work consistently offers to reconcile poetic appropriation and original authorial expression. Having indicated some of the major developments in twentieth-century conceptions of the poet writing which encouraged the critical opposition of authorial expression and appropriation, I will move now to consider the changing definitions of the poet through history, and the perspective it offers on contemporary understandings of the poetic practice of appropriation.

The Altering Alluding Poet

The role of the “alluding poet” has changed as often and as dramatically as has the critical interpretation of appropriation. The “ultimate unknowability of the poet’s intention” was variously celebrated and problematized by twentieth-century movements within literary criticism, but this question of poetic intention was not nearly so difficult for poets in Roman times (Hinds 144). The Roman poets were so confident of their role as authors that they were fond of “exert[ing] themselves to draw attention to the fact that they [were] ... alluding, and to reflect upon the nature of their allusive activity” (1). If the Romans practiced appropriation with “a high level of linguistic and literary self-awareness,” the conceptual poets practice appropriation in a diametrically opposed fashion, incorporating text so as to progressively efface both the poet and the writing process (xi). The figure of the “alluding poet” comes with a long history that reflects the many different periods of literary and critical tradition. Latin poetry is commonly presented as spanning three eras, the Classical, the Medieval, and the Renaissance, and Hinds’s study takes the analysis of allusion and intertextuality up as far as Milton in the 1600s.\(^8\) With Hinds attentive to the long history of Latin poetry, it is possible to begin the analysis of more recent seventeenth-century conceptions of authorship. Definitions of the

\(^8\) In his book *Reading Latin Poetry Aloud*, Clive Brooks proposes an even more expansive history which regards the “whole two-thousand-year corpus of Latin poetry” (i).
“alluding poet” changed significantly from Virgil to Milton; however, the literature and criticism of the seventeenth century provoked a marked shift towards our contemporary definitions of authorship. By studying conceptions of the author in the criticism of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poetry, it is possible to develop some sense of the changing figure of the poet during this era, and the implications for the “alluding poet” in contemporary poetry. The criticism of this period was published contemporaneously with important progressions in publishing practices and copyright law. By tracing the history of contemporary “alluding poet[s]” such as Joyce, Halsey, and Howe it is possible to gather alternative interpretations of textual borrowing, and thus to suggest new ways of reading the appropriative practices of these poets. I will begin this analysis of the changing definition of the alluding poet by studying the critical response to Edmund Spenser and William Shakespeare from the distance of the 1760s.

At the conclusion of Allusion and Intertext, Hinds argues that contemporary critics should “grant ... that the self-fashioning, intention-bearing poet is a figure whom we ourselves read out from the text,” and yet critics and essayists from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries adopted a very different approach to the poet writing (144). Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein report that Spenser and Shakespeare were “commonly praised as ‘natural geniuses’” by the critics that followed them (5). The editors trace this praise to texts such as Edward Young’s Conjectures on Original Composition (1759) and William Duff’s An Essay on Original Genius (1767) wherein “originality was key to a work of literature and the only true sign of an author’s genius” (5). Young’s and Duff’s essays are important documents of the espousal of literary genius in criticism, but both of these essays appeared nearly 150 years after Spenser and Shakespeare had died. Critical tracts and statements in
favour of the two authors by their contemporaries are reverent in their praise, but the idea of literary genius is a part of a distinct history of literary criticism that was not part of critical parlance at the time that Spenser and Shakespeare were writing. What does endure from these seventeenth-century tributes through to the later eighteenth-century responses is an affiliation between the talent of the author and the “images of nature” which Dryden attributes to Shakespeare (par. 1). Clayton and Rothstein’s account of literary genius learns from Young and Duff the essential quality of the “natural” in these attributions of genius (5). Here, Spenser and Shakespeare are commended as “‘geniuses’, who, like the first primitive poets, imitated nature rather than art.” Indeed Young’s essay was one of the most important texts in the shift from traditional conceptions of genius as “spirit of a place” towards more familiar conceptions of the word as organic, celestial, and rigorously opposed to imitation (“Genius”).

*Conjectures on Original Composition* outlines a specific trajectory for the development of literary genius in reading and criticism of the 1700s. Young’s arguments provide important parameters both for the recognition of Spenser and Shakespeare as “natural geniuses,” and for the developing critical interpretation of the “alluding author” (Hinds 144). Early in his essay, Young makes a clear distinction between originality and imitation which serves as a basis for his definition of literary genius:

> Originals are, and ought to be, great favourites, for they are great benefactors; they extend the republic of letters, and add a new

---

9 Examples of these contemporary responses to Shakespeare include Ben Jonson’s commendation of him, saying, “I loved the man, and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry as much as any” (Dyce xlv). John Dryden acknowledged Shakespeare as having “the largest and most comprehensive soul … [with] All the Images of Nature … still present to him” (par. 1), and Samuel Johnson described Shakespeare as “the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life” (301).
province to its dominion: imitators only give us a sort of duplicates of what we had, possibly much better, before; increasing the mere drug of books, while all that makes them valuable, knowledge and genius, are at a stand. (349)

For Young, the “original” text may be said to be “of a vegetable nature,” emerging organically from within the writer as a destined force or power which has no need of study or development (349). This prioritization of organicism and nature is directed towards the writing of the “primitive poets,” who were fortunate in their primacy of having nobody to imitate (Clayton and Rothstein 5). The conflicted relationship Young establishes between genius and imitation might appear to deny any possibility of the appropriative practices I am studying; however, the author does permit some facets of appropriation in his essay. Prefiguring questions from his readers, Young asks, “Must we then, you say, not imitate ancient authors?,” to which he replies, “Imitate them, by all means” (350). A poet is entitled to imitate, Young explains, so long as he imitates “not the composition, but the man.” The question of imitation is elaborated later, when the author again voices his critics, saying, “you may reply that you must either imitate Homer, or depart from nature.” Young rejects this opposition and argues, “suppose you was [sic] to change place, in time, with Homer; then, if you write naturally, you might as well charge Homer with an imitation of you.”

There is a clear sense of the primacy of the first in Young’s essay, so much so that imitation is said to “counteract nature” and “thwart her design” (353).

Young’s essay predates the individual originality that is often ascribed to Romanticism. The essay appeared almost forty years before *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) was published, an event many critics interpret as inaugurating Romantic poetry in England, even if the term itself was rarely used or applied before 1820 and is
indebted to literary criticism for the longevity is has enjoyed since then. While Young and Duff, together with William Sharpe and Alexander Gerard, were beginning “to identify ‘original genius’ as essential to the greatest poetry,” the literature and poetry that was appearing coterminously with their essays did not reflect these critical reformulations (Stafford 341). Fiona Stafford asserts that the writing of this period was still generally “compos[ed] according to critical rules that had been commonplace” for some time. The neoclassical concept of genre was a prevailing influence on this literature, establishing connections with Roman and Greek precursors in an era of Enlightenment rationality. Under neoclassicism, the idea that “a certain tone, style, and set of conventions unites poems of demonstrable similarity across times, places, and culture” was particularly powerful (Hunter 177).

If this practice of invocation across poetic styles and eras recalls appropriation’s ability to reconcile disparate texts and cultures, then the Romantic era which followed would redefine appropriation for its own uses.

Returning to Young’s essay, we can see that the author’s idealization of genius as natural and divine is complicated by his invocation of the laws of inheritance and economic exchange in defining the original unindebted energy of literary genius. In order to absolve the “Latin classics, and all the Greek” who are “imitators, [and] yet receive our highest applause,” Young compares them to “lawful heirs” who, “on their father’s decease,” “enter … on their estates of fame” (350). This explanation and justification of literary genius via the social institutions of law and finance is elaborated later in the essay when Young encourages writers to “prefer the native growth of thy own mind to the richest import from abroad,” saying

---

10 Duncan Wu begins his introduction to Romanticism: An Anthology with a quotation from Byron reflecting on the importance of Lyrical Ballads to the emergence of the term “romanticism.” However, he is conscious that the negative connotations of the word in the 1790s means that “Wordsworth and Coleridge would have resisted its application” (xxxii).
“such borrowed riches make us poor” (355). The progressive conflation of literary creation, authorship, and property which recalls appropriation’s etymological roots would be enshrined as copyright law over the course of the following century and is suggested by Young’s assertion that an author’s works “will stand distinguished: his the sole property of them: which property alone can confer the noble title of author” (346). The alignment of the author with the imagery and concepts of property and inheritance law in Young’s 1759 essay sets the tone for the dramatic changes in the conception of the author, and of copyright law in the following century. Young’s essay consolidates the idea of the “alluding poet” as the authoritative figure at the centre of the poem [as against Kristeva’s intertextuality which prioritizes the text over the author], while also undermining the practice of appropriation as a symptom of imitation rather than original genius. If the eighteenth century introduced the idea of literary genius as the antithesis of imitation, the nineteenth century was responsible for establishing the author in law, and affirming relations between literature and property. Before elaborating on the impact of copyright law on Romantic conceptions of authorship, it is worth considering the contrast between Young’s definition of authorship and the poetry written coterminously with it which retains a close relationship with appropriation. Christopher Ricks’s investigation of allusive practices in British poetry during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries offers one perspective on the manifestation of textual borrowing during the development of copyright. Ricks retains an author-centred approach to appropriation but his analysis is useful as a record of the endurance of textual borrowing at a time when the concept of original genius dominated critical conceptions of authorship.

Ricks begins his first chapter by invoking Walter Jackson Bate’s theory of literary history in his reading of the allusive practices of John Dryden and Alexander
Pope, and Bate’s comments are useful for the analysis of Romantic appropriation. In a passage discussing Restoration England’s “‘embrace of the neoclassical mode,’” Bate reflects on the pleasure that arises from asserting or appropriating the authority of ancient tradition rather than “‘the immediate past’” (Ricks 13). Bates attributes this pleasure to the fact that ancient tradition “‘is not an authority looming over you but ... is remote enough to be more manageable in the quest for your own identity.’”

11 The critic regards this era as “‘the first large-scale example in the modern history of the arts, of the leapfrog use of the past for authority.’” Dryden and Pope are both indebted to a model of allusion and literary influence which mirrors the paternal lineage that Young identified as justified imitations of the poetry of Homer, Pindar, and Anacreon. Here, poetic appropriation is oriented directly to the establishment of patrilineal lines of descent and Ricks’s allusion is explicitly intended as a means for the poet to “create his own meanings by bringing into play the meanings of other English poets” (33). This poetic invocation proceeds “without malignancy or belittling” but still neatly absolves the poet of “the crippling burden” of the past whereby allusion is also “a form of benign appropriation.” 12 As his title suggests, Ricks’s definition of allusion pertains solely to allusion to other poets, which provokes a different set of questions to those raised by appropriation. Bearing in mind this difference, Ricks’s account of poetic referencing is revealing of the imperatives and anxieties that characterize different eras of English poetry and thus the changing definition of the author from Dryden and Pope in the 1600s to Keats and Byron in the 1800s.

---

11 Here, Bate introduces the idea that a writer might find his or her identity through appropriation.

12 Appropriation is represented as a feature or facet of allusion; however, Ricks generally eschews the term in favour of allusion. Nevertheless, his account of appropriation, saying, “what was so well said has now become part of my way of saying, and in advancing the claims of a predecessor ... the poet is advancing his own claims, his own poetry, and even poetry,” compounds my proposal regarding the enduring relation between poetic appropriation and legal history and property (33).
After a first chapter on Dryden and Pope, Ricks moves to a discussion of the Scottish poet Robert Burns. Burns transforms the patrilineal lineage that Ricks identifies in Dryden’s and Pope’s poetries into a community of brothers, and while the Scottish poet may not acknowledge his debt to “Young, Thomas, Shenstone, or Shakespeare,” Ricks argues that there is “much of these other poets about him” (48).

In the third chapter on Wordsworth, we are presented with a poet who prided himself on choosing “incidents and situations from common life” as the subject of his poems (Wordsworth 7). The poet committed himself to “relat[ing] or describ[ing]” these scenarios “in a selection of language really used by men,” and yet this does not release him or his poetry from the bonds of allusion or appropriation. Wordsworth’s appropriations are prone to “redemption,” Ricks says, and these “feats of rescue and renovation are characteristic of how his mind works with allusions, and not his mind only but his heart” (88). This mention of the heart reflects Ricks’s construction of Wordsworth’s allusions, and of allusion more generally, as an act or display of gratitude to one’s forebears. Wordsworth is concerned to restore the authority of the originals he borrows in accordance with his commitment to retaining the meaning of the original text. In “An Evening Walk,” Wordsworth incorporates the line “Where, undisturbed by moons, Winander sleeps” from Abraham Cowley, and, paradoxically, alters the line in order to remain faithful to Cowley’s original (Ricks 94). By changing “moons” to “winds,” Wordsworth borrows from Cowley without “disturb[ing] the rhythm of the original line” (95). Ricks reads Wordsworth’s poem as “restoring something of Cowley’s gravity” after Dryden whose allusions were often “charmingly aware of allusiveness,” albeit a charm and levity “that Wordsworth deprecated” (10, 95).
Despite Wordsworth’s aversion to Dryden’s self-annotative appropriations, critics such as Hartman have argued that his poems reveal a play of overt and covert references that belie Ricks’s affirmation of allusion and the authorial self-awareness it supports. In The Unremarkable Wordsworth, Hartman reads Wordsworth’s 1816 poem, “To Dora,” as the “working through of … [inner]’ voices’, wherein the “inner voice” of Wordsworth’s poem “also proves to be a text” (100, 98). These voices manifest themselves in Wordsworth’s poem not just through the “intrusion” of the voices of different texts in his mind that prompt the poem, but also in the overt and covert references which constitute the poem (120). Hartman’s analysis contravenes Ricks’s, and Wordsworth’s, belief in the appropriation or “intrusion” of texts in a poem as a conscious decision on the part of the author. Wordsworth’s poem begins with a quotation, “A little onward lend thy guiding hand / To these dark steps, a little further on!” which is taken from the opening lines of Milton’s Samson Agonistes (Hartman 120). After this opening line, the first two lines of the poem proper “embod[y] a further quotation,” Hartman says, a quotation “more covert than the first, yet raising with equal force the issue of beginnings” (125). These lines, “What trick of memory to my voice hath brought / This mournful iteration,” constitute a “far-reaching echo of Shakespeare’s King’s Lear,” Hartman says. Wordsworth’s “eyesight [was] troubling him” as he was writing the poem, so perhaps it is not surprising that the poet “dislocate[s] the words of another blinded man, Gloucester,” in “To Dora” (120, 125). Wordsworth’s lines recall Gloucester’s comments on meeting Lear, “now driven mad by the cruelty of his elder daughters as well as by the memory of his own cruelty to his youngest daughter,” and his statement “‘The trick of that voice I do well remember’” (125). Hartman describes this opposition between overt and covert allusion in Wordsworth’s references as evidence of the
“defensive” character of allusions where the “overt presence” of Milton offsets the more “dangerous” presence of Shakespeare (127). Hartman’s assertion of explicit and implicit references in Wordsworth’s poetry undermines the individual authorship attributed to the Romantics and the perception of allusion as reflecting a culture of gratitude among poets. Ricks’s study of allusion reflects his preference for a poet-centred tradition, where the invocation of one poem by another is always a self-conscious gesture that supports a culture of gratitude within the arts. Each new poet is indebted to his predecessors and he demonstrates his gratitude to them through allusion. Ricks also situates his study in relation to theoretical parameters, and this situating of allusion contributes to the broader historical analysis of the “alluding poet” undertaken here.

1.3 From Appropriation to Individualism

The appropriative practices that manifest themselves in the poetry of Dryden, Pope, Burns, and Wordsworth do not preclude the idea that these poets might have been anxious about legitimacy and authority in their writing. Prickett’s study of “the two meanings of the word ‘appropriation’” articulates the positive, legitimizing potential of the practice (47). This does not displace the broader critical investigation into the anxiety surrounding legitimacy and authority in Romantic poetry. Prickett investigates the dual ideas of “quasi-legal ‘theft’ that lies just below the surface of the Latinate Anglo-French word” “appropre” and “the connotations of biological growth behind the German aneignen.” For Prickett, these two definitions of appropriation are not opposed, but actually “appear to be structurally part of the

---

13 In Ricks’s book, poetic tradition is a male tradition.
14 Prickett explains that “aneignen” is the German word for “‘appropriation’” which is elaborated by Paul Ricoeur and becomes particularly important in his 1981 study, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (30).
same phenomenon” (47). In this way, appropriation “is a tradition not just of legitimation,” whereby new literature is validated by its borrowings from older classic texts, but also of “a growing consciousness of the process by which such legitimation is achieved.” The dual imperatives Prickett finds in appropriation are manifested in a quotation from Francois-Rene de Chateaubriand’s 1802 review of Milton. This review serves as evidence of the problem of contemporary descriptions of Romanticism as propagating poetic individualism and original genius.

Chateaubriand praises Milton as “‘acquir[ing] originality in appropriating to himself the riches of others’” (42). According to the critic, “‘the art of imitation, known to all great writers, consists in a certain delicacy of taste which seizes the beauties of other times and accommodates them to the present age and manners.’” Prickett reads Chateaubriand’s review as evidence that “for the Romantics, ... appropriation is immediately linked with its seeming opposite, originality, in such a way that it can be read back into a new interpretation of the past.” For the Romantics, then, appropriation did not exacerbate the anxiety concerning legitimacy and authority but actually serves as a support to these poets by imbuing their poems with historical authority. Prickett’s book was published in 1996, but his arguments concerning the closeness of originality and appropriation in Romantic poetics have been slow to filter into the conceptual rhetoric of contemporary criticism about poetic appropriation.15 By returning to Bate’s 1970 book it is possible to gain a clearer picture of the anxiety concerning legitimacy and authority in Romantic poetry. This anxiety is not opposed to Chateaubriand’s ‘originality through appropriation’ but

15 It is revealing that of the texts comprising this historical analysis of authorship and poetic appropriation, two of the major studies were published under series and titles far removed from contemporary poetry criticism. Hinds’s Allusion and Intertext is part of Cambridge University Press’s “Roman Literature and its Contexts” series, and Prickett’s Origins of Narrative is a biblical studies text, with the subtitle “The Romantic Appropriation of the Bible.”
instead reflects the important role that appropriation played at the heights of the Romantic period.

Bate’s study of *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* is an important reference point in the investigation of traditions of authorship, not just as an influence on Ricks’s *Allusion to the Poets*, but also in its articulation of the literary and cultural past as a ‘‘burden’’ for the English poet (Bate 13).16 ‘‘What is there left to do?’’ is the ‘‘cry’’ that ‘‘animates Bate’s book,’’ says Ricks, as it has ‘‘animated most poetry for the last three centuries’’ (Ricks 13). Bate’s interest in the eighteenth century is motivated by his belief that it is ‘‘the first period in modern history to face the problem of what it means to come immediately after a great creative achievement’’ (Bate 12). There is an anxiety concerning authority and legitimacy which both Bloom’s and Ricks’s texts retain in their analyses of textual borrowing or influence which is not unique to the Romantic era but which does belie contemporary conflations of ‘‘late-romantic[ism]’’ and ‘‘heroic individualism’’ (Drucker n. pag.).17 Bate sources this anxiety to a ‘‘remorseless deepening of self-consciousness’’ of the poet ‘‘before the rich and intimidating legacy of the past’’ which he says has become ‘‘the greatest single problem that modern art ... has had to face’’ (4). Bate’s analysis of this ‘‘deepening self-consciousness’’ as a disabling force was not roundly accepted. Donald Greene’s criticism of the book counteracts this analysis by arguing that ‘‘the burden of the past,’ far from inhibiting literary creativity, stimulates and enhances it’’ (260). Greene’s assertion of literary tradition

---

16 Halsey articulates this same precise experience of ‘‘the burden of the past’’ in a 2010 interview (Bate 13), in which he distinguishes the experience of the English poet from that of American poets, such that ‘‘an English poet has to be busier picking through local wreckage to find whatever’s worth either salvage or creative demolition’’ (St. Thomasino n. pag.).

17 In an essay in support of Conceptualist poets, Johanna Drucker justifies their self-effacing poetics by opposing it to ‘‘late-romantic heroic individualism’’ (n. pag.).
as fostering literary creativity depends upon the poet’s capacity to admit that past into his or her writing and use it to “stimulate[ ] or enhance[ ]” his or her writing. Greene’s criticism recalls T.S. Eliot’s arguments about the capacity of “the really new ... work of art” to modify the “existing order” of tradition (153). Eliot argues that “the relations, proportions, [and] values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted” by the introduction of the new work of art, and this readjustment reflects “conformity between the old and the new.” Prickett extends Bate’s account of the anxiety that characterized this period beyond the immediate influence of literary tradition to a broader shift in social and cultural patterns of reading and interpretation. By aligning these two analyses, it is possible to arrive at a more expansive understanding of the local permutations in authorship and the consequences for appropriation during this time.

Prickett diagnoses a “sense of loss” and “corresponding need for new kinds of legitimation” in Romantic self-consciousness which he says reflects the “widespread shift away from older, more collective ways of reading” (267). Hegel describes this shift as “the failure of the traditional religious underpinning of objective meaning in the world” which he said “was creating a new subjectivity that spelt ‘the end of art’” (151). This failure regards the dissipation of the long-held belief that “there was a meaning to the whole cycle of human existence” such that “every event described in the Bible, however trivial it might seem, had a figurative, typological, or ... symbolic relation to the whole” (4). Bible stories which had long been interpreted as presenting readers with types of people and situations, changed with the emergence of the novel in the eighteenth century towards a more

---

18 Bloom breaks with Eliot on this question of conformity between old and new in tradition in The Anxiety of Influence (51), and specifically with Eliot’s argument in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” regarding the “supervention of novelty” which he says alters “the whole existing order” (Eliot 153).
individualist reading as reflecting the morality and decisions of individual agents. With this shift, a literary text comes to be legitimated not by its typological representation, but rather by “transcendent powers of the self, the possession (even by theft) of a divine blessing, or simply a literary tradition” (265). In all cases, literary legitimacy depends upon a “sequence or line” of tradition. The “heroic individualism” that Drucker, speaking on behalf of the conceptualists, attributes to the “late-romantic” period, can be read as a contemporary response to this concern with legitimacy effacing that figure of the author who offered to shore up Romantic poetry (n. pag.). And yet, modern conceptions of Romantic individualism tend to neglect the extent to which the Romantic poet was indebted, both through the practice of appropriation and in his or her affiliation to the “sequence or line” of tradition, to what came before (Prickett 265). Attributions of “heroic individualism” to the Romantic author are problematized by the fact that legitimacy in Romantic poetry is not solely the product of individual genius but also depends upon appropriation from earlier times, both in the composition of the poem and in the poet’s individual sense of place in the broader history of English literature (Drucker n. pag.). Prickett cites Byron’s borrowing of the Bible story of Cain and Abel as evidence of the Romantic poet’s indebtedness to earlier periods, with his Cain “one of the first of a whole series of nineteenth-century dramatisations” of biblical stories (128-29). Here, the Romantic author responds to the problem of “com[ing] immediately after a [period of] great creative achievement” by borrowing or appropriating from the past (Bate 12), and thus establishing their own legitimacy by fitting in to the “sequence or line” of tradition (Prickett 265). Literary historical indebtedness might be a problem of the Romantics as Bate argues, but there is a much broader tradition of appropriation of the Bible and classical myth that frames
Byron’s *Cain*. Prickett’s acknowledgement of the Bible as “the most important single book in the history of Western civilisation” to which we “owe ... even our idea of a book itself,” serves as evidence of the pre-eminence of these literary and cultural sources, and the longer, unbroken tradition of cultural appropriation they bestow (2).

Contemporary critics such as Drucker are confident in attributing self-assurance and authority to the Romantic concept of the author, and yet Bate’s assertion regarding the anxiety about the “great creative achievement” that went before, and Prickett’s account of the shift in religious reading, are not the only forces which problematize this interpretation (Bate 12). Martha Woodmansee and Peter Jaszi’s argument that the modern concept of the author “culminated less than 200 years ago in the heroic self-presentation of Romantic poets” overlooks the endurance of textual borrowing during this time and the challenge it presents to the image of the individual genius (3). Their investigation of the construction of authorship is important as an acknowledgement of the impact of the progressive legalization of authorship in the Romantic period. By distinguishing the Romantic concept of authorship from the progressive legal protection of publishing rights, it is possible to gain a clearer picture of authorship at this time. Woodmansee and Jaszi discuss the legal protections against unauthorized republication of books in the eighteenth century which protected the bookseller who bought the rights from the author. As literary culture developed a more “proprietary” approach to authorship, these laws came to protect the author as originator and creator of the text more than the bookseller. For the editors, Wordsworth stands as the pre-eminent example of the “proprietary nature of authorship” in this era (2). The poet enjoyed productive working relationships with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and his sister, Dorothy Wordsworth, and both contributed to his compositional process, however this
contribution is “occluded” by the poet’s “authorial persona” (3). Wordsworth’s “authorial persona” is that of the “secular prophet with privileged access to experience of the numinous and a unique ability to translate that experience.” In his essay on the poet from their collection, Thomas Pfau asserts that Wordsworth’s persona reflects a “crisis of the subject,” and this adds weight to Bate’s and Prickett’s assessment of the anxiety within Romantic selfhood (142).

Michael Gamer puts the case clearly when he argues that “Accepting the author of Wordsworth’s 1800 Preface and 1815 “Essay” as the ‘Romantic author’ ... not only reproduces many features of the Romantic canon, but also narrows our inquiries into the history of authorship by allowing them to become dominated by another history—that of copyright reform” (833). Accepting Wordsworth as “the ‘Romantic author’” is also problematic because of the differences that emerge between his model of authorship and those which emerged after him in the second generation of Romantic poets. Relations between Wordsworth and the younger poets are notoriously complicated. Byron complained that Shelley “‘used to dose [him] with Wordsworth physic’” in the early months of their friendship in 1816, and Byron would incorporate a “Wordsworthian flavour” to several passages of Canto III of “Childe Harold” written later that summer (Harson 113). Keats took the opposite approach, trying, but never quite succeeding, to separate himself and his poetry from Wordsworth’s and Milton’s influences. Keats’s effort to diverge from Wordsworth is made clear in his account of “the poetical Character” in a letter to Richard Woodhouse from 1818 (Keats 194):

As to the poetical Character itself (I mean that sort of which, if I am anything, I am a Member; that sort distinguished from the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime, which is a thing per se and
stands alone), it is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing—It has no character ... A Poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence because he has no Identity—he is continually in for and filling some other Body. (195)

Keats situates his definition of poetic authorship at a strict remove from “the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime,” and yet the poet’s failure to complete the two *Hyperion* poems indicate that, like Wordsworth, Keats retained a commitment to his poetic forebears. In her reading of Keats’s poem, Marjorie Levinson acknowledges the poet’s efforts to transcend this influence, interpreting “The Fall” as “demonstrat[ing] on every level Keats’s autonomy” (181). Keats may have “escaped the influence of his great precursors,” but “‘The Fall’ maintains a posture of dependence, dependence on *Hyperion*, [and] hence on Keats’s earlier loves and selves.” In this way, even Keats’s turn away from Wordsworth and Milton suggests their influence on him. Keats’s experience serves as evidence of the conflicted nature of Romantic authorship, and this before the critical conflation of authorship and copyright law comes into play. Irrespective of these differences in Romantic conceptions of the author, and thus the relation to appropriation, Wordsworth’s poetry and criticism are often presented as symptomatic of the “late-romantic heroic individualism” that contemporary critics reflect on, and his contribution to the legalization of copyright only compounds this reading (Drucker n. pag.).

Wordsworth and William Hazlitt were two “major proponents ... of the Romantic ideology of cultural production as original creation” and they made important contributions to the progressive legalization of literature and publishing (McCutcheon 72). Both authors would have supported the 1842 Copyright Act which “significantly extended the term of copyright protection to forty-two years
from publication or, if the author was still alive thereafter, to seven years after the author’s death” (74). Wordsworth was integral both as author and activist in the progressive development of copyright law in the nineteenth century, and by 1860 copyright was firmly enshrined in English law. That said, copyright law is not and should not be exchangeable with literary and critical conceptions of authorship, even for Wordsworth, just as contemporary definitions of copyright law and authorship do not determine poetic innovation and appropriative practices. By calling attention to Wordsworth’s individual notion of authorial persona, the divergence of his contemporaries, and the progressive legalization of the author, I am arguing that the Romantic definition of authorship which contemporary poets and critics inherit does not represent the full extent of the intentions and the anxieties of poets writing at the time.

Gamer describes the Romantic era as “a convenient high-water mark” for the “recent explosion of historical studies on authorship and copyright” which contemporary conceptualists reflect on as the source of conservative notions of lyricism and poetic expression (831). This historical investigation of authorship works against contemporary critics’ proclivity to invoke historical constructions of authorship as evidence of the ancient roots of appropriation, or, alternatively, of the innovation of contemporary redefinitions of authorship. These invocations of historical authorship rarely acknowledge the local permutations and ideologies motivating particular models of authorship, whether they reflect the ancient rhetorical notion of topos or the 1760s concern with nature. Rachel Galvin cites the Latin cento as an early precursor for conceptualist appropriation (25), and Drucker

---

19 I am using the conditional here because Hazlitt died in 1830.

20 Gamer also rejects the conflation of Romantic authorship with concurrent developments in copyright law in his essay, and indeed he reads gothic fiction and stage drama as “destabiliz[ing] notions of authorship and originality in the Romantic period” (833).
rejects “late-romantic heroic individualism” in her assertion of conceptualism, but neither critic thoroughly interrogates her historical reference point (n. pag.). This analysis reveals a history of authorship much more complex and varied than contemporary critics of conceptual poetry tend to acknowledge. The Romantic concept of authorship becomes particularly complicated when aligned with the practices of appropriation which endure through the Romantic period and which provide such a powerful antecedent to modernists in the twentieth century, an era which from today’s perspective represents a highpoint in the aesthetic engagement with appropriation. The Romantic period provided the poetic and critical parameters that later modernist and postmodernist poets would respond to and react against, and thus are important to poets such as Joyce, Halsey, and Howe writing out of a late-modernist tradition.

1.4 Reconciling Authorship and Appropriation.

Before moving on, it will be helpful to take account of the historical development of authorship so far and the consequences for appropriation in the poetry of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe. This history began with Latin poetry from Roman times which tends to invoke its “intertextual tradition as a collectivity” and is “mobilized by the poet in full self-awareness” (Hinds 34). Critics such as Hinds, Thomas, Brooks, and Martindale apply author-centred concepts such as allusion, reference, and *topos* in their analysis of intertextual referencing in Latin poetry. This proclivity towards author-centred concepts supports the critical analysis of Latin poets as self-conscious and authoritative authors whose appropriations reflect the parameters of poetic intentionality. Thomas’s concept of “accidental confluence” admits and acknowledges the modicum of intertextuality independent of the author (Hinds 34), but this concept, like Ricks’s later attribution of “unconscious intentions” to the
Romantic poets, does little to challenge the self-awareness and intentionality attributed to the author in Roman times (Ricks 314). If the clear parameters of the author as arbiter of the poem meant that Latin poets were content to admit and even “annotate” references to earlier authors in their poems, the critical approach to authorship would look very different at the end of the Renaissance period (Hinds 57). By this time, critical accounts of the “self-annotati[ve]” references of the Latin “alluding poet” had faded, and “the openness of the borrowing” no longer served as a “guarantee of the author’s integrity” (1, 22). The concept of authorship undergoes significant changes between the celebrations of Shakespeare by Jonson, Dryden, and Johnson in the 1600s and the critical demarcation of the author in scholarly essays of the 1700s. Young’s 1759 essay makes it clear that a good author “shew[s] an original, unindebted energy; the vigor igneus, and caelestis origo,” such that inspiration is part organic, part divine, and imitation is best avoided (Young 352). Critics such as Bate, McFarland, Pfau, and Prickett have articulated the “sense of loss” in Romantic self-consciousness and the “corresponding need for new kinds of legitimation” as variously contributing to this conflation of Romantic authorship and heroic individualism (Prickett 267). It is worth remembering, however, that the Romantics and pre-Romantics invoke a tradition of poetry and culture wholly distinct from that shaping later modernist poetry and poetics.

The poetics of Romanticism take the Judaeo-Christian prophetic tradition as its source, while the Greco-Roman Latinate tradition dominates the later modernist era. William Blake’s *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) exemplifies the difference between these two modes. Here, Blake articulates his personal perspective on contemporary poetry, ideology, and religion, while the form of his poem recalls

---

21 Hazard Adams’s edition of the essay footnotes these Latin phrases as meaning “‘glowing energy’ and ‘heavenly origin’” respectively (343).
the wilder, prophetic example of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. The individuality of Blake’s *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* emerges with his reassessment of the binaries of “Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate” that define Christianity and shape religious thought (pl. 3). Blake’s poem questions the Christian affirmation of “attraction,” “reason,” and “love” over their opposites, recognizing the necessity of these conceptual oppositions because “Without Contraries is no progression” (pl. 3). In arguing for the primacy of “the ancient Poets” over the “Priesthood” in “animat[ing] all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses,” Blake demonstrates his belief in the Biblical origins of poetry as prophecy, a belief that modernists such as Eliot replace with a Latinate tradition. In *The Anxiety of Influence*, Bloom takes Blake’s “Priesthood” as a conceptual model for his critical analysis of literary influence on the basis that it too is “a system … which took some advantage of & enslav’d the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects” (pl. 11) (Bloom 29). Bloom’s “anxiety of influence” regards the “inhibit[ion] from creativity by an obsessive reasoning and comparing … of one’s own works to the precursor’s” (29). The problem of originality is clearly a significant one for the poet writing and is heightened by the enduring nature of appropriative practices, and yet the topic received no attention among essayists such as Young.

Bloom was not alone in recognizing the association between literature and the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Erich Auerbach outlines the concept of “figure” in a 1959 essay in terms which illuminate the relation to influence and tradition in literature. Auerbach takes figure as his subject in this essay, outlining the etymological and tropological history of the concept as it informs ideas of tradition and literary inheritance in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. The critic proposes a
conceptual approach to figuration, taking as his example the manner in which the various books of the Bible tropologically allude to each other. This model not only provides a parallel to critical analysis of literary influence, it also provides an alternative to the modernist Latinate model of tradition which denies the affiliation between poetry and the Bible. Auerbach traces the changing definition of figure from “pagan antiquity,” where it was exemplified by Quintillian’s differentiation between tropes and figures, to the later Christian interpretation of it as a “prophetic event” in the Bible where it “foreshadow[s] things to come” (27, 29). In biblical studies, “figura” describes the “creative, formative principle, change amid the enduring essence, [or again] the shades of meaning between copy and archetype” (49).

Auerbach includes examples of biblical figuration, such as Moses’s naming of Nun’s son “Jehoshua (Joshua),” as “a phenomenal prophecy or prefiguration of the future Saviour,” to demonstrate that “figura is something real and historical which announces something else that is also real and historical” and this extends to the dual structure of the Bible with the Old Testament prophecying or providing a figure for the New Testament (29).

The relevance of Auerbach’s “figura” to Bloom, and to the broader issue of Romantic authorial individualism under question becomes clear in the third section of his essay. Having outlined the pagan and Christian histories of the concept, Auerbach moves in this third section to discuss “figural interpretation” (49). Here, “figural prophecy” is presented as “impl[ying] the interpretation of one worldly event through another” such that “the first signifies the second, [and] the second fulfills [sic] the first” (58). If the “modern view” sees “the provisional event … as a step in an unbroken horizontal process,” then the “figural system” of interpretation is “always sought from above … torn apart, individually, each in relation to something
other that is promised and not yet present” (59). Given Romanticism’s belief in the
dual sources of Western poetry and culture, Bloom reads this “figural system” of
interpretation as part of the “Hebrew temporal Sublime agon” (Bloom “Wrestling”
88). This approach to the “figural system” situates it at odds with “the Greek spatial
striving for the foremost place” that characterizes modernist Eliotic tradition.
Auerbach and Bloom both offer more comprehensive accounts of the traditions of
Western culture and poetry by incorporating the Judaeo-Christian source so often
relegated in modernist and post-Romantic poetry. Bloom is attentive to this duality,
however Ricks promotes the Latinate understanding of tradition in Allusion to the
Poets, and this preference is manifested in his negotiation of the opposition of the
critical concept of original genius and the enduring nature of appropriative practices.

Ricks’s study of allusion in British poetry from the 1700s to the 1900s serves
as evidence of the enduring nature of appropriative practices throughout this period.
The critic prefers the author-centred concept of allusion which works against the
more independently intertextual approaches that dominated literary criticism in the
closing decades of the twentieth century and are recorded in John Hollander’s 1981
book, The Figure of Echo. Hollander’s “figure of echo” offers a critical approach to
textual borrowing or referencing which “does not depend on [the] conscious
intention” of the author, and Hollander applies the concept to Milton in the 1600s all
the way up to T.S. Eliot in the 1900s (64). Books such as Hollander’s work against
the idea of original genius and the progressive legalization of the author as sole
authority and owner of the text through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
During this period, the figure of the author gained legal definition and the author
rather than the bookseller was progressively granted ownership of his or her text
under the law. The anxiety within Romantic self-consciousness and the gradual
legalization of authorship which devalues the use of appropriative practices in Romantic criticism did not continue through to the modernist period. If twentieth-century poetry and art represent a high point in the aesthetic engagement with appropriation, this era also reflected several corresponding developments in the critical approach to authorship. By studying the opposition between Ricks and Bloom and their contemporary re-readings of Romantic authorship and appropriation, we can learn more both about Romantic authorship and about the poetic and theoretical parameters of appropriation for Joyce, Halsey, and Howe.

In the preface to his book, Ricks situates Allusion to the Poets in opposition to Bloom’s Anxiety of Influence. Ricks lists Bloom as one of four critics important in the study of literary allusion. Unlike Bate, Hollander, and Eleanor Cook, Bloom does not receive the “due gratitude” the author attributes to these other critical precursors (41). Bloom’s Anxiety of Influence has made “beneficiaries and victims” of its readers, Ricks says, and the victimizing he attributes to Bloom’s text outweighs the insight and close analysis of influence that The Anxiety of Influence brings to criticism (5). In Bloom’s text, Ricks diagnoses a “melodramatic sub-Freudian parricidal scenario,” a “sentimental discrediting of gratitude,” and an “explicit repudiation of all interest in allusion” (6). Bloom writes insightfully about the conflicted relationship of the younger poet to his or her predecessor, and he is aware that “the poet in a poet” is motivated to write by the work of these earlier poets, insisting that the struggle to supersede one’s elders is what generates new and innovative poetry (Anxiety 11). In the opening lines of his book, Bloom outlines his interest in “strong poets, major figures with the persistence to wrestle with their strong precursors, even to the death” (5). Strong poets are not bound to “idealiz[ing],” like their weaker peers, choosing instead to “appropriate for
themselves”; however, “nothing is got for nothing, and self-appropriation involves the immense anxieties of indebtedness.” Where Bloom identifies an “anxiety of influence” between poets, Ricks sees a culture of gratitude and generosity, and where Bloom proposes the failure of poetic intention and the inevitability of allusion, Ricks is convinced of poetic intention and agency as the determining force in poetic allusion (xx).\textsuperscript{22} Ricks’s poetics of gratitude are linked not only to the work of T.S. Eliot, but also to that of Northrop Frye. Frye’s crucially influential work on tradition and influence in essays such as “Tradition and Change in the Theory of Criticism” and “Elementary Teaching and Elementary Scholarship,” as well as more canonical works such as Fearful Symmetry and The Secular Scripture, emphasize the alternate Biblical roots of poetry. Despite the differences between Ricks and Bloom, Fearful Symmetry was also important to Bloom’s concept of tradition and his work on Blake. Rather than reinforcing Frye’s arguments as Ricks does, Bloom rebels against Frye’s Anglican poetics of accommodation, and argues instead for the Romantic Hebraic poetics of conflict.

Despite their shared inheritance from Frye, there are significant differences between Ricks’s and Bloom’s concepts of tradition. Laura Quinney makes the peculiarities of Ricks’s text clear when she argues that “None of the odd, contradictory, provocative, inexplicable, troubling features of literary experience–or of allusion–features in his [Ricks’s] analysis,” and “nothing unnerving makes its way into his account” (n. pag.). The difference between the two critics is that “Ricks appears to regard poetry as a place of perfection,” Quinney says, “and he resents Bloom for attempting to insinuate into it some of the squalor of ordinary life” (n.

\textsuperscript{22} Laura Quinney draws attention to one moment in Ricks’s text, “in his essay on Winters, [where] he writes of ‘unconscious intentions,’” which would appear to lead away from his preoccupation with author-centred poetic intentionality; however Quinney is clear that “the concept of ‘unconsciousness’ does not mean much so long as it is still paired with ‘intention’” (n. pag.).
This difference becomes particularly pronounced with Bloom’s negative account of the imagination in *The Anxiety of Influence* which David Fite characterizes as a “malignity” or “alienation, profound and irreducible, [which] devours us from within” (187). These differences are important in gaining a clearer perspective on historical understandings of Romantic authorship and on the difficulty of depending on critical approaches to authorship through history.

Ricks and Bloom diverge in their interpretations of textual borrowing, and yet the two critics write relatively cotermiously when compared with Young whose essay was published in 1759. This divergence indicates that appropriation is a highly contested concept and that conflicting accounts of the practice can exist in society simultaneously. This divergence reflects the dual sources of poetry—the Greco-Roman and the Judaeo-Christian or Biblical tradition—and the critical proclivity to emphasize the Greco-Roman and elide the Biblical. In *Ruin the Sacred Truths*, Bloom acknowledges that “the two modes themselves seem irreconcilable,” and thus critical “attempts to explain this opposition on a linguistic basis have failed” (27). Such “reductiveness must fail when two … antithetical visions of life are contrasted” Bloom says, and instead the dual Greco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian sources of tradition should ensue in contested agency (27). Bearing in mind the problematically patriarchal nature of these two sources of culture, Carolyn Burke complicates matters further in her 1985 review essay on the female subject in modernist poetry when she warns against ethical judgements of poetic practices in retrospective analysis. Reviewing a number of books on female modernist poets such as Laura Riding, Mina Loy, and Marianne Moore, Burke articulates the danger of applying contemporary principles to the poetry of earlier times, and her analysis has consequences for Ricks and Bloom and the present investigation of historical
authorship. Reflecting on contemporary critics’ judgements on the work of these female modernists, Burke warns that “It would not do to lament the female poet’s self-effacement, her lack of self-assertion, or even her failure to speak in an identifiably female voice” (133). The problem with such approaches, according to Burke, is that they are “projections of our own concerns back onto the writing of an earlier period” which tells us little about the intentions of the poet in writing or the social, cultural, and political context within which the poetry emerged. Burke’s caution to critics problematizes Young’s attribution of genius to the literature of “Chaucer, Raleigh, Bacon, Milton, [and] Clarendon” who were writing at a time when his divinely natural model of genius did not exist (339). Burke’s warning also has relevance for Bloom because his critical model of the anxiety of influence cannot accommodate the power and strength that self-renunciation makes available to some poets.

The poetics of renunciation is elaborated in The Madwoman in the Attic with Emily Dickinson’s reading of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Aurora Leigh is said to manifest “the Romantic rage for social transformation concealed behind the veil of self-abnegating servitude” (Gilbert and Gubar 580). Here, poetic self-abnegation contravenes the “essential process of self-definition [which] is complicated by all those patriarchal definitions that intervene between herself and herself [as poet]” (17). This poetics of renunciation also contravenes Bloom’s conception of poetic influence as a wholly male phenomenon which Gilbert and Gubar reveal in their quotation from The Anxiety of Influence, “‘from the sons of Homer to the sons of Ben Jonson, poetic influence [has] been described as a filial relationship,’ a relationship of ‘sonship’” (6). Burke’s criticism is also instructive for my analysis, in that even a supposedly objective attempt to trace the changing history of the
“alluding author” is motivated by and will reflect the scholarly forms and social ideologies of a particular period. That said, Bloom’s and Ricks’s critical analyses of textual borrowing by the Romantics affords some insight into earlier conceptions of the author, not least of the instabilities and contingencies that define that figure and the consequences for contemporary understandings of poetic appropriation.

Ricks and Bloom are important in providing two diverse critical negotiations of authorship and appropriation through the figure of the Romantic “alluding poet.” Their analyses demonstrate that authorship and appropriation are not opposed but actually manifest a potent and productive duality, whether as a culture of gratitude as in Ricks’s study or as an anxiety of influence as per Bloom. This investigation of the historical development of the author demonstrates the changing definition of the poet writing and the social, cultural, and legal forces which shape our understanding of authorship. The purpose here is to demonstrate the reactionary nature of Drucker’s problematic assertion of “late-romantic heroic individualism” which is itself a response to contemporary anxieties about legitimacy and authority and the long, rich history of authorial appropriation (n. pag.). The significance of this history of authorial appropriation manifests itself most clearly when we turn to the contemporary school of conceptual poetry which asserts as one of its guiding principles the opposition of authorship and appropriation. Irrespective of the critical literature emphasizing the long and productive relation between authorial originality and appropriative practices, the conceptualists are vehement about the failure of original expression and the necessity of understanding appropriation as a means of effacing the poet writing.

Conceptual poetry is an early-twenty-first-century literary movement which tends to dominate contemporary discussion of the practices of appropriation,
adaptation, and textual borrowing that also distinguish Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s poetry. The main point of contrast between the conceptualists and these three poets is conceptualism’s propensity to position itself in opposition to a definition of Romantic lyricism, a definition which does not reflect the endurance of appropriation through the Romantic era, and is nowhere evident in these three poets’ appropriative practices. Kenneth Goldsmith expresses conceptualism’s positioning of itself in contrast to this concept of Romantic individualism in a 2007 essay for *Poetry Foundation* in which he rejects the possibility of authorial originality. Reflecting on the question of the possibility of “non-expressive poetry,” Goldsmith offers this response which consolidates conceptualism’s oppositional approach and indicates its failure to account for the expressive appropriative practices of the three poets preoccupying this study (“Journal” n. pag.). Goldsmith explains the “non-expressive” quality of conceptualist writing as follows:

Conceptual writing obstinately makes no claims on originality. On the contrary, it employs intentionally self and ego effacing tactics using uncreativity, unoriginality, illegibility, appropriation, plagiarism, fraud, theft, and falsification as its precepts. (n. pag.) Conceptualism’s explicit opposition to originality reflects the issues and debates that shape this chapter, but Goldsmith also takes a highly adversarial approach to language as the substance of the poetry. Under conceptualism, language is “junk,” “detritus,” “something to be shovelled into a machine and spread across pages, only to be discarded and recycled once again” (n. pag.). This poetry, “more concerned with quantity than quality,” situates poetic forms and styles which retain a concern with language as meaningful within a conservative standpoint, and yet this is not the most powerful imperative in Goldsmith’s definition. Conceptualist anti-subjectivity
is the most contemporary expression of the opposition of the author and appropriation and it takes this opposition to the fullest extent. Conceptualism also dominates contemporary conversations surrounding poetic appropriation, but it stands at a strict remove from the poetries of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe which use appropriation to uniquely declarative effects. By tracing the changing definitions of authorship from era to era and demonstrating the enduring nature of textual borrowing, it is possible to escape the opposition between poetic expression and poetic appropriation which manifests itself most clearly in contemporary conceptualism. From the self-assured Roman poets so confident of their status as author that they annotated their own appropriations, to the sixteenth-century critical admiration for Shakespeare and Spenser who retain those “images of nature,” and the later seventeenth-century attributions of literary genius, poetry has witnessed some rather significant changes in the meaning and definition of authorship and appropriation (Dryden par. 1). The changing definition of authorship need not preclude appropriation from contributing to the declarative, expressive force of a poem. Much has been written about conceptualism’s denigration of the author and its corresponding celebration of appropriative practices. It will be helpful to consider these criticisms in the analysis of the appropriations of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe and the importance of these practices in the development of three distinctly declarative poetries and poetics.

1.5 Advancing Appropriation in Contemporary Poetry

The practice of appropriation could be said to be in the ascendant again, nearly thirty-five years after the highpoint of postmodernism which relished the anti-subjective and sociopolitical imperatives of the practice. The current vogue is attributable to the strengthening of conceptual poetry in recent years, however
conceptualism has not been commended in all quarters. Critics such as Brady have been forthright in challenging conceptual poetry by suggesting that such writing is far more indebted to the lyric form it resists than those involved would like to admit. Conceptualism echoes twentieth-century experimentalism in its language and formal procedures, and yet the force with which the many essays surrounding the poetry attempt to eliminate the human from the poem is unique. The conceptualist approach to appropriation infers a rupturing of poetic voice and expression, and this violence is one of the most unsettling aspects of conceptualism for Brady. In studying the relationship between the poetries of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe and the conceptualist poetics of Goldsmith and Dworkin, a number of issues arise which distinguish these three poets from the contemporary conceptualist vogue. One of the prevailing differences between Dworkin and Goldsmith’s articulation of conceptualist principles in Against Expression and these three poets emerges with the conceptualist poet’s rejection of his or her own subjectivity in the poem. Brady takes up this question of subjective expression in conceptualist poetics, identifying a series of problems for the desubjective epithet that are particularly revealing of the innovation of the appropriative poetries under scrutiny here.

Critiquing Conceptualism

Brady’s interrogation of the formal, aesthetic, and political implications of conceptualist poetics provides a useful comparison and contrast for Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s writing, and for the interpretation of their appropriative poetics. In her analysis, Brady contrasts conceptualism with the lyric tradition it opposes, and while this thesis does not go so far as to reclaim these three poetries for the lyric tradition, her arguments are helpful in recognizing the limitations of the conceptualist definition of appropriation. In an unpublished conference paper entitled
“Poetry and Bondage,” Brady aligns the panegyrics bolstering conceptualism with the poetry and delineates the theoretical and aesthetic limitations of the poetics of conceptualism. Brady begins by demonstrating the difficulty of defining conceptual poetry among the plethora of critical statements and poetic examples, a situation she resolves through two distinct explanations: first, conceptualism is the name given to a vast range of experimental forms and practices which counteract the lyricism that has come to define the MFA workshop culture that pervades contemporary American poetry, thereby producing a very expansive definition. The second explanation, and one which has more serious ramifications for the conceptualists, is that there is no specific category of conceptual poetry, because there is nothing specific about the school other than the conceptualist appellation.

Brady’s critique leans towards this second scenario of a lack of any “specific category of conceptual poetry,” and yet this lack has not prevented conceptualism from situating itself as the sole alternative to the perceived individualism of the lyric (n. pag.). The emphatic nature of Dworkin’s denigration of lyricism in Against Expression clashes with the more ambiguous definitions of conceptualism by Laura Mullen and Sarah Dowling in the anthology of women’s conceptual writing, I’ll Drown My Book. Brady reads this anthology as veering very close to lyric modes of expression inherited from the critical construction of Romantic “heroic individualism” (Drucker n. pag.) According to Brady, the “caricatured notion of lyric authority” which conceptualism positions itself against emerges again in individual poems and series by some of the movement’s leading figures (n. pag.). Vanessa Place’s “Factory Series” “glorizes the author [-function],” Brady says, as does Goldsmith’s Soliloquy and Fidget which “are fabricated out of a distinctively personal vantage within the New York art scene.” Convinced by their own
redefinition of poetic practice as the “manage[ment] of language in the digital age,” poets and artists in the conceptual tradition follow Sol LeWitt in belittling the act of composition as “a perfunctory affair” (Goldsmith *Uncreative Writing* 4). The conceptualists’ anti-subjectivist take on form and practice reduces the poem to the status of a machine, Brady argues. Like the machine in Marx’s *Grundrisse*, the poem “possesses skill and strength in place of the worker[poet]”: The poem “is itself the virtuoso, with a soul of its own, while the worker operating it ‘is reduced to a mere abstraction of activity’” (n. pag.). Brady’s comparison of the conceptualist poem with Marx’s machine completes the conceptualist effacement of the poet writing, such that appropriation comes to dominate the writing scene and the poet is written out by each phrase he or she takes in from elsewhere. Brady’s interrogation of conceptualist appropriation is heightened by the fact that she incorporates appropriation into her own poetry. Before elaborating on her divergence from conceptualist practice, it will be helpful to learn more about conceptualist anti-subjectivity and its consequences for contemporary understandings of appropriation.

The evacuation of the subject in conceptualism is described in the essays that surround the poetry using machine rhetoric and imagery. Brady references Perloff and LeWitt and their invocations of the machine in conceptual poetry, but most of her quotations come from Goldsmith’s essay, “Flarf is Dionysus. Conceptual Writing is Apollo,” and from his 2011 monograph, *Uncreative Writing*. In the first text, Goldsmith reflects on appropriative practices and the difficulty of conceiving of the poem as an originally-authored piece of writing. In an essay which variously affirms and rejects poetic subjectivity, Goldsmith acknowledges the deconstitution of the poet writing: “Come to think of it, no one’s really written a word of it. It’s been grabbed, cut, pasted, processed, machined, ... and reframed from the great mass of
free-floating language out there” (n. pag.). Perloff’s work on conceptualism is related to Goldsmith’s attempts to historicize conceptual poetry as the teleological consequence of twentieth-century modernism. Brady cites Goldsmith’s response to Walter Benjamin’s *Passagenwerk* as indicative of this historicizing effort. Goldsmith accounts for Benjamin’s text by saying that “the machine that makes the work is set up in advance, and it’s just a matter of filling up those categories with the right words” (*Uncreative Writing* 114). This description is representative of the way Goldsmith historicizes conceptual poetry, and of his conscious effort to inculcate conceptualism as the necessary outcome of modernist impersonality and the appropriative practices of Cubism, Surrealism, and Dada.

To some extent, Goldsmith is correct in asserting that conceptual poetics develops appropriative practices from the modernist period, and extends the modernist propensity to interrogate poetic subjectivity. His statement that “On the conceptual side, what matters is the machine that drives the poem’s construction” is the latest manifestation of a long trajectory of modernist definitions and explanations of poetry (“Journal” n. pag.). From Valéry’s “a poem is a kind of machine for producing the poetic state of mind by means of words” (79), through Marinetti’s commitment to literature which “rend[ers] the life of a motor” (18), and on to Pound’s affinity for “machine art,” there is a long and rich history of the poem as machine in modernist poetry (57). As pervasive as this history is within modernist poetics, for Brady it does not absolve Goldsmith of his wilful “mechanising [of] the producer of language” (n. pag.). Such “mechanising ... depoliticiz[es] autonomy,” she says, and “ridicule[s] [the] identity and authenticity” of both reader and writer. The freedom on offer conceals a broader delimitation which conceptualism enforces...
not just on traditional lyrical modes of expression but for the very possibility of expression in poetry.

For Brady, the chief problem with recent conceptualist rhetoric is the “decay of poetic form as social mediation” which it promotes, and thus the decay of “‘mediating elements within the individual himself’” that Adorno says makes the individual part of a social subject (n. pag.). This might seem an unusual critique given the poetry’s propensity to appropriate fragments from texts and contexts that are already a part of society, and yet conceptualism represents only the most restricted account of appropriation in contemporary poetry. Other accounts emerge through texts such as Galvin’s 2014 essay, “Poetry is Theft,” in which she argues that “intellectual and artistic theft are not transhistorical concepts, but are construed differently at different times and in different places” (25). Conceptual poetry may be the most prominent example of textual borrowing in contemporary poetry, but it is not the only site of appropriation. Extending Galvin’s argument that artistic theft is “construed differently at different times and in different places,” I would argue that the examples of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe demonstrate that appropriation can also mean different things for poets writing in diverse social and cultural contexts.

Brady’s 2010 poem *Wildfire* serves as evidence of appropriation’s multiple meanings and interpretations and indicates the necessity of redefining appropriation.

Brady’s critique of appropriative poetry in her analysis of Goldsmith’s poetics is helpful in distinguishing the poetry and practices of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe; however, she is not adverse to the practice of appropriation in her own poetry. Brady’s criticism of conceptualism as “mechanising … the producer of language” is specifically addressed to the conceptualist negotiation of appropriation, and not to the practice itself. Brady’s 2010 poem, *Wildfire*, incorporates appropriation and is
indicative of the complexity of the practice and the divergence of an individual poet’s engagements with it. *Wildfire* is subtitled a “Verse Essay on Obscurity and Illumination” and the poem appropriates material from a vast range of texts. The sources of *Wildfire* include Ancient Greek works such as Theophrastus’s *De Igne* and Marcus Graecus’s *Liber Ignium*, and contemporary texts including Richard E. Threlfall’s *The Story of 100 Years of Phosphorus Making, 1851-1951* (1951) and Ernest Volkman’s *Science Goes to War* (2010). Brady’s negotiation of appropriation must diverge significantly from the conceptualist approach to avoid replacing subjective expression with a “mass of free-floating language” as conceptualism aims to do (Goldsmith “Flarf” n. pag.). In her “note on the text” which accompanies the poem, Brady details her intentions and motivations in writing *Wildfire*. The poet describes her difficulty appropriating text in an earlier poem entitled *Sweatbox* which she later abandoned, and this experience provides the impetus for *Wildfire*:

The failure of my first effort to write such a poem, *Sweatbox*, showed me unable to cope with a rapidly unravelling history … Epic fragments were transported by Penguin Classics to a nook in London then back out to a pixellated field sewn with cluster bomblets and the shards of the Nemean lion. I busied myself at the British Museum, reading the blurbs, constellating fragments as a melancholic formal reminder of the fractures and losses in real-time reporting and in the dispersal of a living culture. But I couldn’t keep up with the news, couldn’t fit that fast degeneration to an epic impasto worth thousands of years. (70-1)

The note describes Brady’s engagement with appropriation and her intimate knowledge of the dangers implicit in borrowing texts. Brady differs from the
conceptualists in the extent to which she acknowledges her own role in the selection of text and materials. Her reflection on the failed poem entitled *Sweatbox* shows the poet positioning herself as mediator of materials and text which are “transported ... to a nook in London” where she lives or works, and then transferred out again “to a pixellated field” (70). Responsibility for the poem rests solely with the poet and this is reflected in the acutely personal nature of her note on the text: “my first effort ... showed me unable,” “I busied myself at the British Museum,” “But I couldn’t keep up with the news” (emphasis added) (70-1). Her sense of responsibility to and for the poem is entirely at odds with Goldsmith’s orientation to composition as “a perfunctory affair” (*Paragraphs* n. pag.). Brady’s account of the difficulties she experienced with *Sweatbox* serve as evidence both of her appreciation of appropriation as a uniquely declarative practice and of her awareness of the problems that surround it, problems which recur in Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s poetries and practices.

One of the major problems in writing *Sweatbox*, which Brady sought to resolve in *Wildfire*, was that of authority, both her own authority to recount and respond to the atrocities of the Iraq War and the authority of her representations developed through the poem. In her note to *Wildfire*, Brady describes her struggle to overcome these difficulties in the earlier attempted poem:

> My appropriations showed through: the desire for wholeness implicit in the phrases airlifted from news bulletins; the desire for the right and the position to speak, for consensus and legitimacy of representation. The absence of those rights and places, the mourning echoes of the epic voice, turned the poem all tawdry ironic—better than a barbaric silence, but only just. (70-1)
Brady’s notes reflect the complex nature of poetic appropriation and issues of ethics and authority both in the appropriation of another author’s text and in the viability of representation. These issues recall the earlier questions of “moral … dubious[ness]” and dispossession that emerged in the definition of appropriation and which recur in the poetics of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe. Brady seeks to resolve some of these problems in *Wildfire*, or at least to become more acquainted with them. The fact that her 2010 poem was published coterminously with Place’s *The Guilt Project* and *Statement of Facts*, and within years of defining conceptualist texts by Goldsmith, Caroline Bergvall, and Robert Fitterman, demonstrates that multiple meanings and interpretations of appropriation do exist simultaneously in poetry.\footnote{Goldsmith published *Traffic* in 2007 and *Sports* in 2008. Bergvall’s “Via” was published in *Fig* in 2005 and Fitterman published “Notes to Conceptualism” with Place in 2011.}

Brady is not alone in asserting the declarative and expressive force of appropriation, and the number of poets and critics making similar statements about the closeness of authorial expression and poetic appropriation reflect the progressive redefinition of appropriation that is underway. Another of Galvin’s 2014 essays, “Lyric Backlash,” responds to Calvin Bedient’s essay which argues for a recovery of lyric expression from conceptualist anti-subjectivity. Galvin asserts that César Vallejo and M. NourbeSe Philip, two poets whom Bedient situates at opposite ends of the lyric/conceptualist spectrum, “both compose poetry according to formal concepts or constraints” such as appropriation, and yet both poets “strongly communicate affect” (n. pag.). Keston Sutherland makes a similar argument for deconstituting the opposition of authorial expression and appropriation in a blog statement for the “Revolution and/or Poetry” conference at the University of California in 2013. Here, Sutherland argues that “‘Lyrical confession’ versus ‘formal complexity’ is a false contest whose function in literary critical culture is to
blackmail poets and readers out of the formal complexities of subjectivity: the formal complexities of life itself” (n. pag.). Brady, Galvin, and Sutherland each articulate their arguments differently, and these differences reflect a broader divergence in critical opinions. Some critics emphasize a return to lyric poetry and others encourage a more expansive definition of conceptualist poetics, and yet Brady, Galvin, and Sutherland are united in absolving appropriation of the critical accusation of meaninglessness in poetry, and as being anti-subjective and anti-lyrical in its relation to both poet and reader. These critics provide support for my reinterpretation of appropriation as a uniquely expressive practice which is not opposed to authorial originality or declarative poetry.

Conclusion

Appropriation might be a conflicted term to apply to the appropriative practices of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe, enmired as it is in questions of “moral … dubious[ness],” the historical “annexation of land,” and issues of “property law”; however these moral conflicts feature in their poems which deal with narratives of national history and dispossession, questions of literary tradition, and authorial authority and authorship (Prickett 27). From Joyce’s preoccupation with “recoup[ing] ... the history” of Irish colonialism and dispossession from the prevailing narratives and rhetoric of national history (Why I Write” n. pag.), to Halsey’s redefinition of literary tradition from Eliot’s modernist ideal, and Howe’s affirmation of a feminist alternative to traditional patriarchal models of authorship, appropriation manifests itself in diverse ways and to different effects across these poetries.

This proposed redefinition of appropriation is uniquely suited to the poetries of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe because it acknowledges the aggregative nature of their poems without presuming, the way allusion does, that the constitutive texts will
explain or elucidate the poem. Appropriation remembers the poet who does the appropriating, and recognizes the collage nature of the poems which is often more explicit and literal than intertextuality permits. Finally, appropriation is the most suitable term for the analysis of these three poets because it provides a potent reference point for comparing their individual practices and the questions of authorship, literary tradition, and histories of land ownership which impact their writing. By bringing the word appropriation to the poetries of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe, it is possible to present a more expansive and insightful definition of the concept which acknowledges its declarative power beyond the author-centred referencing of literary allusion and the textual independence of intertextuality.

Aligning appropriation with these three poetries expands contemporary interpretations of textual borrowing such that the incorporation of a phrase, a line, or a paragraph from another author can be read not as effacing or replacing the words of the individual poet, but rather as articulating more fully the experience of the individual author and of the reader. Having defined appropriation and delineated the restrictions of contemporary applications of the term in poetry and criticism, I will move now to close readings of Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s poetries for evidence of the multiple and diverse practices of appropriation that demand an extension and development of the contemporary definition of the practice. The second chapter studies Joyce’s appropriative practice as a means of renegotiating the lyrical styles that characterize Irish poetic tradition.
Chapter Two: “Releasing the chaos of energies”: Communicating the Concurrences in Trevor Joyce’s Appropriative Poems

In a 1934 review of Herbert Read’s book, *Art Now*, Roger Fry criticizes Max Ernst’s collages as singularly failing to manifest the “unconscious urge which governs a genuine artistic sensibility” (245). Close attention to Ernst’s art reveals his practice as a process of “deliberate and conscious invention or adaptation,” Fry says. This “deliberate[ness] and conscious[ness]” stands in opposition to the psychoanalytic unconscious and “intuitive unreason” which characterizes art and criticism in the Surrealist tradition. Ernst’s work might reflect the “required suggestion” of “mystery” and “profundity,” Fry says, but it lacks the “constant quality of [the artist’s] own unconscious rhythmic feeling.” “[R]hythmic feeling” requires “concentrating on some external problem” in order to engage “the higher levels of our unconscious cerebration” and thus to provide art with “significant synthetical results.” The intentionality that Fry finds in Ernst’s practice undermines the “unconscious elements which govern the art of a Rembrandt” that he says are “far more mysterious and significant” than Surrealist art. Ernst’s “invention or adaptation” fails to engage any “external problem” that would enable the “fruitful synthesis both of science and art.” According to Fry, Surrealist intentionality also “worship[s]” the “lowest, most unreasonable levels of the unconscious life” which he says “underlie … so many of the methods of modern art” and are “absurd.” This question of intentionality is a potent one for an artist such as Ernst who celebrates Surrealism for “turning topsy-turvy the appearances and relationships of reality” and thus “‘hasten[ing] the general crisis of consciousness which must perforce take place in our time’” (Krstovic 314). The purpose of Surrealism was to engage the
unconscious and give aesthetic shape to the dream-life of the individual, thus escaping the violence and restrictions of rationality in the inter-war period. According to Fry’s review, Surrealism fails not only to meet the standards of traditional art, but also to realize its own principles of aesthetic unconsciousness by acceding to the “deliberate and conscious” design of the artist (245).

The Surrealist affirmation of collage and other appropriative forms as abstruse and abstracted still characterize definitions of collage today, even as contemporary poets put these practices to different uses. Fry’s interrogation of the “unconscious” nature of Ernst’s collages undermines the essential tenets of Surrealism and the artist’s capacity to realize them in art. This criticism also reflects on the Surrealist influence on contemporary poets such as Trevor Joyce and his inheritance and innovation in developing the aesthetics of the 1920s and ‘30s. This chapter addresses Joyce’s declarative appropriative practices in his recent poetry as a contemporary response to this Surrealist inheritance. Joyce’s appropriative practice is indebted to Surrealist collage, and the art of Ernst and Joseph Cornell is particularly influential. Over the course of this chapter, I will demonstrate Joyce’s divergence from the Surrealist celebration of the unconscious by focusing on the concurrences which make his appropriative poems uniquely expressive and meaningful. My purpose in addressing the declarative force of Joyce’s appropriative practice is not to situate him in opposition to the Surrealist tradition, but rather to articulate his contemporary development of that aesthetic. Before addressing Joyce’s declarative appropriations, it will be helpful to indicate the trajectory of this chapter and the arguments that arise concerning Joyce’s declarative collages.

The chapter begins with a definition of the word ‘declarative’ as it is applied to Joyce’s appropriative practice, and the arguments for using this word in the
analysis of his poetry. This question of what declarative means extends from
dictionary definitions to rhetorical and scholarly uses of the word so as to emphasize
the articulate and expressive power of appropriation. Having outlined the meaning
and relevance of the declarative to this analysis of Joyce’s appropriative poetry, I
will then turn to the practice of appropriation itself. The collage approach that
distinguishes much of Joyce’s recent poetry reflects specific modernist traditions,
and it is incumbent upon an analysis of his appropriative practice to ask how the poet
came to write this way. Ernst and Cornell present particularly compelling examples
for Joyce’s practice, and this analysis of the poet’s inheritance is oriented around
their art. After indicating some artistic examples to Joyce’s poetics, attention will
turn to the techniques and effects of Joyce’s appropriations which make his poems
uniquely declarative. Through an alignment of four of Joyce’s appropriative poems
from *with the first dream of fire they hunt the cold* (2001) and *What’s in Store*
(2007), I will offer an account of the particular features of his poetry which
contribute to this declarative effect.1 With some sense of how Joyce’s appropriative
poems achieve their declarative effects, the next question for this chapter is what do
Joyce’s appropriative poems declare? To answer this question, I will undertake a
close reading of two of the poems already discussed. Through this critique of “De
Iron Trote” and “Trem Neul,” I will identify the major themes of both poems and ask
how Joyce’s appropriative practice helps to articulate and interrogate these themes in
new and innovative ways. The growing body of criticism on Joyce’s oeuvre attests to
his poetry’s reinvigoration of the lyrical modes of expression which have long
characterized Irish poetry. This chapter concludes by aligning the declarative nature
of Joyce’s appropriative poetry with lyric expression, thus reconciling the restrictive

---
1 Hereafter, *first dream of fire*. 
and residual opposition in contemporary criticism between formal complexity and lyric expression.

2.1 Sourcing Joyce’s Appropriative Practice

Defining the Declarative

Before addressing the declarative force of Joyce’s appropriative poetry, it will be helpful to offer a definition of the declarative as applied to his appropriative practice, and to Halsey’s and Howe’s poetry more broadly. The word declarative has meaning across a variety of different contexts and disciplines. The OED begins by defining the word as “characterized by declaring,” “making clear, manifest, or evident,” or as that which “manifests itself or is capable of manifestation” (“Declarative”). As an adjective, “declarative” retains the action of its root verb, “declare,” such that a “declarative” sentence makes “clear or plain (anything that is obscure or imperfectly understood)” (“Declare”). To describe a poetic practice such as appropriation as declarative, then, is to attribute to it the capacity to articulate something, to make assertions, or to make something evident through the poem. The rhetorical function of the declarative, to “clear up, explain, ... [or] interpret,” indicates the performative power of the word, hence the subsequent definitions of declarative as “a proclamation” or public statement which announces a real-life change of policy or law (“Declare”). This performative quality is also important to the grammatical classification of declarative sentences as sentences that “make statements which convey information directly about some state of affairs” (Cann 13). Ascribing performative characteristics to the declarative is important to the critical analysis of the role of the poet in appropriative poetry, but it also raises questions about the conceptual framework of some varieties of speech-act theory and particularly the opposition of performative and constative. For the Surrealists, the artistic escape into
the unconscious was expressly an attempt to escape the rationality and enlightened subjectivity of the individual. André Breton pushed the issue further in his preface to a 1920 exhibition by Ernst when he asked, “‘Who knows if we are not somehow preparing ourselves to escape the principle of identity?’” (Matheson 539). The declarative’s performative nature insists that there is somebody present to do the performing. This reinforces appropriation’s commitment to retaining that figure of the author which other concepts of textual borrowing deny or suppress.

The proposed attribution of a performative quality to the declarative calls into question the conceptual opposition of performative and constative. The truth-value of declarative statements aligns the term declarative with the constative, but by drawing attention to the subjective agency of the performative, this opposition begins to break down. The declarative nature of these appropriative poems actively deconstructs the constative/performative binary. The performative meaning of declarative is also reflected in the more colloquial applications of the adjective. When a person is criticized as declarative it usually means that he or she is overly self-assertive and demonstrative. The word declarative also has meaning in pedagogy and memory studies, both of which provoke parallels with Joyce’s appropriative poems. Declarative learning refers to that which we know, as against procedural learning which regards that which we can do. In her essay on social transmission in humans, Kathleen R. Gibson states that “Humans transmit factual information primarily via spoken, gestural, and written languages,” which also includes poetry (354). This relation between declarative learning and language is such that “the declarative learning system can be said to have expanded into a declarative learning-language system,” even if procedural language skills enable this communication. The alignment of declarative learning and language, and thus
poetry, supports the description of Joyce’s appropriative poetry as declarative. Gibson’s essay also promotes the relation between poetry and physicality which becomes particularly potent in Joyce’s “De Iron Trote” in that both reading and writing are physical as much as mental skills. With declarative learning defined as acquiring knowledge that one can talk about, we might read the declarative concurrences of Joyce’s poems as encouraging readers to reconsider their knowledge of specific texts and ideas. The study of memory also includes a concept of the declarative to describe one type of long-term human memory, a concept which provokes a range of concurrences with Joyce’s appropriative practices, and with Halsey’s and Howe’s poetries.

The purpose of describing Joyce’s appropriative practices as declarative is to assert the articulate nature of his appropriations which interact with and respond to each other through rhyme, imagery, and the near-imperceptible changes Joyce makes to the text he appropriates. The word declarative also supports the concept of the poet which appropriation retains but that is denied by more intertextual approaches to textual borrowing. The performative nature of the declarative presents Joyce’s appropriations as articulate and meaningful, and sustains rather than effaces the individual poet writing. My purpose in selecting this word to describe Joyce’s appropriative practice is not to suggest that the aggregation of text in his poems achieves an expository or didactic force. Instead I am using the word to assert the articulate nature of his appropriations; that is, to assert the potential for a phrase or line from one source to speak to a phrase or line from another. Joyce’s appropriations respond to each other and, in doing so, establish concurrences across wildly diverse social, cultural, and literary contexts. As well as establishing a conversation or exchange across different ideological belief systems, these poems
also illuminate the commonalities among disparate texts and contexts. The value of
the declarative to the description of Joyce’s appropriative practice arises from the
possibility it affords of recognizing his innovative development of the abstract and
aleatory forms he inherits from modernism. In Joyce’s poetry, the word declarative
describes the new processes of meaning-making, and new meanings, which arise
through the poems. Before undertaking a critical investigation into the declarative
techniques and effects through which Joyce’s appropriative poems gain their
expressive force, it will be helpful to trace the history of his appropriative practice
and the influences that shape his poetics.

Modernist Influences on Joyce’s Appropriations
In his discussion of the importance of the 1996 conference Assembling Alternatives
to Joyce and his poetry, Fergal Gaynor is careful to acknowledge the longer history
of appropriative practices in the poet’s work. The conference brought Joyce into
contact with his Irish peers, Billy Mills, Catherine Smith, Randolph Healy, Maurice
Scully, and Geoff Squires, and these meetings, and others, “inspire[d] him to devise
his own collages and assemblages” (64); however the “sensibility behind these new
forms had already been cultivated” by Joyce’s interest in art, specifically “late and
fringe Dada, surrealist, and absurdist modes” (65). Joyce’s influences include “Klee,
Schwitters (as poet and collagist), Lorca, Ernst (particularly of the Une Semaine de
Bonté), Kafka, Finnegans Wake, Borges, Beckett, [and] Joseph Cornell.” Each of
these artists can be productively aligned with Joyce’s appropriations, and Ernst and
Cornell offer particularly compelling parallels.

The readings of Joyce’s poems in this chapter will present a variety of
motivations both for Joyce’s appropriation of particular texts in the poem, and for his
appropriative practice. Joyce seeks the same eclecticism in his selection of materials
as Cornell, for, as the artist says, “‘how does one know what a certain object will tell another?’” (Bourdon 66a). The American artist became interested in collage after visiting a Surrealist exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York in 1931. Cornell returned to the gallery several weeks later to deliver his own uncommissioned collages to Levy, and by 1932 the earliest examples of Cornell’s art were exhibited in the “Surrealism: Paintings, Drawings, and Photographs” show at the gallery. In his interview with the artist from 1967, David Bourdon reports that Cornell “resents any deep reading of his boxes for symbolic interpretation.” Bourdon suggests instead that the “objects in these carefully staged dramas seem to communicate with each other in an eloquent sign language.” This suggestion of the communicative relation between materials anticipates the declarative force of Joyce’s appropriative poems. Cornell’s combination of materials and images in his collages and boxes are important as a reference point for Joyce’s declarative appropriations, though there are also important differences between the two. Juan Antonio Suárez explains that the elements incorporated into Cornell’s boxes are “fastidiously chosen and combined to evoke and withhold meaning” (162). Many of Joyce’s source texts in his poems have historical and political value, but it is important to retain the possibility of spontaneity in Joyce’s selections. Another of Joyce’s modernist antecedents is discussed in Werner Spies’s 1988 study, *Max Ernst, Collages.*

The example of Ernst offers a more critically attuned analysis for comparison with Joyce’s practice. Critical analysis of modernist collages are helpful because they articulate the primary questions for spectators reading and viewing these works. These questions are harder to ask from a contemporary critical perspective because, as Spies says, the original imperatives in collage practices
“seem speculative from today’s point of view” (25). When it comes to collage, “the burden of interpretation is definitely on the spectator” the author argues, and a spectator’s “first reaction” is invariably “to ask where these images came from” (24).

The spectator “entangles himself in an attempt to make secondary knowledge of the original context ... stand in for primary knowledge.” For Spies, the questions that Ernst’s collages provoke in the viewer differentiate collage from the Cubists’ papier collé, in that Cubists practices “awaken no such disquieting need to find references.” Spies’s articulation of the “disquieting need to find references” in Surrealist collage will also be recognizable to readers of Joyce’s appropriative poems. The critic offers an insightful breakdown of this “disquieting need” and the questions it provokes in his analysis of Ernst’s work. According to Spies, the major issue for spectators of Ernst’s collages is the extent to which “a knowledge of his source material—a knowledge that can never be as complete as the artist’s—should be taken into account when investigating the collages.” By following Spies’s response to this question, it is possible to gain a clearer picture of Joyce’s development of modernist collage and his divergence from its example.

Spies begins his analysis of Ernst’s collage practice by articulating several assumptions which applied to the 1930s, the artists, and the spectators of the Surrealist collages. First, Spies says that Ernst “does not assume that the spectator needs to know his sources,” and “We may conclude that the collages expressly deny their relation to their sources.” The second assumption Spies articulates regards the spectator who “sees the combinations in ... Ernst’s collage as the result of an aleatory procedure.” This belief in the “aleatory” nature of collage regards the “elements juxtaposed in the collages as being random and fully interchangeable with any others.” Joyce occupies an ambiguous position towards both assumptions. The poet
includes lengthy notes regarding his sources and influences in the poems from *stone floods, Syzygy*, and the selection of “Shorter Poems” in *first dream of fire*. Meanwhile, the poet limits himself to a few clues as to the constitutive texts of the forty-five-page appropriative poem “Trem Neul” in the same collection, stating that “it would be pointless to give a complete list” of source texts (240). In naming the authors and not the texts who contribute to “Trem Neul,” Joyce may be acknowledging those authors who granted permission for their texts to be used rather than offering any direction for curious readers.\(^2\) That said, Joyce has been quite willing to confirm the bibliographies of various appropriative poems I have sent to him, and often specifies the particular edition of an essay or text he incorporated into a poem.

These oppositional approaches to acknowledgment do not reflect a contradiction in Joyce’s position but rather serve to support his belief that knowledge of his source texts offers little to readings of his poems. In a 2005 interview with Keith Tuma, Joyce was asked whether he thinks readers should be acquainted with his compositional process in appropriative poems. The poet initially answered in the negative; however, he revised his position in a later interview I conducted with him in 2011. Reflecting on whether readers should be informed of his use of procedural constraints or Excel spreadsheets in the composition of the poem, Joyce stated that “The poem should be able to function without it, to some degree, and [he] think[s] that … [in the case of “The Peacock’s Tale”], it would function, to a large degree” (O’Mahony n. pag.). Ernst’s unwillingness to divulge his sources, or more properly, his belief that these sources are irrelevant, becomes a point of contrast with Joyce. Considering the value that such information could contribute to a reading, Joyce is

\(^2\) This hypothesis excludes P.W. Joyce, A.R. Luria, and Sir Charles Sherrington whose names are included in Joyce’s note but who were all long dead at the time of publication.
clear that knowledge of his sources and processes should “open it [the poem] up more, it should mean more if this is known.” In the case of the procedural poems from *first dream of fire* and *What’s in Store* which will preoccupy this chapter, Joyce now believes that understanding the structure of his poems “probably is more desirable” than he originally stated in the interview with Tuma (n. pag.).

Louis Aragon described Ernst as “‘a painter of illusions’” because his collages “conscious[ly] exchange ... one real thing for another” (Spies 25). Ernst is an important precursor to Joyce’s practice of appropriation, and his example of altering and reinterpreting his source material becomes an important declarative feature of Joyce’s appropriative poems.

Spies’s book on Ernst was first published in German in 1974 and the critic is conscious of how dated some of his assumptions will seem to contemporary readers. We have already heard how Ernst’s ideas “may seem speculative from today’s point of view,” and “misinterpretations of this kind have long become irrelevant” (25). That said, such “misinterpretations” were “by no means irrelevant to ... Ernst,” Spies argues, and “the belief that collage was an autonomous, historically unprecedented art form was vital to him.” The situation is very different for Joyce, a contemporary poet writing more than a century after collage was first introduced. Cornell and Ernst are important antecedents to Joyce’s appropriative practice, but Joyce’s poetry does not replicate the principles and parameters of their work. Joyce diverges from their example by fostering a declarative imperative within his appropriative poems, and this declarative force reflects his negotiation with the lyrical modes that dominate contemporary Irish poetry. In order to understand Joyce’s development of his modernist ancestors, it is necessary to consider the

---

3 Hence, Joyce’s publication of “Some notes” on “The Peacock’s Tale” and *Syzygy* in a special feature of *Drunken Boat* on Oulipean poetry the following year in 2006.
features of the declarative quality I am attributing to his poetry. In the following pages, I will investigate how Joyce’s appropriative poems achieve their declarative effects.

2.2 Decoding the Declarative in Joyce’s Appropriations

In the introductory paragraphs of this chapter, I outlined the various interpretations of the word declarative and indicated its suitability to the description of Joyce’s appropriative practice as both performative and constative. The dictionary definitions and etymological history of the word indicate that to describe Joyce’s appropriations as declarative is to attribute to them powers of articulation and expression. The word also contains within it the presumption of an individual speaker or subject performing the action, and in this way, the word declarative supports appropriation’s preservation of the poet. Having defined the word and demonstrated its suitability to the description of Joyce’s appropriative poetry, it is necessary now to consider how Joyce achieves this declarative effect in his poetry.

Joyce published his first collection, *Sole Glum Trek*, in 1967 with New Writers’ Press, jointly run by Joyce, Michael and Irene Smith in Dublin. This first collection was followed by *Watches* (1969), *Pentahedron* (1972), and *The Poems of Sweeny, Peregrine* (1976), at which point Joyce stopped publishing poetry for nearly twenty years. *The Poems of Sweeny, Peregrine* could be read as Joyce’s first significant engagement with appropriation. The poem sees Joyce carrying over the eighth-century myth of the Irish King Sweeny who was cursed by Saint Ronan to wander the woods deranged and alone until his death. Joyce subtitles *Sweeny* not as a translation but rather as a “working of the corrupt Irish text.” This subtitle acknowledges Joyce’s reading of the original ancient Irish text alongside English translations by J. G. O’Keeffe among others, and calls attention to the many
differences and discrepancies across the various manuscripts. *Sweeney* might be Joyce’s first poetic engagement with source texts but it does not reflect the same appropriative style that we find in his more recent poetry. The poet’s predilection towards appropriating material in his poems has long been an important feature of his poetics, and yet the practice becomes much more explicit in *first dream of fire* and *What’s in Store*. In order to gain a clearer sense of the declarative quality of Joyce’s appropriations, it is necessary to take a closer look at individual poems.

“‘De Iron Trote’” appears midway through the “‘Undone’” section of *What’s in Store* which is Joyce’s twelfth collection of poems and is still his most substantial volume running to more than three hundred pages. The two tables of contents which appear in the book, one at the front and a more detailed version to the back, list the many translations or workings of European folksong, of Turkic and Finno-Ugric, and of the Chinese and the Irish. There are densely procedural poems, many variations on constraint, and an enduring negotiation with traditional lyric forms, both as a resistance to and a redefinition of that form. The “‘Undone’” section is comprised of five poems with dedications to Alison Croggon, Keith Tuma, and Fanny Howe. “‘Causes of Affects,’” “‘De Iron Trote,’” and “‘The Peacock’s Tale’” are each appropriative in structure, while “‘Dramatis Personae’” mirrors the lyric sections of these three poems, and “‘Elements’” is a chiasmus. The title, “‘Undone,’” might be read as reflecting the lack of intentional expression and sentiment in these densely aggregative texts while also suggesting the processes of unravelling and textual unmaking which characterize the poems.4

---

4 The “‘Undone’” title also recalls Joyce’s twin 2003 chapbooks, *Take Over* and *Undone, Say*, published by The Gig. According to Jeffrey Twitchell-Waas, the “cover of the chapbook, *Undone, Say*, in which ‘The Peacock’s Tale’ was first published, give[s] a complete listing of the various word strings of ‘rhyme chains’ Joyce incorporates into the lyric half of the poem, as well as those for ‘De Iron Trote’” (216). It is also notable, Twitchell-Waas says, that “the aural rhyme chains are far more prominent in ‘De Iron Trote’ than in ‘The Peacock’s Tale.’”
“De Iron Trote” is an unusual poem with which to begin this analysis of the declarative force of appropriation in that the first section of the poem is comprised almost entirely of appropriated text while the second section eschews and even ridicules the same practice of appropriation. This duality between the incorporation and eschewal of appropriative practices in the poem provides a critical lens onto the role and function of appropriation, and emphasizes the comparison and contrast between the declarative force of appropriative poetry and more traditional lyric writing. As well as taking oppositional approaches to appropriation, the two parts of “De Iron Trote” are also formally very different. The first part is presented as a prose poem of eleven block paragraphs, and the second part is comprised of seven sentences divided into stanzas and progressively indented.

“De Iron Trote”

Joyce’s use of conceptual rhyme and imagery and his modification of individual lines and phrases differentiates his appropriative practice from the Surrealist commitment to the unconscious, while also encouraging a more explicitly meaningful poetry which breaches the borders of lyricism. The first part of “De Iron Trote” is aggregative in form, gathering together a multitude of diverse source texts.\(^5\) Part one runs over two and a half pages with paragraphs of varying length and begins as follows:

As man, in deep and level sleep, periodically draws a long inspiration, song is learned and figured in the brain.

Think of the way a musical box, wound up, potentially represents a slow or lively air. (233)

---

\(^5\) A full breakdown of source texts comprising this poem is included in Appendix I at the end of the thesis and should be read alongside the chapter in order to follow the contributing authors and texts invoked through this analysis of the poem.
The opening image of a man inhaling a breath in sleep runs into the description of song learnt and manifest in the mind, and the paragraph proceeds with the instruction to consider a musical box which “potentially represents” song. The didactic, or declarative tone is carried over from the two source texts, particularly Clendening’s twentieth-century text-book, and contrasts with the peculiar nature of the proposition. The opening paragraph serves as an exposition of the tone, form, and themes of “De Iron Trote” and the questions that arise indicate the difficulty of interpreting Joyce’s appropriative poetry. Several conceptual rhymes emerge across the first section of the poem; the definition and distinction of the human as a cultural being in the first paragraph rhymes with the degradation of the human in the third; the Munster Plantation which is a primary image in the third paragraph parallels the imperial power manifested in the Ancient Chinese hunting parks; and the apprenticeship of Ticket writers in the final paragraphs rhymes with Joyce’s own practice as a poet and the writing of this poem. Joyce uses prepositions and adverbs to consolidate his sentences and sustain the block prose structure of the poem. These grammatical interventions help realise the declarative potential of “De Iron Trote” by providing a centre-point of a rhyme or compounding the various meanings of a word to multiply relations between the lines.

The third paragraph of the poem exemplifies Joyce’s declarative techniques in “De Iron Trote.” The first seven lines of the paragraph proceed as follows:

Garments of silk, or thin dry wool, also give rise to a noise calculated to cause error, sometimes mitigating the production and carefully controlled cropping of live creatures for high ends. Else, from every corner of the woods and glens see them come creeping on their hands,
for their legs cannot make fast, as in humans the larynx migrates down the neck since the age of eighteen months, from which arises the sound of voices. (233)

The “garments of silk or thin dry wool” that “give rise to a noise calculated to cause error” become a “mitigating” factor, literally “alleviat[ing] or giv[ing] relief from the “production and carefully controlled cropping of live creatures for high ends” in Zhou Dynasty China (“Mitigate”). The following word, “Else,” “like its synonym other admits contextually of two different interpretations: e.g., something else may mean ‘something in addition’ to what is mentioned, or ‘something as an alternative or a substitute’” (“Else”). Here, the word connects Schafer’s description of the Chinese wildlife preserves from the second century B.C.E. with Spenser’s description of the Irish “creeping on their hands” “from every corner of the / woods and glens” (233). Joyce’s poem permits both interpretations, combining the Chinese and the Irish examples while also making them alternatives for one another. In this way, the “production and carefully controlled cropping of live / creatures for high ends” compounds Spenser’s representation of the Munster Plantation, while also becoming exchangeable with it so that the “live animals” of the Chinese leisure parks are synonymous with the native population of the Irish colony. Joyce’s use of the adverb “else” to ground a conceptual rhyme about imperialism in Ancient China and sixteenth-century Munster serves as another example of the effects and techniques he uses to encourage the declarative force of his appropriations. It is not only the changes that the poet makes to the text he appropriates which contribute to the declarative force of this appropriative poem. Joyce, like Howe, also incorporates a self-annotative element to his appropriations which informs the aggregative nature of these poems.
The comment on speech development which intervenes after the conceptual rhyme on imperialism is continued through the remainder of the third paragraph:

In time
these come to speak of a political meeting, of market shares. Someone tells of a woman who murdered her lover. “A chauffeur kills his wife,” says another. All teetotallers like sugar. No nightingale drinks wine.

Go figure. (233)

After Ponting’s account of speech in infants, the poem introduces a cacophony of voices which itself invokes a longer history of poetic appropriation and aesthetics. These voices are drawn from the opening lines of Rosalind Krauss’s 1998 study, *The Picasso Papers*, and refer specifically to Picasso’s newspaper collages from the 1910s. In effect, Joyce’s poem directs readers towards its aesthetic influences and sources, with the obligatory degree of textual remove and dissociation via Krauss. The following lines of Krauss’s description of Picasso’s processes of composition in *The Picasso Papers* provide a critical correlative for “De Iron Trote”:

Each newsprint fragment forms the sign for a visual meaning; then, as it butts against another, the sign re-forms and the meaning shifts ...

[...]ach little paper piece submits itself to meaning, but never enduringly so. For the same piece, in another location, constellates another sign. (1)

These lines could serve as a description of Joyce’s poem as easily as they do of Picasso’s collage, and yet there is something discomfiting about the poet suggesting this analogy for his own practice. Picasso’s status, alongside Georges Braque, as the

---

6 The collage in question is Picasso’s *Violin and Newspaper* from November 1912 which includes a newspaper headline in the bottom left-hand corner of the canvas which reads “Un Chauffeur Tue sa Femme.”
creator of collage makes him a potent reference point in the analysis of Joyce’s appropriative practice. The poet offers a more nuanced account of his practice in a series of emails from 2013.

In two emails from spring last year, Joyce articulates his assessment of the appropriative practices shaping “De Iron Trote” and their function within his poetics. Starting with his sources, Joyce explains that his selections tend towards older texts which are “rancid with nostalgia” and “almost fracturing already under the pressure of too much meaning” (29 Mar. 2013). This pressure might be attributed to “figures of speech (explicit or not) tearing [the texts] apart,” or simply to the fact that they come from “an older time or … different sensibility.” Examples of Joyce’s “fracturing” texts are replete within the poem, notably Spenser’s *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596) which comes laden not only with the specific social and literary contexts of sixteenth-century England, but also with the political and historical contexts of Ireland which are compounded for an Irish poet such as Joyce living and working in post-colonial Ireland. The reference from *Trades for London Boys* could also be read as “fracturing … under the pressure,” although the pressure impacting this text is different to that afflicting Spenser’s text. The excerpt from *Trades for London Boys* provides an analogy between Joyce’s practice as a poet and the formal training required of these apprentice ticket writers. Meanwhile, the pressure that manifests itself in the middle lines of paragraph six where Joyce borrows from Peter Beckford’s 1847 text, *Thoughts on Hunting*, regards the “figures of speech” which are manifested as a warning against idle chatter among the huntsmen. If the poet collates source texts which reflect an overbearing pressure of meaning, what is the effect when these texts are gathered together in a poem? Joyce

---

7 My thanks to Trevor Joyce for permission to quote from these emails.

8 Hereafter, *A View*. 
offers his response to this question in his description of “De Iron Trote” and similarly procedural poems as:

[I]mmersed within language, and comprised of the elements of language, words, syntax, [and] register, . . . which are often traceable, in differing granularities, to a variety of other texts, but they don’t rely on those other texts being recognized and recalled to memory.

(17 Feb. 2013)

For Joyce, then, these poems are a composite of language and literature which emerges at the local level of letters and syntax. The primary imperative for appropriating a text is the poem itself, and the texts appropriated must be “traceable.” “De Iron Trote” does not require that every text be revealed and recorded by the reader, but the poem carries with it the personal, political, historical, and aesthetic contexts of the texts it invokes. The poet works with “distinct methods” and “local effects” to gather letters and words towards the constitution of a line of poetry, and this aggregation of text progresses in accordance with the immediate demands of the line (29 Mar. 2013).

“De Iron Trote” is symptomatic of Joyce’s “many attempts to bring together diverse materials,” but it is not enough to amalgamate various texts (29 Mar. 2013). The poet demands that these texts “mutually resonate,” and this resonance manifests itself with Poundian force, “transfusing, welding, and unifying,” so that “the whole assemblage constitutes a new meaning” (Pound Essays 49). Joyce’s appropriations are declarative in the extent to which they provoke language to unfamiliar and even unintentional patterns of association, and the resonance he finds in a successful poem does not delimit those patterns of association. Having demonstrated the initial features of Joyce’s appropriative practice in “De Iron Trote,” I will turn now to
consider “The Peacock’s Tale,” “Causes of Affects,” and “Trem Neul” as they extend and develop the declarative features of Joyce’s appropriative practice.

“The Peacock’s Tale”
Alongside “De Iron Trote,” the “Undone” section of What’s in Store also includes the other appropriative poems, “Causes of Affects: A Sentimental Retrospect” and “The Peacock’s Tale.” 9 “The Peacock’s Tale” is dedicated to Fanny Howe and is oriented around a one-line excerpt from one of her poems entitled “The Sea-Garden.” In his notes to the poem published in a special issue of Drunken Boat, Joyce explains how “The Peacock’s Tale” is structured according to three specific reference points: the quotation from Howe’s poem, an 1842 Encyclopaedia Britannica entry on Ireland, and “the dense formal organization of Chinese parallel verse” (“The Structure” n. pag.). Here, parallel verse is used as a constraint to organize the poem and offset the confessional predilection of the “poetry of expression” (Joyce “Point of Innovation” 46). Joyce applies the Chinese poetic form to “The Peacock’s Tale” because he admires the acuteness of language and rhyme it inspires such that “every element in a parallel couplet rhymes semantically with its counterpart, as well as fulfilling certain phonetic constraints” (“The Structure” n. pag.). After delineating a rigorous selection of rhyming chains, Joyce explains how he takes Howe’s line, “A human is a thing that walks around disintegrating,” as a reference point for a number of conceptual rhymes. These rhymes incorporate the rhetoric of renaissance butchery, three dances with animal names, “four terms from iron-founding, ... six realms of being in medieval Japanese-Buddhism, ... [and] the verbs occurring last in each of the four paragraphs of the accompanying prose.” It might seem strange that a poet such as Joyce who adopts such an intensely

9 Neither “Elements” nor “Dramatis Personae” incorporate appropriation in the way the other three poems do, and so I have left them out of my analysis of the “Undone” section.
procedural form should delineate his process so clearly, however the poet feels no risk in granting the reader this access. As with “De Iron Trote,” “The Peacock’s Tale” works because of the declarative rhymes which emerge across the poem and contribute to the many associations and connections which offer a new perspective on and interpretation of the texts contributing to the poem.

The initial rhyme for Joyce is between Howe’s quotation and the “costume of the people” of Ireland in the 1840s which is “so wretched” that “if they once took off their clothes, it would be difficult to put them on again” (“The Peacock’s Tale” 239). This rhyme resounds with the verbs of dismemberment used by renaissance butchery which appear across the poem, including “tusk,” “frush,” “untache,” “disfigure,” “unbrace,” “tranche,” “leach,” and “splat” (240-41). The rhyme emphasizes the poverty of the Irish which the *Encyclopaedia* entry describes, and the exploitative nature of colonialism which reduces the colonized land to plantations for foreign markets. The rhyme is compounded by the description of “these sheer beasts” which makes the animals of renaissance butchery exchangeable with the destitute Irish (239).

Twitchell-Waas elaborates on Joyce’s investment in Chinese parallel verse in “The Peacock’s Tale” in his essay on the influence of Chinese and Japanese literature on the poet. Reflecting on the poet’s appropriations of parallelism, Twitchell-Waas explains that “Joyce’s deployment of … structural parallelism is never merely formal, since it is inextricable from his persistent thematic concerns with time, transience, and mortality” (199). The purpose of parallelism in Joyce’s poem is to “Allow[ ] the outside in,” the critic says, and thus to serve as an enabling

---

10 Most of these terms are included in Mark Morton’s entry on carving in his book, *Cupboard Love 2: A Dictionary of Culinary Curiosities*, 69.

11 Without being able to source the original 1842 entry, I am not sure whether the reference to “sheer beasts” is Joyce’s own creation which serves to reinforce the rhyme, or whether it was included in the *Encyclopaedia* entry.
constraint for the poet writing. The parallelism constraint allows both poet and poem to express something without incurring what W.B. Yeats describes as the “self-contempt” of individual “egotism and indiscretion,” or “the boredom of [the] reader” (522). Here, appropriation is a dissociating force, and parallelism “accept[s] temporality and change” which manifests itself both in the multitude of eras and societies represented and in the antithesis that emerges through these rhymes (Twitchell-Waas 199). The multiplicity that characterizes appropriation and parallelism “forever threatens any sense of the singular integrity of the poem,” and this multiplicity fosters associations and connections across the poem which are uniquely declarative. “The Peacock’s Tale” demonstrates the range and scope of Joyce’s declarative appropriations, extending and developing the conceptual rhymes of “De Iron Trote” in more explicitly formal ways. In order to gain a clearer perspective on Joyce’s appropriative practice, and the declarative force of his poetics, it will be helpful to analyse one of his poems which does not achieve the same declarative force as “De Iron Trote” and “The Peacock’s Tale.”

“Causes of Affects: A Sentimental Retrospect”

The third appropriative poem in the “Undone” section is primarily composed of an extract from General Edward Braddock’s “Letters from an Officer” which are excerpted from Archibald B. Hulbert’s The Paths of Inland Commerce (22). A comparison of Braddock’s “Letters” with the poem show that Joyce makes very few changes in his appropriation of the text, altering approximately thirty words from Braddock’s original. For the most part, Joyce’s alterations swap the geographical or agricultural details of Braddock’s Virginia landscape for human emotions. He exchanges “cow-pens” for “affections,” “woods” for “past,” “corn” for “love,” “calves” for “domestic rages,” and “head of cattle” for “head of feelings.” The
second, lyric section of the poem echoes that of “De Iron Trote” and “The Peacock’s Tale” with twelve six-line stanzas progressively indented. It is harder to establish connections between the two sections of the poem here than in the other two poems. Joyce’s decision not to deviate too far from Braddock’s original text limits the declarative force of the poem and the possible meanings which might emerge through this appropriative practice. The final paragraph of the poem serves as an example of these limitations:

You see, Sir, what a wild set of Creatures Our Civil Men grow into, when they lose Society, and it is surprising to think how many Advantages they dispense, which our near industrious would be glad of: Out of many hundred Things Forgotten they will not give themselves the trouble of controlling more than will maintain their Family. (229)

This passage includes five changes from the original text which are denoted in the passage using italics.12 The poem’s title supports Joyce’s invocation of “love,” “sadness,” and “feelings” though these alterations do not generate the same conceptual rhymes or imagery that emerge in the other poems. The alterations Joyce makes in “Causes of Affects” do not have the same force in the consolidation of rhymes or connection of disparate source texts, and his appropriations lack the imagery which fosters new interpretations and meanings of constitutive texts in other poems. If “Causes of Affects” does not achieve the same declarative force of “De Iron Trote” and “The Peacock’s Tale,” it is worth turning to one of Joyce’s earlier

---

12 “Civil Men” replaces “English Men,” “dispense” replaces “throw away,” “near industrious” stands in for “industrious Country-Men,” “Things Forgotten” is substituted for “Cows,” and “controlling” is used in place of “milking” (Hulbert 22) (“Causes of Affects” 229).
poems which demonstrates the poet’s potential to use these declarative techniques and effects to extend the remit of the lyric.

“Trem Neul”

“Trem Neul” offers more to an analysis of Joyce’s appropriative practices and the declarative force of his aggregation of text. This poem makes up the final section of Joyce’s 2001 selected poems where it was included as a sample of his contemporary writing. Peter Manson describes the poem as “defined by the points of intersection of an intricate golden braid of strands of appropriated language ... [with] the total effect [that] is both true to experience and extraordinarily moving” (8). In her reading of the poem, Satris is emphatic about the personal imperatives motivating Joyce’s appropriations. “Trem Neul” does not only reveal the “self-construction of the author through his use of texts,” she says, the poem is also “specifically about Joyce’s own past” (30). This interpretation of the poem as a feat of “self-construction” proceeds “despite the fact that the collage-like structure of the poem seems completely abstracted from the life of the author.” For Satris, the dynamic force of “Trem Neul” emerges from this dialectic between the abstract form of the poem and the “concept” of the poem which she says “originates in Joyce’s personal and family history.” Over forty-five pages, “Trem Neul” aggregates a myriad of texts and materials in a bicameral structure of block prose paragraphs and corresponding lyric stanzas. The epigraph to the poem comes from Yeats’s “General Introduction for My Work” and serves to suggest the various uses of appropriation in Joyce’s poetry. In this 1935 introduction, Yeats records his process of discovering “a language to [his] liking” with which to write his poetry (521-22). The poet describes feeling “compell[ed] ... to accept those traditional metres” which provided him with a “passionate syntax for passionate subject matter” and diverged so much from the free-verse styles of his
modernist contemporaries. Translators of the Bible provided Yeats with evidence that “a form midway between prose and verse” was “natural to impersonal meditation” and yet, he warns, “all that is personal soon rots; it must be packed in ice or salt” (522). The poet’s commitment to discovering a “passionate syntax for passionate subject matter” seems far removed from the abstract appropriations of “De Iron Trote” and “Trem Neul,” but there is much to recommend a comparison between the two.

Yeats concludes this paragraph from his “General Introduction” by rejecting the possibility of originality in poetry: “Talk to me of originality and I will turn on you with rage. I am a crowd, I am a lonely man, I am nothing. Ancient salt is best packing.” The older poet resigned himself to “accept[ing] those traditional metres” and dual prose/verse form because it allowed him to avoid “self-contempt” and the “boredom of [the] reader.” Joyce’s criticism of the “poetry of expression” in his 1997 essay corresponds with much of what Yeats articulates here, even if the category of “expression” in poetry means different things for the two poets (“Point of Innovation” 46). If “Trem Neul” is a poem of preservation, and “ancient salt is the best packing,” then it is only fitting that Joyce’s appropriations stretch from the Khmers in the eighth century up to Dōgen in the thirteenth, and Bashō in the seventeenth century up to James Joyce in the twentieth. Satris’s assertion that Joyce’s appropriations reflect the concept of “Trem Neul” which “originates in Joyce’s personal and family history” befits Yeats’s epigraph (“Voices” 30); however this personal imperative does not undermine the declarative force of Joyce’s appropriations. According to Satris, “through the act of reframing classical texts [—Joyce’s Portrait of an Artist, Tim Robinson’s Setting Foot on the Shores of Connemara and P.W. Joyce’s “Some Reminiscences ... ” —] Joyce “unsett[t[es] ...
memory and identity” in “Trem Neul” and thus “challenges the idea that there is a continuity with the past” (48). Here, the declarative force of the poem manifests itself with the same “arrangements of and meddling with” appropriated text, rhyming, and imagery that manifests itself in Joyce’s other appropriative poems (40).

These poems demonstrate the declarative features of Joyce’s appropriative poetry, recognizing the prevailing uses of rhyme and imagery as well as the local alterations and syntactical alignments of individual lines. If this analysis investigates how Joyce achieves a declarative effect through his poetry, the next question is what do these poems declare? What is expressed and what meanings manifest themselves through Joyce’s particular negotiations with appropriation? To respond to these questions, I will undertake a close reading of two of the poems addressed in this section, “De Iron Trote” and “Trem Neul.” In the following analysis of Joyce’s declarative appropriations, I will discuss the themes of dispossession, writing, and authorship, and the etymology of appropriation as it shapes “De Iron Trote.” My reading of “Trem Neul” follows Satris’s lead by attending to the interrogation of personal and collective history, and the form and function of memory. This analysis incorporates Joyce’s essays and critical responses to both poems, while also situating Joyce’s practice within a broader critical and cultural background of Irish poetic tradition. This situating of Joyce’s declarative appropriations investigates the relation between his appropriative practice and lyric poetry, and the possibility of reading his declarative appropriations as breaching the boundaries of the lyric.

2.3 Joyce’s Poetic Declarations

“De Iron Trote”: Appropriation and Dispossession

In the previous chapter, I traced the etymological roots of appropriation and ascertained a “morally dubious” history bound up in property seizure, land
acquisition, and conflicts of ownership and authority. The close correlation between this etymology and the themes, images, and issues which distinguish “De Iron Trote” demonstrate that appropriation contributes directly to the over-arching themes of the poem. “De Iron Trote,” “The Peacock’s Tale,” and “Trem Neul” each incorporate representations of colonialism in Ireland, and each poem is composed according to appropriative practices. It is plausible then to suggest that Joyce chooses the practice of appropriation for these poems because it provokes the same issues of ownership, authority, and deprivation that the poems themselves engage. The conceptual rhyme between Huxley’s human/inhuman opposition and Spenser’s discussion of the Irish in A View serves as a particularly potent example of this alignment of form and content.

The first quotation Joyce takes from Huxley appears little over halfway through the philosopher’s essay in a paragraph comparing the vocal mechanism in animals and humans. In the following quotation, the phrases in italics are those Joyce carries over into “De Iron Trote”:

In man there is also a vocal mechanism, and the cry of an infant is in the same sense innate and á priori, inasmuch as it depends on an organic relation between its sensory nerves and the nervous mechanism which governs the vocal apparatus. Learning to speak and learning to sing, are processes by which the vocal mechanism is set to new tunes. A song which has been learned has its molecular representative, which potentially represents it in the brain, just as a musical box, wound up, potentially represents overtures. Touch the stop and the overture begins; send a molecular impulse along the proper afferent nerve and the singer begins his song. (59)
The conflict surrounding the ontological distinction of humans and animals provides a useful dialectic for reading this poem which is populated by a number of different bodies and groups. The opening paragraph distinguishes the human as uniquely capable of learning and performing music, and presents this musical capacity as a physical process. It is fitting, then, that “De Iron Trote” attends to distinctions between human and inhuman and considers the consequences of such distinctions in enabling and approving mistreatment and violence.

Included in the population of the poem is the sleeping man of the first paragraph, the baby of the third paragraph whose larynx “migrates down the neck” at eighteen-months, a “woman who murdered her lover,” “a chauffeur [who] kills his wife,” and “these brutes” who threaten to be nothing more than a “superior race of marionettes” (233). The “agopithecus” of the fifth paragraph indicates the problem of distinguishing between man and animal on the basis of speech and communication as this “ape-like goat” has a voice which is “very like a man’s” (234). The roll call continues with the speaker and little boy with his teddy bear, which precedes an oblique reference to the “Crying Boy,” the media name for a “cursed painting of a little boy blamed for a spate of house fires in working class areas of Northern England in the mid-eighties.” 13 Paragraph six sustains Clendening’s “Investigation on Respiration” with reference to “women who are both grown up and fat,” and goes on to list huntsmen, politicians, admirals, and somebody’s grandmother. This first section of the poem ends with a delineation of an apprentice’s requirements for Ticket and Sign Writing and Boiler-making as established by the Apprenticeship and Skilled Labour Association of London in 1908. The array of individuals and groups that manifest themselves in “De Iron

Trote” serve as a reminder of the many authorial voices and texts that constitute the poem. This population also reflects a broad spectrum of the actions and interactions that Huxley analyses in his investigation of the relation between humans and animals, from the “cry of an infant” in paragraph three which is innately human, to the “brutes” in paragraph five who threaten the boundary between human and nonhuman. This opposition becomes particularly pointed when “these brutes” are aligned with Spenser’s description of the native Irish in *A View* (233).

Spenser’s denigration of the Irish problematizes Huxley’s careful comparison of humans and animals in his 1874 essay by reducing the Irish to animals or “brutes.” This treatise was written in the aftermath of the Desmond Rebellions in Munster (1569-1573 and 1579-1583) which were organized as a response to the strengthening of the English colonial forces in Ireland. Spenser took his cues for *A View* from Lord Arthur Grey de Wilton who was acting Lord Deputy of Ireland at the time and was later recalled by Queen Elizabeth I because his policies were deemed “excessively brutal” (Rambuss 26). This brutality manifested itself in scorched-earth tactics which led to famine, driving starving people to Cork city where plagues broke out. Sir Warham St. Leger, Provost Marshall of Munster, estimated that the death toll passed 30,000 within the first six months of plague (Hirst 103). This figure did not reflect the death toll through fighting, and yet Spenser is clear that the suffering endured by the native population was not the fault of the colonists: “yet sure in all that warr there perished not manye by the sworde, but all by the extremitye of famyne, which they themselues had wrought” (Spenser 135). Spenser advocates for a violent military operation to bring the native population under control, arguing “yt is in vaine to speake of plantinge of lawes and plottinge of pollycies, till they [the native Irish] be altogeather subdued” (17).
Among the various arguments and assertions in Spenser’s text, his depiction of the Irish is particularly compelling and appalling, and this depiction constitutes the basis of Joyce’s appropriations from the text in “De Iron Trote.”

Joyce first references Spenser’s text in the third paragraph of the poem where he borrows and adapts the author’s lines to read, “from every corner of the / woods and glens see them come creeping on their hands, / for their legs cannot make fast” (233). These animalistic portrayals of the starving Irish eating carcasses out of their graves, “scrape[d] back out of their deeper sleep,” supports Huxley’s downgrading of human consciousness. Spenser’s text demonstrates that a physical process of the body such as hunger can drive humans to acts far removed from enlightened consciousness. Spenser’s call to more forcibly subdue the native population incorporates an opinion of the Irish as less human than the English. This attitude excused English brutality and holds the Irish accountable for a famine “they themselues hadd wrought,” justifying a range of behaviours that would not be necessary or appropriate in a more civilized society (135).

Spenser is not a neutral selection for an Irish poet such as Joyce living and writing in Cork, and A View is particularly provocative because of the violent subjugation which Spenser says is necessary to control “the moste barbarous nacion in Christendome” (56). It is important to note that Joyce makes no attempt to alert readers to this source text in “De Iron Trote,” and indeed the violence and destitution

14 Spenser’s original text reads, “out of euerie Corner of the woodes & glennes they came crepinge forth vpon theire hands, for theire legges could not beare them, they looked Anotomies of death, they spake like ghostes cryinge out of theire graues, they did eate of the dead Carrians, happye were they could fynde them, yea and one another soone after in so much as the verie Carcases they spared not to scrape out of theire graues, and yf they founde a plot of water cresses or shamrocks, there they flocked as to a feast” (135).

15 Spenser has maintained an important position in Joyce’s poetics, emerging again in the 2014 collection, Rome’s Wreck, which “translates” Spenser’s Ruines of Rome. Manson describes Joyce’s translation as a “gleefully violent revenge” on the English poet which reduces each word of his thirty-two poems to one-syllable (8).
of Spenser’s images are more forceful when they are taken out of their original political and historical contexts. The two themes of the human/inhuman opposition and the depiction of the starving Irish meet in the rhetorical statement which concludes the fourth paragraph of the poem: “What proof is there these brutes / are other than a superior race of marionettes, which eat / without pleasure, cry without pain, desire nothing, / know nothing, merely simulating true intelligence” (233). By changing Huxley’s “what proof is there that brutes” to “what proof is there these brutes,” Joyce reorients the question to refer to the wretched Irish of the previous paragraph. This alignment questions the processes by which consciousness becomes the distinguishing feature of humanity and is variously ascribed and denied to different groups. Here, the Irish experience of dispossession is manifested through the opposition of ontology and Spenser’s denigration of the Irish, an opposition which supported and justified a violent colonial regime.

“De Iron Trote”: Writing and Authorship

The conceptual rhyme between Huxley and Spenser is a primary declarative moment in Joyce’s poem and it reflects appropriation’s “morally dubious” history of dispossession. The second theme which emerges in “De Iron Trote” is writing and authorship which further elaborates the declarative force of Joyce’s poem. “De Iron Trote” is dedicated to Tuma, and this dedication is intended as a response to the critic and his comments on Joyce’s poetry in a 2003 essay on Tom Raworth. In this essay, Tuma discusses Joyce’s poem “DARK SENSES PARALLEL STREETS” which aligns Raworth’s “Dark Senses” with sixteen new quatrains, one responding to each of Raworth’s originals. Tuma’s distinction between the two poets regards the more “‘restricted’” nature of Joyce’s language when compared with his English counterpart (“Snifiting” 81). In a 2015 essay, Tuma asserts that his comments about
Joyce’s “restricted” diction eventually came to the poet’s attention, and “De Iron Trote” was his response. Tuma reads the poem as Joyce “working with found text to shape a lively, humorous prose and poetry diptych about the craft of putting words to song.” The final paragraphs of the poem on writing and authorship reconcile my reading with Tuma’s and contribute to this investigation into the declarative force of Joyce’s appropriative practice.

The final three paragraphs of the first part of the poem are primarily derived from the 1908 text, *Trades for London Boys*, but it is the progression of Ticket Writers in the eighth paragraph which interests me here. Exchanging the original words, “The apprentice,” for “The illusion of experience,” Joyce leaves the rest of the excerpt exactly as it appears in the original text:

> The illusion of experience, as a rule, begins by filling in provided letters with paint, and later gets on to the proper writing and lettering. Attendance at technical classes would be useful in order to bring up a good style of writing with some originality. (234)

This account of the “illusion of experience” uses the same imagery that Joyce invokes in his criticism of popular forms in Irish poetry in his essay from 1997. In “The Point of Innovation in Irish Poetry,” Joyce reflects on the general failure of mainstream Irish poetry, which he characterizes as “the poetry of expression,” to supersede the boundaries of individual experience (46). The difficulty that such poetry experiences is in “representing” the “reality” of the world and the “irreducible experience of real pain ... pressed on us by media.” This pain cannot register, Joyce says, in a poetic language “in which all positive terms have been appropriated by
advertising.” The problem with the Irish “poetry of expression,” Joyce explains, and he includes some of his early poetry under this category, is that “we imagine that all we need to do is lay bare our souls in a few images, neatly segmented through the line-break mechanism ... and there we have that sacred thing, a poem.” When “De Iron Trote” is aligned with this 1997 criticism of “a certain sort of recent poetry, particularly evident in Ireland,” the “ticket writers” of Joyce’s poem recall the contemporary authors of the “poetry of expression.” Read this way, the closing line of the eighth paragraph which advocates for “Attendance at technical classes to bring up a good style of writing” could be read either as an ironic criticism of the “originality” of the “poetry of expression,” or as a demand for a more original and formal approach to expression such as that represented by “De Iron Trote.” In this context, the final paragraph of this first section is a wry self-deprecating reflection on the poet’s process of composition: “Work with letters may be done sitting without difficulty / and is quite suitable for cripples. The trade is not a / large one” (235). This first section of the poem comprised of appropriated material is ostensibly more expressive and declarative than the “refined / precedent” of the lyric tradition that informs the second section (237). By aligning the second section with potential influences it is possible to gain a clearer understanding of how Joyce uses appropriation declaratively.

The first and second sections of “De Iron Trote” assert opposing stances on appropriation; however, this second section does bear the marks of different poems and texts. It might alleviate a reading of this verse section to relate Joyce’s “train / of state” in the ninth stanza to the same phrase in Samuel Johnson’s “The Vanity of Human Wishes” (1749) (237). The tenth stanza of Johnson’s poem addresses Thomas Wolsey, a clergyman and politician who amassed a great fortune and lavish
properties during Henry VIII’s reign. Wolsey played an important role in the progressive redefinition of appropriation during the English Reformation. In the previous chapter, I cited Prickett’s explanation of how the word appropriation became a euphemism for the “looting of ... monastic houses with well-rewarded zeal by a member of Henry’s newly Protestant merchant-aristocracy” (26-7). This historically specific definition supports the invocation of Johnson and Wolsey here, and the broader reading of appropriation as characterizing both the form and the content of “De Iron Trote.” A 1743 biography of Wolsey asserts that contemporary historians charged the politician with “sacrilege, on account of the dissolution of ... forty monasteries” (Grove and Cavendish 430).16 In “The Vanity of Human Wishes,” Johnson dramatizes the King’s turn against Wolsey and his alienation from Court by a retinue of courtiers and attendants:

Claim leads to claim, and power advances power;
Till conquest unresisted ceased to please,
And rights submitted, left him none to seize.
At length his sovereign frowns—the train of state
Mark the keen glance, and watch the sign to hate.
Where’er he turns he meets a stranger’s eye … (60)

This reproach of Wolsey in Johnson’s poem is followed by another of King Charles XII of Sweden which is read as “skilfully includ[ing] many of Johnson’s familiar themes” that echo the themes of “De Iron Trote” (Weinbrot 47). Johnson’s themes include “repulsion with slaughter that aggrandizes one man and kills and impoverishes thousands, understanding of the human need to glorify heroes, and subtle contrast with the classical parent-poem [in Juvenal’s Satire X] and its

16 That said, the authors are careful to point out that Wolsey put the revenue of these monasteries to “a spiritual use” (Grove and Cavendish 430).
inadequate moral vision.” One could interpret Johnson’s thematic influences as supporting Joyce’s interest in the human consciousness in “De Iron Trote” and the concomitant portrayal of colonialism in Ireland. That said, Joyce puts Johnson’s “train of state” to different use in his poem, demonstrating the difficulty of making assertions about the poet’s intention in appropriating a text and its cultural and political resonances within the poem (60). “De Iron Trote” extends the phrase beyond Johnson’s regal ascription to accommodate a more literal meaning. The phrase is elaborated in the final stanzas of the second section:

Let’s catch

the track

will lead us

to our train

of state,

then venerably

process.”


You’ve heard it’s true.

that by a snifting

clack

the air

is expelled

from the

pickle-pot. (237-38)
A “snifting clack” is an old name for the safety valve on a steam engine that ejects air from the cylinder, and so the “train / of state” in Joyce’s poem recalls not just the royal retinue but also, through the “track” and “snifting clack,” an actual train. It is these final lines that present the second section of “De Iron Trote” as the inverse of the first with regards to appropriation. Here, Joyce sets two separate stanzas in quotation marks, neither of which gives way to ostensible bibliographical sources.

There may appear to be little in the way of thematic connections between the two sections, and yet the oppositional approaches to appropriation serve as evidence of Joyce’s divergence from Picasso’s collage practices invoked via Krauss’s 1998 study. Joyce’s play on true and false appropriations challenges Picasso’s comment on artistic copying and stealing which echoes T.S. Eliot’s assertion that “immature poets imitate, mature poets steal” (Sacred Wood 114). The endurance of these assertions of poetic and artistic theft as a compositional practice in modernism is reflected by Richard Ellman’s assertion, quoted in the previous chapter, that “the best poets expropriate best” (8). The conflict that Joyce generates around the idea of appropriation also challenges the idea of the fully constituted text which Picasso presumes is there for the taking. The practice of appropriation problematizes the attribution of authorship as it is traditionally defined, and this problematizing recalls the question of Joyce’s appropriative practice as breaching the boundaries of lyricism. In order to address this relation between the declarative nature of Joyce’s appropriations and his innovations of traditional lyric form, I will turn to “Trem Neul” where this question comes to the fore.

17 The quotation attributed to Picasso is “Bad poets copy, good poets steal,” however there is no documentary evidence of Picasso having made this statement.
“Trem Neul”

In the previous discussion of the appropriative nature of “Trem Neul,” I suggested that this is a poem of preservation as signalled by its epigraph, its investment in personal and collective histories, and its preoccupation with memory. “Trem Neul” has attracted more critical comment than many of Joyce’s poems, partly because of its length, and partly because of its various methods of reconciling the individual with the social. The existing criticism of this poem recalls the arguments rejecting the critical opposition between formal complexity and lyricism by Brady, Sutherland, and Galvin. In the following paragraphs, I will investigate the relation between the declarative nature of Joyce’s appropriations in “Trem Neul” and the innovative reformations of lyricism which critics attribute to his poetry. If this poem is an exercise in preservation, the first two questions for “Trem Neul” is what it is that Joyce is trying to preserve, and why appropriation is particularly suited to this attempt at preservation. In order to explain Joyce’s predilection towards appropriation, it will be helpful to consider the poetic and cultural context within which he began writing in Ireland, and his divergence from this tradition. One of Joyce’s reasons for using appropriation is that it supports his attempts to “recoup part of the history of [his] world from what Beckett terms ‘the uniform memory of intelligence’” ("Why I Write" n. pag.). This “uniform memory of intelligence” shapes historical narratives and definitions of identity, and the terms in which these narratives and identities are expressed. In “Trem Neul,” the declarative nature of the poem emerges from Joyce’s contravening of traditional modes of lyric expression. By studying this formal innovation, we arrive at a deeper understanding of Joyce’s appropriative practice, and his poetry and poetics.
The question of what is being preserved in “Trem Neul” is a difficult one for a poem so deeply indebted to the texts of other authors and eras. On the back cover of the 2001 edition of *first dream of fire*, “Trem Neul” is described as “an extended autobiographical essay in prose and verse from which everything personal has been excluded.” In the absence of confessional verse, the spaces of the poem are “crowded with the memories and apprehensions of others,” and yet Joyce is clear about the personal nature of his poem. In a 2013 interview with Satris, Joyce proposes reading “Trem Neul” as “a meditation on family, tradition, [and] lineage” (25-6). The story about Ned Goggin from P.W. Joyce’s 1913 essay serves as a guiding narrative for the poem while also consolidating the themes of family and tradition. The older Joyce recalls the visit of Ned Goggin, a famed fiddle-player, to his childhood home seeking shelter during the “Night of the Big Wind” in 1838. Joyce remembers Goggin playing “The Tuning of the Colours” during his visit, though it was many years before he could recall the melody and add it to his collection of Irish folk music. In this essay written the year before he died, Joyce recounts how the tune came back to him one night during sleep, “trem neul, as the song-writers would say,” “through my dream,” so that he “woke up actually whistling the tune” (17). Trevor Joyce’s selection of this phrase, “trem neul,” as the title of his poem indicates his interest in the processes of memory which sustain tradition and lineage. Alongside P.W. Joyce’s narrative, the poet also makes reference to James Joyce, and to textual representations of Galway and the west of Ireland where his mother, Nora Joyce, was born and raised, and which he brings together with lines lifted from his 1998 poem, *Syzygy*. The photo which forms a cover image of *first dream of fire* and “Trem Neul” was taken by his mother at her
ancestor’s home place of Coolaghy, Co. Galway, circa 1950. This image, and the tradition of community it represents, supports the poem’s aggregation of texts and authors and the broader themes of tradition and cultural lineage.

The question of what is being preserved in “Trem Neul” remains to be answered, and for that it will be helpful to take an excerpt from the poem. The following lines are drawn from the second page of the poem:

It is a mixture of spaciousness and intimacy, with a slightly sunken stage at the centre, which is not to be mistaken for the world. Round three sides, rows of chairs await their occupants, for the months and days are the passing guests of a hundred generations, and the years that come and go are also visitors, for which we must make due accommodation. The fourth side is open for the entry of actors. An audience of several hundred already fills the seats—so many as the chamber can hold. Here is included everything under the

---

18 The image represents the Meitheal tradition wherein neighbours and friends gathered on a local farm to help the resident family save the hay. Joyce’s father’s family is from East Limerick and they “had more than enough family history to go around” compared with his mother’s upbringing in the poor house (Satris “Interview with Trevor Joyce” 25).

19 A brief bibliography of the contributing texts and compositional process of this page is available online at https://jacket2.org/poems/trem-neul-composition-process.
sky; next the fine austere stand the
gaudy young, the feeble lacer-
tion neighbours fleeting strength,
for debility is universal. All rise
and bow to the king as we enter.
He and I sit above, opposite the
centre, and a hush falls as retainers
approach on their knees, offering
programmes for our instruction,
chocolates and sweets for our re-
freshment, and in such a company,
there’s no such things as time. (187)
The opening image of a stage recalls the analogy between the theatre and the world
in William Shakespeare’s As You Like it. In act 2, scene 7, the courtier, Jacques,
offers his account of human life in a play replete with double-identities and false
names; “All the world’s a stage,” he says, “And all the men and women merely
players. / They have their exits and their entrances, / And one man in his time plays
many parts” (1672). Joyce’s lines are actually drawn from Malcolm MacDonald’s
Angkor and the Khmers, but the analogy to Shakespeare is more helpful for thinking
about the relation between family, tradition, and lineage in Joyce’s poem.20 The
speaker of Joyce’s poem resides in a relation of “spaciousness and intimacy” with the
generations that went before (187). The actors and audience members that populate
these opening lines reflect the “passing guests of a hundred generations” gone before,

---

20 This analogy belies the fourth line of Joyce’s prose section which states that the “sunken / stage at
the centre is not to / be mistaken for the world,” however I am making this analogy because it is
useful for extending Joyce’s stage to meet the themes of family, tradition, and lineage which the poet
says comprise the poem (187).
and “the years that come and go are also visitors, for which we must make due accommodation.” This rhyming of human history and the transience of time manifests itself not through the fact of the passing of life and time, but rather through the endurance of the two, and “Trem Neul” testifies to this endurance. The theatre of the second page “include[s] everything under the sun,” the “fine austere,” the “gaudy young,” the “neighbours,” and “the King,” and “in such a company / there’s no such thing as time.” In breaching the boundaries of time, all that remains is “a dense constellation / of some thousands of nodal points ... in a short phase of rhythmical / flashing,” and although this constellation may incur “a deliberate crescendo to a climax, declining then and dying away,” it will light up again “after due pause” (195). The appropriation of text in “Trem Neul” proceeds more seamlessly than in “De Iron Trote” and the concurrences which emerge work to escape “what Beckett terms ‘the uniform memory of intelligence’” (“Why I Write” n. pag.).“The rare thing” which might offer alternatives to this “uniform memory” can be achieved when one acknowledges that memory is also a process of change, both of the individual remembering and of the information internalized (“Trem Neul” 227).

The “rare thing” which is remembered “does / not stagnate but moves from / one style to another,” and this “mov[ing]” manifests itself in a variety of ways in the poem (227). The process of transformation might describe the notation of a song from a melody recalled to a tune written down and recorded, or the transformation of the individual’s body when, as Joyce says, “with the exception of your neurons / and your muscles, the cells of your / first body are long gone” (223). The aggregative nature of the poem supports Joyce’s effort to establish memory not as a cerebral phenomenon but rather as a physical and collective process, and yet this appropriative form may seem an unusual choice for a poem addressing themes as
personal as family, tradition, and memory. In order to understand Joyce’s invocation of appropriation here, it will be helpful to consider the alternatives available to him in Irish poetic tradition.

Joyce’s Lyricism

Joyce has frequently articulated his disinterest in the lyrical modes which have characterized Irish poetry over the course of his writing career. His earliest comments derive from the 1997 essay, wherein the poet articulates his divergence from the “familiar marketable thing, the Irish poem” (47). The traditional Irish poem “was invariably in the expressive mode,” Joyce says; “it took its theme from off the shelf, and told you, in lyric fashion, what the poet felt on the subject.” By Joyce’s own admission, it took some time for his poetry to move beyond these conventional lyric forms, and his near-twenty-year silence reflects this struggle. I have already outlined Joyce’s difficulty with the “poetry of expression,” and yet he acknowledges that by the early seventies, his own “technical development as a poet hadn’t got much further than the standard Irish bag of tricks: lyrics of description and expression dressed in the most transparent of formal attire” (“Phantom Quarry” 6).

The implication is that the poems of Pentahedron (1972) constituted those same “lyrics of description and expression, ... the emphasis being almost entirely on the language as carrier of information, with little heed to other possibilities.” Much of the criticism of Joyce’s poetry addresses his departure from these traditional lyric forms, so that even the most densely appropriated and complexly procedural poems bear witness to declarative, and possibly even lyrical moments.

In Satri’s essay on “Trem Neul,” the critic reads Joyce’s poem as “renounc[ing] the lyric focus on expression from a self contained voice” (“Voices” 31). In place of lyric “univocality,” Satri interprets the poem as “incorporating …
many different levels of discourse” to “show us ... that the individual is constructed from its contact with others” (33). Geoffrey Squires pushes Joyce’s rejection of lyricism further when he says that “the authorial agent” in Joyce’s poems “survives only as the arbiter and organiser of these various elements: a kind of poetic ‘hidden hand’” (95). Both critics register Joyce’s divergence from the lyric, and yet both also read his poems as deeply meaningful and expressive. The implication that emerges from these analyses is that of Joyce’s capacity to reconcile the opposition of formal complexity and lyricism that Brady, Sutherland, and Galvin problematize. Gaynor articulates this capacity in Joyce’s poetry in his reading of the 2005 poem, “STILLSMAN.” Here, Gaynor assesses Michael S. Begnal’s and Stephen Vincent’s reviews of the poem which he says “reflect recognisable features of the poem but fail to register the importance of the plain narrative” (66). By omitting this narrative, Begnal and Vincent risk realigning “STILLSMAN” as either a poetic transcription of post-structuralist theory or an act of lyric resistance.” The account of “STILLSMAN” as a “poetic transcription of poststructuralist theory” is reductive, and the underlying idea of Joyce’s poem as either for or against lyric is even more problematic. “STILLSMAN,” like “Trem Neul” and “De Iron Trote,” is comprised of a variety of separate narratives and texts, but this in itself does not mean that the poem is for or against lyricism. To interpret the poem this way would be to concede to conceptualist extremism which embraces appropriation as a means of effacing the poet writing. What matters instead is the declarative effect of the poem and its ability to supersede the boundaries of individual experience. For Adorno, it is the “mediating elements within the individual” which make him or her “a part of [the] social subject” (150). Joyce’s criticisms of Irish poetry regard this failure to
supersede the individual, such that his own poetry is an explicit attempt to transcend these boundaries.

Joyce incorporates appropriative practices and procedural forms into his poetry as a way of avoiding the “self-consciousness of the expressive voice” (“Point of Innovation” 46). Having established that “the lyric mode” of his earliest collections “was quite as prone to exclude the incoherent world as the mannered narrative [he] so distrusted,” it was incumbent upon the poet to devise new ways of writing and articulating his experience of the world (“Why I Write” n. pag.). Eric Falci offers a revealing reading of Joyce’s negotiation with lyricism in his more recent poems, and his insights develop the relation between the declarative force of Joyce’s appropriative practice and lyricism. In his critique of Joyce’s poetry, Falci argues that what he describes as lattice poems from the late-nineties constitute a “simultaneous reinvigoration and undermining of lyric form” (130). Poems such as Syzygy, “Approach of Bodies Falling in Time of Plague,” “Proceeds of a Black Swap,” “Data Shadows,” and “DARK SENSES PARALLEL STREETS” “do not fully abandon the possibilities of lyric utterance,” Falci says, “while simultaneously submitting the usual features of lyric to disruptive compositional strictures.” Falci’s description of Joyce’s “reinvigoration and undermining of lyric” supports my assertions about the declarative nature of Joyce’s appropriative poems as they disrupt the opposition of formal complexity and expression and reaffirm the poet writing at the centre of the poem. In his 2003 essay in Assembling Alternatives, Joyce notes the lack of the kind of consolidated avant-garde tradition in Irish poetry which had provided poets in other countries with a way out of the confessional impasse in lyric poetry. There are no “second-generation Beats, or Black Mountain, or New York School” in Irish literary history for contemporary poets to “react to,” Joyce says
Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that the declarative moments in Joyce’s densely procedural poems should be most reminiscent of lyricism. According to Falci, “the full abandonment of lyric poetry is, particularly in Ireland, unlikely,” and poets such as Joyce “seem to have registered this fact” both in their criticism and in their poetry (153). Joyce’s declarative appropriations provoke some intensely expressive moments, and whether or not one agrees with the assessment of Joyce’s poetics as reinvigorating lyricism in Irish poetry, or reconciling formal complexity with lyric expression, his poetry constitutes a sustained challenge to the critical interpretation of appropriation in poetry.

**Conclusion**

This chapter studies Joyce’s appropriative practices and demonstrates his innovative development of the practice beyond traditional definitions of collage as an abstract and aleatory form. This analysis sees that Joyce’s poems breach the boundaries of appropriation by reinvigorating the lyrical modes of expression that characterize much contemporary Irish poetry. Joyce’s appropriative poems retain the figure of the poet in a manner which challenges traditional critical understandings of appropriation. In these poems aligning appropriative practices with declarative effects, the poet writing may not occupy the centre of the poem as in traditional lyric poetry, but he is certainly a formative presence, curating text and materials towards the constitution of the poem. Joyce’s poetry demands a more expansive interpretation of poetic borrowing so that the appropriation of text is not opposed to expression or meaning but actually enables a more explicit account of both the poet’s and the reader’s experience of the world. Joyce’s poetry extends critical understandings of appropriation in poetry, and of Irish poetry more generally, by
challenging the precepts and parameters of both categories and demanding more of
critical readings of his work.
Jean-Michel Rabaté presents the poet of *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot, as “a young man walking with a ‘heap of broken images’ circling around his mind,” which Rabaté says precisely describes what Eliot means by tradition (213). The phrase, “‘a heap of broken images,’” provides the visual accompaniment to Eliot’s model of tradition, a model which some critics credit as consolidating the idea of tradition in twentieth-century literary criticism, and others reject because of its restricted ideological and cultural values. Reading a letter from Eliot to Mary Hutchinson written in 1919, Rabaté reflects on Eliot’s desire to appropriate tradition to himself. For Rabaté, this desire derives from the poet’s American heritage and his outsider status in the English society and culture within which he lives and writes. In his letter, Eliot warns Hutchinson to bear in mind that:

I am a metic—a foreigner, and that I want to understand you, and all the background and tradition of you ... [I]t is very difficult with me—both by inheritance and because of my very suspicious and cowardly disposition. But I may simply prove to be a savage. (212)

For Rabaté, this admission presents a clear imperative for Eliot’s definition of tradition in his 1919 essay, “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” This model of tradition may have dominated the early decades of the twentieth century, but it was not the only definition in circulation at the time.
Eliot’s “heap of broken images” strikes a close rhyme with Ezra Pound’s “bundle of broken mirrors” from his 1915 poem, “Near Perigord” (63). Pound’s “bundle of broken mirrors” provides an image for an alternative model of tradition which emerges through the Cantos. According to Donald Davie, the “conflicting testimonies and mutually exclusive hypotheses which are all that ... the scrupulous historian has to show” is a “central and governing concern” of “Near Perigord,” and it becomes a guiding force in Pound’s poetry from 1915 onwards (Davie 63). The ambiguity and multi-perspectival approach of “Near Perigord,” and later the Cantos, enacts the historical process, challenging its authority and the historical narratives received by modern audiences. Pound’s influence is felt in Joyce’s appropriative practice and in his divergence from Pound’s example; however, it remains to be seen whether Eliot’s aesthetic offers anything to the declarative force of Alan Halsey’s appropriative poetry and his model of tradition. This chapter poses the question of the relationship between Eliot’s model of tradition and Halsey’s poetic engagement with tradition in The Text of Shelley’s Death.¹ Before taking up the question of Halsey’s inheritance and divergence from Eliot, it will be helpful to outline the trajectory of the arguments and the critical response to Eliot’s negotiation with tradition in The Text.

In this chapter, I study the declarative force of Halsey’s appropriative practice in The Text of Shelley’s Death through which he presents a textual reformulation of literary tradition. The chapter begins with a close reading of the opening pages of The Text to delineate Halsey’s practice of appropriation. Through the process of close reading, we gain a clearer perspective of Halsey’s negotiation with appropriation and its consequences for traditional concepts of narrative and

¹ Hereafter, The Text.
individual subjectivity. Halsey’s appropriative practice deconstitutes individual subjectivity, both of the author and of the drowned poet, and this undermines interpretations of The Text as being about Shelley’s death. But if Halsey’s poem is not about Shelley and his drowning at sea, then what is it about? Halsey offers one answer to this question when he proposes reading The Text as a poem about narratives, the construction and development of specific narratives, and the process by which some narratives gain authority and become part of tradition. After delineating Halsey’s appropriative practice and its consequences for subjectivity, I move to consider The Text’s engagement with the narratives of literary tradition. Halsey’s preoccupation with tradition in The Text sets him in opposition to many of the poets and critics of innovative British poetry for whom tradition is the purview of the mainstream and necessarily delimits alternative poetries.

Having asserted Halsey’s engagement with literary tradition in The Text, the next task for the analysis of Halsey’s poem is to establish what definition or model of tradition he is writing against. The dominant voice in the twentieth-century turn to literary tradition is T.S. Eliot. Eliot’s 1919 essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” was a formative text in the establishment of a concept of tradition in literature and scholarship over the following decades. This chapter proceeds with a close reading of Eliot’s essay and the understanding of tradition it instils in contemporary criticism. The impact of Eliot’s tradition extends beyond literary criticism, and so to gain an adequate picture of the model of tradition Halsey is writing against it is helpful to look to a more contemporary critical engagement with Eliotic tradition. John Guillory’s 1993 book Cultural Capital incorporates Eliot’s tradition as part of its ideological critique of the university. Guillory studies the social, political, and economic development of literary studies in the academy.
Halsey diverges from both Eliot’s Hegelian model and Guillory’s ideological critique by using textuality to undertake a radical demystifying of tradition for contemporary audiences. Halsey’s appropriative practice is integral to his textual reformulation of tradition and this textuality reflects the poet’s belief in fragments and ruins as the necessary inheritance of every English poet. By comparing this imagery of fragments and ruins in Eliot’s poetry and criticism to Halsey’s 1995 poem it is possible to gain a clearer sense of his textual reformulation of tradition and thus the declarative force of his appropriative practice in *The Text*.

3.1 Understanding Halsey’s Appropriations in *The Text of Shelley’s Death*

Halsey is an English poet whose writing constitutes a sustained challenge to originality, voice, and elitism within art. His first collection, *Yearspace*, was published by Galloping Dog Press in 1979. *Yearspace* distinguishes itself by creating meaning not out of words or sentences but rather “within linguistic space,” Selerie says, and the poems “anticipate the concern with verbal fabric” that would become so important in later works such as *The Text* (n. pag.). *Yearspace* and *Present State* (1981) have an “emotional fullness that gets submerged in the work of the latter period,” Selerie continues, so that by the time *Perspectives on the Reach* is published in 1981, “the lyric tone” of Halsey’s poetry is “dim[med]” and collage practices have taken up a prominent place. From 1979 to 1997, Halsey managed The Poetry Bookshop at Hay-on-Wye which is remembered nationally and internationally as “a key source for British and American small-press material” (Caddel and Quartermain 271). The Irish poet Maurice Scully describes the shop as “a cornucopia,” explaining how he received “a good chunk of [his] early education” as a poet by ordering chapbooks and collections from Halsey’s catalogue (Satris “Scully” 7). Halsey continued to write and publish his own poetry throughout this period, and in 1994 he
founded the small press, West House Books. Halsey’s lifelong involvement in the production and dissemination of poetry through West House and The Poetry Bookshop manifests itself poetically in the appropriative structure of *The Text* and in its engagement with literary history and tradition.

*The Text of Shelley’s Death* was published in 1995 and is the longest of Halsey’s prose poems. Halsey conceives of his poetry as “the work of a ‘logoclast,’” an individual predisposed to “break the too-serious word, to twit the dogmatic” (Latta n. pag.). The title of logoclast reflects Halsey’s predilection towards “carefully appointed assemblings and alignings” in the construction of his poems, and particularly in *The Text*. The poet uses these practices of textual appropriation to interrogate and undermine literary and institutional tradition. The reading of *The Text* in this chapter pursues the declarative force of his appropriative practices and the challenge they present to literary tradition, as well as his expansion of the critical understanding of appropriation in poetry and criticism.

*The Text of Shelley’s Death* first appeared from Five Seasons Press and was reprinted under West House Books in 2001. The poem is divided into three parts, with the first part entitled “The Text of Shelley’s Death” constituting the poem proper. This is followed by “Reversions on the Text” and a final section entitled “Towards an Index of Shelley’s Death.” “The Text of Shelley’s Death” makes up the body of the book, with the “Reversions” and “Index” sections composed of nine and twelve pages respectively. I use the word poem tentatively in the description of *The Text* because the prose-style block paragraphs which make up the body of the poem

---

2 The word “logoclast” derives from the poem entitled “The Logoclast’s Lost Weekend” from Even if only out of; however the word has a longer history which provokes connections across this thesis. “Logoclast” is generally related to Samuel Beckett who proposes in a letter to Susan Howe’s mother, Mary Manning, to “start a Logoclast’s League,” stating, “May I count on your support? I am the only member at present. The idea is mystical writing, so that the void may protrude like a hernia.” (Beckett 521)
eschew conventional lyric form. The front cover of the book “reproduces the first page of one of Shelley’s last Italian notebooks” while the back reprints part of a leaf from *The Triumph of Life* (Back cover). This layering of text on text suggests something of the range, complexity, and playfulness of the work. The covers and front and back matter upset conventional distinctions between the text and its paratextual elements so that the “Reversions on the Text” and the “Index” occupy an ambiguous position in relation to the poem. A preliminary glance through the book wrong-foots the reader by upending even those most customary of literary devices. This effect is compounded in the opening line of the poem, “Everybody knows the text of Shelley’s death,” which sets a precedent that the rest of the book challenges through a maelstrom of statement, counter-statement, and flagrant contradiction (9).

*The Appropriative Construction of “The Text”*

The appropriative practice shaping Halsey’s poem inaugurates a vociferous cycling of voices which tell and retell the story of Shelley’s death. In this section on Halsey’s appropriative practice, I will undertake a close reading of the first ten pages of Halsey’s poem, attending to his excerption and combination of texts and the consequences for this retelling of the story of Shelley’s death. The paragraphs gather multiple accounts of the event, with the appropriated texts sometimes slotting together so that the change is imperceptible, and other times using line breaks as one text tapers off and another is introduced. At the conclusion of the “Index of Shelley’s Death,” Halsey includes a list of his “Sources” which catalogues the constituent texts included in the poem. This list indicates one of the many differences between Halsey’s and Joyce’s appropriative practices; Joyce offers a few clues to his sources in his notes at the back of each collection, while Halsey presents a complete list of constituent texts as part of the poem. Halsey’s sources manifest themselves early in
The Text, with the opening page appropriating material from at least five sources.

This opening page offers an indication of Halsey’s appropriative practice, the form and style of his appropriations, and the interrelation of different source texts on the page:

Fig. 1. From Alan Halsey’s The Text of Shelley’s Death, 9.

The first narrative of Shelley’s death in the poem begins with William Sharp’s Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley (1887) which is one of the earliest texts included in Halsey’s
As the opening paragraph progresses, we hear how Trelawny accompanied Shelley’s boat out to sea in Byron’s yacht, the *Bolivar*, but when they were underway “the guard-boat boarded them to overhaul their papers” (9). Here, Sharp’s text is swapped out and Halsey replaces it with either André Maurois’s *Ariel*, or perhaps Isabel C. Clarke’s *Byron and Shelley*, to describe Trelawny’s failure to secure clearance and his return to port. Both Maurois and Clarke are referenced in Halsey’s “Sources,” and although Clarke’s is the earlier text by more than seventy years, there is no evidence to suggest which of the two Halsey uses. This ambiguity is cultivated as the text develops, becoming a guiding principle to the poem and the narrative it conveys.

The representative from the Health Office threatens Trelawny with quarantine if the *Bolivar* continued with Shelley’s boat. The length of quarantine ranges from “fourteen” to “forty” days depending on what text one reads, with the disparity denoted by square brackets and the term “var.” indicating a variation among the texts. This first paragraph does not conclude but rather breaks off, leaving Williams “fretting and fuming” with the possibility of delay. Opting for a sudden line break in place of a full stop or comma, Halsey ends this account of Shelley’s departure from Leghorn [now Livorno] and turns to Trelawny who tells us, “It was hopeless to think of detaining my friends / It was two o’clock already [var. past two o’clock], and there was very / little wind.” In 1858, nearly forty years after Shelley’s death, Trelawny published *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron* which recounts tales of his travels with the poets and their untimely deaths. The text was reissued twenty years later by William Rossetti under the title *Records of Shelley, Byron, and the Author*, and Trelawny’s interjection in the first paragraph could equally be derived from this later text. The 1878 reissue has the distinction of
incorporating a variety of significant alterations from Trelawny’s first account of his
time with the poets, and it also provides the source for the varying lengths of
Trelawny’s threatened quarantine. In his 1858 edition, Trelawny reports that the
Health Office official threatened him with forty days quarantine (118), while
Rossetti’s 1878 version changes this to fourteen days (128). Whether the change was
intentional or not, Halsey is attentive to the variances, acknowledging edits, errors,
and alterations as part of the literary transmission of the narrative of Shelley’s death.

Trelawny’s interjection is followed by a line space before the poet revives
the omniscient narrator for the final two paragraphs of the opening page, thus ending
the preliminary account of Shelley’s drowning. The first of these two paragraphs
combine lines from Peter Quennell’s *Byron in Italy* and Trelawny’s *Recollections*
with Halsey’s own alterations and revisions. One significant alteration regards the
name of Shelley’s boat. The boat was commissioned for Shelley by Trelawny to be
built by Captain Roberts and it was delivered to Livorno under the title *Don Juan*, a
name Shelley immediately rejected. In the lines drawn from Quennell, Halsey reverts
to the original name of the boat despite Quennell’s use of *Ariel*. The final paragraph
appropriates lines from Eileen Bigland’s *Mary Shelley* and includes a note in
parenthesis which consolidates the variation in names. In the final lines, Halsey
describes the Don Juan/Ariel “disappear[ing] into thick haze” as Captain Daniel
Roberts watches fearfully from the shore (9). The description of Shelley’s boat
disappearing provides a potent image for the formal and aesthetic devices at work in
Halsey’s poem. Here, the omniscient narrator gives way to the singular speaker,
Trelawny, albeit a speaker half-remembering Shelley’s drowning more than forty
years after the date. This combination of narrators confounds rather than clarifies
matters, raising questions around the authority and reliability of the narrative voice and foregrounding contradiction as the necessary condition of literary history.

It would be gratifying to maintain a bibliographic approach to the Text, matching each passage to its source text and listing each of Halsey’s divergences, and yet, as in Joyce’s poetry, this offers little to a reading of The Text. Gregory Vincent St. Thomasino describes Halsey’s Text as “highly conceptual,” indicating the rich aesthetic and critical possibilities raised by the poem which redirect readings (n. pag.). The Text continues the narrative of events, restarting on the second page with the statement, “I could not believe it. An Adventurer and teller of tall tales” (10). With this warning, the poem returns to the morning of Monday, July 8th 1822, and the crew members’ preparations for their fated voyage to Lerici. Almost immediately the text is irrupted again and Shelley and Williams’s visit to the bank changes into a visit to “Mr. Dunn ... the banker,” before changing again to Shelley visiting “a notary about his will.” No sooner are the variations accounted for and Shelley and Williams “set out to buy provisions” than the text introduces a new style of parentheses, “[del. ...],” which presents text under erasure. By the time the afternoon comes around and the boat is ready to depart, the chain of telling is undone as more and more alternatives enter the text:

The Don Juan [del. therefore] embarked just after

one o’clock

var. between two and three o’clock

var. at three o’clock

var. just after noon

var. after two
the Don Juan sailed alone out of harbour [var. almost at the same moment as two feluccas]. (10)

The instability attested to here is more than a simple plethora of voices which arises from Halsey’s appropriation of the many accounts of Shelley’s last sailing. The propensity to include all of the available variations reduces the semantic coherence of the text and makes these sections almost unreadable as narrative which justifies St. Thomasino’s description of the text. The concatenation of departure times ruptures the coherent progression of the paragraph and the desire to ascertain a true picture of events encourages a pedantry that distracts from the primary task of reading. Here, Halsey’s appropriation of text undermines the possibility of empirical knowledge of Shelley’s drowning. As well as disabling a clear account of Shelley’s death, Halsey’s appropriative practice also undermines traditional notions of subjectivity and authorship. This close reading of the poem proceeds with an analysis of Halsey’s negotiation with subjectivity in this appropriative poem.

*Individual Subjectivity and “The Text”*

In his review of *The Text*, Dorward interprets Halsey’s appropriative practice as invoking Roland Barthes’s “Death of the Author” in its play on authorship and identity. Despite Dorward’s analogy, it would be reductive to suggest that the conflicting voices and narratives of Halsey’s appropriative poem disable or deny authorial subjectivity completely. Contemporary criticism is still developing a suitable conceptual schema for aligning formally complex works such as *The Text* with traditional ideas of lyricism and authorial expression, and Dorward’s comparison with Barthes is helpful in differentiating Halsey’s appropriation from that of Joyce for whom appropriation can be a means of expression. Halsey’s poem is replete with voices and names, not just of people but also of boats and places, and
yet the poem regularly insists on the first person singular. The word “I” appears seven times in the eleven lines of page sixteen and reflects five unique voices; without tracing each phrase, a reader might interpret the various sentences as spoken by one voice. The sheer number of times the word “I” appears on this page has the paradoxical effect of undermining the singularity and authenticity of the word. *The Text* is, as the poem states, a “confused ... mass, interlined [interworded] and broken into fragments” with each fragment derived from a different source (12). Each statement and text contradicts the next, and this undermines the possibility of deriving anything verifiably true about Shelley’s drowning from the poem. It is because of, rather than in spite of, this multiplicity of narratives and voices that *The Text* achieves such an insightful investigation of individual selfhood and subjectivity.

The concept of the individual speaker manifested on page sixteen becomes problematic when contrasted with the shifting names and identities on the following page. Byron’s boat is named Guiccioli after his Italian mistress, and Shelley’s boat is

---

Byron too would have a boat, named **Guiccioli** ([var. The Countess Gamba Guiccioli]), a favorite mistress of his. The boats were to be built in the government dockyards at Genoa.

Williams and Shelley had already christened the *Don Juan* in honour of Byron

[var. Shelley had from the first accepted the name which Trelawny proposed. Trelawny has heard from Roberts that S.’s boat will be launched today [March 21] S’s boat to be finished in 10 days [April 5] Heard from Trelawny that the “Don Juan” will be here tomorrow [May 9] May 9 Our anxiety for the boat increases May 10 threatening weather she is afraid to put to sea

---

Fig. 2. From Alan Halsey’s *The Text of Shelley’s Death*, 17.
initially named Don Juan, and later renamed Ariel from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. From the oppositional accounts of the naming of Shelley’s boat on page seventeen, Halsey records the anxious wait for the boat to arrive, and then the wait for the “threatening weather” to pass so that Shelley can put to sea (17). The first person singular of the previous page is deconstituted by Halsey’s practice of appropriation through which names and identities are variously doubled and divided. Here, Guiccioli is both Byron’s mistress and his boat, Don Juan is Byron’s poem and Shelley’s boat, which is also known as Ariel, while Shelley himself is also “S.” The “threatening weather” which delays the poet sailing is also doubled in that it precedes the storm which wrecks the boat only two months later in July.

This problematizing of individual subjectivity is not just a matter for the author. It also extends to Shelley. Writing a book entitled *The Text of Shelley’s Death* suggests a commitment to discovering and relating actual events, and yet the acknowledgement of sources and their contradictions in this text distracts from the story of Shelley’s drowning. In reading the many variations, deletions, and revisions of the story of Shelley’s death included here, a reader loses sight of the purported point and purpose of the book—to learn how and why Shelley drowned in the Gulf of La Spezia. By pursuing this trajectory, which is at once the most faithful and least direct account of Shelley’s death, Halsey establishes an instability in the poem more radical than mere contradiction. The instability of the narratives passed down gives way to a deeper problematic regarding the difficulty of discovering the poet among the combination of voices, stories, reports, letters, and memories that make up the poem. In a poem promising an authoritative account of Shelley’s death at sea, the poet himself is missing. Shelley is lost in the crowd of witnesses, relatives, and friends that comprise the text, drowning in, or at least drowned out by the diffusion
and diffraction of different stories. This effect is compounded by the desire on the part of the reader to glean something tangible about the poet and his death from *The Text*. From the opening statement, “Everybody knows the text of Shelley’s death,” which is at once a challenge and a paradox, the poem appropriates the literature and, in the process, loses the poet among the plethora of letters, biographies, and analyses that deal with his death. With Shelley lost among the noise of the crowd, *The Text* comes to articulate the dissociation between a poet’s work and the processes of canon formation that lionize some poets and marginalize others.

Jeffrey C. Robinson also recognizes the “dis-figuring, the fragmentation, and the dismemberment” that I have identified in *The Text*, but he interprets it quite differently (642). In his 2012 essay, Robinson interprets Halsey’s appropriative practice as a “way to finding Shelley.” Halsey’s “characterization” of Shelley “picked from the shards of his language and the surrounding narratives belongs to a quotidian, erotic, often self-absorbed world,” Robinson says, “but also one drenched in sounds, rhythms, and figuration.” To read *The Text*’s materiality as uncovering Shelley for contemporary audiences, even a Shelley of “radical transformations,” undermines the rupturing of linguistic referentiality and linear narrative that characterize the poem (643). According to Robinson, “The text of Shelley’s death absorbs and transforms the poet-as-ego into a much larger and more poetic version of self, linked to mythological figures of his own referencing (like Prometheus or Mercury) and to poetic language.” Reading Halsey’s fragmentary, diffracted representation of Shelley as reconstituting a whole by recovering for modern audiences a Shelley suitable for the times ignores the conceptual development fostered by Halsey’s negotiation of the first person singular through his appropriative practice. Robinson’s and Dorward’s readings are not the only responses to *The Text*,
and by turning back to the poet we gain a more explicit account of the poem’s workings.

Halsey offers an alternative interpretation of the “dis Figuring, the fragmentation, and the dismemberment” of Shelley in *The Text* in an email discussion of the poem from 2013 (Robinson 642). Reflecting on the writing of *The Text*, Halsey explains his opening sentence, “Everybody knows the text of Shelley’s death,” by saying that “the stress can be put on any of the words, but whichever way you say it it’s untrue” (21 Aug. 2013). The treacherousness of the sentence is not solely a result of the fact that readers may not actually know the story of Shelley’s drowning, but also reflects the fact that there are only texts of Shelley’s death in the plural, and no definitive text, and because “death is of all things the most profoundly non-textual.” Halsey’s *Text* investigates the relation between the textual and the non-textual in a manner which explains his admission in reintroducing the poem in “Reversions” as “The text of Shelley’s death, in so far as there is a text of Shelley’s/ death” (61). Setting Halsey’s description of Shelley’s death as “profoundly non-textual” alongside the progressive effacement of the poet by the appropriation of texts, it becomes more difficult to accept the poet’s drowning at sea as the topic of Halsey’s poem. But if Shelley’s drowning is not the sole or dominant subject of *The Text*, then what is the poem about? Halsey presents one response to this question in the email from August 2013, in which he suggests reading *The Text* as “a matter of narrative, how narratives are made, or apparently develop of their own accord, and why this or that one is believed, or this or that text privileged.” In the opening pages of the poem, there is a paragraph which recalls the images of tradition of Eliot and Pound which began this chapter. By aligning this image with Halsey’s assertion of

---

3 My thanks to Alan Halsey for permission to quote from these emails.
the importance of narratives, it is possible to propose a critical approach to *The Text* as a poem about literary tradition, and, furthermore, as presenting a poetic redefinition of the critical understanding of tradition. In order to develop this interpretation of Halsey’s poem, it will be helpful to study this paragraph and its consequences for reading and interpreting *The Text*.

3.2 Tradition and *The Text*

On page twelve of his poem, Halsey appropriates a series of texts which, taken together, present an image not just of the appropriative nature of the poem, but also of Halsey’s redefinition of tradition in *The Text*. In a paragraph listing the books recovered on Shelley’s body, Halsey appropriates words and phrases towards an account of tradition as a uniquely textual phenomenon. The paragraph begins with Trelawny’s *Recollections*, and continues with lines from Mary Shelley’s “Notes” to Shelley’s poetry published after his death:

![Image](image.jpg)

Fig. 3. From Alan Halsey’s *The Text of Shelley’s Death*, 12.

The first two lines derive from Trelawny’s account of coming upon Shelley in a forest where he used to read, and of opening his edition of Sophocles’s plays rather than disturbing the poet. Halsey pokes fun at Trelawny’s notorious inconsistency in his account of Shelley’s life and death, including the “edition of Aeschylus” which
Trelawny exchanges for Sophocles in later retellings, along with “Faust and a volume of Shakespeare’s plays.” From here, Halsey turns to Mary Shelley’s account of the woeful condition of the poet’s manuscripts in her “Notes to P.B. Shelley’s 1839 Poetical Works.” Reflecting on the paucity of her sources, the author states that had anyone seen the volume she was working from, “the wonder would be how any eyes or patience were capable of extracting it from so confused a mass, interlined and broken into fragments” (290). Of the following phrases, the first, beginning “words one upon the other” derives from Trelawny’s Recollections, the second, “the torn leaf of a book,” comes from Shelley’s note to Jane Williams accompanying a poem entitled “Remembrance,” and the third is lifted from another of Shelley’s poems to Williams, entitled “To Jane: The Recollection.” Beginning from the middle of this extract, Halsey’s image of tradition in these lines is of “so confused a mass, interlined [interworded] and broken into fragments—words one upon the other, over and over in tiers all run together—the torn leaf of a book out of date—overgrown blots” (12). Here, Halsey generates his own image for the critique of tradition which emerges through the poem. I interpret these lines as Halsey offering a visual accompaniment for his reformulation of tradition; however, contemporary criticism of innovative British poetry does not share his views on tradition. By comparing Halsey’s poem with the prevailing attitudes to tradition in contemporary criticism we gain a clearer sense of Halsey’s innovations in The Text and of his divergence from the dominant ideas and beliefs in innovative British poetry and criticism.

Halsey’s appropriative practice deconstitutes Shelley, rejecting the possibility of wholeness that is promulgated by biographies and literary criticism of the poet and his work. By denying the possibility of recovering a complete picture of the poet, Halsey’s poem also denies literary tradition’s ability to reconstruct and
retain a complete or even an adequate image of the poet. There are a number of anthologies and critical studies on contemporary British poetry that are useful in distinguishing Halsey’s interest in tradition in *The Text* from the critical problematizing of mainstream literary tradition.

Ric Caddel and Peter Quartermain’s introduction to their 1999 anthology *Other: British and Irish Poetry since 1970* serves as evidence of the critical proclivity to distinguish linguistically innovative poetry from literary tradition on the basis that tradition is necessarily affiliated with the perceived mainstream. Caddel and Quartermain are clear that tradition is primarily a restrictive term for Halsey’s peers whose work appears in the book, poets such as Tom Raworth, cris cheek, Bob Cobbing, and Grace Nichols. According to Caddel and Quartermain, the vocabulary of “tradition” “prizes terms like ‘unified’ and ‘centred’” they say, “for in proposing their contraries—edges, margins, fragments—such terms trivialize and thus silence dissent” (xxi). Tradition is an “instrument of power,” the editors argue, an instrument which “sanctions agreed habits of syntax, rhythms, and sequences of thought, intonation, figurative language, and range of diction” (xx). By enforcing these “sanctions,” tradition becomes a “normative” power which “reinforces notions of intelligibility.” For Caddel and Quartermain, the normative power of tradition enables “the intellectual legitimation of political rule, of the hegemony, whose very existence resides in and relies upon its moral and cultural legitimation by tradition” (xi). The publication of any collection of poetry requires that the editors to take a poetic, and often a political stance on the function of their anthology and the value of the poetry presented. Caddel and Quartermain are attentive in framing *Other* as an anthology of poetry which distinguishes itself from the work of the “well-established
mainstream,” and yet the editors are conscious of the limitations of this oppositional stance, hence their invocation of literary history in the title of their introduction, “A Fair Field Full of Folk.” The title is drawn from *Piers Plowman* and counteracts the oppositional tone of the introduction by suggesting that the anthology is intended to present a more complete account of the “field” of contemporary British poetry. The editors’ commitment to representing the broader community of British and Irish poets is reflected in their inclusion of Halsey who maintains quite a different attitude towards tradition. In his 1983 essay “On Poetic,” Halsey argues that “The demand for ‘political’ or ‘committed’ poetry is [a] betrayal of [the] poetic as [a] mode, as a distinct kind of thought,” and yet, he says, “it is true that [the] poetic can not fail to be political” (n. pag.). The difference between Halsey’s position and the editors of *Other* is that Halsey is willing to consider tradition as itself a suitable topic for poetry, while Caddel and Quartermain are not. In this essay, Halsey designates poetry as fostering a “distinct mode of thought,” and, simultaneously, for that poem to be deeply invested in the political (n. pag.). Halsey’s proposition contributes to a reading of his poetry but before engaging with his ideas and testing their relevance to *The Text* it is worth extending the critical comparison between his poem and his orientation to tradition.

Jacques Derrida has much to say on the opposition of margins and centre in philosophy and criticism. Despite Halsey’s unwillingness to be associated with literary theory, Derrida’s analysis is useful in explaining the conflicting accounts of tradition in British poetry and criticism. Just as Joyce and Smith did not accede to categorizations of New Writers’ Press as alternative because doing so would “accede

---

4 In his interview with St. Thomasino, Halsey separates himself from the influence of European literary criticism, saying, “I could certainly name some English poets whose work seems riddled with theory but it’s not true of any of those I’ve been closely associated with or have published at West House” (n. pag.).
to the claims made by the ‘mainstream’ for its own centrality,” Derrida too rejects
the opposition of centre and margin as unnecessarily maintaining a restrictive binary
(Joyce “Point of Innovation” 47). For Derrida, the free play of signification means
that “each mark [of signification] is constituted by its contexts and its limit”
(Siemerling 586). In texts such as *The Margins of Philosophy* and *The Truth in
Painting*, Derrida demonstrates how the “mark” is “mediated by a continual process
of contextual ‘re-marking’ that undoes the oppositions in which it is—necessarily—
first approached,” oppositions such as margins and centre. Halsey’s appropriation of
tradition as a theme in *The Text* runs against the prevailing rhetoric of tradition in
British poetry criticism, and his engagement with tradition challenges the
oppositional approach that this criticism supports. In effect, Caddel and
Quartermain’s rejection of tradition as a mainstream concept distinguishes Halsey’s
innovation in incorporating the theme of tradition with formally complex practices
and an avant-garde poetics. Andrew Duncan offers a more critical account of the
problem of tradition in innovative British poetry, and his criticism is helpful for
understanding Halsey’s reformulation of tradition.

Duncan’s 2003 study, *The Failure of Conservatism in Modern British
Poetry*, offers another perspective on the role of tradition in innovative poetry,
although here the perspective is expressly negative. Duncan defines the dominant
literary tradition of contemporary Britain as a “vast and expensive machinery of
cultural conservation” (2). Now that the majority of poets and “most of our leading
cultural figures” have become “employees” working in the industry of “Ruins
Management,” he says, it is less and less likely that the mainstream can produce any
poetry that might carry contemporary writing beyond these old tomes. The work of
“cultural conservation” is all-consuming, and in any case, “nothing is being added to
the ruins.” Duncan describes literary history as haunting the present so that contemporary poets are merely “conservators,” “servants, solemnly reciting the words of the dead.” There is a distinction to be made between literary history and tradition, but Duncan does not untangle the two here. Instead, modernity becomes a “vague and overblown term” aligning history and tradition, “a terrifying ghost, whose name we give to the wreckage which has engulfed so many cultural projects, or to the failure of 20th C [sic] British poetry.” According to Duncan, contemporary poetry is plagued by the memory of literary history in which tradition is the organizing device consolidating a concatenation of ideal texts. If Halsey demonstrates quite a different engagement with poetry in his writing, he still retains the imagery of ruins that Duncan is so enamoured with in his essay. I will return to the imagery of ruins later, but for now it will be helpful to say a little more about Halsey’s textual approach to tradition as it emerges in The Text.

The textuality of Halsey’s appropriative poem receives close attention in the few reviews it has received, and these reviews indicate Halsey’s difference from the prevailing poetic approach to textuality and its contribution to his reformulation of tradition. Robinson and Dorward both identify the variorum as a formal model for The Text, as does Halsey himself in his “Mythopoeic Retrospective” on the poem (153). A variorum is a scholarly form which takes an empirical approach to a work of literature by attending to the breadth of scholarship surrounding the work and variations in the critical analyses of different ages. The form gained popularity with Dutch publishers in the seventeenth century who sought “interpretive comprehensiveness” by focusing on the critical and annotative history of a text (Gondris 126). The variorum reached the height of its popularity with editors of the eighteenth century which Júlia Paraízs describes as “the peak of the received text
tradition” (128). Halsey’s poem supports the variorum comparison on a conceptual level, mirroring the aggregation of versions towards the consolidation of one authoritative manuscript of Shelley’s death. The clamour of descriptions, perceptions, and assertions of Shelley’s character, his life and death, that constitute this poem exist at a remove from the poet himself. While the translation of the Latinate “variorum” as “of various persons” might be a fitting account of the appropriative form of Halsey’s poem, the form reveals a central and motivating contradiction within the text (“Variorum”). This scholarly form gathers all of the known variants of a text so as to demonstrate the textual decisions and emendations influencing editions and reissues of the text. The literary history reflected in Halsey’s poem, meanwhile, creates an effigy that has little direct relation to Shelley the man, and this infers that readers will have to look elsewhere for the subject of The Text.

Taking tradition and textuality rather than Shelley as the subject of Halsey’s poem provides new parameters for his appropriations, and for the declarative force of this practice. Reuben Sanchez describes the body of criticism gathered in a variorum as a reflection of “the critical and cultural period in which the annotator lives and works” (3). In Halsey’s poem, it is the textuality of the work that reflects the “critical and cultural period” of the poet wherein appropriative practices are de rigeur again. The textuality that Halsey draws attention to through his poem has not always enjoyed an easy relationship with collage practices, despite the fact that, from a contemporary perspective, the two seem conceptually well suited. Elza Adamowicz notes the Surrealist difficulty with verbal collage in her 1998 book, *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image*. In Surrealist art the breaks, disjunctions, and clashes of appropriated materials which are constitutive of collage, are glaringly apparent, Adamowicz notes, but when it comes to literature these effects are muted because of
the “invisibility of some verbal collages” (15). Henri Behar rejects verbal collage on account of this invisibility, saying that collage is “condemned, in the area of literary collage, to a perpetual blindness, whereas in the plastic arts it appears as such by a set of formal indices” (15-6). Michel Décaudin makes the problem of literary collage more clear when he states that “in the literary domain ... the glued elements do not rupture; they are most often words and phrases pasted in the middle of other words and phrases; the thread of the discourse will be more or less disturbed, but the principles of reading are not changed” (16). Surrealist collage calls into question the very possibility of Halsey’s appropriative practices, and yet contemporary interpretations of collage are more expansive in the parameters they provide to Halsey’s textuality and his redefinition of tradition.

In an essay celebrating Guy Davenport’s innovations and insightfulness in modernist criticism, Quartermain offers a definition of collage which extends the Surrealist delimitation of the practice in literature. This development reflects the endurance and development of collage practices after the 1920s and ‘30s and extends the critical and aesthetic remit of Halsey’s Text in a way which enables critical analysis of his reformulation of tradition. Reflecting on Davenport’s resistance to “completeness,” both in life and in art, Quartermain warns that “no order of the universe can finally be seen order it [sic], and we must keep our options open” (79). Practices of textual appropriation and assemblage are ideally suited to retaining this openness, Quartermain says:

The logical mode for the expression of such ideas, the form, is collage, for collage resists finality, resists categories and the notion of completeness; it resists ... any theory that does not keep open the

---

5 The translations of Behar and Décaudin from French to English are both my own.
While Davenport’s belief in “resist[ing] finality,” “categories,” and the “notion of completeness” are echoed in Halsey’s collage practices, this affirmation of openness also undermines the status of tradition which relies for its authority on a closed order of elite texts. Halsey diverges from the critics of British poetry because his belief in poetry’s “distinct kind of thought” means that it can offer a new perspective on and understanding of tradition in literature. For him, tradition is not just a possible but a necessary topic for poetry. Halsey’s appropriation of tradition in *The Text*, a concept usually reserved for literary critics, also works the other way, bringing his poetry within the domain of literary criticism. Graham Allen’s 2009 essay on Mary Shelley reads Halsey’s *Text* as articulating a critical position, and by studying Allen’s reference, the innovation of *The Text* becomes more explicit.

“The Text’s” Intervention in Critical Tradition

Allen’s 2009 essay challenges an enduring critical misconception regarding Mary Shelley which infers that her writing life ended with her husband’s death in 1822. In this way, Allen’s essay is itself an engagement with tradition, and the contemporary memory and inheritance of Shelley and her writing. Rather than resisting the “biographism” that has influenced readings of Shelley’s literature, Allen proposes that critics use her biography and all the “letters, notes, [and] journals” not as “data” but as “texts” (70). By taking this approach to Shelley’s letters and journals, these texts “begin ... to present us with a host of connections with her novels and other published works,” Allen says, “connections which demonstrate a remarkable, complex and multiple ‘voice.’” Allen begins this task of re-reading with the author’s
September 1822 letter to Maria Gisborne and the various deductions critics have derived from this text.

In the process of re-reading, Allen cites Richard Holmes’s depiction of P.B. Shelley in his biography on the poet as an example of the more extreme negative consequences of conventional biographism. Allen quotes Holmes saying that “Shelley’s death is ‘one of the most powerful of all Romantic legends. And also one of the most misleading’” (75). The problem for Allen regards Holmes’s suggestion that P.B. Shelley’s drowning is “the origin of the misunderstanding, confusion, [and] strangeness” of his biography. Allen takes issue with the assertion that Shelley’s death “‘transformed his life almost beyond recovery’” (75), which he says perpetuates Matthew Arnold’s representation of the poet as a “beautiful and ineffectual angel” (Arnold 380). Allen’s criticism regards the term “recovery” and the critical suggestion of reviving P.B. Shelley from the plethora of descriptions, accounts, and biographies which have been published since his death (75). The problem with the term “recovery” is that it implies the “successful separation of textual information into the opposed categories of fiction and fact,” and thus, a particular hierarchy of scholars and critics capable of making the necessary distinctions. For Allen, the “recovery” of Shelley would require a “re-establishment of temporal order and the successful explanation (biographically, historically, culturally, psychoanalytically) of phantasmal effects such as déjà vu, doppelgangers, proleptic visions, proleptic texts, [and] the return.” No rational explanation has been offered for Jane Williams’s vision of Shelley disappearing off the terrace of the house in Viareggio on page twenty-four of The Text, or for Shelley’s meeting his double who ominously asks “siete soddisfatto?” [“How long do you mean to be content?”] (25). No such recovery is possible, it seems, and so critics such as
Robinson and Holmes must acknowledge that the poet’s death has indeed “transform[ed] his life … beyond recovery” (75). Without a “successful explanation … of [these] phantasmal effects,” Allen says, any “recovery” of the poet is illusory. The failure of chronological certainty and rational explanation also shapes Halsey’s critique of literary tradition in *The Text*, though in quite a different way to Allen’s argument. The critic’s appropriation of Halsey’s poem here serves as evidence of *The Text* breaching the boundaries between poetry and criticism, and the declarative force of his appropriations as interrogating the narratives that shape literary tradition.

Allen disagrees with Holmes’s “sense of chronology” which makes Shelley’s death “the origin of [the] misunderstanding, confusion, [and] strangeness” that shadows the poet in literary tradition (75). Holmes’s attempt to “straighten out or ‘recover’” Shelley’s life and work into a chronological narrative “sever[s] historical work, biographical or critical, from its own foundation (its origin) in writing” (80). In the course of his essay, Allen also questions Halsey’s assertions and ideas in *The Text*, “despite the beautiful way in which … [he] has formed the ‘texts’ … in a strange non- or a-fictional poem” (75). The problem regards Halsey’s assertion that after Shelley’s drowning, “in Mary’s mind / The idealization of Shelley begins almost at once” (63). The invocation of Halsey here demonstrates that *The Text* can be and is read as declarative, presenting critical arguments and statements which situates it as a contemporary addition to the history of criticism that surrounds Shelley and his poetry, and thus as a part of literary history. To challenge this reading of Halsey’s text by suggesting that it transcends the complex of history and myth that surrounds Shelley would require a model of criticism that positions itself at a remove from literary history. Halsey is unconcerned by the fact that his *Text* represents another addition to the long history of Shelley literature which derives from and contributes
to the myth surrounding the poet. Halsey distinguishes between mythology and
tradition such that tradition is not simply a list of important texts but is rather a
history of textuality. The poem does not depend on publication or readership, on
myth as an overarching concern, or even on Shelley as a canonical poet for its
integration into literary history. Rather, the inculcation of The Text into that tradition
relies on the implicit and explicit textuality of the work itself. Allen’s invocation of
Halsey’s poem demonstrates its propensity to intervene in Shelley scholarship, not
just by taking up Shelley’s death again but also by using the appropriated material to
interrogate the chronology of texts that constitutes this scholarly tradition. In order to
understand the innovations of Halsey’s poem and his reformulation of tradition, it is
necessary to consider the definition of tradition that he is writing against. If Halsey’s
poem challenges conventional conceptions of tradition, then how did this conception
of tradition develop, and where did it come from? To answer these questions, we will
return to T.S. Eliot whose prose essays are formative of twentieth-century
understandings of literary tradition.

3.3 Halsey’s Challenge to Literary Tradition

*Inheriting T.S. Eliot’s “Tradition”*

In the preface to *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1964), Eliot
complained about the degree of critical attention that his early essay on tradition
received. Just as “objective correlative” and “dissociation of sensibility” have
become catchphrases for contemporary critics of his work, Eliot says, it is equally
inevitable that “every anthologist wishing to include a sample of [his] essays will
choose “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (n. pag.). The problem is compounded
for Eliot by the fact that he considers this essay to be “the most juvenile” of his
publications, “and certainly the first to appear in print” (9). The essays collected in
the 1964 volume are intended to provide alternatives for anthologists of the future to consider when selecting from Eliot’s prose. The implication is that the text is over-read, over-anthologized, and thus precisely a part of that process of historicizing and tradition that preoccupy the essay. In this sense, Eliot’s essay exemplifies the very material and concrete processes by which literary tradition is established and disseminated, which remains a motivating factor in this analysis of Halsey’s poetry. Eliot’s instruction for a broader consideration of his critical work haunts each ensuing scholarly assessment of the essay. That said, Eliot’s denigration of the essay has done little to dissuade critics from reading it as the pre-eminent statement on tradition in modernist poetry.

Eliot’s essay was first published in the *Egoist* in September 1919 and appeared again in the *Selected Essays* towards the end of his life. The original publication date of the essay is changed, “perhaps inadvertently,” in Eliot’s *Selected from 1919 to 1917*, a change that Lawrence Rainey says presents the essay as “the gateway to his [Eliot’s] entire oeuvre” (*Modernism* 152). Eliot’s essay is divided into three parts, with the first section defining tradition and presenting it as the measure of an artwork, and containing the majority of the essay’s critically acclaimed phrases and statements. Criticism might be “as inevitable as breathing” for Eliot; however, contemporary literary critics still seem to be making serious errors in their analysis of texts (Eliot “Tradition” 152). When responding to a work, Eliot says, the tendency is to “insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else.” By approaching a poet “without this prejudice, we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets ... assert their immortality most vigorously.” Taking the relationship between poets and poems as his topic, Eliot is alert to the long
history of literature and the necessity of “great labour” to engage with literary

tradition. Developing this “historical sense” requires a perception “not only of the
pastness of the past, but of its presence.” Once acquired, this perception can:

[C]ompel[ ] a man to write not merely with his own generation in his
bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe
from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own
country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous
order. (152-53)

For Eliot, then, “it is the “sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the
timeless and of the temporal together” that “makes a writer traditional” (153). Once
he has established that poets and their work must be compared to be properly
understood, Eliot spends the remainder of the first section of his essay explaining the
process by which tradition develops and an artwork enters into that lineage.

In order for a poem to become part of tradition, it must present a disruption to
the standing order of that tradition. “The existing monuments form an ideal order
among themselves,” Eliot says, and this is “modified by the introduction of the new
(the really new) work of art among them” (153). Each text that is produced impacts
those that have gone before and, as far as Eliot’s essay is concerned, “Whoever has
approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature will not
find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the
present is directed by the past.” In addressing the process of tradition and the
interrelations between past and present, the poet remarks that art cannot get better or
worse from era to era, but “the material of art is never quite the same” (153). Eliot
closes this first section by articulating the importance of “depersonalization” as a

---

6 Hereafter, each full quotation and excerption from this line of Eliot’s essay, “The existing
monuments form an ideal order among themselves,” is drawn from the same source, page 153 of
“Tradition and the Individual Talent.”
necessary characteristic of any artwork that would join the “ideal order” of “existing monuments” (154).

With the conclusion of the first section, the conversation moves from the definition of tradition to the question of individual talent. The second section begins with a chemical analogy which Eliot uses to describe the ideal process of poetic composition. Having defined tradition and outlined the accretion of poetic works, Eliot now turns his attention to the development of the poem which here is presented as a wholly organic phenomenon, and which therefore challenges Halsey’s appropriative practices that explicitly undermine such organicism. The goal of the analogy is to demonstrate the neoclassical organicism of the seventeen-hundreds discussed in the first chapter is carried through modernist aesthetics such that “the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates” (154). Taking Canto XV of Dante’s *Inferno* as his example, Eliot directs attention to the final quatrain of the Canto as realising this poetic ideal. In this last verse of Dante’s Canto after Bruno Latini, the poet presents “an image” which achieves this separation of man and poet. This is an image or “a feeling attaching to an image, which ‘came’, which did not develop simply out of what precedes, but which was probably in suspension in the poet’s mind until the proper combination arrived for it to add itself to” (155). For Eliot, Dante’s final quatrain is evidence that “The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones” in poetry to “express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all” (156). Rather than presenting the feelings or experience of the poet, the poem should be “a new thing” resulting from the “concentration” “of a very great number of experiences.” The individual talent of the title refers to the poet’s ability to write poems not as a “turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion ... not
an expression of personality, but an escape from personality.” With sections one and two affirming the centrality of tradition and the abnegation of personality as motivating forces for contemporary poetry, the shorter third section constitutes a statement on the essential concurrence of past and present in the poem.

In order for a poet to achieve the state of impersonality required by a great work, the poet must surrender her- or himself fully to the work “to be done” (156). Knowing what needs to be done means living in “what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past,” Eliot says, of being conscious “not of what is dead, but of what is already living.” This sense of simultaneity or continuity between past and present reflects the neoclassical imperative within modernism which became a distinguishing feature not just of Eliot’s poetry and prose but also of the literature and criticism of the twentieth century. Before moving on to address the consequences of Eliot’s essay, it is worth considering his style in this essay and the consequences for his argument about tradition in poetry and criticism.

Many critics have commented on the evasiveness and ambiguity riddling Eliot’s essay and the implications for the particular model of tradition it presents. In the following sentence from the first section of the essay, Eliot’s combination of authoritative statement and conceptual blurring becomes clear: “The historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional” (153). Here, Eliot presents a definition of “historical sense” which invokes the binary opposites of “timeless” and “temporal” and conflates them in their difference as a unitary “sense” that distinguishes the responsible artist. In this programmatic statement from the essay, Eliot appropriates the “timeless” and the “temporal” as distinct ontological concepts and then erodes the conceptual difference between the two by aligning them as the
definition of “what makes a writer traditional.” This blurring of critical boundaries has less to do with the advancement of conceptual thought and more with the exploitation, at the conceptual level, of the empirical framework of critical thought.

Jean Paul Riquelme recognizes this issue in his reading of Eliot’s essay in *Harmony of Dissonances* published in 1991. Focusing attention on the final section of the essay, Riquelme takes the following line as an example of this problematic:

> He [the artist] is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living. (10)

According to Riquelme, the sentence’s “obvious repetitions and contrasts create an effect that is harmonious but dissonant” (30). In lines revealing the source of his title, Riquelme explains how Eliot achieves a prosody that is “harmonious because of the sense of patterning that conveys an impression of logically coherent, concordant relations, [and] dissonant because the patterning includes elements that are not fully compatible with one another.” The combination of didactic pronouncements and rhetorical ambiguity creates problems for the critical assessment of Eliot’s model of tradition because “Despite the impression of concord and formal coherence among the sentence’s parts [and thus among Eliot’s pronouncements], they are permanently at variance.” This same effect leads Stanley Edgar Hyman to assert that “it is impossible to read Eliot’s criticism for very long without beginning to feel that he is making statements in a language in which it is impossible to discuss the matter with him” (58). In a stern criticism of the poet, Hyman describes the “doctrine of tradition in Eliot’s criticism ... [as] primarily a weapon for achieving ... [that] unattractive society” of Eliot’s “‘corporative state’” in which fascism is only “‘the extreme
degradation of democracy’’ (72). With Eliot’s essay and prose-style provoking such virulent attacks, it is important to consider the reasons for these criticisms and the implications for contemporary readers.

Eliot introduces his topic by demonstrating that the term “tradition” appears infrequently either as word or concept in English writing, “save when lamenting its absence” in contemporary literature (152). Here already, a significant problem arises for contemporary critics. According to Max Saunders, the twentieth-century institutionalization of literary criticism is such that “Certainly now one can refer both to ‘the tradition’ and to ‘a tradition’” (185). Along with this radical shift in the literary and critical environment, other changes have also taken place. Tradition has lost much of the positive meaning that Eliot acknowledged in his analysis of the term and it is generally used as a negative adjective or “phrase of censure” for contemporary critics. (Eliot “Tradition” 152). Tradition may have been granted particular canonical value or values in the decades since Eliot’s essay but this has been accompanied by an almost complete break with Eliot’s “approbative” sense of the term. It is revealing that this restriction in meaning should be the outcome of nearly a century’s worth of intensified literary study, during which time Eliot’s restitution of tradition to a position of literary and critical importance was a, if not the, dominant influence. Halsey’s Text does not attempt to recover the “approbative” meaning of tradition by echoing the condemnation of contemporary critics of innovative British poetry. Instead, his poem challenges the authority of the “existing monuments” which form “an ideal order among themselves,” and Halsey’s critique is not limited to the literary definition of tradition. By aligning Halsey’s interrogation of the dominant narratives of tradition with John Guillory’s account of the processes
of institutionalization which have delimited literary studies in the twentieth century, it is possible to trace the broader social and political resonances of The Text.

*Literary History and “Cultural Capital”*

John Guillory’s 1993 publication, *Cultural Capital*, provides a revealing delineation of the processes of institutionalization that established Eliot’s as the defining model of tradition for twentieth-century criticism. Guillory takes his cues from Pierre Bourdieu’s formulation of cultural capital developed in *The Forms of Capital* (1986) and applied to higher education in *The State Nobility* (1996). In *Cultural Capital*, Guillory presents an ideological critique of the processes of canon construction which set the barbed criticisms of Eliot in relief. Guillory’s recognition of the dense complex of socioeconomic and political imperatives implies that Eliot’s dominance of twentieth-century literary criticism is more complicated than it might first appear. Guillory’s text provides a perspective on tradition that is not available either in Eliot’s work or in the criticism that surrounds him. In a chapter entitled “Ideology and Canonical Form: The New Critical Canon,” Guillory addresses the New Critical appropriation of Eliot’s ideas and the propagation of that aesthetic in classrooms across the US since the end of the Second World War. Asserting “interpretation” over judgement as the ideal critical strategy, the New Critics were more interested in distinctions between literature and mass culture than they were in evaluative judgements of individual authors (141). In this sense, the New Criticism “was at once unfaithful to Eliot’s specific revisionary judgements,” Guillory says, “and more deeply faithful to the *principle* of his judgement than Leavis ever was.” With the period after the war pre-empting a dramatic increase in university enrolment numbers and a newly diverse student body, the New Critics were granted the
opportunity to impose a radical revisioning of the nature of literary study and its
status and function within the academy.

According to Guillory, Cleanth Brooks and the New Critics revise Eliot’s
concept of ‘minor poetry’ to “find in the traditional canon of ‘major’ authors ... the
reserve of orthodoxy” (140). The point of “institutional victory for the New
Criticism is marked by a strategic reaffirmation of the traditional canon of major
authors” Guillory explains. This reaffirmation constitutes a “reread[ing] according to
a pedagogic strategy—‘close reading’—that refinds in these authors what is well
hidden there ... the same orthodoxy of opinion Eliot found only in the ‘minor’
tradition” (141). Following Eliot’s assertion that literature should be “unconsciously,
rather than deliberately and defiantly, Christian,” the New Critics repositioned
literature to occupy the position of orthodoxy in society (136). For Guillory, this
revisioning of literary sensibility as a pre-given standard encourages readers to
acknowledge the truth of the poem as transcending the dogma of orthodoxy to
emulate the status of doxa. It is in this way, he says, that every poem was
transformed into an “image of the very institutional space in which it is read, a
perfect mirror in the imaginary of that space” (165-66). Despite the many successes
of the New Critical programme, Guillory argues for the ultimate failure of Brooks’s
either/or approach to literature and mass culture for the generation of post-war
readers. The cultural capital available through canonical literature and university
education should have been diffused by the radical opening up of the academy
beyond the elite classes in the 1940s. Instead, there emerged a kind of “recusant
literary culture, at once faithful to the quasi-sacred authority of literature but paying
tribute at the same time to the secular authority of a derogated mass culture” (175).

The New Critical paradigm performed a significant and powerful reformation of the
literary canon, and yet this bastion of High Culture continues to exist in a relation of parity to rather than dominance over mass or low culture.

Despite the New Critics’ failure to completely dominate the cultural realm, the literary canon and its proponents still control the dissemination of cultural capital via the academy. If there is “no way out of this game of culture” as Guillory concludes, then there still remains the possibility of “another kind of game, with less dire consequences for the losers” (340). An alternative “aesthetic game” would acknowledge “‘prestige’ or fame” as a symbolic representation of cultural capital freed from the academic “institutions of the materially advantaged” (339). This freedom is manifested as a “Socialising [of] the means of production and consumption” so that cultural capital is “disarticul[ed]” and the university is divested of its role in the “the system of class formation, and thus … ‘distinction’ based on inequality of access to cultural goods” (339). The task of separating the university from the dissemination of cultural capital is a difficult one, and Guillory’s resolution to the inequitable distribution of cultural goods in society is not without its critics.

Guillory’s conclusion mirrors Bourdieu’s characteristic trope of the “thought experiment,” and yet, as Bill Readings points out in The University in Ruins, this formula is a somewhat lacklustre response to “rethinking” the academic control over culture (109, 112). Assessing the viability of Guillory’s “experiment,” Readings argues that “One can immediately observe that it begs the thorny institutional question of who will perform this reorganization, and how” (109). Readings charges Guillory’s “redistribution of cultural capital” with following “techno-bureaucratic culture in the moment when capitalism seeks to expand its consumer base” (110). Readings goes so far as to align Guillory’s resolution to
*Cultural Capital* and the problem of literary canon formation with “the Thatcherite desire to bring all subjects within the fold of the ‘property-owning democracy.’” Guillory’s demystifying of literary history is criticized as a defence of the literary tradition which Readings describes as an “arbitrary archive” symptomatic of the modern “University of Excellence” (86). “Once the link between literary study and the formation of the model citizen has been broken,” Readings says, “knowledge tends to disappear, to be replaced as a goal by facility in the processing of information.” As far as Readings is concerned, the goal of any such break is to make literature “one field of knowledge among others.” With the Humanities taking the brunt of the academy’s current economic difficulties, it seems safe to assume that the link between literature and the model citizen has lost ground. It does not follow that the canon has “come to function as the arbitrary delimitation of a field of knowledge” that has dispensed with tradition and literary history as Readings suggests. The arguments of Caddel, Quartermain, and Duncan serve as evidence that canon and tradition are still central to the study of literature, whether or not the critic agrees with them, and neither Guillory nor Readings offer any explanation of this fact. Before returning to Eliot to demonstrate Halsey’s development of existing definitions of tradition, it will be helpful to look again at the poem and Halsey’s declarative appropriative practice which engenders a uniquely textual engagement with tradition.

3.4 *The Text of Shelley’s Death*, or, Tradition in Ruins

In “Reversions on the Text,” Halsey cautions readers against reading *The Text* as a verifiable record of Shelley’s death because “the text of Shelley’s death / is an embodiment of contradiction” (61). The poem resists the monumentalizing force of tradition by insisting on the divergences that characterize Trelawny’s hypotexts and
the many other contributing texts and documents. The proclamation on page twenty-five, “Now let us together solve the great mystery,” suggests a break or interjection in the “confused ... mass” of appropriated text, and proposes to resolve the mystery of Shelley’s death (12):

Now let us together solve the great mystery. It was very dark. The sea looked as solid and smooth as a sheet of lead and was covered with an oily scum: gusts of wind swept over it without ruffling it, and big drops of rain fell on its surface rebounding as if they could not penetrate it. Fishing-craft under bare poles rushed by in shoals running foul of the ships in the harbour. But the din and hubbub made by men and their shrill pipings were suddenly silenced.

Edward and Jane came in, their bodies lacerated, their bones starting through their skins, their faces stained with blood. Edward was the weakest [var. over-anxious and wanted practice]. Janus! I nearly put an end to the Poet and myself.

Edward sat on the deck as the topmast rigging was being reset and read Shelley’s copy of *Queen Mab*. He seems happy and content.

Fig. 4. From Alan Halsey’s *The Text of Shelley’s Death*, 25.

The statement actually derives from Shelley himself, who, arising from a deep reverie during a boat trip with Jane Williams and her children, suddenly exclaimed, “now let us together solve the great mystery,” leading Williams to believe that he intended to capsize the boat and drown her and her children (Trelawny *Records* 108). Reading the line as part of Halsey’s poem, one cannot help interpreting the proceeding lines as the beginnings of a traditional narrative of Shelley’s drowning. Lines such as “It was very dark. The sea looked as solid and smooth as a sheet of lead” conform to the inherited style of narrative introductions, not least because Trelawny’s style of biography and narrative has indeed shaped the narratives of Shelley’s life and death. The page proceeds with the same appropriative style that distinguishes the poem, moving from Trelawny’s narrative to Mary’s re-telling of Shelley’s nightmare about Edward and Jane Williams. The page concludes with an
unsourced account of Edward reading Shakespeare, and the final line, “He seems happy and content,” derives from one of Shelley’s letters to Claire Clairmont. The viability of the narrative form in recounting events is called into question again several pages later with the stated “wish to escape from the third person” (31). Following Halsey’s suggestion of reading his poem as a “matter of narrative,” The Text becomes a poetic interrogation of the narratives that constitute tradition (21 Aug. 2013). Here, the aggregation of conflicting narratives demonstrate the instability of contemporary definitions of tradition. This instability is attested to several pages later with the following statement:

It may be that Nature masks in life several copies. They seemed as they moved to blot the thoughts [var. the shadows of all forms] and the light imaginings. I have lived to be older than my father; I am ninety. (33)

Here, the seeming authority of the natural dominates the possible alternatives, “blot[ting] the thoughts ... and the light imaginings” that might organize literary tradition differently. Literary history and tradition ensures that Shelley has indeed “lived to be older than [his] father,” and the wealth of literature and criticism surrounding the poet and his work has extended that life long past ninety. Literary tradition makes a monument of the poet, which belies the many conflicting accounts of his life and death and supports critical accounts of the poet as a “beautiful, and ineffectual angel” (Arnold 380). Halsey appropriates the textual history of Shelley’s death so as to demonstrate the unreliability of the critical tradition that has inspired generations of texts and arguments regarding the poet and his work. Having outlined Halsey’s break with conventional understandings of tradition in The Text, it is necessary now to address the consequences of this break, both for his own poetry
and for our understanding of tradition. To answer these questions, it is worth looking
again at *The Text* and its development from the inherited model of tradition. To do
so, I will return to the imagery of ruins referenced earlier, which illuminates
Halsey’s negotiation with tradition in his poem and his development of, and
divergence from, the Eliotic tradition.

Many critics have discussed the ambiguities and inconsistencies in Eliot’s
essay, and the difficulty of clearly establishing Eliot’s understanding of tradition is
compounded by close analysis of the terms of his argument. The *OED* definition of
“monument” offers an alternative perspective on Eliot’s use of the term in “Tradition
and the Individual Talent,” and its implications for his model of tradition. The *OED*
definition begins as follows:

1. A tomb, a sepulchre. Also *fig*.
2. a. A statue, building, or other structure erected to commemorate
   a famous or notable person or event.
   b. An effigy; a carved figure, statue.
3. a. A written document or record; *(Law)*

Here, monument is shown to rely on an idea of the personal and the individual which
is unusual for a poet so wary of poetic personality. Eliot’s use of the term instills a
sense of tradition as enduring and permanent, hence the “existing monuments” of
tradition, however according to the *OED* definition, these “existing monuments” are,
at the same time, tombs or sepulchres for what is already dead. Paul de Man writes
insightfully of the meaning and import of the monument in our understanding of
literary tradition in his 1979 essay entitled “Shelley Disfigured.” Here, de Man
compares the inculcation of an author or poet into the canon to “bury[ing] them in
their own texts made into epitaphs and monumental graves” and, in effect,
“monumentaliz[ing]” the author into “historical or aesthetic objects” (121). This process of monumentalizing is neither positive nor negative, and is certainly not avoidable, for “monumentalization” “is the madness of words” (122). To understand monumentalization as a “source of value” “leads to a misreading” de Man says (123). Reading is itself a process of “disfiguration,” and recognizing this fact means relinquishing the desire to monumentalize the reading process. If the monument is an ambiguous figure for de Man, it gains positive force in Eliot’s essay on tradition.

Eliot aims to delineate the authoritative lineage of texts that would join the “existing monuments” of literary tradition, but he does so with a curious abstraction between the texts constituting that tradition and the concept of the monument. This abstraction is manifested in the alignment of the “really new ... work,” which shapes that tradition, and the monument, which serves as a memorial to commemorate some “notable person or event” (“Monument”). This alignment empties out the text which Eliot imbues with permanence and focuses instead on the text as already dead. This abstraction might be read as yet another of Eliot’s contradictory statements were it not for the fact that the criticism of British poetry is replete with the imagery of monuments, ruins, and wreckage. This imagery also permeates contemporary British literary criticism and has particular relevance for Halsey’s invocation of tradition in *The Text*.

Perhaps the most direct statement on the centrality of ruins to English poetic tradition, and to contemporary poets, comes from Halsey himself in his 2010 interview with St. Thomasino. Here, Halsey is challenged to distinguish between the work of British avant-garde poets and that of their American peers for whom literary theory has been such a pervasive influence. Halsey begins by acknowledging some “similarities and some cross-fertilisation in more recent work” by British and
American poets; however he is adamant about the profound and fundamental differences between the two groups (St. Thomasino n. pag.). Language poetry applies European theory to a “disruptive version of the Whitman-Williams quest for a poetic language grounded in American speech,” Halsey says. By contrast, there is no equivalent model of “poetic language” available to British avant-garde poets. Lacking a reliable route to national poetic tradition, he continues, an “English poet has to be busier picking through local wreckage to find whatever’s worth either salvage or creative demolition.” Halsey’s description of the English poet “picking through [the] local wreckage” provides a useful starting point for assessing the consequences of his interrogation of tradition in The Text and for understanding the relevance of ruins to contemporary British literary criticism.

Charles Martindale does much to delineate the relationship between ruins and tradition in British poetry in his essay, “Ruins of Rome: T.S. Eliot and the Presence of the Past.” Martindale’s analysis of textual borrowing via allusion and topos in Latin poetry was important to the definition and distinction of appropriation from alternative concepts of textual borrowing in the first chapter. The critic’s attention to author-centred concepts of textual appropriation reflect the Latin poets’ self-conscious appropriations from earlier poets which were often coloured by their own annotations. The shift in poetic and cultural values from the Renaissance period onwards meant that contemporary poets were much less likely to flag their influences and appropriations in the poem, and practices of textual borrowing came to be seen as undermining the “author’s integrity” (Hinds 22). While Martindale provides a point of contrast to my definition of appropriation as an author-centred but not author-determined practice of textual borrowing in the first chapter, his
arguments in this essay outline the role of ruins in modernist poetry which serves both to connect and to oppose Eliot’s and Halsey’s poetics.

Martindale traces the history of the relationship between ruins and tradition in terms particularly apposite to Halsey’s vision of English poetry. His essay revolves around a discussion of The Waste Land’s vision of modernity as a condition of “ruins and rubbish” (102). With just three years between the two, The Waste Land is the obvious and concurrent poem to read alongside Eliot’s essay on tradition. The criticism that surrounds Eliot’s poem is replete with ideas of tradition, nostalgia, and history, and yet the title of the poem denotes an approach to history and tradition as already ruined and perhaps irrevocable. By aligning Eliot’s poem with phrases like “ideal order” and “existing monuments” from his 1919 essay, it becomes harder to secure a stable definition of Eliot’s model of tradition, and thus of the relevance of that model for contemporary poets such as Halsey. Martindale relates The Waste Land to the genre of “ruin poem” through which “English literature can be traced back to Anglo-Saxon times, and to the poetic fragment” (120), and thus, for Eliot, to the broader “mind of Europe” (“Tradition” 153). Martindale, a professor of Latin, is interested in The Waste Land as revealing “the presence of ancient Rome” in the twentieth century (103). He cites the cultural significance of Eliot’s poem, its espousal of “classicism, imperialism, and tradition,” and Eliot’s commitment to establishing Virgil as the “indisputable European classic,” as making the 1922 poem a “good starting point” for articulating the relationship between modernist poetry and Rome (102-3). Taking Eliot’s definition of tradition as the dominant model for twentieth-century modernist poetry, The Waste Land is an even better starting point for investigating the relationship between Eliot’s tradition and the imagery of ruins which continues to define contemporary poetry.
Monuments and Ruins

Martindale understands *The Waste Land* as a quasi-archaeological project, a poetic mode which he says is “not uncommonly encountered among modern poets” (115).7 Reading Eliot’s opus as a ruin poem, Martindale interprets the use of the appropriated fragment as symptomatic of post-World War I literature and characteristic of much modernist poetry. Recalling the ruins of his title, Martindale presents ruins as “signs both of origins and of ends or the end” (122). Ruins also serve a second function in society which Martindale learns from Anne Janowitz’s *England’s Ruins*, that of “restor[ing] art to nature, or blur[ring] the distinction” between the two. Martindale echoes Janowitz in describing this accord between ruins, art, and nature as rooting the “present social order … deep in time and the soil [which] will thus endure.” This conflation of ruins, art, and nature promotes a range of “ideological entailments” which have significant consequences for Eliot’s poem, Martindale says, and for the interpretation of tradition in contemporary poetry (121).

The monument is central to Janowitz’s study of ruins in English poetry, and thus to Martindale’s analysis of Eliot’s poem. Janowitz refers to Henri Lefebvre in her definition of monument and his comments are useful for distinguishing Halsey’s poetics from Eliot’s model of tradition as manifested in *The Waste Land*. Quoting from Lefebvre, Janowitz describes monuments as “offering ‘to each member of a society the image of his/her appurtenances and social face’” (46). Here, the monument connects the singular with the collective, promoting identification of “the individual with the nation.” Lefebvre’s analysis reveals how the “existing monuments” of Eliot’s “ideal order” constitute and cultivate “ideological entailments” which bring with them particular models of authority and morality.

---

7 This representation of the poem is deeply antithetical to Duncan’s criticism of mainstream British poetry which invokes precisely the same terms to denigrate the majority of poetry.
Janowitz’s brief commentary on *The Waste Land* as “arrang[ing] cultural fragments into a new coherence” to “repair … the crisis of European imperialism” is indicative of this problematic, linking Eliot’s poem with a repressive colonial history (8, 19). In this way, Halsey’s description of the English poet, “picking through [the] local wreckage to find whatever’s worth either salvage or creative demolition” (St. Thomasino n. pag.), begins to distinguish itself from Eliot’s model of tradition and the “ideological entailments” it incurs (Martindale 152).

Towards the end of *The Waste Land*, there is a now famous line which provides a useful basis for differentiating between Eliot’s and Halsey’s ideas of ruin and their attitudes towards tradition. Drawn from the very final section of the poem, Eliot’s line, “These fragments I have shored against my ruins” may well be the most quoted line in critical analysis of tradition in *The Waste Land*, but I use it again here because it demonstrates the stark contrast between the two poets (140). The fragments comprising Eliot’s poem, which Janowitz describes as seeking a new coherence in the “crisis of European imperialism,” are shored by the speaker against downfall or decay (19). It is notable that the poet says ruins, in the literary and figurative description of a building or town, however there is also the implication of ruin, of a private or personal downfall and the accompanied loss in social or moral standing. Eliot’s fragments are intended to save the speaker from ruination, a motive Janowitz reads as explicitly Eurocentric and imperialist. Halsey offers quite a different imperative for the fragmentary structure of his poem. Whereas *The Waste Land* appeals to the authority of its constitutive texts, not all of which are literary or historical tomes it must be said, Halsey’s poem foregrounds its fragmentary structure as a challenge to the tradition his constitutive texts represent. The fragment emerges as a point of difference for Eliot and Halsey, indicating two very different attitudes
towards tradition. If *The Waste Land* attempts to bolster the speaker and his culture against the threat of destruction, *The Text* takes destruction as its starting point, not to attack English poetry and tradition but rather as the point at which every contemporary poet begins. The flaws, inconsistencies, and contradictions that characterize the various accounts of Shelley’s death set the model of tradition presented in *The Text* at a definite remove from Eliot’s example.

Both Eliot and Halsey are interested in ruins as a way of understanding tradition in poetry, but the ideological entailments of Eliot’s ruins are very different from Halsey’s textual engagement with tradition. Martindale learns from Janowitz that a ruin is “evidence ... of the power of time to weaken and destroy, but it can also be read as ‘the site of a recovery’ and even, in D.F. Rauber’s phrase, ‘an aspiration for the infinite’” (121). Ruin poetry had serious social and political ramifications for poets and readers at the height of the genre’s popularity in eighteenth-century Britain. Janowitz puts the case succinctly when she articulates “The paradox of eighteenth-century ruin” as a “figure of decay” which was at the same time “the image used to authorize England’s autonomy as a world power” (2). The ruin poem, just like the physical ruin, justified the present social order of eighteenth-century Britain as it was reformed according to the twin enterprises of colonialism and the industrial revolution. Here, ruins are made “signs of a lost whole,” a lost authority or power which is made to seem natural by ceding with the physical landscape as it is reinvigorated and even piqued for a return to working order (Martindale 122). This idea of ruins may have some appeal for Eliot’s vision of the “ideal order” of “existing monuments,” but it is also symptomatic of the divergence between his example and Halsey’s use of appropriation and textuality to challenge the authority of hermetic tradition.
Janowitz’s analysis of monuments and ruins as performing a “central social function” by offering society a “‘collective mirror ‘more real’ than the individual one’” recognizes the “existing monuments” of Eliot’s “ideal order” of tradition as an authoritative list of works (46). According to Lefebvre’s comments, this authoritative list is not simply a lineage of preferable works or texts; it cultivates a way of life which is reflected back onto its audience and which establishes social and cultural mores that encourage specific economic and political principles. In effect, Eliot’s model of tradition is prescriptive, culturally and morally superior, and it gives support to the processes of class construction that Guillory discovers within the infrastructure of the university. In their 2010 edited collection on the Ruins of Modernity, Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle assert the responsibility of “the beholder” in recognizing ruins (7), and thus manifesting the “ideological entailments” that reflect the “central social function” of monuments and ruins (Martindale 121) (Janowitz 46). This attribution of responsibility to the beholder distinguishes the authoritative nature of Eliot’s tradition from Halsey’s textual approach. Halsey’s textual model of tradition eschews the top-down approach of Eliot’s “existing order” and begins instead with the physical material of language which constitutes each literary monument (153). Hell and Schönle share Martindale’s belief in the “ideological entailments” of ruins, but they are also explicit about the role of the individual in identifying and recognizing the ruin (Martindale 152):

The beholder defines the ruin, and the ruin could not exist without such creative appropriation. As a result, the ruin is often the playground of speculative strategies that tell us more about the beholder than about the ruin or its original environment. (7)
Hell and Schönle are emphatic that it is up to the individual to acknowledge a ruin, thus supporting Eliot’s belief articulated in *The Waste Land* of the individual poet’s capacity to offset ruin/s by writing poetry. In order to avoid ruination, an individual must be able to recognize it as such. Despite Eliot’s attribution of independence to tradition wherein “the existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves” and thus not at the behest of the poet or critic, his statement in *The Waste Land*, “These fragments I have shored against my ruins,” suggests quite a different imperative in the construction of tradition (*Waste Land* 140). If “the beholder” is responsible for “defin[ing] the ruin,” and this process “tell[s] us more about the beholder than about the ruin” (7), then it is also possible that the beholder is responsible for defining tradition and the particular “ideological entailments” that ensue (Martindale 121). In *The Waste Land*, Eliot presents tradition as a means of saving himself, and all of European culture, from destruction, and yet his definition and delineation of tradition invokes strikingly similar images, ideological imperatives, and forms of authority to that attributed to ruins by Martindale, Janowitz, Hell, and Schönle. If Eliot’s definition of tradition displays the same ambiguity and evasiveness that Riquelme terms a ‘harmony of dissonance’, then what does Halsey offer as an alternative in his engagement with tradition in *The Text*?

Halsey is explicit about poetry offering a “distinct kind of thought” from that available in the critical writing of Eliot’s 1919 essay (“On Poetics” n. pag.). Perhaps the clearest way of understanding Halsey’s textual reformulation of tradition in *The Text* is as manifesting this “distinct kind of thought” which eschews imperial imaginaries and elitist “ideological entailments” in favour of a more materialist textual approach to writing and literary lineage (Martindale 121). The “distinct kind
of thought” that Halsey attributes to poetry enables an alternative approach to tradition which is not beholden to the empirical accretion of worthy texts or “ideal monuments” (Eliot “Tradition” 152). Instead, Halsey’s poetic thought orients itself to textuality which forms the basis both of the constituent literature of any model of tradition, and of the particular appropriative practice that shapes and structures *The Text*. By rejecting the empirical account of tradition as a chronology which forms an “ideal order” of texts, Halsey’s *Text* proposes a more lateral account of tradition that focuses attention not on the macro-level processes of empire and ruin, but rather on the local level of letters and words. This lateral approach addresses the textuality which constitutes and consolidates tradition, renewing it day by day so that tradition is not a retrospective phenomenon. *The Text* rejects that vision of tradition as the canonising of those most revered and inaccessible of texts and understands it instead as a history of our language, a language as diverse and mutable as the readers and writers who put it to new uses every day.

**Conclusion**

Contemporary criticism of innovative poetry tells us that tradition is not an appropriate topic for poetry, and yet Halsey’s *Text* uses poetic practices and effects to illuminate tradition in new and provocative ways. Halsey’s negotiation with tradition extends the remit of appropriation in poetry, using the conflict of different texts and narratives to effect a declarative challenging of received ideas on the construction and development of tradition. Textuality is the common denominator of Halsey’s appropriative practice, and it also provides the basis to the tradition of literature and criticism that informs the poem. The innovative nature of *The Text* emerges by enabling a perspective on tradition which avoids the elitism, the exclusivity, and the authority of Eliot’s hermetic definition of tradition. Halsey’s
Text emphasizes the textual basis of tradition and, in so doing, recalls the collective imperatives within literature, namely the shared nature of language and the communal nature of tradition collectively inherited and celebrated.
Chapter Four: “Was there ever an original poem?”: Refashioning Authorship in Susan Howe’s *A Bibliography of the King’s Book, or, Eikon Basilike*

Susan Howe is the third and final poet in this triptych study of poetic appropriation and its declarative potential. This chapter consolidates the analysis of alternative practices of appropriation in contemporary experimental poetry and suggests another development of the current understanding of the term in literary criticism. In her essay on the poet in the seminal text on Language Poetry, *In the American Tree*, Tina Darragh outlines Howe’s combination of historical material and contemporary practices and its consequences for critical analysis of her poetry. In this short essay on the American poet, Darragh recalls her initial reading of Howe and her surprise at discovering “vocabulary of the ‘Old World’ (terms from the classics, mythology, the Bible, Latin liturgy, and so on)” combined with “experimental techniques such as the fragmentation of words and the isolation of individual letters” (547). Here, Darragh interprets Howe’s appropriation of historical texts in her writing as evidence of the poet “stand[ing] up” and “as an intellectual” “fight[ing] back” against “the weight of our own language’s history” (549). This perception of Howe as resisting language’s history sets her at odds with Halsey who embraces linguistic history as constitutive of tradition. Whether or not one agrees with Darragh’s assessment of her poetry, Howe shares with Halsey and Joyce a profound interest in the language and literature of earlier times. Her interests and imperatives in practising appropriation diverge in important ways from her English and Irish counterparts, and these differences are indicative of the necessity of redefining appropriation beyond the conceptualist
definition. Before undertaking a critical reading of Howe’s poem, it will be helpful to offer an outline of this chapter and the trajectory of the arguments that shape this reading of her work.

This chapter begins by addressing the materialist nature of Howe’s appropriative practice which manifests itself from the very beginning of A Bibliography of the King’s Book, or, Eikon Basilike. ¹ By moving from letter to letter and line to line of Howe’s poem, specific differences emerge between her appropriative style and those of Joyce and Halsey. Howe’s poem proposes a radical deconstruction and redefinition of authorship, and this becomes a guiding force of the poem. As the chapter progresses, appropriation emerges as a vital force in Howe’s rejection of the traditional, patriarchal definition of authorship. This rejection manifests itself and is worked out through a variety of themes and issues in the poem. The enclosure of the commons is essential to Howe’s redefinition of authorship, while also provoking provocative parallels with the etymology of appropriation that recurs across this thesis. The debates surrounding enclosure raise the same “morally dubious” questions of authority, ownership, and propriety that characterize the practice of appropriation for Halsey and Joyce. Howe echoes Halsey by incorporating literary criticism into her poem, and this appropriation provides the poet with a direction for her redefinition of authorship. Under the surface of patriarchal literary tradition, bibliography, and scholarship, Eikon Basilike envisions a female ancestry of writing and authorship divested of the restrictions of proprietorship and authority. Howe’s feminist redefinition of authorship reorients appropriation by revealing its potential for critical and conceptual work. Howe’s Eikon Basilike extends contemporary understandings of appropriation in a new

¹ Hereafter, Eikon Basilike.
direction, and thus compounds the critical requirement to extend and develop contemporary understandings of appropriation in poetry and criticism.

4.1 Appropriation versus Authorship in *Eikon Basilike*

This section investigates Howe’s appropriative practice in *Eikon Basilike*, beginning with an introduction to the text and proceeding with a close reading of the poem which attends to the specificities of her engagement with appropriation. *Eikon Basilike* was published by Paradigm Press in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1989.\(^2\) The title of the poem is carried over from Edward Almack’s 1896 bibliography which documents the many versions and reprintings of *The King’s Book* since its publication in the wake of Charles I’s execution in 1649. The sources and setting may seem unusual for Howe, a poet firmly committed to uncovering the violent history of the New England Puritans; however, the regicide of Charles I intervenes as “a primal sin” for the settlers and haunts them as an act of originary violence (Foster 175). *Eikon Basilike* is Howe’s tenth collection and it was published in her first year working as Visiting Professor at SUNY Buffalo. This is not the first of Howe’s poems to feature appropriation, although it is her first to address English literary history. Howe’s poetic preoccupation with American history was established with her second collection, *Chanting at the Crystal Sea* (1974), and consolidated with her invocation of the seventeenth-century narrative of Puritan Minister Reverend Hope Atherton in *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time* (1987). William Montgomery has argued that the collections published before and after *Eikon Basilike*—*Articulation of

\(^2\) Hereafter, the original 1649 text will be referred to as *The King’s Book* and Howe’s poem will be referred to as *Eikon Basilike*. Page numbers and citations for Howe’s poem will reflect the republished version of the poem, which is collected in *The Nonconformists Memorial: Poems by Susan Howe* and published by New Directions in 1993. With a publication date of 1989, Howe’s *Eikon Basilike* is the earliest of the poems included in this project; Halsey’s *Text* appeared six years later in 1995, and Joyce’s “Trem Neul” and “De Iron Trote” were published in 2001 and 2009 respectively.
Sound Forms in Time (1987) and Thorow (1990)—are Howe’s “most sustained poetic attempts at addressing the colonization of America and its ramifications for American literary identity,” and this raises questions about Howe’s influences and imperatives at the time of writing Eikon Basilike (1986). The Western Borders (1979) was Howe’s first text to address her Irish heritage with the poems incorporating Irish landscape and myth. The Irish theme was taken up again in Cabbage Gardens (1979), The Liberties (1980), and Defenestration of Prague (1983). Howe is primarily known as a poet interested in America and Ireland, and so Eikon Basilike represents something of a change while still reflecting her primary interests.

Eikon Basilike runs to thirty-seven pages and begins with a prose introduction. Howe aligns poetry and visual art in the poem with pages of rich textual collage intersecting terse stanzas of appropriated text. The poem incorporates more than forty source texts, ranging from Shakespeare’s Coriolanus written in the early 1600s to Stephen Greenblatt’s Renaissance Self-Fashioning published in 1980. In the opening chapter of this thesis, I investigated the conflicted relationship between appropriation and authorial expression and argued for an enduring historical understanding of appropriation’s declarative force in poetry. In this analysis of Eikon Basilike, the practice of appropriation is extended beyond authorial expression to address the possibility of authorship itself. Howe is deeply invested in questions of the possibility and propriety of authorship in this poem, and in its proprietary nature under appropriation. This chapter takes up the question of authorship in Howe’s poem and asks how her particular negotiation with appropriation proposes a redefinition of authorship. By aligning Howe’s appropriative style with the broader themes and issues in the poem, it is possible to propose a reading of Eikon Basilike which contravenes traditional patriarchal understandings of authorship without
relinquishing the poet’s, or her poem’s, capacity to be declarative and meaningful in new and provocative ways.

The following close reading of the introduction and opening pages of *Eikon Basilike* outlines the materialist nature of Howe’s appropriative style, and the implications of this materiality for her negotiation with authorship in the poem. *Eikon Basilike* begins with a four-page introduction, entitled “Making the Ghost Walk About Again and Again,” which provides a context both for *The King’s Book* and for Howe’s poem. The tone is as factual and objective as that of a standard scholarly text, with the same details of date, name, and location framing the King’s execution. The precise difference between Howe’s writing and traditional scholarly prose emerge as the specificities of time and place give way to a more subjective tone and poetic form. After recounting the textual history of *The King’s Book*, Howe disrupts the traditional scholarly form, as follows:

Printers of the *Eikon Basilike* were hunted down and imprisoned. But in spite of many obstacles the little book was set in type time and again.

During 1649 fresh editions appeared almost daily and sold out at once.

The *Eikon Basilike*’s popularity continued throughout the years of the Commonwealth and Cromwell’s Protectorate.

The *Eikon Basilike* is a forgery. (55)

---

3 In his *Dictionary of Catch Phrases*, Eric Partridge relates the phrase to the theatre where “ghost walk” means ‘payday’: “‘[The] ghost walks on Friday’, ‘the ghost does not walk’, ‘when will the ghost walk?’, ‘has the ghost walked yet?’ There is—or is not—any money for salaries and wages; when will there be—has there been—such money?” (152). The theme of theatre will come up again in Howe’s appropriation from Thomas More’s *The History of King Richard the Third*. 
Howe breaks the line after “Cromwell’s Protectorate” to position on a new indented line the statement, “The *Eikon Basilike* is a forgery” (55). The force of the statement is compounded by this break which also demonstrates the particularity of Howe’s prose form and its difference from academic writing. Howe describes the ambiguity between a scholarly imperative and the more creative form of her prose in an interview with Lynn Keller:

> Writing poetry, I feel completely free. It’s meditative ... Writing an essay, I want to say something specific ... I’m very anxious to be scholarly correct ... Then there is sound. The power of sound never changes between poetry and essays. More and more, as I write essays I seem to be ... obsessing that every line is right. (26)

The difference Howe perceives between poetry and prose is important because of her frequent merging of the two forms in her poetry and in prose works such as *My Emily Dickinson* (1985) and *The Birth-mark* (1993). David Arnold reads Howe’s aligning of poetry and prose in *The Birth-mark* as the poet going “‘off-road,’” “extend[ing] the topography of scholarship” in “a typically antinomian gesture, which challenges the authority of overseers, … cartographers,” and literary critics (128). Arnold’s response to Howe’s innovation in literary form is to suggest that literary critics “shed the mantle of critic and reveal ourselves as writers, as a result of which disrobing we might enter a broader community” (130). As well as encouraging a more self-conscious and subjective critical style, Arnold’s response also reflects the radical potential of Howe’s poem by encouraging critics to supplant institutional borders and challenge the empirical nature of scholarly objectivity. In *The Birth-mark*, and *Eikon Basilike*, meaning is manifested not just through the syntax and semantics of rhetorical prose, but also through the form and structure of
the writing—the sound, lineation, and line-breaks—which have traditionally preoccupied poetry and poetry criticism.

The introduction continues with a discussion of the bibliographies and sources influencing the text. The many bibliographers and critics referenced in Howe’s poem reflects Eikon Basilike’s engagement with the scholarly tradition that surrounds The King’s Book. The poet’s son, Mark, purchased Almack’s bibliography for her and this provides the hypotext of Eikon Basilike; however, she also draws on Christopher Wordsworth’s Who Wrote Eikon Basilike? (1824) and Francis F. Madan’s New Bibliography of the Eikon Basilike (1950). Howe explains the history of her acquaintance with Almack’s and Madan’s bibliographies as follows:

Eikonoklastes is a political tract … But it is A Bibliography of the King’s Book; or, Eikon Basilike, by Edward Almack, that interests me … Almack’s Bibliography was published in 1896 in support of Royal authorship. Francis F. Madan’s A New Bibliography of the Eikon Basilike of King Charles the First, with a note on the authorship was published in 1950 in support of John Gauden. (Eikon 57)

Howe makes clear the different affiliations of the two bibliographies. In the following lines, the poet outlines the difficulty that this difference creates for the supposedly empirical nature of bibliographical work. If bibliography is defined as “‘the history, identification, or analytical and systematic / description or classification of writings or publications considered as matter / -ial objects,’” as Howe says, then how do Almack’s and Madan’s texts also present arguments for the real identity of the author (58)? In his 2006 essay aligning Howe with H.D., David Clippinger points out that Howe’s appropriation of Almack’s title page reflects a bibliographical commitment of her own. Clippinger notes that Howe does not cross
out “‘member of the bibliographical society’” on Almack’s title page the way she does Almack’s name and the original publisher (n. pag.). As well as sharing a “critical methodology” based on bibliography with Almack and Madan, Howe also shares with them the proclivity towards statements about the real author of the text (Clippinger n. pag.). For Howe, this proclivity manifests itself quite differently than for her forebears, and is heightened by her interrogation of authorship in the poem.

Howe concludes the introduction by interrogating the concept of the “original text” and articulates her dissatisfaction with literary criticism’s deference to the author (58). The poet articulates her doubts about authorial and textual originality by asking, “Can we ever really discover the original text? Was there ever an / original poem? What is a pure text invented by an author? Is such a conception possible?” For Howe, these questions of originality regard the difference between the poet’s intentions in writing and the materiality of the published poem: “Only by going back to the prescriptive level of thought / process can ‘authorial intention’ finally be located” she says, “and then the material / object has become immaterial.” Poetic intention should not feature in the analysis of the text, Howe argues, because the finished poem acquires a materiality that transcends the cognitive and aesthetic processes of the poet writing, and to revert to the poet’s intentions in writing the poem is to deny the poem its distinct material existence. Howe’s position is a familiar one for contemporary Language poets writing in the 1980s at a moment of acute consciousness about the material conditions of textual production. That said, her assertion that deferring to authorial intention betrays the materiality of the poem is itself an expression of her poetic intentions. But now, the formal introduction gives way to pages of dense collage, and the questions of bibliography and authorial expression become much more complex.
The opening page of Howe’s poem typifies the visual violence of *Eikon Basilike* and its consequences for readers of her poem:

Fig. 1. The first page after the introduction of Susan Howe’s *A Bibliography of the King’s Book, or, Eikon Basilike* (Howe *The Nonconformist’s Memorial* 59).

The tilted text, “Oh Lord / o Lord,” toppling off the left margin provokes a number of references and interpretations for a reader acquainted with the literary history
behind *The King’s Book*. As well as offering a visual representation of the King’s beheading and evoking the King’s fear on approaching the scaffold, these lines also recall Philip Sidney’s ‘Pamela Poem’ which Milton uses to bring *The King’s Book* into disrepute (Bloomfield 428). Howe herself explains the sloping lines that structure the poem as “based around the violence of the execution of Charles I, the violence of history,” and also “the stage drama” of the King’s execution (Keller 8). The visual materiality of the text is a response to this violence, Howe says, because “There’s no way to express that [violence] in ... words in [an] ordinary fashion” (8).

The poet’s intention to present “chaos and violence” “visually” in the poem explains the “frequent violent visual disruption” of these opening pages, but it does not help to elucidate the particular arrangement of letters and lines, or how to read them (Keller 8) (Bloomfield 419). Howe offers a description of her process in composing these collaged pages, but even this offers little to the analyses of *Eikon Basilike*. Responding to Keller’s question about her mode of composition, Howe explains:

> First I would type some lines. Then cut them apart. Paste one on top of another, move them around until they looked right. Then I’d xerox that version, getting several copies, and then cut and paste again until I had it right. The getting it right has to do with how it’s structured on the page as well as how it sounds. (8)

Sound is essential to Howe’s construction of these pages, just as in her prose, and yet, with no recordings of Howe reading *Eikon Basilike*, it is hard to know how to sound out her “visually [disruptive]” lines, much less how to understand them (Bloomfield 419). The following excerpt from the opening lines is indicative of the problems that her appropriative practice creates for the reader:
What order should we read these lines in, and how to sound out the inverted “obwructions” and “comand”? The reader is explicitly required to answer these questions in order to read the poem. This divesting of responsibility to the reader sees the poet withdrawing from her own poem, which supports Howe’s statements on poetic intentionality in the introduction. Howe leaves it to the reader to make more or less informed guesses as to the sound and meaning of her lines, and this obligation to attend to the material nature of the poem undermines critical analysis of “authorial intention” (Eikon 58). By attending closely to these lines and considering potential approaches, it is possible to gain some sense of how to read and interpret this poem.

So far, I have outlined Howe’s distrust of poetic intentionality, her innovative prose style, and the materialist nature of her appropriative practice, all of which will be shown to contribute to her negotiation with authorship in the poem. This materialist approach is compounded over the following pages so that the instability of the opening lines permeates the phrases that follow with some letters missing, some doubled, and other part-words extracted and repeated. On page fifty-nine, the “a” hanging upside-down from the second “e” of “beering” evokes the ligature of the Latin diphthong “æ” and by literally “transpos[ing]” the two letters, “beering” turns
to “bearing.” The inversion of “transposed” on the same page is a physical representation of the meaning of the word “transposed,” to “cause (two or more things) to exchange places,” or to “transfer to a different place or context” while also reflecting the historical power shift from Charles I to the Parliamentarians (“Transpose”). This transformation of the phrase from “beering transposed” to “bearing transposed” establishes new relations between the phrase and those surrounding it. Here, “transposed” “bearing” refers both to the King’s fall from sovereign to prisoner and to the conflict of “Laws” and “zeal” which characterize the era (59). “Laws” and “zeal” manifest themselves in Charles I’s belief in the Divine Right of the monarch which led him to refuse to compromise with the Parliamentarians who held him captive. The same passionate belief prompted the Parliamentarians to establish the Black Tribunal to try the King, a tribunal described as “the most extraordinary judicial body to be met with in English history” (Sachse 69). William L. Sachse confirms the exceptional nature of the Tribunal in English law, stating that “no court has ever been so vigorously disclaimed as to jurisdiction, or so bitterly vilified as to personnel.” Already, there is a strong sense of the materiality of Howe’s appropriative poem. The “u” missing from the phrase “nfortunate Man” is emphasized in the following phrase “un ust” which, if we input the right letters becomes “Unfortunate Man / / unjust” (59). “Futnre” recalls the middle letters of “nfortunate,” and the word ‘future’, but, like Bloomfield, I have little to offer to an interpretation of “woule,” and the final line “audPaged doe of Title-page.” Kent Lewis compares this final line to “a Rorschach ink-blot,” a description which proves useful for understanding Howe’s poetry (124). The Rorschach test analyses a subject’s psychological response to intentionally abstruse and conflicted images, and thus serves as an analogy for Howe’s challenge to readers
to discover their own way of reading *Eikon Basilike*. It is worth remembering that, for Howe, these collages are ordered by sound and not syntax or semantics and so it should not come as a surprise that every line cannot be accounted for and explained.

Howe makes indeterminacy her goal in this poem, and yet her materialist appropriative practice does achieve certain declarative effects. Pages sixty-four to sixty-five of the poem are indicative of the interpretations or meanings available within Howe’s appropriative collages:
Fig. 3. From Susan Howe’s *A Bibliography of the King’s Book, or, Eikon Basilike* (Howe *The Nonconformist’s Memorial* 64).  

These collaged doubles betray a textual self-consciousness both of the form of the poem, as in the phrase “a pivot” which denotes the physical relation of these pages, and also of a broader awareness within the poem as a whole. This self-consciousness

---

4 Pages sixty-four and sixty-five are collaged doubles of each other.
is disconcerting. It is as though the poem knows things that the reader does not or will not know, and it knew these things long before the reader might come to recognize them. These self-annotative or declarative moments emerge repeatedly across the poem. The line “A cleric’s forgery / of pseudo-biographical / apology” running perpendicular to the main stanza on page sixty-six provides a counter to the primary lines describing King Charles I approaching the scaffold. The two margins multiply the number of available perspectives on the King and The King’s Book, expanding the range and scope of Howe’s poem beyond the empirical realm of argument and counter-argument. The effect is replicated on the next page where the first paragraph beginning “England’s Black Tribunal” is followed by the phrase, “It passed with the Negative,” which appears in a chapter on the execution in Liljegren’s Studies in Milton (67). The lines read as a dialogue with one source responding to another such that the poem answers its own questions. This interpretation is compounded by the use of the word “Historiography” on the same page which draws attention to Howe’s poem as a literal “[re-]writing of history based on ... the synthesis of particulars into a narrative that will stand the test of critical methods” (“Historiography”). In her essay on Eikon Basilike, Bloomfield attributes “communicative capacities” to the “material dimensions of the printed word” which is cut, pasted, and copied in Howe’s poem (431). These “communicative capacities” are the product of Howe’s materialist appropriations and they encourage critical attention to the declarative force of her aggregative constructions. The relation between Howe’s appropriative practice and her definition of authorship in Eikon Basilike becomes clearer with an excerpt from Sir Thomas More’s The History of King Richard the Third which illuminates the play of identity that becomes a framing image in the poem.
The excerpt from More is the longest block quotation in the poem after the references from Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield*. The passage from More asserts the theatrical nature of the Royal Court and Court politics. In this arena, “pore men be but ye lokers-on” and “they; yt wise be, wil medle / no farther. For they that sometyme step vp and play wt them, when / they cannot play their partes, they disorder the play & do themselves no / good” (*Eikon* 61). The lesson here is not that “pore men” should not intervene in Court life but rather that they must “play their partes” well if they are to be successful. To be successful is to uphold the “play” which extends from the “pretended Court / of Justice” to the King’s “performance on the scaffold” (62, 56). Here, an actor’s exchanging of roles and identities mirrors the question around authorship and identity in *The King’s Book*, thus elaborating the poet’s interrogation of authorship in *Eikon Basilike*. The theatre analogy permeates the text and complicates the critical propensity to assert the real identity or voice of the poet and of the author of *The King’s Book*.

Taken together, the materiality of Howe’s appropriations, the textual self-consciousness of the poem, and More’s theatre analogy encourage the progressive effacement of authorship from the poem, at least as authorship is traditionally defined. The traditional conception of authorship inferred here is that which Duff delineates in his 1767 tract, *Essay on Original Genius*. According to Duff, an author of original genius will not content himself with a “mediocrity of reputation” (131). More important than the author’s reputation, however, is Duff’s assertion that the author “disdains to imitate what perhaps he is qualified to excel.” Imitation is inclined to “cramp the inventive powers of the mind,” Duff says, “which, if indulged in their excursions, might discover new mines of intellectual ore” (131-32). Instead

---

3 More’s lines on theatre also compound the theatrical title of the introduction to Howe’s poem.
of “tracing the footsteps of his predecessors,” an author should allow his imagination, and it is his imagination, to eschew imitation, and thus appropriation. By avoiding imitation an author can “allow his imagination to range over the field of Invention ... [and] strike out a character like his own Genius, perfectly original” (132). The appropriations of text that constitute the poem take the place of Howe’s authorial voice, but if these appropriations replace the poet speaking, do they also dominate the declarative or expressive function in the poem? With appropriation taking the place of poetic intentionality or voice in Howe’s poem, what, if anything, do these appropriations declare in *Eikon Basilike*? As well as addressing the declarative force of Howe’s appropriations, this question of appropriation in *Eikon Basilike* also illuminates Howe’s negotiation with authorship. Of the various images and issues that manifest themselves in Howe’s poem, the enclosure of the commons is one of the most significant for the question of authorship. Having outlined the materialist nature of Howe’s appropriative practice, I will move now to investigate her engagement with enclosure in the poem and the consequences for her negotiation with authorship.

4.2 Authorship and the Enclosure of the Commons

*Enclosure of the Commons*

The enclosure of the commons emerges as a theme with a number of reference points in Howe’s poem. From the shared history of English literature which is freely invoked in *Eikon Basilike*, to the enclosure of copyright law which delimits the same appropriation of texts, and the construction of authorship as individual ownership, there are a number of compelling correlations between Howe’s interrogation of authorship and the subject of enclosure. The theme of enclosure begins with references to “Tract,” meaning a “stretch or extent of territory” (“Tract”), and
continues with the “Historiography of open fields” and “The place name and field name” (64-66). “The commons” refers to the collective ownership and management of land, a phenomenon which characterized agriculture in England until the twelfth century when enclosure first got underway. Nigel Harris describes enclosure as the “appropriation of common lands by private owners to the point where all the territory within Britain was officially parcelled up among a category of ‘owners’” (124). The theme of enclosure is consolidated as we move through the poem, beginning with the narrow lines of page seventy-one:

Strip furlong field

Feet on someone else’s wheat

Easy market access

On-going struggle

abandoned lands

Lost power of expression

Last power of expression

The Battle of Corioli

Obsessive images of Coriolanus … (71)

---

Howe became interested in the topic of enclosure while working on My Emily Dickinson (1985). The later prose work entitled The Birth-mark (1993) includes an essay referencing the phenomenon entitled “Incloser.”
The furlong was the “fundamental operating unit” of the enclosure, Robert C. Allen says, and this allowed land to be “shifted to new or experimental uses in small quantities” (62). A furlong is constructed of several adjacent strips in a field, and so Howe’s first line, “Strip furlong field” describes the taxonomy of land division during the process of enclosure. As well as the obvious appropriation of public land during the enclosure, individual plots were often separated by “mere strips [balks] of turf about a foot wide,” so one might easily find their “feet on someone else’s wheat” (Slater 22). If the open field system ensured that even the poorest people had access to land, the enclosure guaranteed that the poor could gain “access only by means of economic leases subject to the market” (Wood 38). With the onset of capitalism, everybody was subject to the same market conditions, and so while “market access” might have been “easy,” in Howe’s ironic phrasing, this “access” did not prevent or reduce “On-going struggle.” Shakespeare is one of the most distinguished landowners fined for “purchas[ing] and stor[ing] grain, malt, and barley for resale at inflated prices to neighbours and local tradesmen” (Archer 8). In this context, Howe’s next lines, “abandoned lands / / Lost power of expression / Last power of expression,” invokes the poor farmers relinquishing of subpar land, and their consequent loss of authority or voice in English society.

This relationship between the loss of land and “lost powers of expression” is made clear in a statement by Thomas Rainsborough, a Colonel, a Member of Parliament, and a leading spokesperson for the Levellers in the Putney Debates. The Levellers, mentioned on page eighty of Howe’s poem, were proto-democratic activists in seventeenth-century England who got their name because of their involvement in levelling the hedges during the enclosure riots. Rainsborough was

---

7 Rainborough’s brother, William Rainsborowe, was a Ranter, a Major in the Royal Navy, and a political and religious radical, who was among the early settlers of New England, moving to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1630s.
speaking on behalf of the pro-Leveller soldiers of the New Model Army at the Putney Debates when he made the following proclamation aligning his own anti-enclosure principles with the concept of individual voice:

I think that the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he ... the poorest man in England is not at all bound in the strict sense to that government that he hath not had a voice to put himself under. (Gentles 209)

Here, Rainsborough articulates the radical potential of democracy, but Howe is more interested in the fact that “the poorest man,” divested of access to land because of enclosure, “hath not a voice.” Howe makes reference to the matter obliquely again in the lines, “In his reply Pseudomisus / shifts the balance / of emphasis,” the first few words of which are borrowed from a tract by the pro-enclosure writer, Reverend Joseph Lee (75). In 1654, Lee published his response to an anti-enclosure pamphlet written a year earlier by the Puritan clergyman, John Moore. Lee’s essay used the pastoral debate form, with himself as Pseudomisus, to challenge each tenet of the 1653 pamphlet and demonstrate that there are no viable ways of making the commons as profitable as the enclosures. I have not discovered the exact source of Howe’s three lines, if indeed there is one, but most accounts of the exchange report Moore’s enthusiasm leaving him open to a “stunning retort from Pseudomisus” that contributes towards a more positive conception of enclosure (Kerridge 126).

The criticism of enclosure manifests itself most clearly in Howe’s invocation of Shakespeare’s Coriolanus.8 The historical figure, Gaius Marcius, received the name Coriolanus on account of his bravery in fighting for Rome in the Battle of

---

8 T.S. Eliot includes the line “Revive for a moment, a broken Coriolanus” in the final lines of The Waste Land. Here, the word “broken” compounds the fragmentary nature of the poem while also attesting to the epic grandeur of that history “shored” by the poet “against [his] ruins” (Waste Land 140). Eliot describes Coriolanus as “Shakespeare’s most assured artistic success” and he also wrote a two-part poem about Coriolanus (The Sacred Wood 91).
Corioli (493 B.C.E.). In Shakespeare’s tragedy, Coriolanus is expelled from the city of Rome for rejecting the rule of the people. He returns with an army to seek revenge for his expulsion and is only dissuaded from burning the city by his mother’s entreaties. The play is replete with images of food, eating, and nourishment which recall the “corn shortages and insurrections” that characterized Shakespeare’s England in the early 1600s (Cavell 211). The opening scene of the Roman people rioting because the city’s grain stores have been withheld from them would have struck a chord with Shakespeare’s audience. Coriolanus’s criticism of Greece’s democratic model, “they nourish disobedience, fed / The ruin of the state,” would also have resonated with viewers in the wake of the Midland’s Revolt of 1607 (2838).

Stanley Cavell, who is responsible for the phrase “obsessive images of Coriolanus” in Howe’s poem, asserts that the play depicts Shakespeare’s Rome as a “circle of cannibalism,” an image which provokes provocative parallels with Howe’s Eikon Basilike and the transference of power shaping the English Interregnum (203). The cannibalism Cavell introduces manifests itself at all levels of the poem and among all political groups. Charles I levied the Ship Money tax against coastal cities and counties without Parliamentary consent in 1629. This tax decreased his popularity among the public which meant that there was little sympathy for the King at the time of his death. In effect, the revenue the King collected from his subjects encouraged public support for the Parliamentarians’ call for his execution. The King was executed by a Parliament strengthened by the Bishops’ Wars which were a result of his own attempts to force the Church of Scotland to accept high Anglican principles and practices. Against this backdrop, the relation between Howe’s poem and Cavell’s depiction of “the eater eaten by what he or she eats” becomes clear.
(203). Cavell’s cannibalism also applies to the Parliamentarians. The many radical political groups which were encouraged during the Interregnum—the Levellers, the Diggers, the Religious sects, and the Conservatives—all had their own intentions for the Commonwealth. This diversity made it difficult to establish an effective model of government, and decision-making power passed from the Rump Parliament to the Nominated Assembly, on to the Instrument of Government, and finally to the Humble Petition and Advice, before Charles II regained the throne in 1660. The enclosure of the commons provokes a number of parallels for Howe’s appropriative practice in *Eikon Basilike*, but the theme is most powerful as it illuminates Howe’s negotiation with authorship in the poem. By pursuing this question of authorship in *Eikon Basilike*, we gain a clearer account of the declarative effects of Howe’s appropriative practice.

**Appropriation and Authorship**

The question of authorship which preoccupies Howe’s poem is one of the most personal questions a poet can address in her writing. Instead of attributing the text to a particular author, either herself or her contributing authors, Howe presents her *Bibliography of The King’s Book* as an interrogation of the idea of authorship itself. In the following extract from the poem, Howe indicates the difficulty of discerning and attributing authorship, and the dangers in doing so:

> This still house  
> An unbeaten way  
> My self and words  
> The King kneeling  
> Old raggs about him  
> All those apopthegems
Civil and Sacred

torn among fragments

Emblems gold and lead

Must lie outside the house

Side of space I must cross

To write against the Ghost … (68-9)

These lines stage a conflict in the action of writing and the attribution of authorship, calling into question Charles I’s contribution to *The King’s Book* while also problematizing the poet’s own authority as author. The “unbeaten way” of the second line suggests the originality and creativity traditionally required of the author writing, an idea which Howe overtly challenges in the introduction to the poem. Howe positions “My self and words” against “The King kneeling,” and despite the impoverished depiction of Charles I—“Old raggs about him / All those apothegems / Civil and Sacred / torn among fragments”—the task of writing is still a burden to her. Elisabeth W. Joyce reads these lines as expressing the speaker’s doubt about her own status in the writing of the poem. The speaker is bound to “repeat what others have said,” Joyce says, “without assurance that these words are real, that she is real, that anything is or could be the truth” (43). Such “assurance” “Must lie outside the house,” on the “Side of space I must cross // To write against the Ghost” (*Eikon* 69). These lines indicate the poet’s difficulty in asserting authorship, and the authority that accompanies it, as it is traditionally defined, and her preference for an alternative model of authorship derived from the “torn … fragments” that *The King’s Book* leaves behind.
The cannibalism that Cavell’s text introduces to the poem manifests itself too in Howe’s negotiation with authorship. This image of the poem as cannibalistic in its appropriation of materials, voices, and texts has a long history in the analysis of appropriative practices, and can be traced back to Oswald de Andrade’s 1928 Cannibalist Manifesto. Galvin reads the Brazilian poet De Andrade’s Manifesto as evidence of the historical antecedent to the current conversation around appropriation and conceptual poetry. De Andrade’s Manifesto “energetically reclaim[s]” “the traditionally denigrated figure of the cannibal or New World barbarian,” Galvin says, so that the poetic appropriation of texts is synonymous with the native consumption of colonial culture (19). This “reclaim[ing],” or “cultural re-mastication” empowers poets of the “colonial or subaltern culture,” Galvin explains, making him or her “‘a conquering agent unexpectedly capable of transformations that affect both self and other.’” The appearance of the word ‘cannibalism’ in the poem serves as evidence of Howe’s problematizing of the practice of appropriation and the violence it infers, while also offering a more insightful account of her negotiation of authorship in the poem. In this context, the line “Lost power of expression” also applies to the poet through a new conception of the author as “borrower” (Eikon 72). This new role is carved out through the stanzas of the following page:

Driest facts
of bibliography
Scarce tract work
pagination signatures running
The borrower
Stamp of the King’s
own character

I am a seeker

Blades Blades & Blades

Tell you my author

I knew his hand

The book was his

The cloathing Hands

I am a seeker

of water-marks

in the Antiquity

The Sovereign stile

in another stile

Left scattered in disguise. (72)

The switch to small case in these stanzas encourages us to read adjoining lines as complete phrases or sentences, with several four-word phrases broken over two lines from Almack’s Bibliography. With “Driest facts / of bibliography,” “pagination signatures running,” and “Stamp of the King’s / own character” lifted directly from pages four, two, and six of Almack’s Bibliography respectively, the remaining lines, “Scarce tract work,” “The borrower,” and “I am a seeker” become more prominent. The first of these phrases describes the poet’s task of searching for and selecting material from “scarce” or rare old books, or instead of her style of appropriating restricted fragments and phrases into the poem. “I am a seeker” reads as a direct statement by the poet about her obligation in composing the poem by aggregating and arranging enough words and phrases to “get ... it right” (Keller 8). The final line,
“Blades Blades & Blades” plays on the name of Almack’s original publisher while also invoking Howe’s cutting and pasting of words and pages in the process of composition, and the framing violence of the King’s execution. It would be a mistake to underplay Howe’s sense of the violence of cutting and pasting another’s text. Kathleen Crown describes the dangers incurred through this practice, and the risk of propagating colonial mentalities by “‘convert[ing], recod[ing], mak[ing] transparent, and thus represent[ing] even those experiences that resist [representation] … with a stubborn opacity’” (n. pag.). Howe is also conscious of the more “alluring … but problematic” dangers of effacing authorial presence from the poem (Guthrie n. pag.). This is why the repetition of “I am a seeker” has such force. By ignoring the shifts to small case in this second stanza, we arrive at a more insightful reading which contributes to Howe’s rejection of traditional definitions of authorship.

In the opening three lines of the second stanza, Howe delineates one of the major problems of authorship as it is conventionally understood. As we saw in the first chapter, the emergence of originality as the primary principle of authorship coincided with the effacement of traditional appropriative practices in poetry and the progressive development of copyright law. Howe takes up this question of originality in her interrogation of authorship in Eikon Basilike, using it to undermine the authority of traditional conceptions of authorship. First, Howe offers to “Tell you my author,” where “my author” could be the authors behind her many appropriations, or else an assertion by the poet of her authority over these authors who she claims as her own. The poet “knew his hand,” and “the book was his” but is now hers through her new role as “the borrower.” Through the poet’s practice of appropriation, “The Sovereign stile” is now “in another stile,” Howe’s style, whose
sources she leaves “scattered in disguise” (72). Here, Cavell’s imagery of cannibalism also applies to *Eikon Basilike*’s self-consciousness whereby the poem not only consumes other texts but also recognizes itself as such, generating more text by commenting on or feeding off this act of appropriation. Howe’s interrogation of her role as author echoes that broader question of the authorship of *The King’s Book*:

Printing an edition
of the *Eikon Basilike*

Insertion of prayer
from Sidney’s *Arcadia*

The *Eikon* is an imposture

…………………………

Amateur such as the King

Saying so I name nobody … (74)

Here, Howe recalls Almack’s account of the printer, William Dugard, who divulged on his deathbed that “Milton found [him] printing an edition of the *Eikon Basilike* about the time of his arrest and compelled the insertion of the prayer from Sidney’s *Arcadia*” (Almack 9). As well as calling into question the possibility of attributing the text to one author, these lines also demonstrate the instability of the published text. Bloomfield reports that “a version of *The Eikon Basilike* edited by Almack neither contains the prayer nor makes any reference to it,” which presents another blow to the empirical authority of bibliographical texts and their influence in shaping literary history and scholarship (429). From this perspective, “the commons” in Howe’s poem might be said to represent the full extent of texts, versions, interpretations, and editions, “the share to which each member of the company is
entitled,” that supposedly objective forms such as bibliography wish to restrict or enclose through the attribution of authorship (“Commons”).

Joel Kuszai outlines the conflicted nature of bibliography in Howe’s poem by attending to the oppositional conclusions of the various bibliographers of The King’s Book. Almack and Madan based their bibliographies “‘on approximately the same set of data’” Kuszai says, and yet they draw different conclusions as to the author of the text (Back 127). This difference can be explained by the fact that “‘[in] each case … their reading of the Eikon was mediated through what they already believed true,’” a starting point which defies the first principles of bibliographical study. “The Eikon is an imposture,” Howe says, echoing her earlier accusation of the text as a forgery, with the final two lines, “Amateur such as the King” and “Saying so I name nobody” quoted from Almack and [Christopher] Wordsworth respectively and their opposing arguments for authorship of The King’s Book (74). The divergence between Almack and Wordsworth contributes to Howe’s destabilizing of empirical literary history; however it also adds weight to her rejection of traditional conceptions of authorship by progressively undermining the possibility of a verifiable author of The King’s Book. Howe’s appropriations on the following pages extend her interrogation of authorship by aligning with concurrent developments in contemporary literary criticism, leading Eikon Basilike towards an explicitly female redefinition of authorship.

4.3 Howe’s Feminist Refashioning of Authorship

Authorial Refashioning

Howe’s appropriations from Cavell’s literary criticism seem an unusual choice for a poem primarily composed of historical texts and authors. Just as Halsey breaches the boundaries of scholarship in The Text, Howe’s quotations from Cavell reflect her
poem’s engagement with contemporary literary criticism. This engagement becomes more pronounced with Howe’s borrowings from Stephen Greenblatt’s 1980 book, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. These references from Greenblatt consolidate the relation between appropriation, authorship, and enclosure in Howe’s poem and develop her redefinition of authorship through *Eikon Basilike*. Chris Baldick identifies Greenblatt’s 1980 book, and the following 1988 publication *Shakespearean Negotiations*, as two texts integral to the development and definition of new historicism. This school of criticism is directed against the “purely formal or linguistic critical approaches such as the New Criticism and deconstruction” (Baldick n. pag.). In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Greenblatt reads the literature of English poets and authors “From Shakespeare to More” for evidence of “an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process” during the sixteenth century (2). This investigation of self-fashioning during the Renaissance period shapes the critical definition of new historicism which “emphasize[s] the historical nature of literary texts and at the same time ... the ‘textual’ nature of history” (Baldick n. pag.). Howe’s references from Greenblatt consolidate the poem’s engagement with literary criticism by aligning her rewriting of the *Bibliography* with a provocative re-reading of literary and historical texts by contemporary critics. The new historicists “attempted to show how literary works are implicated in the power-relations of their time,” Baldick says, “not as secondary ‘reflections’ of any coherent world-view but as active participants in the continual remaking of meanings.” Howe’s appropriations from Greenblatt provoke questions for *Eikon Basilike*, both of her reorienting of *The King’s Book* and of authorship as traditionally conceived. Responding to these questions extends critical readings of Howe’s poem, and brings her divergence from traditional conceptions of
authorship within a literary critical framework that affords new and different opportunities for authorial self-fashioning.

Just as Cavell’s statements on *Coriolanus* and cannibalism provoke broader parallels in Howe’s poem through the theme of enclosure and authorship, the quotations from Greenblatt also provoke concurrences across *Eikon Basilike*. The particular lines Howe borrows from Greenblatt derive from a discussion of More’s 1516 book, *Utopia*, and specifically concern More’s criticism of enclosure. More takes issue with enclosure in Book I of *Utopia* and uses the dialogue form, which characterizes the text, to stage a debate on the topic. In a conversation with John Morton, Cardinal and Chancellor of England, More’s speaker diagnoses enclosure as the real cause of theft in contemporary English society. Here, More claims that the appropriation of lands which “devour[s] men and unpeople[s], not only villages, but towns” greatly impoverishes the population, and “then what can they do but steal—and be very properly hanged ... or to go about and beg?” (26). More’s text continues the theme of enclosure, but it is Greenblatt’s response to the text which provides Howe’s appropriations.

In his analysis of More’s *Utopia*, Greenblatt borrows Louis Marin’s assertion that “there are in the smooth surface of Utopian life a series of half-hidden ruptures” (Greenblatt 23). Marin reads these ruptures in More’s text as “reveal[ing] the presence in the work of the half-effaced signs of its own production, the presence of sociohistorical forces to which Utopia owes its existence and which it is designed to render invisible.” For Marin, the “brief, fragmentary narrative enclaves” in More’s text “destroy[s] the structural integrity” of his utopia, revealing “subtle inconsistencies and contradictions in topography, economic exchange, the exercise of power, concepts of criminality, and the uses of violence” that ground More’s text
in the realities of English life in 1516. Greenblatt disagrees with Marin’s interpretation of the ruptures in More’s text. Far from disabling More’s ideas, Greenblatt interprets these ruptures as contributing to *Utopia*’s “subtle anamorphic art” which “constantly question[s] its own status and the status of the world it pretends to represent.” The two phrases that Howe appropriates from Greenblatt’s text can be traced to his defence of More’s *Utopia*, and this supports a comparison between More’s self-reflexive text and Howe’s poem. Howe selects the phrase “fragmentary narrative enclaves” from Greenblatt’s account of Marin for inclusion in her poem. Greenblatt uses the phrase to describe the “ruptures” Marin finds in More’s text which bestow upon it such declarative reflexiveness. The second phrase Howe appropriates from Greenblatt’s text is “Mock alphabet and map” which appears a few paragraphs later in his analysis and serves as an example of just some of the artefacts gathered in humanist works of the era such as More’s text and Holbein’s “The Ambassadors.” Greenblatt interprets these two items as evidence of the humanists’ “mode of civility” and their “enhancement of specifically human powers” (24). The “mock alphabet and map” of More’s text are two contradictory items, one deriding empirical knowledge and the other supporting scientific study. In his text, these two items sit next to each other “without contradiction” on account of More’s “profound, playful attention” as author. The connections forged between Howe, Greenblatt, and More through the poet’s appropriations extend beyond the cutting and pasting of text to situate the poem in relation to a specific critical conversation about the form and function of the text and its capacity to reveal something about the society within which it was written. Studying this relation offers

---

9 I will return to this phrase in the following paragraph.
more to a reading of Howe’s poem and her redefinition of authorship through appropriation.

Howe’s appropriations from literary criticism bring her poetry into contact with the university, an institution and bastion of cultural capital that has proved deeply problematic for her and her writing. Howe has written about her literal exclusion from the Harvard libraries which promised such riches to a “‘library cormorant’” such as herself (Birth-mark 18). In The Birth-mark, the poet remembers her need for “out of the way volumes” from Widener Library at Harvard University. Howe’s father refused her request to accompany him, saying that “it would be trespassing if [she] went into the stacks.” This feeling of exclusion followed Howe through to her adult life until she took her first post at the University of Buffalo, and it returned, presumably, before and after various appointments and professorships at Stanford, Princeton, and Wesleyan that occupied her over the following years.

Rather than suggesting that Howe’s poetry provides a poetic corollary to Greenblatt’s new historicism, it is more helpful to situate Eikon Basilike in the Poundian and Olsonian tradition which it extends and develops. In the chapter on Halsey, Pound’s Malatesta Cantos were presented as the necessary development of “conflicting testimonies and mutually exclusive hypotheses” of the historicist (Davie 63). By the time that the Malatesta Cantos were published in 1924, Pound had found a way to gather materials towards the constitution of the poem so as to respond to historical scholarship. The poet’s purpose in drawing on primary sources such as Sigismundo’s letters, papal edicts, and lists of building materials was not to supplement academic study of the Italian condottiero. In gathering together these archival sources, and sometimes modernizing them for effect, Pound “undercuts their historicity” and asserts instead the endurance and relevance of these texts, and the
issues and concerns they raise, to a contemporary readership (Perloff *Indeterminacy* 183).

Howe’s poem, like Pound’s *Malatesta Cantos*, “insist[s] on our participation” as readers, but if Pound’s appropriative collage is, in part, a response to the perceived advancements in mass media, technology, and information exchange that characterized the period, Howe’s poem uses the same practices to opposite effects (Perloff 183). Howe’s appropriations in *Eikon Basilike* slow the reading process by encouraging the reader to labour over individual decisions of sound and meaning. Reading Pound’s appropriations in the *Malatesta Cantos* as reflecting contemporary developments in the dissemination of information does not undermine his belief in the interconnectedness of past and present. Rather, his appropriative practice serves as a contemporary response to the consequences of these transformations and processes of cultural transmission. Rainey elaborates on this relation between appropriative form and the ‘meaning’ of Pound’s poem in his response to Perloff’s analysis. Rainey rejects Perloff’s reading of the *Cantos*, and her “assumption” that “the relationship between inset (quoted item) and frame (quoting agency) is purely ‘textual’ in character” (*Ezra Pound* 71). In focusing on the “relationship between text and text” in the *Cantos*, Rainey says, Perloff fails to consider the “social dynamics of transmission that comprises numerous inscriptions.” Pound’s appropriation of texts in the *Malatesta Cantos* might “undercut” the constitutive texts’ “historicity,” Rainey says, but only to elaborate the “social dynamics of transmission.” These “social dynamics” provide an alternative to the restrictive empiricism of the discipline of history and of our understanding of the processes and practices by which knowledge is passed down.
Howe carries Pound’s commitment to the “social dynamics of transmission” through to *Eikon Basilike*, taking up the same critique of scholarly forms and academic authority that Pound outlines in his poetry (Rainey 71). Her quotations from Greenblatt compound this relation by showing the poet encroaching on an academic discourse which explicitly re-reads and thus redefines the past for a contemporary audience. This historical re-reading provokes comparisons with Howe’s poetic projects in *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time*, for example. Here, Howe incorporates the story of “Hope Atherton’s Wanderings” for the challenge it presents to historical and contemporary definitions of knowledge, civility, and intelligibility. Peter Nicholls outlines Howe’s incursions on scholarly form and empiricism in this poem when he says that “Atherton ... like [Emily] Dickinson and [Mary] Rowlandson ... falls out of the safe discursive space of a ‘prophetic’ and corporate’ identity—though his wanderings remain ‘untraceable’, not directly narratable” (594-95). *Eikon Basilike* too disrupts the discourses of history and its claims on knowledge and authority. In orienting *Eikon Basilike* to the “social dynamics of transmission” that characterize literature, culture, and society in 1989, Howe asserts her own belief in the continuities of past and present (Rainey 71). This poem does not attempt to return readers to the issues and debates of 1649, or indeed of 1896, and the poet acknowledges that she “can’t really bring back a particular time” in her poetry (“Incloser” 194). Howe is “not ... a chronicler” rewriting history for a contemporary audience as Perloff says, and to do so requires some certainty as to the separation between the past and the present (“Collision” 533). One of the purposes of *Eikon Basilike*, and of Howe’s other appropriative poems, is to broach the possibility that “then is now,” that the critical debates and bibliographies carried over from earlier times, and the faith in empirical knowledge that they reflect,
continue to elide a reality of contradictions, inconsistencies, and unknowability that is as tangible and definite now as it was in the 1650s. Howe’s invocation of Greenblatt might challenge the narratives and discourses of literary criticism and history that shape academic knowledge, but she also gleans something from these appropriations. By turning to the third of Greenblatt’s quotations in *Eikon Basilike*, it is possible to gain a clearer sense of how his statements on Renaissance self-fashioning illuminate Howe’s redefinition of authorship.

Greenblatt is emphatic about the insights available through the “fragmentary narrative enclaves” of More’s *Utopia* (23). In Howe’s poem, the phrase reflects the multitude of individual texts and narratives that constitute the poem, and especially those that contradict each other or are discovered to be citations of citations. If More’s *Utopia* conceals just below the surface of the text “subtle inconsistencies and contradictions,” then Howe moves her “inconsistencies and contradictions” to the surface, so that the reader must negotiate and understand the many disjunctions which emerge in and through Howe’s poem (Greenblatt 23). More’s disjunctions in “topography, economic exchange, the exercise of power, concepts of criminality, and the uses of violence” have particular relevance for Howe’s investigation of enclosure. The ruptures in *Eikon Basilike* are not “half-hidden” as in More’s text but are instead unavoidable, and yet their effect upon the reader who encounters them is the same. Like More’s text, Howe’s poem “constantly question[s] its own status and the status of the world it pretends to represent.” Howe exhibits the same “profound, playful attention” that Greenblatt attributes to More, though with a less buoyant, more literal playfulness in phrases such as “Thin king the Personator” and the alliterative “Archaic Arachne Ariadne” (76-7). The third quotation from Greenblatt
in *Eikon Basilike* elaborates on Howe’s interrogation of authorship in the poem and indicates her process of redefinition.

This third phrase from Greenblatt occurs several pages later in a longer passage which I will quote in full:

Who is not a wild Enthusiast

in a green meadow

furious and fell

Arriving on the stage of history

I saw madness of the world

Stripped of falsification

and corruption

anthems were singing

in Authorem

Father and the Father

by my words will I be justified

Autobiography I saw … (82)

The line from Greenblatt, “stripped of falsification and corruption,” is taken from a discussion of Thomas Wyatt’s practice of poetic “self-fashioning” (127). Before
demonstrating the relevance of these lines to Howe’s redefinition of authorship, I will suggest a few cues and contexts for the surrounding lines. The first line, “Who is not a wild Enthusiast,” is drawn from Patricia Caldwell’s 1985 text, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative*, which Howe praises in *The Birth-mark* and in her interview with Foster. The line is taken from a discussion of the incongruities within the conversion narrative of Mrs. Elizabeth White, purportedly a Puritan and a member with her husband, Thomas White, of one of the Massachusetts Bay colonies. Caldwell makes it clear that Mrs. White “is not a wild Enthusiast” like the Ranters, the Antinomians, and the Quakers who were gaining momentum at the time, but rather “uses her Bible with prudence and faithfulness” (17). Mrs. White’s moderate faith makes it difficult to understand how her conversion narrative contains dreams which are subject to “deep suspicion” in “Puritan psychological theory” (16). Mrs. White is one of several women who provide parallels to Howe’s own negotiation of authorship and identity through the text.

Proceeding through the rest of the excerpt, “furious and fell” appears in Canto IX of Spenser’s *The Faerie Queen* (118), and “In Authorem” is the title of a poem by Ben Jonson. Jonson’s poem anticipates the anamorphic quality of *Eikon Basilike* which is also suggested in Greenblatt’s discussion of the “subtle anamorphic art” of More’s *Utopia*. In her account of the poem, Lynn S. Meskill argues that Jonson learned from Samuel Daniel and John Harrington to perceive “the envious reader as capable of ‘deforming’ the text,” a perception evident in poems such as “In Authorem” where “the act of ‘looking’ is metaphorically compared to the viewing of an anamorphic perspective” (88). Meskill describes how Jonson “puts a twist on the

---

10 Caldwell moves immediately to demonstrate that Mrs. White “was not an American Puritan,” that “she lived and died far away from Boston, in the hamlet of Caldecot, in the parish of Newport Pagnell, in the county of Buckingham, England, and there is no indication that she ever set foot on the American strand” (3).
analogy with an anamorphosis” at the conclusion of his poem with the reader
discovering that “the deformation that defines the anamorphic image, lies not in the
text/painting,” as in Holbein’s “The Ambassadors,” “but rather in the eye of the
reader” (79). The lesson of Jonson’s “In Authorem” is to learn to “‘look well’” at the
poem (Jonson 256), “instead of taking it from an oblique angle” (Meskill 89). Howe
is more indebted to More’s productive, playful attention than to Jonson’s
prescriptive anamorphosis; however the rhetoric of “oblique angles” and “lateral view[s]” of “In Authorem” befits the poem. In Howe’s poem, the phrase “In
Authorem” emphasizes the question of authorship, but instead of accusing the reader
of “look[ing] asquint” at the poem, Howe writes a poem that is all “oblique angle[s],” so that looking at it directly will not always generate the most productive
or revealing reading (256).

_Eikon Basilike_ sparks a multitude of indirect relations, associations, and
connections which challenge conventional reading processes and critical attributions
of authorial voice. Howe exploits a “distorted projection” or perspective in her poem
which “tell[s] all the truth but tell[s] it slant” (Dickinson 431), in the words of one
of her favourites (“Anamorphosis”). Howe accumulates these distortions as a
powerful rejection of the prevalence of historical narratives oppressive in their
wholeness and factual correctness. These “distort[ions]” disrupt the unity and
authority of the following line, “Father and the Father,” which is excerpted from the
_Gospel of John_, verse 14.10, and shows Howe asserting her own authority as a writer
of distortions and “oblique angles” (Meskill 89). The verse reads, “Don’t you believe
that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own,
but my Father who lives in me does his work through me,” but in many ways, the
second line has more relevance to critical analyses of Howe’s poem than the one
quoted in *Eikon Basilike* (“John 14.10”). Howe’s appropriative practice works to replace the patrilineal line of textual inheritance from male author to male author represented by her bibliography of source texts. Instead, she proposes a matrilineal line of women’s texts disrupting, interjecting, and pushing through history and the literary canon. In this way, Howe maintains the second image from verse 14.10, of ‘speaking through’ another without wholly relinquishing her own authority. The following line, “by my words will I be justified,” is a deformation of a similar phrase from verse 12.37 of the *Gospel of Matthew*, “by your words shall you be justified,” which strengthens Howe’s assertion of a matrilineal line of expression that does not depend on the patrilineal lineage for authority or permission (“Matthew 12.37”). In effect, Howe rejects the opposition of author and reader in *Eikon Basilike* and uses her poem to align the two in the practice of appropriation as writing.

Howe’s proposed matrilineal tradition and her reconciliation of author and reader are consolidated in the lines she borrows from Greenblatt and his framing discussion of Renaissance self-fashioning. The words from Greenblatt, “stripped of falsification and corruption,” are drawn from a discussion of the “alternative and even competing modes of self-fashioning” which the critic says characterize Wyatt’s psalms and satires in an analysis which also references More (127). In this chapter, Greenblatt rejects traditional interpretations of Wyatt as either “inheriting an inert mass of clichés” which “by virtue of his intense individuality, [he] managed ... to infuse ... with warmth and life,” or the idea that “his poetry exemplifies ‘the clash between a desperate personal need and the impersonal and ceremonial forms which such needs assumed in the court of Henry VIII’” (120). In contrast, Greenblatt argues that “there is no privileged sphere of individuality in Wyatt, set off from linguistic convention, from social pressure, from the shaping force of religious and political
power.” Writing in this context, “Wyatt cannot fashion himself in opposition to power and the conventions power deploys.” Greenblatt’s account of Wyatt’s psalms recall Howe’s appropriative practice and can be productively applied to *Eikon Basilike*. Here, self-fashioning is a means of responding to the failure of “Absolutist identity” both in the author of *The King’s Book* and in Howe’s own writing (*Eikon* 76).

This concept of self-fashioning is helpful in the critical analysis of Howe’s interrogation of authorship through appropriation. Greenblatt compares Wyatt’s psalms with his satires, both of which “self-consciously give voice to a ‘true’ self, stripped of falsification and corruption,” but which exist in opposition to each other (127). The same oppositional forces are present in Howe’s poem. *Eikon Basilike* is the latest text in a long critical tradition of investigating “The Authorship Controversy,” but it is also written by a poet who is the direct descendant of the seventeenth-century Puritan migration to New England, and who consistently problematizes the conventional modes of expression as patriarchal and therefore repressive for women, without either surrendering her right to self-expression (*Eikon* 70). Howe embodies and engages each of these positions in *Eikon Basilike*, manifesting to the fullest extent the complexity and dialecticism that properly represents autobiography in Howe’s terms. These conflicting standpoints all contribute to *Eikon Basilike* and reflect the various women who appear in the poem and disappear as quickly. If Howe’s negotiation with authority in the poem reflects a matrilineal rather than a patrilineal inheritance of modes of assertion and articulation, it still remains to consider those women and their role in elaborating a new definition of authorship.
Feminist Refashioning of Authorship

Howe’s form in *Eikon Basilike* is attributable to the texts of women such as Sidney’s Pamela, Elizabeth White, Mrs. Gauden, King Charles I’s sister, Arachne, and Ariadne, who subsist textually and rupture the surface of their enclosing texts, including Howe’s poem. These women come to the fore in the final section of the poem which Bloomfield says effects “a final partial distancing from the specifics of the poem’s theme and a contemplation of broader historical questions” (420). This “final partial distancing” manifests itself most emphatically in the wild collage form of the text where Ariadne’s prowess as a weaver gains new relevance to the question of authorship.
Fig. 4. From Susan Howe’s *A Bibliography of the King’s Book, or, Eikon Basilike* (Howe *The Nonconformist’s Memorial* 87).

The collages of pages eighty-six and eighty-seven appear as an interjection after the previous twenty pages of narrow verses and block text. This change to collage form can be attributed to the forthright assertion of Ariadne in the role of the weaver and
the parallel with Howe’s concept of herself as poet gathering texts toward the
collection of the poem. We meet Ariadne after she has “led Theseus” through the
Minotaur’s maze by giving him a ball of thread to trace his path and find his way
out. Bloomfield is attentive to the “frayed and intertwined strands” of Ariadne’s
story, “many of them contradictory, and none of them authoritative,” which befits
Howe’s poem (Bloomfield 432). One version of the story sees Theseus promise to
elope with Ariadne after he escapes the maze, but he “let[s] [her] down” by
abandoning her on the island of Naxos (Eikon 87). References to thread and weaving
surround “Minos’ / daughter” in Howe’s poem with the phrases “from / Thread,”
“Trace / weft,” “CLOTHE” and “she wore ... / the sea,” establishing her presence,
and references to “fate,” “Island,” “Crown,” “deathless,” and “Stars,” evoking the
various accounts of her demise. The page is “Illimited” in a manner unlike many of
the surrounding pages, with no prescriptions of style or convention enclosing the
form, and no obligations of meaning circumscribing the language. This “Illimited”
style continues on the final page where the few semantically coherent phrases belie
the much broader, more emphatic dissociation of syntax and semantics.
Fig. 5. From Susan Howe’s *A Bibliography of the King’s Book, or, Eikon Basilike* (Howe *The Nonconformist’s Memorial* 90).

Here, the same references to “thread,” “weft,” and “trace,” with “ARACHNE” written upside down, appear alongside a vertical column reading “She / was / winding / wool” (90). Hank Lazer warns critics against selecting “pithy passages”
when critically analysing a poem, as though “the experience of the poem crystallized with some finality in such remarks” (65). Bearing this warning in mind, I will link Arachne and Ariadne in Howe’s poem to the critical representation of these women so as to learn more about their contribution to Howe’s redefinition of authorship in the poem.

Arachne is the central figure of Nancy K. Miller’s 1988 essay, “Arachnologies: The Woman, the Text, and the Critic,” where she is taken as “a trope of feminist literary agency” (77). In Miller’s essay, “arachnology” is defined as:

[A] critical positioning which reads against the weave of indifference to discover the embodiment in writing of a gendered subjectivity; to recover within representation the emblems of its construction. (80)

By making “indifference” her target in “Arachnologies,” Miller is writing against Barthes’s “recasting of the text as texture” in “The Death of the Author.” In acceding to texture, Barthes undercuts the autonomy and authority of the author as white, Western, and male, but his deference to the author also undercuts the female writer who is historically denied these privileges. Miller’s twin propositions in her essay— to challenge the “interpretative model” that defines inherited reading practices and to construct a “new object of women’s writing” – both befit Howe’s poem (83). *Eikon Basilike* challenges traditional reading practices by “Slowing the consumption of text, [and] resisting the emptying of language” so that “the packaging of intellect and imagination becomes the task of the poet, [and] then, in turn, of readers” (McCorkle n. pag.). Howe’s appropriative practice is central to her challenge to the inherited “interpretative model” of reading, while also shaping her development of
that “new object of women’s writing” (Miller 83). Miller learns from Annette Kolodny that “only the subject who is both self-possessed and possesses access to the library of the already read has the luxury of flirting with the escape from identity” (Miller 83), hence Howe’s statement of the “alluring … but problematic” nature of self-effacement for female authors (Guthrie n. pag.).

The densely collaged and fragmented nature of these final pages dominated by Arachne and Ariadne constitutes Howe’s “representation of writing itself” which, for Miller, “figure[s] the production of the female artist,” but not in the “classical sex/gender arrangements of Western culture” (83). Howe’s appropriative style rejects the male-dominated lineage of writing and literature in favour of a female mode of expression and articulation. This framing of Howe’s appropriative practice in Eikon Basilike as presenting an alternative to the traditional, patriarchally “coded representations of female signature” support contemporary re-readings of her poetry.

Danielle Spinosa interprets the visual disruptions and wild collage style of Howe’s poem as “a kind of joyful proclamation” (n. pag.). In her reading of Eikon Basilike, Spinosa “designat[es] the radical potentials of joyful movement, at once out of the static, the stasis of grid and structure, as well as a communication coming out of static, or noise.” This assertion of joy rather than violence in these final collaged pages correlates with Howe’s references to Mr. Dick from David Copperfield who celebrates the wilful dispersal of knowledge and facts. The reference to Mr. Dick, who is variously identified by his former name, Mr. Richard Babley, and by critics, with Dickens himself, elaborates the enduring problem of identity and authorship in

11 Spinosa is working on a doctoral thesis on poetry and post-anarchism which she is composing as “a digital, hypertextual project … made up of twelve sections” with “each hyperlinked chapter as a “plateau” (2 July 2013). Spinosa uses the word “plateau” in the “same way Deleuze and Guattari use it: “A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. A rhizome is made out of plateaus. … We call a ‘plateau’ any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome’ (A Thousand 21-22)” (2 July 2013).
the positioning of the excerpt, surrounded by pages of collage, and its development of the poem’s thematic intertwine the “string” of Mr. Dick’s kite with the threads of Ariadne and Arachne to “take the facts a long way,” which is Howe’s “manner of diffusing ‘em” *(Eikon 89).*

**Conclusion**

Howe divests herself of responsibility for “the facts” in *Eikon Basilike,* not as a reactionary gesture but rather because “the facts” are so difficult to discern in the case of *The King’s Book* (89). Scholarly efforts to articulate certainties use the authority of critical objectivity as a guise to hide the subjective nature of their arguments. Howe revels in the multiplication of voices and identities in *Eikon Basilike* because it allows her to communicate her distrust of the unity and wholeness of the dominant historical narratives and the literary canon. She redefines authorship from the fragments of these traditions, and fashions from the scraps and remainders a poem, and a model of authorship, which is wholly her own. By recognizing Howe’s appropriative practices as enabling rather than disabling a concept of authorship which does not replicate the traditional, unified definition, it is possible to extend our understanding and interpretation of appropriation in her poetry. Through this process of poetic redefinition, appropriation becomes a means of affirming the poet’s particular version of authorship. Howe’s poetry is a clear example of a very distinct and different practice of poetic appropriation, a practice which variously bolsters and interrogates the appropriations of Halsey and Joyce, while also adding weight to the idea that appropriation can mean different things for contemporary poets writing in different places at the same time.
Conclusion

In his review of *Plagiarism and Literary Property in the Romantic Period*, Andrew M. Stauffer reflects on the contradiction between the proliferation of appropriation during Romanticism, and the Romantic poets’ development of an “artistic model wherein individual subjectivity is paramount” (79). The critic explains how the book’s author, Tilar J. Mazzeo, affirms “Romantic creativity [as] passionately engaged with the materials of the past.” Mazzeo reconciles this celebration of historical texts with the Romantic principle of individual subjectivity through the following instruction for contemporary poets: “steal all you want, just be sure you really own it in the end.” Stauffer and Mazzeo are confident that the enduring history of appropriation in poetry continues through to the Romantics, for whom composition was “anything but a process of original creation *ex nihilo*.” This thesis traces the history of appropriation through to the present era, where the self-consciousness of modern and postmodern poetic examples have, counter-intuitively, limited contemporary definitions of the practice. Through close readings of the poetries of Joyce, Halsey, and Howe, I demonstrate how the range and scope of these poets’ practices exceed the current understandings of appropriation, and thus demand a redefinition of the term for contemporary criticism.

In proposing a critical redefinition of appropriation, it is necessary first to establish the contemporary understanding of the term. The thesis begins with an investigation of appropriation, its definition and meaning, and proceeds by outlining the history of appropriation from the early Latin poets up to the Renaissance and Romantic periods and through to the present era. This delineation of the diverse history of appropriation contravenes the contemporary predilection of conceptualist
The appropriative style of individual poems from Joyce’s 2003 and 2007 collections betray a poetic concern with the forms of expression that dominate Irish poetry. Poems such as “Trem Neul” and “De Iron Trote” constitute a poetic renegotiation of the lyricism that characterizes Irish writing. Joyce’s appropriations eschew confessionalism and transform the means of expression, which encourages Joyce’s alternative account of personal and collective histories. The declarative effects of Joyce’s practices of appropriation are echoed in Halsey’s poetry, though to different effects. In *The Text of Shelley’s Death*, Halsey appropriates a multitude of textual accounts of Shelley’s drowning at sea where their many conflicting details call into question the reliability of literary tradition. Halsey’s textual remodelling of tradition reveals the critical capacity of his practice of appropriation, where the accumulation of conflicting accounts of Shelley’s death serves to reject the authority and autonomy of the inherited Eliotic model of literary tradition. This tradition also occupies an important position in Howe’s *Eikon Basilike*, though here again the declarative nature of her poem reflects the particularities of her appropriative style. Howe’s appropriations support an alternative definition of authorship which exchanges the strictures of the patriarchal definition for a feminist alternative that celebrates multiplicity, diversity, and contradiction. These three poets’ practices of appropriation achieve declarative effects in a variety of ways, and thus exceed the parameters of contemporary definitions of appropriation.
The encroachments on lyricism, tradition, and authorship that Joyce, Halsey, and Howe effect through their appropriative practices indicate directions for the redefinition of appropriation. These encroachments reflect the declarative and critical capacities of appropriation which exceed the contemporary definition of the practice. The significance of Joyce’s, Halsey’s, and Howe’s innovative appropriative styles is that they reveal the inadequacy of the contemporary understandings of appropriation. By extending the traditional definition to accommodate these innovations, literary criticism can begin to reconcile formally complex practices of textual borrowing with inherited ideas of expression and meaning in poetry. This tripartite analysis of textual borrowing does not reject the conceptualist definitions of the practice as effacing the poet writing, but rather recognizes the need for alternative or indeed multiple definitions of the practice. The conflicting understandings of appropriation also challenge the subjugation of the practice as a symptom or feature of more prominent concepts of textual borrowing in poetry and criticism. This poetry provides aesthetic and critical direction for the redefinition of appropriation in art which encourages a broader, more comprehensive understanding not just of individual poems but of our concept of appropriation as a practice and pattern of cultural exchange.
Appendix I: “De Iron Trote” (Section 1)

As man, in deep and level sleep, periodically draws a long inspiration, song is learned and figured in the brain. Think of the way a musical box, wound up, potentially represents a slow or lively air.

Clothes, however thick, diminish little the sonorities of breath. Touch the stop and the air sounds out; send an impulse along the proper afferent nerve and voice starts on song. Succussion, too may raise a splashing sound much like the respiration, voice, and tinkling. Odd.

Garments of silk, or thin dry wool, also give rise to a noise calculated to cause error, sometimes mitigating the production and carefully controlled cropping of live creatures for high ends. Else, from every corner of the woods and glens see them come creeping on their hands for their legs cannot make fast, as in humans the larynx migrates down the neck since the age of eighteen months, from which arises the sound of voices. In time these come to speak of a political meeting, of market shares. Someone tells of a woman who murdered her lover. “A chauffeur kills his wife,” says another. All teetotallers like sugar. No nightingale drinks wine. Go figure.

Clothes, even when their thickness is considerable, do not appreciably diminish the intensity of the sound produced by respiration.”

Clendening: “when a man, in deep and peaceful sleep, periodically draws long inspiration” (324)

A song which has been learned has its molecular representative, which potentially represents it in the brain, just as the musical box wound up potentially represents overtures” (59)

Send a molecular impulse along the proper afferent nerve and the singer begins his song” (59)

Garments are of silk, or thin dry wool, gives rise to a noise calculated to cause error” (325)

the production and carefully controlled cropping of live creatures for high ends.” (323)

out of euerie Corner of the woodes & glennes they came crepinge forth vpon thereire legges could not beare them” (135)

of a political meeting, of market shares. Someone tells of a woman who murdered her lover. “A chauffeur kills his wife” (25)

for the respiration of the fattest children is more forcibly heard even through thick clothing than is that of the thinnest adult examined without any clothing.” (327)
The respiration of the plumpest child is louder clothed than of the thinnest adult frame stripped down. The throat is delicate and worthy to be protected. Says who? Whose voice? What proof is there these brutes are other than a superior race of marionettes, which eat without pleasure, cry without pain, desire nothing, know nothing, merely simulating true intelligence, for all it has been said that when emotions stir within, they take form in words?

"Wen Xuan": "When emotions stir within, they take form in words" (77)

French [John Dee]: "There is also the agopithecus, the ape-like goat whose voice is very like a man’s but not articulate, sounding as if one did speak hastily or with indignation or sorrow" (31)

To be included here is the agopithecus, an ape-like goat Whose voice is very like a man’s but not articulate sounding as if one did speak hastily with indignation or sorrow, as here, where one such encounters in the woods a boy: ‘What’s that you have?’ The boy holds it out. It is a toy, a bear. A teddy bear. The boy’s eyes are large but without expression. “I don’t want it, keep it.” The boy hugs the bear again. A house takes fire. Later comes the writing of authorizations and designs on shop window tickets, and of inscriptions too private to allow printing.

In women who are both grown up and fat, the respiration is often audible with great force, even through the breasts. When your raptors are at fault, prevent all speech: let such as follow them ignorantly and unworthily, stirrup all aloof for whilst such are chattering, none with hunt. A-propos, Sir, a politician will say: “What news from America?” A-propos, “Do you think both the admirals will be tried?” Or, a-propos, “Did you hear what has happened to my grandmother” (150)

Beckford: “When your hounds are at fault let not a word be said: let such as follow them ignorantly and unworthily stand all aloof, - Procul, O procule est profane! For whilst such as chattering, not a hound will hunt. A-propos, Sir, a politician will say: “What news from America?” A-propos, “Do you think both the admirals will be tried?” Or, a-propos, “Did you hear what has happened to my grandmother” (150)

Dick: “What’s that you have?” Hendricks said sharply. The boy held it out. It was a toy, a bear. A teddy bear. The boy’s eyes were large, but without expression. “I don’t want it. Keep it.” The boy hugged the bear again” (n. pag.)

Clendening: “In women who are both grown up and fat, the respiration is often audible with great force, even through the breasts.” (327)

Spenser: “they looked Anatomies of death, they spake like ghostes cryinge out of theire graues, they did eate of the dead Carrions, happye were they could fynde them, yea and one another soone after in so much as the verie Carcases they spared not to scrape out of theire graues, and yt they founde a plot of water cresses or shamrocks, there they flocked as to a feast” (135).
Such rustling sensations are nothing else than a purring-thrill, and when this co-exists with the sound of the bellows, rasp or file we may be assured others will soon resemble anatomies of death, like ghosts crying out of their graves, and will eat the dead carriions, happy where they find them, and the very carcasses they spare not to scrape back out of their deeper sleep.

Ticket writers may proceed to designs for posters when they can name their own figures. The illusion of experience, as a rule, begins by filling in provided letters with paint, and letter gets on to the proper writing and lettering. Attendance at technical classes would be useful in order to bring up a good style of writing with some originality.

A dull but strong sound like that produced by a file on wood has something harsh in its sound. So, other boys start as heaters, then exercise as rivet-carriers, holders up, anvil-hands, and lastly platers. Hear the whizzing sound of the left auricle.

Caution: Boys are often required to stand inside the chamber, as supporters, while the men pierce, and then hammer it outside, and deafness is apt to result. I found one who had abandoned his laborious occupation, and gained an easy place as servant to a priest.

Work with letters may be done sitting without difficulty and is quite suitable for cripples. The trade is not a large one.

Clendening: “a peculiar rustling sensation … is nothing other than the purring thrill already described … when the sound of the bellows, rasp or file, persists in the left auricle…” (328)

Laennec: “A dull but strong sound like that produced by a file on wood has something harsh in its sound.” (696)

Clendening: “the whizzing sound of the left auricle.” (330)

“Trades for London Boys”: “learn their trade as an angle-iron smith, plater, riveter, or caulker, and be out of their time at 21” (10)

Clendening: “I found that he had abandoned his laborious occupation of gardener, and had an easy place as the servant of a priest.” (330)
Works Cited


French, Peter J. *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus*. New York:


Schafer, Edward H. “Hunting Parks and Animal Enclosures in Ancient China.”


Works Cited


[Forthcoming]


  <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/conceptual_paragraphs.html>


---. “Re: IMOCA—I just found these, text lost.” Message to Niamh O’Mahony. 17 Feb. 2013. Email.


---. Take Over. Willowdale, On: The Gig, 2003. Print,


---. “Collision or Collusion with History: The Narrative Lyric of Susan Howe.”


<http://www.case.edu/affil/sce/authorship/Rogers_v_Koons.pdf>


  <http://genericpronoun.com/2014/03/25/ex-static-indeed/>


  <http://www.eratiopostmodernpoetry.com/editor_Alan_Halsey.html>


Sutherland, Keston. “Statement for ‘Revolution and/or Poetry.’”


