

‘come out of *Reading without Tears*’

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This paper is about the moment of reading and the situation of being
a reader, and it starts with two supposings: what
if William Empson’s *Seven Types of Ambiguity* were to have been the first work of
literary criticism you read (a point at which you would have known possibly
as little about it as is possible while still being able to do something you

could call *reading it*); and what if you much later found yourself commissioned to edit it for Oxford University Press (a process one of whose side-effects, if not aims, is that you should know as much about it as possible, even to the point when you could no longer do something you could call *reading it*)?

At present, your reading would be somewhere between those states, one only remembered and the other only imagined; but what if Empson got there before you, and that the way in which *Seven Types of Ambiguity* conceived of reading, always, had been as a possibly impossible and impossibly possible combination of those states, in the same person, at the same time: it would be a book that tried to be that reading and imagine that reader: someone who knows only just enough and also someone who knows perhaps too much. And what this then might **mean** is that we've been getting this book all wrong. What if it were less a work of literary criticism than a reader, a reading, about reading being always and necessarily making it up as you go along, and the along making up the way it goes and will go and did go: a song of innocence and experience, about what you think *becoming experienced* might be but also about what you think that it **might have been**, in the words of this conference *a constructivist text*

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or in other words a coming of age story about reading people as much as reading literature; also a searching for lost time and finding it (and **A** lost time, and somewhere along the way a lost Proust, and a missing Hart Crane too)? BUT because the history you're supposing makes it *your* coming of age story (one of the things it would have done was teach you to read – to read); and here you are, reading **this** back onto **that**, your first reading: well, *you would say that, wouldn't you?*

So: this reading is all at conditionals and subjunctives.

And this reading too. This reading, which also includes all the words printed like this (1.3-spaced, further to the right, justified, in Garamond, and conventionally formatted; also the illustrations and text scanned and pasted in and aligned with the same margin) would happen afterwards. This reading would have happened if you were asked to revise the paper which you delivered around midday on 30th June 2013 at a colloquium called *A la recherche* into an article to be delivered by 1st September 2014 and published in the online journal *Thinking Verse*; to take the text from which you read for twenty minutes or so—a text you arranged for you, one particular reader-aloud, to speak, once, to listeners, most of whom you know, in one room of the University of East Anglia, in summer—and to make a version of it as a text 6,000-7,000 words long to be read on-screen and perhaps as a print-out by persons unknown and in any possible place and time from now on.

Revising a colloquium- or conference- paper into an article for a book or special issue of a journal is an exercise which usually involves some or all of the following: the incorporation of ideas raised in discussion during the conference or which have since occurred to the author; the addition of material initially excluded and/or the restoration of material cut for reasons of length when preparing the original paper; the removal of references to things supposedly irrelevant to readers of the journal or book (not only conference in-jokes but also mentions of the original date, time, audience, location, room, weather...); the provision of references such as footnotes directing readers of the journal or book to publicly accessible resources (page numbers in standard texts, website addresses); the removal of any idiosyncratic formatting or diacritics relating to vocal delivery or ease of reading aloud (double-spacing, easily legible typeface, large point size, bolds, italics, gaps and punctuation-marks indicating pauses and phrasings); the assumption instead of that journal's or publisher's house style of formatting. Making an article out of a paper means cutting not only potentially puzzling features which could be explained only by saying *You had to be there*, but any sign of having been there at all; which is to say removing indications of time (*having been*) as well as place (*there*). References to things that happened *this afternoon* disappear, references to texts available at any time are elaborated, and the twenty minutes of

talk which happened *that afternoon* absorbs everything that might have followed it and reaches its finished state as a certain number of typed words intended for continuous broadcast in the academic present tense. To write it you would use a sort of double-think which allows you to avoid recording contingent details whilst still preserving contingency in the guise of conference-scented mood-music: for instance, you may admit that ‘this is a version of’ an earlier, shorter, paper, but what you actually said will be indistinguishable from what you were going to include but then had to cut at the last minute to keep to time; your acknowledgments might thank X and Y for their insightful comments but the main text will read as if it, as if you, always already knew everything.

But what if you were to begin this very usual process of revision—this re-seeing, re-viewing, re-reading—with two more supposings: what if you were to be revising a paper invited ‘in a spirit of intellectual autobiography’, and which is about experience, reading, and the experience of reading; about alternative truths and alternative lives? And what if the author of the book upon which your paper concentrates were to have emphasized, upon his revising it for its second edition, that ‘It seemed the best plan to [...] make clear that all the footnotes in this edition are second thoughts written recently. [...] I did not want to cut too much’?⁴ Under these circumstances wouldn’t you have to mark the passage of fourteen further months of intellectual autobiography as the gap across which that revision was taking place? And further, wouldn’t you have also to acknowledge, as Empson’s typographically separate footnotes acknowledged, the separate voices and integrities of those chronologically-distinct texts, instead of melting down what you read aloud *that afternoon* and re-casting it into a piece of writing which smooths over the signs of its spoken, site-specific history; a seamless whole: without *tears*?

(But: as this history you want to mark still began with that coming of age story and here you would be, again, reading this out of your that earlier reading, still taking after that very first reading: well, well, you would say that, wouldn’t you? Again.

So: this reading is all the more at conditionals and subjunctives.)

You would have learned to read when you were a child and then when you were still a child – legally – in 1993, in the library of Thorpe St Andrew School, Laundry Lane, Norwich, you could – instead of going to whatever else your timetable suggested – have stood in front of a shelf in the library and read most of a book called *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. You wouldn't have known what literary criticism was. You would have read:

'The brown cat sat on the red mat'

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and then you would have read:

I should only isolate two of its 'meanings,' to form an ambiguity worth notice; it has contradictory associations, which might cause some conflict in the child who heard it, in that it might come out of a fairy story and might come out of *Reading without Tears*.

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You would need to come back to this child, often. To take readings.

This reading which is all at conditionals and subjunctives is in two – though not equal – parts. The first part could be thought of as about **reading conditionally** – that is, with a focus on causes and consequences, what would and could and should and might happen *if*; *if* this *then* this; and it sees ambiguity and its perception as serial, involving time and its passing. The second part could be – *let the second part be* – thought of as about **reading subjunctively**: ambiguity as creating fully imagined worlds which yet *aren't* (*which aren't yet*); which are *supposed, proposed* but held in suspension and protected with no *if* or *then* or *so* to hold them

to; so it's about things held in parallel, and therefore about evading time and its passing.

Ambiguity read in the way I'm describing as conditional, then, would look like this:

contradiction is at once understood in literature, because the process of understanding one's friends must always be riddled with such indecisions and the machinery of such hypocrisy; people, often, cannot have done both of two things, but they must have been in some way prepared to have done either; whichever they did, they will have still lingering in their minds the way they would have preserved their self-respect if they had acted differently; they are only to be understood by bearing both possibilities in mind.

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And read subjunctively, like this:

while you are puzzling the words have possible alternative meanings, and even to those who see the answers at once the alternatives are in a way present as being denied.

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And what happens in these passages suggests a relation between the two ways of reading: the conditional ambiguity involved in thinking about 'the way they would have preserved their self-respect if they had acted differently' develops through multiplication into the subjunctive of 'they are only to be understood by bearing both possibilities in mind'; the subjunctively parallel world of 'the alternatives are [...] present as being denied' is constructed from a number of conditional 'possible alternative meanings', thought through one by one, in series. What I'm calling a subjunctive sort of reading, then, is a taking into account an overseeing of a re-experiencing of a becoming-more-experienced-in the conditional. And if you were to see that child and its perplexed reading standing between these parts, you could see those two parts as *Reading Without Tears* and a fairy story.

So: now suppose you go back to being that child suppose you
look at these two kinds of reading and how they relate to each other – and
how they relate to a reader's possible experiences of ambiguity – through what
you might call a re-experiencing of ambiguity both in the sense of your own
re-reading *Seven Types*, now, but also in the sense of your now reading **into** it,

adding to the book's own sum of experience, by returning to and reading
an 'alternative [which was] present as being denied' in the book: in his
Preface to the Second Edition, Empson admits that 17 years earlier, in the first
edition,

the topical interest of Freud distracted me from giving adequate
representation [...] to the poetry of straightforward mental conflict [...]. I had
not read Hart Crane when I published the book, and I had had the chance
to.

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Strangely, after this self-reproof, Empson doesn't discuss Crane in the
second or third editions either; but the possibility, the past 'chance
to', preys on him, causes him some 'mental conflict', you might say,
and leaves 'lingering in his mind' as it lingers in his Preface and
could leave lingering in your mind thoughts of the way things could have
been had Freud not displaced Crane.

**and this could then lead you to begin again with part 1: a child
reading; in the conditional:**

For now what if you look at just the final stanza of Crane's poem 'My
Grandmother's Love Letters'?

My Grandmother's Love Letters

There are no stars tonight

But those of memory.
Yet how much room for memory there is
In the loose girdle of soft rain.

There is even room enough
For the letters of my mother's mother,
Elizabeth,
That have been pressed so long
Into a corner of the roof
That they are brown and soft,
And liable to melt as snow.

Over the greatness of such space
Steps must be gentle.
It is all hung by an invisible white hair.
It trembles as birch limbs webbing the air.

And I ask myself:

"Are your fingers long enough to play
Old keys that are but echoes:
Is the silence strong enough
To carry back the music to its source
And back to you again
As though to her?"

Yet I would lead my grandmother by the hand
Through much of what she would not understand;
And so I stumble. And the rain continues on the roof
With such a sound of gently pitying laughter.

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The ambiguity you find is in those two conditionals (*would*) and their possible consequence (*so*) and what they make of Crane's answer to his doubt as to whether or not he **can read** his grandmother's love-letters: 'Yet I *would* lead my grandmother by the hand/Through much of what she *would* not understand'. 'Would' in both cases could mean 'used to', 'want to', and 'will attempt to, *if*'; 'so' can mean 'therefore' or 'in this way': the possibilities these words offer balance the couplet between *now* and *then*, and balance Crane between his childhood and his present self, and his likeness to and difference from his grandmother. Past intimacy with her (when 'would' means 'used to') could be evidence for his ability to catch the tune of her letters now – 'I used to explain things to her in the past when she didn't understand' – then the doubleness of 'so' in 'And so I stumble' adds to this the

further sympathetic senses *'in the same way as she struggled to understand then, I do now'*, and also *'I'm used to helping her out, the old dear, so the revelation of her young, complicated life before even my mother was born leaves me dumbstruck.'* The possibility of the present tense complicates things further: in this, Crane wants, now, to help his grandmother understand something that she either can't get without help, or is refusing to; now he stumbles with not only his own difficulty – and his being-difficult – but also hers; the eversoslightly but unbelievable incestuous frisson of the past which runs through this poem in his experience of her past passion (*'melt'*, *'brown and soft'*, *'trembles'*, *'limbs'*) is both echoed and opposed by the spectre of his dragging her – and unwillingly perhaps in that *would not* – as if she *would rather not*) on a cruise through his gay subcultures of New York and Cleveland, Ohio.

And there's also perhaps a pushiness in that *'would lead'*; a teaching your grandmother to suck eggs; because it could be just in your mind, read out of your own experience into hers, that the *'old keys'* of her lovesongs might just *seem* to echo the tune of your own typewritten lyrics and letters; a mirror image (another echo, *'back to you again'*) of the idea that you might have got it might have got yourself from her somehow anyway.

That would be like leading her *'hand'* over the keys, as any music teacher might when little fingers stumble, but knowing all the while that she your pupil had taught you how in the first place. What's going on in this attic, as also what was happening in the library of Thorpe St Andrew School that time, is sight-reading. The point at which Crane's hand on the keys and the situation of discovering a bundle of old correspondence converge, this is the ability *'to read (a piece of music) at sight'*;¹¹ as the *OED*'s definition suggests, the term refers primarily to what happens when a musician encounters sheet music for the first time. This is because for musicians such a first encounter is worth marking: most readers of sheet music are not sight-reading, but re-reading a piece they have previously

seen, annotated and practised. Readers of words, though, are so often sight-readers ('Can you read?' means 'Can you sight-read?') that it only makes sense to liken initial textual encounters to musical sight-reading under certain circumstances, when some extra difficulty attends the first sight of these words: for example, when they are faint, garbled, handwritten, or otherwise hard to make out, or when a child is first learning to recognize them, or when they are being voiced aloud in performance. These are consequently times when the reader will be particularly conscious of at that moment reading, of being a reader, of the possibilities of reading, and of the various risks and sorts of reading badly: misrecognising letters or words, misjudging intonations and phrasings, halting, stumbling.

As also of misunderstanding references and contexts and misinterpreting senses, for *reading* is both 'the ability to read; the skills required to read, esp. when taught as a school subject' and 'the interpretation or meaning attached to anything'.¹² Crane, reading his grandmother's love letters, is forming these new attachments with a person he didn't fully know, his young grandmother who through them was forming attachments with people Crane might never have known, his unknown strange grandfather yes, but more unknown still her early other suitors, those hidden men. Looking through and at these letters for the first time, he works out what they mean and what they might mean to him, reading her 'by her hand', deciphering handwriting from another era on crumbling notepaper now prised from a corner of the roof; 'by her hand' as by lamplight as he tries to make her out from those formed letters and words, her character from her characters, her world and thoughts and loves and preoccupations and person. 'My Grandmother's Love Letters' reads and leads Crane's grandmother and her words through his life and thoughts and astray from her and hers, to and in places and experiences (New York and Cleveland, Ohio) that *she would not understand*; and so he stumbles; because the answer to the question of whether the silence around your sight-reading can 'carry back the music to its source/And back to you again/As though to her', is No. My world is not her world, is noisy with its own music and its interference disrupts the communication these her written notes have with the world of their origin. I can't read it from them or her

from them. My fingers won't stretch to the unfamiliar intervals of the 'old keys' she knew, and, a sight-reader, I can't read them, play them, perform them in this poem as she, a familiar re-reader, would: would say, ah, yes, I remember that— But then: 'Yet I *would lead* my grandmother by the hand....' It's coming back to me, now. She wrote letters and here I read then write her. Try to think: what would she have said of this? Of that? Of me? Those hidden men. When you sight-read a text, it can feel as if it also sight-reads you; ask it leading questions, use it like the I Ching in leading your life.

You would have got it—as you partly got yourself—from her somehow, anyway; so that this would be a kind of return (back to you again). The writer Brian Dillon, reading a scrap of his dead mother's handwriting, remembers that as a child he 'practised for hours to achieve a script as economical and careful as hers', so that 'even now, after decades of carelessness, I can occasionally catch sight, with a glow of private pleasure, of the brief apparition of her handwriting in my own.'¹³ As he reads this note, though, he finds that something has disappeared: the shapes of the letters tell him that although 'the writing is still recognisably hers [...] something is wrong; her style has contracted [...] it dates from that period when her hands had become so twisted and agonised that she held a pen with great difficulty.'¹⁴ The characters written on the scrap of paper are so 'utterly uncharacteristic of my mother's serenely flowing hand' that

I am almost tempted to fill the empty vertical of her first attempt with a straight 'I', my hand retracing the line she wanted to make. I would like, in fact, to rewrite the whole of this tiny fragment, giving its letters the shapes she must have tried to trace.¹⁵

Having learned her writing he can and itches to rewrite her. The action he imagines collapses memory onto the present, making a doubly-exposed afterimage of a handwriting exercise: an adult's pen traces shapes which a child then follows, and a shaky hand is led by a steadier one to achieve its—their—intention. You want to write as perfectly as your mother; you want your mother to write as perfectly as you. As you. One thing leads to another: *if this then this*.

All through this paper is a child learning (I said it would come back): and this is also always a child experienced through your experience of having learned.

In your first reading of *Seven Types* still not knowing what it was you were reading you would have read that

there is a sort of meaning, the sort that people are thinking of when they say 'this poet will mean more to you when you have had more experience of life,' They mean by this not so much that you will have more information (which could be given at once) as that the information will have been digested; that you will be more experienced in the apprehension of verbal subtleties or of the poet's social tone; that you will have become the sort of person that can feel at home in, or imagine, or extract experience from, what is described by the poetry;

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and that

The process of becoming accustomed to a new author is very much that of learning what to exclude

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and that

sentences in poetry must start from scratch and put the reader in possession of the entire attitude they assume,

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and that

the process of getting to understand a poet is precisely that of constructing his poems in one's own mind.

19

and that

In poetry much stress is laid on alternatives; 'getting to know' a poet is largely the business of learning to control them.

20

and that

the reading of a new poet, or of any poetry at all, fills many readers with a sense of mere embarrassment and discomfort

; it is only at intervals that the strangeness of the process can be observed.

21

But that

poetry, being an essentially suggestive act can only take effect if the impulses (and to some extent the experiences) are already there to be called forth

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and that

whenever a receiver of poetry is seriously moved by an apparently simple line, what are moving in him are the traces of a great part of his past experience and of the structure of his past judgments.

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And there would also have been in this book you were reading poems and bits of poems and discussions of poems, poems that you would never have read before:

Brightness falls from the air.
Queens have died young and fair.

Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang,

It's this hour we're between the daytime and a night
where there is sleep for ever,

the sheep, alas,
The shepherds wither, and the grass.

Bvt wherefore do not you a mightier waie
Make warre vppon this bloudie tirant time?

Swiftly the years, beyond recall.
Solemn the stillness of this spring morning.

But, since, alas, frail beauty must decay,
Curled, or uncurled, since locks will turn to grey.

A heap of dust is all remains of thee;

And even the stable-boy will find
This life no stable thing.

Ah, as the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by,

See how the world its veterans rewards.
A youth of frolics, an old age of cards.
For I have learnt
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth;

In her youth
There is a prone and speechlesse dialect
Such as move men.

She dwells with Beauty, Beauty that must die,

And elde daunteth daunger at the last.

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and you wouldn't have noticed then, how many of these his
examples in this book are – like all his remarks preoccupied with the
business of *getting to know* poems – about getting experience and getting older;
about the difficulty and the inevitability of gaining experience; about
the gap in experience and the gap in understanding between being old and being
young and about what you do with experience when you have it.

If you noticed this, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* would start to look a lot like a
book about learning to read, whose first textual reference is to the most popular
Victorian reading primer of the preceding century (and which **as** it was being
written, **would** have been about William Empson's learning to
read for the English tripos at Cambridge (F.R. Leavis pointed out that most of
Empson's examples came from his set texts for Tripos)). And at that point
you could think again about how Empson learned to read English, and
when: that would bring you to I.A. Richards, whose Practical Criticism lectures,
delivered while Empson was an undergraduate, put unknown poems in front

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of unknowing student readers, whose responses were combined written into and up as the book also titled *Practical Criticism* a text of composite reading experiences, themselves informing Richards's more experienced readings of them, read out of their experience into his (where they might have got it anyway) a text which like all instructional texts thinks in the conditional: if *this* then *this*:

'Surely there is reason', wrote Richards, 'to expect that investigation into the technique of reading may have [...] happier results'. *Practical*

Criticism is also *Reading Without Tears*.

And Favell Lee Mortimer's *Reading Without Tears, or, A Pleasant Mode of Learning to Read, By the Author of "Peep of Day", etc., etc.* is also practical criticism; it takes the educational conditional to its logical conclusion. Mortimer's first book, *Peep of Day; A series of the earliest religious instruction the infant mind is capable of receiving*, had already shown its author sounding out the potential of this mode:

How easy it would be to hurt your poor little body!

If it were to fall into the fire, it would be burned up. If a great knife were run through your body, the blood would come out. If a great box were to fall on your head, your head would be crushed. If you were to fall out of the window, your neck would be broken. If you were not to eat some food for a few days, your little body would be very sick, your breath would stop, and you would grow cold, and you would soon be dead.²⁹

Mortimer's writing presents its mental assault on young minds as necessary in order to avert future accidents to frail young bodies, deriving its nasty force from an invocation of both the physical and mental aspects of what G. Stanley Hall would later identify as childhood and adolescent 'plasticity'.³⁰ Children are impressionable. The infant body ('Your flesh is soft and warm')³¹ appears in *Peep of Day* as infinitely subject, inflected by accident and injury towards this or that or this future, which all are held in suspension whilst having already taken place here in the writing. Between them stands the reading child in its own present, a set of railway points operable only by its own willpower or lack of it, which is all that can keep these terrible examples from ploughing through into the future,

destroying the while their conduit. And while good children do feature (not taking plum-cake, not staying too late, putting their siblings and their Mammias before themselves) they and their rewards (jam, a toy, heaven) pale into insignificance beside the blood-curdling fates of the selfish, the greedy, the disobedient, the neglectful. All cautionary tales operate on this principle: they impress upon you the experiences you must not go on to have, the *ifs* you must not switch to avoid those *thens*.

In this, they are both apotropaic and vicarious, as the child's reading partly wards off the bad experiences and partly stands in for them, making the reader expert beyond experience. In the passage above, *Peep of Day* is already developing analogies between read and lived experience: the violent causalities of sudden conflagration, stabbing, crushing and defenestration are related in hinged sentences which snap shut like traps; it might be only after the final sentence slowly and falteringly breathes its starving last through weakening syntax that you look back and see that those simple conditionals were not only grammatical illustrations but mimetically illustrative: practical criticism. *Reading Without Tears* takes this further, as the primer's construction of words out of letters offers a model for constructing outcomes out of incidents. On facing pages you find:

	boy	spoil	de-stroy
	joy	join	en-joy
	oil	joint	em-joy
	boil	point	oys-ter
Toys	broil	noise	an-oint
oy oi oys	coil	a-void	oint-ment

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and

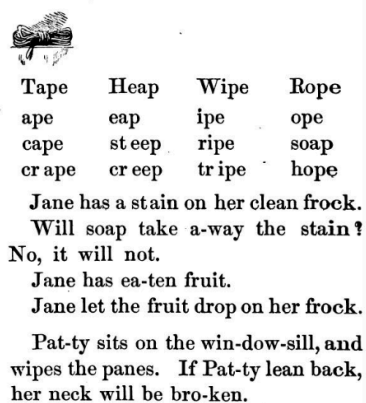
What is the mat-ter with that lit-tle boy?
 He has taken poi-son. He saw a cup of
 poi-son on the shelf. He said, "This seems
 sweet stuff." So he drank it.
 Can the doc-tor cure him? No. Will the
 poi-son de-stroy him? Yes, he must die.

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Learning your lessons is made analogous to learning *a* lesson: as the *oi* of 'poison' and the *oy* of 'destroys' 'must' sound the same, so poison 'must' lead to destruction. The primer's arrangement into sections, each beginning with lists of letter-fragments and then words which are followed in turn by sentences then

stories featuring those words, each section building on previous sections, presents the acquisition of experience as linear, causal, simple: after having mastered this rule, you will be able to read these words and this text, and move on to the next lesson. But some more subtle reflections on experience seem also to be at work here. Notes scattered through the book indicate that this linear approach is not the method intended by *Reading Without Tears*, instead instructing the teacher to *'Let the Child read some "NEW" every day, and also some "OLD", until he overtakes the "new"'. Then let him go back again to an early part of the book.*'³⁴ Returning to the word-list after the story about poisoning, you notice that something has happened to your attention: it seizes on not only the words 'boy', 'poison' and 'destroy', which featured in the story, but many other words, which shift and take on new meanings in its shadow. 'Joy' and 'enjoy' describe the anticipation of 'sweet stuff', and 'point' perhaps the action of glimpsing and choosing the fatal cup; 'broil' and 'boil' insinuate themselves as the child's sensations of pain, and 'coil' and 'noise' (all these *ois* and *oys* even, as if of Hellenic or Jewish consternation) are his visible and audible agonies ('What is the mat-ter with that lit-tle boy?'). 'Spoil' is the inevitable effect, 'avoid' is useless too-late advice; 'ointment' and 'employ' belong to the sickbed, 'oil' and 'anoint' to the deathbed.

Or take for instance page 244:



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'Soap' and 'wipe' prepare you to read the stories; once look back, and 'hope' is that Jane's dress might wash clean and Patty not fall, 'ripe' is for dropped fruit, 'steep' the wall down from the window, and 'crape' horribly pre-empts mourning.

Then, your readings of the two stories begin to turn them into plot and sub-plot, impinging on one another, the fruit which did fall presaging a fall from the window, and the dashed hopes that the stain will come out auguring badly for Patty. And then you see that the first story's analepsis has itself already demonstrated the effects of reading back in this way. Its last two sentences ('Jane has ea-ten fruit./Jane let the fruit drop on her frock.') are the simplest on the page, and also the actions with which that story begins. But the knowledge in this story (like the knowledge needed to read all of its words, not just the "NEW" ones) begins much further back, showing you in a flash-forward to being grown-up what hindsight feels like; for once you know that this kind of stain doesn't yield to soap, Jane who 'let the fruit drop' appears as altogether more careless and culpable. She should have known better (isn't that what grown-ups always say?); and, as this narrative order also implies, all those who know already that fruit stains ineradicably will be able to read from the evidence of her frock the story of just what Jane has been doing; her fall, caught out; a flashback to original sin.

'Then let him go back again to an early part of the book'. Learning to read like this you see other possible contexts spreading out, back, around from "The brown cat sat on the red mat", contexts in which the explanations that 'To [...] analyse the notion of "sat" might involve a course of anatomy; the notion of "on" a theory of gravitation' point to natural laws and their sticky webs of cause and consequence.³⁶ ("The brown cat sat on the red mat." Yes, but who or what else (*rat hat bat*) is sit-ting near-by and on what, to be read af-ter what and be-fore what and as un-der what that would fall *down* if *thrown*, on what *bed* in what *but* which if struck by light-ning would fall *flat* and if so the peop-le *fled* or *sped* or *spread* or *dead*?)

Read. 'It has contradictory associations, which might cause some conflict in the child who heard it, in that it might come out of a fairy story and might come out of *Reading without Tears*'. The contradictory conditionals of Mrs Mortimer's primer, and the stories in which they are contained, teach reading as not only putting letters together ('the ability to read; the skills required to read, esp. when taught as a school subject') but putting the world together ('the interpretation or meaning attached to anything, the view taken of it'); teach that, as Mary Midgley

puts it, ‘Human languages cannot merely be the means of reporting that cats are on mats [...]. They exist for, among other things, making *ourselves* understood’.³⁷ ‘The child who *heard* the sentence about the cat may not be looking at words but is still learning to read: to interpret not just a report, but a person – the reader-aloud, not merely reporting but making *herself* understood – and also the conditions of an experience and a relation, which is that of being read to. When much later he came to write about Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s rereading and consequent rewriting of his own poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Empson’s thoughts turned to another read-to child, who this time must

consider the third son in the fairy story, as he gives his last crust to the withered crone, while seeking his fortune; she is the Queen of the Fairies in disguise, and thus his fortune is secured [...] the intention is to leave the child feeling that kind actions are quite likely to turn out worth while [...]. (And the grown-up has a better *aesthetic* appreciation of the story if he grasps this Intention, not only in its long-forgotten author but also in its innumerable reciters.)³⁸

Who include William Empson who gave it contradictory associations, which might cause some conflict in the adult who read it after reading *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, in that it might come out of a fairy story and might come out of *Reading without Tears* and might come out of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. This is always a child experienced through your experience of having learned. If *this* then *this*. Investigation into the technique of reading may have happier results.

part 2: a fairy story ; in the subjunctive;

But the fortunes of a fairy story might be possible only subjunctively: the last two lines of Hart Crane’s ‘Interior’, for example:

Interior

It sheds a shy solemnity,
This lamp in our poor room.
O grey and gold amenity, --

Silence and gentle gloom!

Wide from the world, a stolen hour
We claim, and none may know
How love blooms like a tardy flower
Here in the day's after-glow.

And even should the world break in
With jealous threat and guile,
The world, at last, must bow and win
Our pity and a smile.

39

The ambiguity of this poem – its story, a romance which is you
suspect no fairytale – is: heads we win heads we lose.

Because you take a bow if you win, and bow your head in defeat; so the
words here *bow and win* pull together or apart pull you together,

yourself together, or pull you (us) apart as you read them one
and the other way; serially or in parallel. It says innocently: *'Even if the
world were to break in on our private bliss, all it could do in the end would be to admit defeat
gracefully before the strength of our love, and then we'd give it the consolation prize of our pity';*

and it says as out of experience: *'In the end we'll be found out and at that
moment the world will have won, for however much we may imagine ourselves set above it by
our love, things will be all up with us.'*

In doing this, Crane's poem dramatises the way in which ambiguities are always pastoral figures in the sense Empson would go on to describe: they are concerned with 'putting the complex' – multiple senses – 'into the simple' – a single word – and with a Socratic sleight of hand they make their readers into pastoral figures too, as you swallow the complex word wrapped up in its simple guise (*there's a good girl*) but it then turns out that you did know all of those implications were there, hidden in plain sight on the page and in your understanding.⁴⁰ When it all comes out the poem's apparent unknowing is made up of repeatedly knowing and refusing to have worked it all out already, not only in the acknowledgment-and-denial of 'bow and win' but in the ambiguities of its previous stanza, where 'Wide' and 'may' look around this place at once clear-eyed and dazzled. The indistinct syntax of 'Wide of the world' allows 'Wide' to hover

and glow and cast a diffuse light adjectivally back on the 'Silence and gentle gloom' of the first stanza, and forwards on the 'stolen hour', 'us', and adverbially on our 'claim'. 'Wide from the world' might sound like another way of deliberately giving the world a wide berth: the room, and its inhabitants, and the time they spend in it, are pulled clear of everything else, 'at (to, from) a (great, or specified) distance; far, far away, far off; (so far) away or off'.⁴¹ But something gone 'wide' can also be 'deviating from the aim, or from the direct or proper course; missing the mark or the way; going astray', 'Far, far apart (in nature, character, views, statements, etc.); not in accordance, disagreeing, different; foreign, alien', 'Going beyond bounds of restraint, propriety, or virtue; [...] lax, loose, immoral'; so that now what you thought was deliberate evasion might to a pious and pitying onlooker be merely some kind of involuntary spasm, a successful escape for you which would be for someone judging this relationship improper a swerve, a miss, a wrong turn, a perversion.⁴² When Philip Larkin later looked around another domestic interior he saw its having gone wrong in the same terms: 'A joyous shot at how things ought to be,/Long fallen wide. You can see how it was'.⁴³ Knowing something has gone wide is usually visual, involving seeing and marking a deviation from the normal trajectory and the expected goal; and seen so clearly as this, here, your wideness leaves you terrifyingly wide-open, for what would be love for your love evidenced in private would be disastrous if witnessed as evidence. And terribly, this is an *if* which is entirely out of your hands, even as and no matter how you pretend otherwise: 'none may know' because you'll magisterially refuse to allow them, you think; but really everything hinges on the hope of poor chance only, that perhaps, if we're lucky, 'none may know' yet.

But look, this hour and place and the people in it are wide *from*, not to, the world; but then again what the ambiguities of 'wide' do most importantly is to play out, early on, the desire for and the impossibility of making, even of seeing, this room, this relationship, this small universe and value-system, as fully independent *from* the rest of the world in such a way that you could substitute – wouldn't it be lovely? – the former for the latter. You can't. 'Wide from the world', as you might stagger in wide-eyed; as your private sphere is a little world

anyway, which can't help but take its form from outside; as the world's narrowness has made you 'wide-awake, cute; shrewd, sharp-witted; (dishonestly) cunning or knowledgeable; skilled in sharp practice; engaging in shady dealings'; but at the same time as even the word 'wide' wants to escape these small restrictions of sense and find its place as 'a conventional epithet of words denoting an extensive area [...] as an epithet of *world*, in later use sometimes implying contrast to the privacy or security of one's own home or country', wanting to go out into the wide world not to find its fortune but because that's the only place it can have gained it.⁴⁴ And the only place you can have learned what's going on here: there are no private languages and you can't be innocent, having picked up these words and their meanings all somewhere else. (Wide *adj.*, 4.b.: 'Of views or opinions, or *transf.* of the person holding them: = broad *adj.* 11': 'Characterized by breadth of opinion or sentiment; liberal, catholic, tolerant, allowing wide limits to "orthodoxy"'.)⁴⁵ 'Interior' pivots on *wide* as the word hinges between room and world: whisper it, listen to it whispered: 'wide' comes after 'shy' and 'silence' and before 'guile' and 'smile'. Its two forms of life are inseparable as the inside and outside of a shell, recto and verso, subjunctive, incompatible, dependent, require substitution, aver that there are no substitutes.

So that after all this,

at the end of this slight even slightly tacky poem, the
ambiguity of 'bow and win' acts like a trick of the light as you move the lamp, to
swivel its shallowness into vertigo, and retrospectively lever shoddiness into grand
innocence. All ambiguities are pastoral but some are more pastoral than others;
Empson's simpler types of ambiguity allow sideways glances, overlappings,
compatibilities, transitions between the senses they combine, but if you were to
read 'bow and win' back into *Seven Types*, it would belong
in the seventh type, created by 'the opposites defined by their context'

46

the type of ambiguity Empson describes as 'at once an indecision and a structure': that sort of situation whose subjunctives not only allow but compel its complete knowingness to exist alongside the most pathetic naïveté just able to sustain an indecision as a structure no matter how 'riddled with such indecisions and the machinery of such hypocrisy', so that 'even to those who see the answers at once the alternatives are in a way present'.

47

'Stolen hour' rhymes with 'flower'.

"Really?"

Let it be.

You might have guessed. It isn't only the most extreme kind of ambiguity that floats substitute worlds made of suspended futures; a rhyme is enough. Discussing bad puns, Empson writes that he has

sometimes wondered whether Swinburne's *Dolores* gets any of its energy from the way the word Spain, suggested by the title and by various things in the course of the poem, although one is forced to wonder what the next rhyme is going to be, never appears among the dozen that are paired off with *Our Lady of Pain*.⁴⁸

Reading 'Dolores' for the first time, years after reading this, you would have remembered it, and waited for Spain and Spanishness and energy and forcing and wonder; and you would have found it not in the poem (as Empson says it isn't) nor in your expectations of the poem (as Empson says he sometimes thinks it is) but only albeit strongly in your expectation of your expectations (because of what Empson said about it). You would find yourself in a peculiar situation: that word Spain wouldn't have been to you 'in a way present' because absent (from your reading the poem), but in a different way absent because present (from your having read *Seven Types of Ambiguity*). And so you wouldn't have been able to get away from it because this significant absence wasn't there; every time you knew you had missed missing it. You would never yet have been

able to read 'Dolores' with Empson, after Empson, as he had, as him; but you wouldn't ever have read it without Empson either, because you read it only after having read Empson, and somewhere, close by your reading of 'Dolores', there would always be another reading of 'Dolores', his reading, the one you hadn't, couldn't, didn't; as if that one were still in some other somehow more original language or script, or at a different frequency, or it were a film made in colour and your set were black and white.

(What does it matter that you think his reading is wrong (because you do)? It's there. Here. Not here; *not* not here; the negative of a negative which is nothing like a positive. It would have been an easy matter to imagine a word into a poem, you do it all the time (what if it had been *glint* instead of *gleam*? etc.); but to imagine a word not-in a poem, differently to all the other words which are not in it? You haven't done it yet.)

All this, however, is not altogether inappropriate to Swinburne's poem which is made of unanswered pleas and questions and murky supposings twisted into the sound of falling on deaf ears, and in which

In yesterday's reach and to-morrow's,
Out of sight though they lie of to-day,
There have been and there yet shall be sorrows
That smite not and bite not in play.⁴⁹

Empson isn't wrong about its energy, or even that it comes from the sophisticated contortions of knowing and not knowing what's coming, he's just wrong that it comes out of the word Spain. A poem wracked by the miseries and joys of many things, but principally uncertainty, what you don't find in 'Dolores' is both more banal and more exciting than what you do. This is the beginning of the fifth stanza, and already the poem's interest in predictable conceptual, syntactic and alliterative couplings, which often tease the edge of cliché or tautology (eyelids/eyes, sorrows/sins, 'Fierce midnights and famishing morrows', 'complete and control', 'not golden but gilded', 'not of gold but of gain', 'of lust and of laughter', 'feed me and fill me') means that it sensitizes you to order and consequence: 'yesterday's' pushes you towards 'to-morrow's' and

then that pairing pushes you towards 'to-day'. 'Have been' prepares you for 'yet shall be', and you read 'to-morrow's' towards a rhyme knowing that 'morrrows' has already rhymed once with 'sorrows'. In the fourth line of the stanza 'smite not and bite not' also falls into line, but only until 'in play' undoes everything; because in a poem which has just ordered lips to 'Bite hard', it's impossible to know whether the sting of these sorrows is that their cruelty is unmitigated ('not in play') or that they are teasingly withdrawn, which is so much more painful ('smite not and bite not, in play'). Within a temporal structure of heavy truisms overemphasized to the point of numbness—the past and the future can't be seen properly from the present; pain has occurred in the past and will in the future—'sorrows', so blandly predicted by the rhyme, now develop unreadable and unstable topologies doubled back on themselves with pain and pleasure, wanting and not wanting, hurt and the absence of hurt which itself hurts (but that's what you *want*, so –), violence and hesitation or suffering and relief or indulgence and teasing. You might know what that's like, or some of it, or imagine, or you might not. Even to those who see the answers at once the alternatives are in a way present as being denied.

Happy ever after.

Tears before bedtime.

but not when reading:

I described Hart Crane as a significant absence in *Seven Types*, one of its own
'alternatives present as being denied'; a future possibility flagged up by a
confession of past omission. The Spain not not in 'Dolores' is and isn't another;
in future you might not see it properly. There's one other such resonant space in
the book, this time pointing back to a reading in the past, which, like 'Interior'
 encourages a subjunctively parallel reading in order to bring together

sophistication and its lack: Empson mentions Proust four times, and
each time there is something missing:

the analyst must be humbled by that story about Proust asking his duchesses
why and how they came into a drawing-room like duchesses; they could not
tell him, and the only result was to make them laugh when they saw him
come into a drawing-room himself.

50

I have a vague impression that Proust has listed a great many reasons why it is
impossible to be happy

51

you remember how Proust, at the end of that great novel, having convinced
the reader with the full sophistication of his genius that he is going to
produce an apocalypse, brings out with pathetic faith, as a fact of absolute
value, that sometimes when you are living in one place you are reminded of
living in another place, and this, since you are now apparently living in two
places, means that you are outside time, in the only state of beatitude he can
imagine.

52

Parodies are appreciative criticisms [...], and much of Proust reads like the
work of a superb appreciative critic upon a novel which has unfortunately not
survived.

53

A missing explanation, a missing list (or impression), a missing apocalypse, and finally
a whole missing novel (as if *A la recherche* were to have been cast using the
lost wax method, breaking its own mould in the (by the) making); these
little remarks themselves mark the absence of direct quotation, standing where
Proust's words *would* or *could* have been placed, but aren't any more
(even Proust's title is replaced by the periphrasis 'that great novel'):
they're hearsay, 'story', paraphrase, in a slightly home-made way,
standing in for something – something apocalyptic perhaps –
happening somewhere else.

For the child reading, everything is happening somewhere else; life is lived in
other places, subjunctively (in fairy tales whose worlds can never be attained and
so hover continually present) and conditionally (in the additive processes of
growing up: if you do this, this will happen in your future world).

And if, here, now you were to '*remember* [...]' Proust, at
the end of that great novel', you would be yourself, by remembering ,

standing in for something: what Empson calls Proust's 'fact of absolute value' that 'when you are living in one place you *are reminded of* living in another place'; and in that sense you would be standing in for yourself as a child as you then stood in for yourself as an adult, as this adult, now editing *Seven Types of Ambiguity* for Oxford University Press; because, reading *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, you would have been, could have been always *from the beginning* (yours, and its) *reading* in one book and *reminded of reading* in another book: like this, as now, and the way editors' footnotes are intended to jog or create memories; but then, still reading in one book and reminded of reading in another book: even if then you had hardly any books yet to remember; even if all the books you then as a child had yet to recall were a fairy story and *Reading without Tears*.

You would have had hardly any books yet to remember but remembering them would have told you that already everything had happened somewhere else. 'Jane let the fruit drop on her frock' and "The brown cat sat on the red mat" involve theories of anatomy and gravity (and colour and textile manufacture and stain removal and the domestication of *Felis catus*) which are among other things also stories, plots already made, done, known. That was what your memory of reading those other books was also a model of: it showed that *Happy ever after* was once upon a time, something that had happened without and before you. "This poet will mean more to you when you have had more experience of life" meant that *if* you had more past *then* you would understand; *and* you haven't yet *so* you don't.

Given that, or rather not given it, how even to begin? *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, between one and eight chapters old, written by William Empson aged between twenty-two and twenty-four years, lacking that more experience of life lives in

what life it has which is the time of its own readings, a present which it extends in all directions as far as its eye can see, over and over. Having no elbow-room to play out long consequences it turns in and makes its own simple present dense with the complex interplay of possibility, in which hardly any *thens* have had time to occur but there are all the *ifs* you can imagine:

Cupid is winged and does range
Her country so my love does change
Yet change she earth, or change she sky
Yet I will love her till I die.

(ANON., *Oxford Book*)

'I will love her though she moves from this part of the earth to one out of my reach; I will love her though she goes to live under different skies; I will love her though she moves from this earth and sky to another planet; I will love her though she moves into a social or intellectual sphere where I cannot follow; I will love her though she alters the earth and sky I have got now, though she destroys the bubble of worship in which I am now living by showing herself to be unworthy to be its object; I will love her though, being yet worthy of it, by going away she changes my earth into desire and unrest, and my heaven into despair; I will love her even if she has both power and will to upset both the orderly ideals of men in general (heaven) and the system of society in general (earth); she may alter the earth and sky *she* has now by abandoning her faith or in just punishment becoming outcast, and still I will love her; she may change *my* earth by killing me, but till it comes I will go on loving.'⁵⁴

Which is to say: *if* she moves...*then* I will still love her, so many conditionals marking the unconditional nature of his love. Or more correctly: I will love her *though she move*, this is a subjunctive, *change she, were she to change*, any of these things might happen and none of them have, but still you can (and loving, you must) imagine them as if they are all imminent: 'all meanings to be extracted from these are the immediate meaning insisted on by the words, and yet the whole charm of the poem is its extravagant, its unreasonable simplicity'.⁵⁵ And look where Empson would have seen this and you see its simplicity as more simple and more unreasonable still; for what he took from Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's *Oxford Book of English Verse* was the third stanza of a lyric from Thomas

Ford’s 1607 *Music of Sundry Kinds* which begins by revealing itself as a sight-reading and its consequence:

THERE is a Lady sweet and kind,
Was never face so pleased my mind;
I did but see her passing by,
And yet I love her till I die.

56

The lines Empson chose for his example unravel into everything, but at the same time and two stanzas and three hundred or so years earlier and ever since the poem’s glimpse of a face is spilling over into an entire lifetime of simultaneous possibilities and certainty, everything that could conceivably happen and one thing I vow will always. That *till I die* means: as far as the eye can see, can see from just this passing moment; and it isn’t *I will love her* but *I love her*; it will always be this minute, now, the immediate meaning insisted on in the present tense.

A tense which says: *This is and always has been and will be forever (until I realise it isn’t)*. This is the the present tense of lovers; and also of readers absorbed in books and outside of time; and is also the academic present tense in which everything ever may be and is enacted simultaneously, in the time of its own readings which it extends in all directions as far as its eye can see, over and over, a magnifying lens of attention. *Here*. And how everything is made so present—how this present gets into *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, how it comes out of its examples—is by means of the multiple layers of paraphrase which make up the dense tissue of its reading time and are how ambiguities in this book disclose themselves. (You would have discovered it and for a while afterwards, perhaps always afterwards, following that example this would have been the only way you would see or think or write: these words mean *this* and *this* and *this* and *this*. Can mean, might mean. And now, together, as I read, they mean—) Paraphrase is how Empson’s ambiguities reveal themselves as pastoral figures; as its prefix indicates, paraphrase is both a complication and a simplification:

in compounds ancient Greek *παρά* has the same senses as the preposition [‘by the side of, beside’; ‘alongside of, by, past, beyond’], along with such

cognate adverbial ones as ‘to one side, aside, amiss, faulty, irregular, disordered, improper, wrong’; it also expresses subsidiary relation, alteration, comparison, etc.⁵⁷

It’s also found ‘in the sense “analogous or parallel to, but separate from or going beyond, what is denoted by the root word”’ and as ‘a rewording of something written or spoken by someone else, esp. with the aim of making the sense clearer; a free rendering of a passage’.⁵⁸ Paraphrase, then (now, here), is a reading which might multiply out and condense in; it says that everything is here and it was all hidden; like all translations, like all readings, it stands for and might stand in for; it inevitably distorts but offers a view back to where it came from and looks forward to places never once dreamed of, reiterating and collecting into itself and going one better.

Paraphrases like readers go wide and that’s the only way they can hit the mark. You take ‘something written or spoken by someone else’ and it makes your understanding, your reading, the way you would have heard *Seven Types of Ambiguity* come out of Thomas Nashe and William Shakespeare and J.M. Synge and Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare and Arthur Waley and Alexander Pope and Thomas Hood and G.M. Hopkins and Alexander Pope and William Wordsworth and John Keats and Geoffrey Chaucer and in there too the thought of Favell Lee Mortimer and the absence of Marcel Proust, as all of those and in its reading of them becoming only itself; not through any anxiety of influence but just in, just as, learning to read. (*But you would say that, wouldn’t you?*) A free rendering of a passage; the only state of beatitude you can imagine; come out of *Reading Without Tears*.



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¹ Illustration from Favell Lee Mortimer, *Reading Without Tears, or, A Pleasant Mode of Learning to Read*, 2 vols (London: Thomas Hatchard, Simpkin and Marshall, 1857), I.iv.

² William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1930; 2nd edn, rev., 1947; 3rd edn, rev., 1953); all further references are to the Peregrine Books edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961). Illustrations are reproduced from a library copy of this edition numbered 905454 by Thorpe Grammar School, later shelved under classmark 808.1 in the library of Thorpe St Andrew School, Laundry Lane, Norwich NR7 0XS, probably

marked as lost some time after April 1995, and now in the possession of the author of this article.

³ 'Constructivist texts are based on language, not as a vehicle for meaning, but as a material performing its own body and expressive resourcefulness, encouraging us to savour its generative diversity.' Clive Scott, *Literary Translation and the Rediscovery of Reading* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 15.

⁴ *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p. vii.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23 n.1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

¹⁰ Hart Crane, 'My Grandmother's Love Letters', in *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, ed. by Marc Simon (New York and London: Liveright, 2000), p. 6.

¹¹ OED, 'sight-read *v.* (*intr.* and *trans.*)',

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/179459?redirectedFrom=sight-read#eid22806488>>.

¹² OED, 'reading, *n.*1', 1.d; 7.,

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/158866?rskey=3vl8cY&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>>.

¹³ Brian Dillon, *In the Dark Room: A Journey in Memory* (Dublin: Penguin Ireland, 2005), p. 67.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 239-40.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. xv.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 2, 42, 27, 54, 23, 72, 22, 111, 148, 149, 151-52, 202, 216, 61.

²⁵ Favell Lee Mortimer, *Reading Without Tears, or, A Pleasant Mode of Learning to Read*, 2 vols (London: Thomas Hatchard, Simpkin and Marshall, 1857).

²⁶ In his review of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, Leavis suggests archly that 'perhaps it will not be impertinent to remark that [Empson] draws many of his examples from books set for [the English] tripos' and concludes that 'Cambridge may pardonably take some credit for him'. (F.R. Leavis, 'Intelligence and Sensibility', *The Cambridge Review*, 16th January 1931), pp. 186-87 (p.187).)

²⁷ I.A. Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgement* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1929).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

²⁹ Favell Lee Mortimer, *Peep of Day; A Series of the Earliest Religious Instruction the Infant Mind is Capable of Receiving* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1833), p. 5.

³⁰ See G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*, 2 vols (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904).

³¹ *Peep of Day*, p. 5.

³² *Reading Without Tears*, II, 82.

³³ *Ibid.*, II, 83.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 169.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 244.

³⁶ *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p.1.

³⁷ Mary Midgley, *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature* (London: Methuen, 1980), p.322.

³⁸ 'Introduction' to *Coleridge's Verse: A Selection*, ed. by William Empson and David Pirie (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), pp. 13-100 (p. 76).

³⁹ Simon, ed., p. 149.

⁴⁰ In *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1935; reissued with 'Preface to 1974 Edition', 1974; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), Empson indicates this connection between pastoral and ambiguity, describing 'the pastoral process of putting the complex into the simple' as 'in itself a great help to the concentration needed for poetry' (p. 21). He also admits that 'taken widely the formula might include all literature' (p. 21), a claim and/or disclaimer very similar to that found at the beginning of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*: 'In a sufficiently extended sense any prose statement could be called ambiguous' (p.1)).

⁴¹ OED, 'wide, *adv.*' 5.b.,

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/228893?isAdvanced=false&result=4&rskey=x2SzSX&>>.

⁴² OED, 'wide, *adv.*' 10.; 9.b.; 11.a.,

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/228893?isAdvanced=false&result=4&rskey=x2SzSX&>>.

⁴³ Philip Larkin, 'Home Is So Sad', in *The Complete Poems of Philip Larkin*, ed. by Archie Burnett (London: Faber, 2012), pp. 54-55 (p.55).

⁴⁴ OED, 'wide, *adv.*' 11.c., <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/228891#eid14448739>>; 'wide, *adj.*' 1b, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/228891#eid14447279>>.

⁴⁵ OED, 'wide, *adj.*' 4.b., <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/228891#eid14447279>>; 'broad, *adj.*, *n.* 1, and *adv.*' 11, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/23502#eid13316324>>.

⁴⁶ *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p. 192.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

⁴⁹ Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'Dolores', ll. 33-36, in *Major poems and selected prose*, ed. by Jerome McGann and Charles L. Sligh (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, c.2004), pp. 119-30 (p. 120).

⁵⁰ *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p. 245.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁵⁶ 'There is a lady sweet and kind', ll. 1-4, in *The Oxford Book of English Verse, 1250-1900*, ed. by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), p. 98.

⁵⁷ OED, 'para-, *prefix* 1', <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/137251#eid32256200>>.

⁵⁸ OED, 'para-, *prefix* 1' 1., <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/137251#eid32256200>>; 'paraphrase, *n.*', 1.a., <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/137577>>.