

the youth of poetry; . . . 'A l'horizon' in 1930 is a salute limited to Breton and his Surrealist group; the return in 1946 to 'Jouvence' implies a rejection of Surrealism and a recognition of the youth of the poet. . . . 'A l'horizon' is an important poem . . . because it affirms that Char's early poetic attempts were directed towards the future of poetry and because it firmly acknowledged that this direction took the form of his adherence to Surrealism, the attainment of one goal" (*The Poetics and the Poetry*, p. 46). Thus the ironic question mark of my original article (p. 1019) still stands.

I was surprised to see that my reader should have thought the *PMLA* article a discussion of Char's "poetic evolution from a presurreal stance, to adherence to the movement, to a postsurreal (and mature) position." She may be glad to learn, however, that I have completed such a study, titled "Violence and Magic: Aspects of René Char's Surrealist Apprenticeship," forthcoming this year in *FMLS*.

6. The question of whether or not a poem should be punctuated has been raised by poets since—at least—Apollinaire. Breton and Cie quickly jumped on the bandwagon, incorporating the expression of a "stranger's" uncertainties into their own poetic credo.

For a while, Char joined them. Since the late 1930's, however, he has hesitated between punctuated and unpunctuated versions of his poems. For example, the 1938 edition of *Dehors la nuit est gouvernée* is punctuated; the 1949 edition is not. The 1963 edition of *Le Marteau sans maître* is punctuated, if sparsely, and the punctuation changes when some of the texts are incorporated into *Commune présence*, 1964. This anthology also takes up texts from *Le Poème pulvérisé*, and some of those change punctuation in the 1972 edition. Punctuated poems in 1938, 1948, 1963, 1964, variants in 1972; unpunctuated versions in 1945, 1949, and 1950. I am quite sure that "Char is fully aware of his own early poetics" (how charitable of our reader to think so!), but punctuation or lack thereof is inconclusive evidence in dating a Char text. Perhaps we should, therefore, try to develop a literary sensitivity that goes beyond the awareness of commas.

In any case, the question asked should not be whether or not a poem is punctuated, but *how* it is punctuated. Question marks, periods, and exclamation points are part of Char's early "poetics," commas are not. Perhaps the addition of commas to later versions of early texts may help the reader to see more clearly the poet's movement from interior monologue to dialogue. One more reason to print "Sur le volet d'une fenêtre" with commas in the *PMLA* article. (By the way, I omitted a comma after "sœur disant" of l. 2. Sorry, it might have helped La Charité date the poem.) I have treated the question of Char's punctuation, marginally, in a study of *Fureur et mystère*.

7. Unfortunately, I do not have access, at the moment, to one of Char's early editions. I cannot check, therefore, whether the poor printer of "Le Rouge et le noir" actually ever did disfigure Char's magnificent title: "Prêt au dépouillement." In any case, misprints are not to be confused with variants, and most of the misprints given by La Charité in her book are not to be found as variant readings in any editions of Char.

Anyone still wondering what "accurate facts and insights" one could "cull from" the work of La Charité is invited to reread my article and to compare its insights and analyses with those quoted by me under 5, or, for that matter, with all of *The Poetics and the Poetry of René Char* (1968, sorry!). The comparisons will speak for themselves and be found amusing, in the bargain.

Mechthild Cranston
University of North Carolina, Asheville

John J. Mood and the Personal System— A Further Note on Samuel Beckett's *Watt*

To the Editor:

Mood's analysis of the "deliberate" errors in Samuel Beckett's *Watt*¹ is itself in error in two instances. Mood first errs by omission in the matter of the gardener Mr. Graves's "three" visits to the establishment of Mr. Knott (*Watt*, p. 143).² Sam, the narrator, records these "three" visits as follows:

In the morning . . . to fetch the key of his shed,
and at midday, to fetch his pot of tea,
and in the afternoon, to fetch his bottle of stout,
and in the evening, to return the key and the bottle.

In the next paragraph, Mr. Graves, whose speech (and in particular the *th*) is imperfect, heightens the deliberate confusion between three and four by protesting, in reference to his afternoon bottle of stout, "Tis only me turd or fart." But even thus amplified, the confusion goes unnoticed in Mood's listing of Beckett's errors.

Mood further errs in reporting that *Watt* has "oddly enough" never been translated into French, since the Editions Minuit *Watt* had already appeared in 1968. In this version, however, the paragraph describing Mr. Graves's speech defect, and his enumeration of the bottles of stout, is omitted. We may presume these "venerable saxon" ambiguities, whatever their appeal to Watt himself, to be untranslatable into the French. A notoriously consistent author, Beckett simultaneously orders the chaos of the preceding paragraph: "Monsieur Graves se présentait à la porte . . . quatre fois par jour."³

Recent American editions of *Watt*, however, have greatly complicated matters while partly vindicating

Mood. These editions, whether with or without Beckett's consent I cannot determine, agree with the French in correcting the number of Mr. Graves's visits from three (comically accurate) to four (numerically accurate). At the very least, this correction establishes an editorial crux in Beckett's continually expanding body of work; in the edition apparently used by Mood, one misses both the comedy of the misenumeration and the preparation that it gives for Mr. Graves's subsequent remarks.

ERIC PARK
University of Oregon

Notes

¹ John J. Mood, "The Personal System"—Samuel Beckett's *Watt*," *PMLA*, 86 (1971), 255–65.

² Reference is to the fifth printing of Grove Press's first American edition (1959). For reasons shortly to become apparent, the particular American edition used is of crucial importance.

³ *Watt*, trans. Ludovic and Agnès Janvier, in collaboration with Beckett (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1968), p. 148.

Mr. Mood replies:

Park's comment occasioned an odd experience for me. I was quite certain, not unlike Watt, that I had covered myself by acknowledging somewhere in my article that my examination of the flaws in *Watt* probably itself had some omissions. I was aware that I had no doubt overlooked some mistakes in *Watt* and thought I had said so.

But I cannot find such an acknowledgement. And a friend of mine, who likewise thought she remembered it, couldn't find it either. So much for the verification principle. And so firmly are we all imbedded in Watt's world. Even when we think we've worked out at least an innerly consistent little system (e.g., a *PMLA* article), and even acknowledged the theoretical possibility of error—even then, flaws creep in. Or, more embarrassing, as in this case, the final cover is blown. Or at least missing. And the world being what it is, someone will call attention to the fact.

Which is to say you scored, Mr. Park. I did indeed miss the contradiction between the stated number of visits and the actual number described. May I now, for the record, say that I am sure there are others in *Watt* I have missed? And I was likewise not aware of changes in editions of *Watt*. The world is indeed in a queer shape if deliberate flaws are going to be removed. What will they think of next?

I do have one small comfort, which I have appropriately saved for my exit so that it will be at least a relatively graceful one. I originally wrote the article before the French translation of *Watt* appeared. When reading *PMLA* galley proofs for the article, I noted that fact but apparently cost factors prevented revision. Another edifying experience for me. I might add that there are, in the printed version of my article, four typographical errors as well. Still another instructive experience.

Not really liking to be edified, perhaps I can draw some small solace from Beckett's own brilliant rendering of the last line of *Watt*: in English—"no symbols where none intended"; in his French translation—"honni soit qui symboles y voit." Garters indeed!

JOHN J. MOOD
Ball State University

Sterne's "Dearly Beloved Roger"

To the Editor:

In his Rabelaisian fragment, Sterne wrote, then eliminated, these words: "'Dearly Beloved Roger, the Scripture moveth thee & me in sundry Places' 'tis so recent a Story, & will bear so villainous an Application I shall never hear an End on't." This is one of the passages Melvyn New's text (*PMLA*, 87, 1972, 1083–92) makes available for the first time. He observes that "Dearly Beloved Roger" is a bawdy parody of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Sterne is, however, more immediately parodying a recently published and popular anecdote about Swift. John Boyle, Earl of Orrery, gives this account in his *Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift* (Dublin: Faulkner [1751]): "As soon as he [Swift] had taken possession of his two livings [Laracor and Rathbeggan], he went to reside at Laracor, and gave public notice to his parishioners, that he would read prayers on every Wednesday and Friday. Upon the subsequent Wednesday the bell was rung, and the Rector attended in his desk, when after having sat some time, and finding the congregation to consist only of himself, and his clerk ROGER, he began with great composure and gravity, but with a turn peculiar to himself, 'Dearly beloved ROGER, the scripture moveth you and me in sundry places.' And then proceeded regularly through the whole service" (p. 32). Other biographers of Swift in the 1750's—his cousin Deane Swift (1755) and John Hawkesworth (1755)—repeated the story. Wherever Sterne found it, it was thus clearly, as the fragment states, a "recent . . . Story." In the context of Sterne's Rabelaisian wit, his question bore "so villainous an Application" not only