ИСТИНСКИЯТ ЕЗИК, НА КОЙТО ХОРАТА ГОВОРЯТ: ТЕОРИЯТА НА УЪРДЗУЪРТ ЗА ЛИТЕРАТУРНОСТТА И НЕСТАНДАРТНАТА РЕЧ

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A LANGUAGE REALLY SPOKEN BY MEN: WORDSWORTH'S THEORY OF LITERARINESS AND NON-STANDARD SPEECH

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ABSTRACT: Wordsworth's theory of poetic language has been much misunderstood – in no small measure thanks to Coleridge's celebrated but misguided critique of the 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads'. Certain more recent critiques of the "language really spoken by men" have only helped cloud the real issues. This paper tries to disentangle a skein of critical threads by a reading of the key texts involved in the debate. Wordsworth's essay on epitaphs is invoked in order to clear away some of the misunderstandings.

Key words: *poetic language, folk, literariness, common language, poetic diction, defamiliarization dialect.*

What does it mean for a poet to recruit the figure of the folk in an argument against dead metaphor? This is the light in which I want to examine Wordsworth's 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads' and Coleridge's response to it in *Biographia Literaria* (chapters xvii-xviii). The main idea I wish to put forward is that Wordsworth's purported veneration of 'rustic' speech boils down to a recipe in imaginative distillation of qualities which are described as pertaining to the folk. But, in this argument, the folk is only a fictional character – a carrier of crucial qualities, and it would be mistaken to read Wordsworth's reference to the language really used by men in the literal way in which Coleridge reads it. Wordsworth is talking about a sort of translation of the folk's essence – not a direct translation or importation of real-life speech – at a time when poetic diction was beginning to seem too mechanical as well as too all-pervasive. It was a time for change, and when Wordsworth was called upon to explain his method he sought resort to the figure of the folk – a logical center in his argument about how to innovate literary language.

Like Synge in his preface to the *Playboy*, Wordsworth's reference to real rustic speech has caused much confusion. In a way this is understandable: any poet who announces that he will deliberately take from the folk should expect to be closely

examined for verisimilitude.[1] But just like Synge's work with peasant speech, Wordsworth's method, as it is set out in the 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads', involves a process of distillation or selection – a kind of heightening of language.[2] Like Synge, Wordsworth was interested in real speech to the extent to which it constituted a rebellion against standards of literariness. (The fact that Synge went much further in actually reproducing real peasant speech is a side issue here.) Wordsworth's investment in the real language of man is a choice made expressly against the stagnant currents of 18-th century rule-based poetic diction. In place of the never-so-well expressed, the Preface proposed a simplicity in poetry. This is the first crucial quality of language as it is really spoken which is said to inhere in the kind of poetry that is open to a sublimated use (as opposed to a direct imitation) of real-life speech. In this context, the folkish poet's task is to merge with the folk.[3] That this *folk* is otherwise unqualified (i.e. except by the crucial qualities he carries) is to be expected from a strategically drawn conceptual center of a highly contrived argument about poetics.

Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated … because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings … The language, too, of these men has been adopted … because such men communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived…[4]

Thus, we see that the 'rustic' folk (never mentioned by name in the 'Preface') is only a representation of a bundle of decisive qualities: simplicity; elemental power of perception of the physical world due to a close relation to nature; sincerity; freedom from restraint; a lack of artifice (a crucial quality vis-à-vis the artificiality of polite diction); a vigorous outspokenness which may be designated as the *interjectional* aspect of language activated when one reacts to real danger, pain, etc.; reality (as opposed to the poetic capacity to recollect experiences from memory). The list is not

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[1] Synge's statement that he did not use anything the peasants themselves did not say set a whole chain reaction of literary criticism as to the reality or otherwise of his stage dialect.

[2] Alan Bliss is one of a number of scholars who talk about 'selection' and 'distillation' in Synge's use of peasant speech. (Bliss, Alan, *The Language of Synge*, pp 35 – 62)

[3] John Guillory reads the 'poet of the Preface as the protagonist of a submerged pastoral narrative. The poet is "distinguished from other men" but not linguistically; he moves among them as though he were one of them, speaking their language, and he only signals his difference by the choice of meter, the signal or signature of the poetic sensibility.' I doubt that meter is the only difference (given that Wordsworth goes to great lengths to explain the poetic sensibility in ways which have nothing to do with meter) but the larger point still stands: Wordsworth's 'narrative … reinscribes the major topos of Renaissance pastoral – the poet as peasant…' (See, *Cultural Capital*, p. 128)

[4] *Wordsworth's Literary Criticism*, ed. Nowell Smith, Humphrey Milford: London, 1925, p. 14.

exhaustive, but the point is that Wordsworth saw in 'rustic' life and speech an explanatory figure of speech which would help him to draw closer to the kind of qualities he was looking for in a poetry which was consciously pitted against ruling conventions of the day. The whole point was to come up with a language which would take him away from the stilted language of classicists with its 'gaudiness and inane phraseology' [5]. "Real" speech – with its immediacy and natural vigor – seemed an attractive alternative. It should be noted here that the rustic is itself only a metaphor for the 'real' which is ultimately the quality Wordsworth sought. In place of 'false refinement', 'fickle tastes' and 'arbitrary innovation', we have an 'organic sensibility', 'emphatic language' and 'repeated experience'. [6]

Objects, perceived naturally, excite feelings more strongly and carry with themselves a 'purpose'. The poet, however, unlike this imaginatively constructed natural poet (this pastoral folk figure whom Coleridge mistook for a real persona) cannot hope to purposefully recollect an experience with the same effect which the experience has in real life. The category of the real (which stands also for the impassioned conception of the object) remains the unachievable target of the poetic sensibility. However, Wordsworth provides an opening: through training (i.e. 'repetition and continuance of this act [of contemplation]'), the poetic sensibility can become accustomed to reaching a version of this unachievable immediacy (i.e. reality) of perception – what results is a similar impassioned response to the one which lived experiences provide. The crucial property of this trained sensibility is that it allows the poetic mind 'by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits' to describe (poetically) objects in such a way as to excite the imagination of the reader.[7] This almost mechanical obedience to the poetic sensibility seems to be nothing other than a trained intuition. While the pastoral folk has a natural intuition, the poet can achieve a similar capability through a process of training whereby the conscious habit becomes unconscious. There is nothing so remarkable about this formulation, and I have dwelled on it only to show that, once gain, a crucial quality (i.e. intuition) is borrowed from the bundle of qualities associated with the fictional figure of the folk. In other words, the poet is allowed yet again to merge with the folk.

Wordsworth of course knows that such an intuitive folk does not exist in real life and that rustic existence is not inherently poetic in the sense of being a perfected sensibility. But the pastoral folk does have simplicity and passion, and Wordsworth wastes no time to recruit this imaginary figure for the radical project of revising both critical convention and the very idea of canonicity. 'If my conclusions are admitted, and carried as far as they must be carried if admitted at all, our judgments concerning the works of the greatest Poets both ancient and modern will be far different from what

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
[6] *Ibid.*, pp 14-5.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 16. This is a rare instance of a positive use of the word "mechanical". Usually Wordsworth uses it to designate the automatic artificiality of poetic diction (e.g. in his essay on epitaphs, he calls the construction of poetry 'mechanical' where 'words [do] their own work and one half of the line manufactur[es] the rest.' (cf. 'Upon Epitaphs' (2), in *ibid.*, p 122)

they are at present.' Even more, 'Now these men [i.e. critics who stumble upon prosaisms] would establish a canon of criticism which the Reader will conclude he must utterly reject, if he wishes to be pleased with these volumes.'[8]

In this latter argument, Wordsworth seems to be revising the very concept of literariness. In place of 'ornament' he stresses directness (as in folk speech); instead of the cold calculation of poetic diction, he valorizes the poetic voice 'which the passion naturally suggests.'[9] In the passage (quoted above) which gives the reason why rustic life was chosen, one cannot fail to notice the view of language as an immediate response to natural objects. This language is 'less under the influence of social vanity'[10] and is a lot closer to the *interjection*: the immediate cry of emotion (passion) for which no substitute can be found since even the most practiced poet cannot exactly replicate the consciousness which consisted in a reaction to a situation from real life. This interjectional aspect of language is, as even Coleridge realizes, a model in Wordsworth's argument for the felt truth of the passion. There is something motivated about it, natural and naked. Ironically, for all his misguided critique of Wordsworth's real language of men, Coleridge manages to point to the heart of Wordsworth's theory of poetic language – built as the latter is on the interjectional principle – and finds a passage from 'The Thorn' in order to illustrate that Mr Wordsworth does, after all, possess 'genuine imagination'. The passage ends with:

> And to herself she cries,
> Oh misery! Oh misery!
> Oh woe is me! Oh misery!

In this cry of pain Coleridge finds genuine poetry which had not been interfered with by 'a mere theory'.[11] But was not the theory itself all about spontaneous cries of sincere feeling, natural expressions of emotion, motivated language with a 'purpose' – in one word, the spoken? But perhaps Coleridge was not so much interested in disproving the theory as in showing that it was not implemented in practice – i.e. few of Wordsworth's poems borrow directly from the language really spoken by men. Even in the passage excerpted above, one doubts if Wordsworth meant more than just a vague imitation of the cry of a mournful peasant.

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[8] *Ibid.*, pp 22, 19.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[11] Jackson, H. J. ed., *Samuel Taylor Coleridge (The Oxford Authors)*, Oxford University Press, 1985, pp 346-7.

But as Coleridge well knew, the resistant heterogeneity of the spoken meant that it was not to be easily co-opted by the written.[12] Wordsworth's own poetic practice shows that. In any case, I do not wish to stress too much, as did Coleridge [13], the literal end of the theory. Suffice it to say, that the spoken functioned in the argument of the Preface as a metaphor of literary language.

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There is one other target of Coleridge's critique which is just as important for an understanding of Wordsworth's subversion of the concept of literary language: the statement that verse and prose differ only in the use of meter in the former. Coleridge spends a lot of time explaining why poetry is not merely prose fitted to meter. But again, in response to his concerned critique, it could be said that the prosaic is, like the spoken, a quality. Poetry, the argument goes, is not an artificial adornment but a sincere expression. Now, why would Wordsworth employ a generic distinction when

[12] One is reminded of a similar passage in Shakespeare's *King Lear* where the King's mournful cry is registered as the word "Wail!" repeated several times. How is one to read such passages? It seems that the best way to read them is to see them as an invitation to acoustic freedom which is the essence of graphic representations of sound. Onomatopoeia, no matter how clever and precise it aspires to be, is after all an impossible ideal. Thus, Shakespeare would not have us think that Lear actually said the word "Wail!" but rather that he actually wailed – or produced some kind of mournful interjectional *sound*. If Lear's "Wail!" may be productively read as a stage direction, why should that acoustic awareness not extend to a discussion of literary language more generally?

[13] Coleridge simply takes the idea of a real or rustic language too literally. Thus, when Coleridge finds characters in Wordsworth's poems to which to object (see chapter xvii of his *Biographia*), he does not realize that instead of looking for personages, he should have been looking for qualities. Wordsworth's folk was just a model – not an attempt at biography. In the same way, Coleridge's objection to Wodrsworth's idea 'that the proper diction for poetry in general consists altogether in a language taken, with due exceptions, from the mouths of men in real life, a language which actually constitutes the natural conversation of men under the influence of natural feelings' (*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, p. 334) entirely misses the target since Wordsworth's intention was never to mechanically reproduce real-life speech. Similarly, Coleridge's reply to what he thought real language of men meant is not a reply at all: 'To this I reply; that a rustic's language, purified from all provincialism and grossness, and so far reconstructed as to be made consistent with the rules of grammar … will not differ from the language of any other man of common sense…' (p. 341) I doubt that Wordsworth was ever thinking of purifying provincialisms – let alone of aiming at a standard English language which would then be asked to play the role of a distinguishing linguistic characteristic of rustic characters. John Guillory follows Coleridge in his mistake and assumes that what Wordsworth had in mind by the process of 'selection' was the subtraction of provincialisms which, of course, made the product of this linguistic operation 'nothing other than the language of the educated middle-class' (see *Cultural Capital*, pp 127-8). Actually, Wordsworth had indeed mentioned a process of purification but that had related to the outspoken passion which was to be purged of its grosser ('disgusting') elements (*op. cit*., p. 24); that is to say, the interjectional is not entirely left to reign supreme but appears in a somewhat tamed form in Wordsworth's argument. Poetic diction is, after all, more than a savage cry. The spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling is recollected in tranquility, and yet it is a tranquility which is not all that tranquil as the emotion gradually rises to a certain pitch which disrupts the calmness of the contemplation. This second heightened state is both similar to and different from the one which had produced the spontaneous cry of emotion (the interjection) – it is powerful yet tamed.

he was meaning to talk about a quality of poetry? The answer to this question lies in his essay on epitaphs. A very similar distinction is made there between artificial poetry and prose. The latter is selected as the best medium for the expression of genuine feeling. Given this interest in the genuine, it is no wonder that the epitaph was the genre chosen: as Wordsworth explicitly says, on the occasion of someone's death we do not expect a triviality of feeling but a sincere emotion. If prose is the best medium for the expression of sincere sorrow (Wordsworth compares epitaphs and ends up stating that the most unnatural epitaphs in the English language in existence were those composed by – not surprisingly – the champion of poetic diction, Alexander Pope [14]), then any poetry which also expresses sincere emotion is, in a sense, prosaic. As the whole section two of the essay on epitaphs shows, those inexperienced mourners who thought – misled by convention – that standard poeticism was the most genuine expression of feeling (presumably because, to the unenlightened, this *was* poetry) got entangled in a poetic diction whose hackneyed phrasing 'seduced' the mind by trapping it into an inability to write with a faithfulness to nature.[15] But Wordsworth somehow manages to rescue the 'natural and pure' 'under current' of the mourner's thoughts by translating the stilted language back into prose.

Good poetry, this argument seems to imply, has something prosaic about it – but that by no means implies an equation of the two genres. Rather, what seems to be at stake is a re-drawing of the map of literariness with genres no longer occupying designated rungs on the hierarchy of valuation. Instead, we find ideals or qualities, with "prose" (i.e. the sincere expression of genuine emotion) occupying the top spot.

The fluidity of generic denomination is entailed by the insistence on qualities. The result is an imaginary hybrid formation (an ideal genre lying somewhere between poetry and prose) which could, in turn, be recruited by Wordsworth in a revision of the literary canon. It should be noted that prose never fails to appear precisely at those points where the argument begins to look like a radical revaluation of what poetry (and by implication poetic language) essentially is and also, crucially, at points where the argument starts to look like a sweeping away of contemporary poetic fashions.

John Guillory is correct in claiming that Wordsworth chose a genre (prose) at a time when the notion of what constituted literariness was just beginning to be established. The nineteenth century, Guillory continues, was also a period when the novel as a genre was beginning to take shape. Wordsworth's appeal to a fledgling genre seems to support the thesis that he was not really talking about what we can now in hindsight identify as the prose of his time (e.g. what the Preface designates as 'frantic novels'[16]) but a quality (exemplified by 'good prose') which could just as easily inhere in "good" poetry. 'The truth of this assertion might be demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings, even of Milton

[14] 'Upon Epitaphs (2) and (3)', in *Wordsworth's Literary Criticism*, pp 115, 123.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 115.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

himself.'[17] This assertion makes nonsense of Guillory claim that Wordsworth's recourse to the category of prose is a compromise between his high standards for poetry which made him an enemy of poetic conventions of his time and the cheap prose that was going around for which Wordsworth had nothing but contempt.[18] Again, the argument was not intended to identify an actual genre – as Guillory suggests – but to point to a quality which might enhance poetic language.

In his argument, heavily inflected by an avid Marxism out to prove that canon formation is not based on an inherent linguistic distinction but is the product of social pressures, Guillory co-opts the narrative of the Preface and presents it as a confusion in generic distinctions 'specifically at a crisis in the history of vernacular canon formation.' His other supporting claim is 'that the distinction between poetic diction and the *lingua communis* is really determined by a generic distinction – between poetic genres and prose genres.' This is wide off the mark, but one of the premises of Guillory's argument is still crucial for an understanding of the implications of Wordsworth's recruiting of the figure of the folk in his Preface. This is the observation that '[f]or the first time poetic genres and prose genres are compatible as *literary* genres.'[19] In other words, Wordsworth's discussion of prose and poetry (or rather his insistent crossing over from one genre to the other) points precisely to the fact that Wordsworth was revising the very idea of literariness in his discussion of poetic and prosaic (hence *literary*) language.

But this literary language (and by implication literariness) has nothing to do with the standard vernacular, with Guillory's *lingua communis*. The language Wordsworth designated as poetic was heightened, purified, distilled. Wordsworth's imaginatively constructed hybrid category of prose-poetry (an impassioned language) borrowed qualities from both genres but did not depend on an equation of the two genres.[20]

Like Coleridge, Guillory is mistaken in his easy identification of a genre (prose) with an ideal quality (the prosaic, loosely defined) inherent, according to Wordsworth's theory, in both good poetry and good prose.[21]

Guillory's sustained critique of the concept of literariness and of canon formation depends for its effect on the thesis that "the canon" and "literariness" are categories

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17 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

18 'Wordsworth's embrace of prose as the language really spoken by men represents a compromise between the distate for a clichéd poetic diction and his disdain for the taste of the public that neglects canonical works in favor of ephemeral novels, plays, and novel-like narrative poems' (*Cultural Capital*, p. 130) Far from *equating* the language really spoken by men with prose, the argument in the preface – as well as in the essay on epitaphs – accords the same logical role for "prose" and the language of men, i. e. these two categories function as pointers to crucial qualities (e.g. simplicity, directness, impassioned sincerity, etc.).

19 *Cultural Captial*, p. 129.

20 Hence, Guillory is entirely wrong in his claim that 'the *language* of the novel and the *language* of poetry are at this moment still virtually indistinct. It is this indistinction of language which Wordsworth unwittingly confirms in defending the language of prose…' (*Cultural Capital*, p. 131)

21 The terms 'good poetry' and 'good prose' are Wordsworth's; they seem to have nothing to do with the standard vernacular.

which are socially constructed in 'the school' which parcels out cultural and linguistic capital. The process of parceling out reflects larger social processes, and to assume that literariness is somehow a linguistically-motivated concept inherent in language itself is to ignore these larger processes. Indeed, the argument goes, the history of canon formation is collapsed into the history of literature by an ideology of tradition which perpetuates a mistake committed even by the various critiques of the canon. The mistake is to assume that the question of literary language is a question of an '*essentially* different kind of language (literariness)' instead of what it really is – a question of 'linguistic differentiation as a social fact.'[22]

But while it should not be doubted that the canon *is in many ways* socially constructed, it seems absurd to claim that ordinary language and literary language are essentially the same thing and to think that authors which make up what is known as literature are so many conduits of only social (and by no means linguistic) contingency. Guillory recruits Bakhtin and Medvedev whose so-called critique of the formalist model of defamiliarization is said to be designed to remedy the 'polarization of linguistic practices into the poetic or literary, and the ordinary or practical.' Bakhtin, we are told, never really meant to make a distinction between ordinary and literary in terms of essential linguistic characteristics but only in terms of social factors such as the vertical (socially constructed) hierarchy of varieties of speech. Sitting at the top, "literary language" is designed to regulate the 'spoken and written heteroglossia that swirls in from all sides'.[23] Guillory credits Bakhtin for placing the concept of literary language 'in its proper category – not aesthetics but sociolinguistics.' In other words, the model of defamiliarization – which sought to explain literariness by utilizing essentialist (i.e. linguistic) categories which would explain why literary language is different from ordinary language – is replaced by what Medvedev called 'sociological poetics'.[24]

It is easy to see from this extended version of the argument why Guillory would assume that in Wordsworth the distinction between real language of men and poetic (or literary) language is a symptom of a crisis in canon formation which is itself determined by larger social factors. "Literary language" is not the 'defamiliarized or the new' but is determined by 'the operation of certain institutional forms.'[25] Without a doubt, Bakhtin is right in pointing to varieties of language (codes which we switch all

[22] *Cultural Capital*, pp 63-4.
[23] 'Discourse in the Novel', cited in Guillory, p. 66.
[24] The reference is Guillory's, p. 66.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

the time) and to their social determination. It still is not clear however why literary language should be 'virtually indistinguishable' from real language. [26]

The model of defamiliarization (which Guillory also criticizes for being a form of psychologism) is and is not a polarization in that there would be no need for defamiliarization if the literary had not become common, i.e. ordinary. Isn't that Wordsworth's point in examining epitaphs where real language of mournful men becomes entangled in artificial poeticisms? I stress this point because it seems to me that its relevance can be extended to the work of such authors as J. M. Synge and indeed to the project of the Irish literary renaissance more generally. This later work replicates Wordsworth's efforts at defamiliarizing the familiar. As becomes evident from Synge's translations of canonical poetry (e.g. Petrarch), what was being defamiliarized (in both Wordsworth and Synge) was the idea of standard literariness. To adopt this model is not to deny that literariness is a historically and socially contingent variable but to insist on the essential difference of two traditions of speech – the spoken and the written – which Müller had also stressed. The appropriation of dialectal ('rustic') speech was designed precisely to sound a new note, to escape from the shackles of polite diction (Wordsworth), to follow a parallel linguistic universe imagined as an exit from standardizing literariness (Synge, Müller), or to subvert established ideas about what literature is as well as about what constitutes canonicity (Synge, Wordsworth). What appears to be the conclusion from the foregoing discussion is what Guillory cannot accept: that the literary is *not* the written nor the spoken modeled on written standards. It is *not* the language formed at school and perpetuated by institutionally sponsored ideas about canonicity which mete out cultural

[26] Guillory is perhaps misled by the tenor of Bakhtin's critique which does start out by saying that the OPOIAZ circle were naïve in their mistaken identification of literary language. The mistake was in the identification of literary language with real language, e.g. regional dialects, the Latin language, Old Bulgarian as a literary privileged language in Russia, etc. And here – even at this early stage – we see how wrong Guillory is in his co-opting Bakhtin into the thesis, which Guillory aims to prove, that literary language ends up being, in Wordsworth, equated with real language. Isn't this exactly what Bakhtin calls naïve in the work of the formalists? Bakhtin makes an interesting analogy: he says that to talk of real-life types of languages (e.g. dialects or the specialized language of the church or a foreign language) and to equate those with literary language is the same thing as to try and define a painting by its chemical elements. There is something more to a painting, apparently, than chemical elements. But does that necessarily lead us to social construction (a factor whose importance in the formation and valuation of literary language Bakhtin would surely not deny)? Bakhtin does talk about construction – but it is not a social construction which he focuses on but a poetic construction. 'Language acquires poetic characteristics only in concrete poetic construction.' (See Bakhtin Mikhail, Pavel N. Medvedev, P. N. Medvedev, *The Formal Method In Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction To Sociological Poetics*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978, p. 84) Bakhtin does complain that the formalists failed to 'cleanse it [the literary work] of the subjectivity and fortuitousness of individual perceptions', that they 'severed it from all those spheres in which the work becomes historically real and objective.' (*Ibid.*, p. 158) This does not necessarily mean, however, that literary language is *only* and above all a social construct. Indeed, Bakhtin preaches a kind of return to the literary work while at the same time insisting on 'a dialectical conception of the "intrinsic" and the "extrinsic" of literary and extra-literary reality (ideological and otherwise) as an obligatory condition for the formulation of a genuine Marxist literary theory.' (*Ibid.*, p. 155)

capital by labeling accepted (and therefore normalized) forms with the tag 'Prestige'. Far from arriving at a standard language (i.e. real speech shorn of provincialisms), Wordsworth insisted on the deviant; indeed his whole argument about poetic language is a celebration of the *non*-standard.

Even *were* it the case that the real language of men (when shorn of provincialisms, etc.) is not essentially different from the standard, it would be incorrect to say that authors do not have the right to imagine a form of speech radically and essentially different from the familiar language of literature. No matter how "constructed" Synge's poetic peasant language might be, however unreal Lady Gregory's Kiltartanese, the work of the Irish renaissance seems to polarize two versions of literary language. The one accepts spoken dialect, while the other eschews it. Ironically, Guillory would be right in claiming that the spoken and the written are not that different in the work of Irish renaissance authors – only this time, it is not the spoken purified from provincialisms[27] but rather the written purified from commonness. Precisely at the moment of crisis of canon formation, authors go to the spoken.

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[27] Guillory's main error is to follow Coleridge in his assumption that Wordsworth claimed that poetic language constituted the real language of men, only purified of provincialisms, etc. Wordsworth never claimed that. It is not as if poetic language gets closer to the standard once it has undergone the process of purification. Purification has nothing to do with provincialisms, dialectal detritus, etc. See note 14 above.