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Behind the Façades of an Aesopian Duck:
The Quest for Authenticity in the Literary Forgeries of David Solway

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> Authenticity is the abiding perversion of our times. It is indulged as a vice, worshipped as a fetish, embraced as a virtue. Like a deity it is pervasive, rapacious, and demanding; authenticity is the underwriter of history and culture, the guarantor of social legitimacy and personal integrity; it is the theorist of truth. Everything it touches turns to gold — or at least is burnished with a scrape of luster — and in that sense it is the mark of genius, the Midas touch, the apotheosis of capitalism.
>
> — Nick Groom, *The Forger's Shadow*

The Genius Marketing of an Indie Poet?

Let us, for a moment, go back to 24 October 2000, to a downtown Montreal Greek restaurant.[1] There is a cozy feel to the packed space. Herbs, Ouzo, and flamed Saganaki spice the warm air. Outside it threatens to snow. A man wearing a black wool coat and checkered scarf strides in out of the cold. That man is David Solway: poet, critic, and trickster. A few moments later, a shorter, rounder man enters wearing worn khakis and a fishing cap. He speaks only Greek and moves around the crowd with an awkward composure. He sits alone at the bar while Solway sits at a large table under the glow of eagerly appreciative faces. Drinks and food go round, and everyone is content. This is the Greek embassy's celebration for Solway's new book of translated poetry from Andreas Karavis. The Greek-speaking man at the bar is supposed to be Karavis — a man heralded by many as "Greece's modern Homer" (Downing).[2] Only, the man in the fishing cap is not Karavis. It just so happens that that man is Solway's dentist, a man of little poetic skill.[3]

Despite Solway's insistence on Karavis's physical existence, literary communities discovered his "hoax" (Starnino, "Who" 1).[4] While some

celebrated and propelled the hoax, others scorned him and questioned his intentions.[5] In any case, Solway managed to stir up the literary scene not only in Montreal but also nationwide in Canada and in Greece. But why did he do it? Could it be that this "Aesopian duck of Canadian poetry"[6] was doing what Rousseau considered only natural in a world full of inequality?[7] Since "the more anti-establishment you are as a performer, the more you direct your rage at the commercial mainstream . . . the more you become grist to the marketing mill" (Boyle 107), was Solway's forgery a cry for attention or a desperate marketing scheme? Is Solway's stunting a way for him to gain readership as an indie poet who has been preoccupied with exposing oppressive "literary hegemony" in Canada (Solway, Preface 10)? With his reputation for being a fierce critic who holds nothing back, he certainly knows how to make a pariah of himself when he attacks such monumental Canadian writers as Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje, Al Purdy, and — with particular vehemence — Anne Carson.[8] Is all that the basis of his reasoning for the invention of Karavis? Or is there more behind his literary hoaxing?

There are multiple ways to read Solway's work, and indeed, there are multiple Solways. His work is a presentation of layers upon layers of truths mixed in with verifiable and unverifiable facts, and creatively imagined voices: his poetry is a palimpsest of strategically constructed identities. Where, in these layers, is the *authentic* Solway? Is such a question rhetorical? What can his work tell us about the construction of an authentic identity? How does he use masks or personae in his construction of identity? I would like to address these questions by looking at Solway's *Saracen Island: The Poetry of Andreas Karavis* (2000) alongside some of his "criticism," particularly *An Andreas Karavis Companion* (2000). By drawing on theories of Romantic authenticity and poetic use of masks and personae, I hope to underline the need to revalue literary forgeries — of course, as with any value judgment, with caution. I will not attempt an investigation by close deconstruction of Solway's poetry and criticism to find the many minute clues that would expose Solway as a hoaxer. Though possible, that task would involve too much speculation. Instead, I will argue that Solway creates, forges, imagines, and brings to life Karavis in order to blur the culturally constructed binary of authentic/inauthentic art by nodding toward Romantic notions of authenticity while underscoring the connection between poetic masks or personae and the construction of authentic identity. I will show that

his work ultimately attempts to illuminate the idea that authenticity *lies* in multiplicity, paradox, and the dissension and disparity of a coherent, singular originality. His forgeries underscore a paradox that dominant popular Canadian culture refuses to accept as anything but authentic: the paradoxical belief in, and desperate quest for, an original, authentic existence.

Toward a Romantic Notion of Authenticity

> The Romantic engagement with literary forgery not only produced a canon of forgers and maintained forgery as a site of inspiration but also provided the ideological means of disabling their work. Romanticism asserted the cultural rights of the individual artist and original creative genius over the impostor or forger.
> — Nick Groom, *The Forger's Shadow*

Solway attempts to collapse the false binary of authentic/inauthentic by creating an authentic self through a literary forgery (Andreas Karavis through *Saracen Island*). He both advocates a freedom of expressive poetic identity and calls for the exposure of what he deems to be oppressive literary hegemony. To understand how he attempts to do both, I will first turn to the Romantic perception of authenticity and to the relationship of literary forgeries to such perceptions. According to Nick Groom, "authenticity carries to the very heart of culture the aesthetics of Romantic authorship — the conceits of genius, creativity, and especially that of originality . . . It also carries falsehood and fraudulence there as well" ("After" 293). "The critical definition of literary forgery in Great Britain," adds Groom, "was fixed at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. In other words, forgery waxed and waned at the same time as the Romantic Movement, and is profoundly implicated therein" ("Wright" 15). Groom's observations suggest that so-called authentic art needed forgeries to validate its existence and that authentic and inauthentic art forms have both genius and creativity driving them. He also points to the constructed nature of both authentic and inauthentic art since the definitions of these terms shift depending on social, economic, and historical circumstances.

In addition, "the relationship between literarity and spuriosity," argues K.K. Ruthven, "is framed as a binary opposition, in which literature is valorised as the authentic Self and literary forgery disparaged as its bogus Other . . . [However,] literary forgery is not so much the

disreputable Other of 'genuine' literature as its demystified and disreputable Self" (Prologue 3). Ruthven's argument asks us to see the spurious and the genuine "not as opposites but rather as allotropic states of one another" ("Cultivating Spuriosity" 69). Solway's work highlights Ruthven's thesis since, on one hand, *Saracen Island* is a creation and exploration of an "authentic" self (Karavis is an authentic self if we understand "authentic" to mean that which we invest in as "real"). On the other, it perpetuates fraudulence in its claim of authority on a "real" identity (read here as a physical being), and thus casts itself into the realm of rejection that surrounds literary forgeries.

Moreover, "being authentic now," writes Ana-Maria Sanchez-Arce, "is related to staying true to our inner selves rather than to accepting the social position into which we are born. This is a more individualistic definition of authenticity whose origins can be traced directly to the pseudo-religious rhetoric of the Romantic movement, which advocated a return to a nature that could be found within everyone" (139). There was, according to Sanchez-Arce (quoting David Simpson), a "'disestablishment of the text as an authority' . . . [and] an establishment of the author's and the reader's inner faculties as the main sources of authority over texts" (139). Sanchez-Arce points to how literary authority for the Romantics was governed by the individual, regardless of rank, rather than the text. Within that context, the definition of authentic art would be limitless since textual authority would be based on individual taste and judgment, rather than elite consensus or authoritative documents. Solway's hoax, then, both underscores the Romantic preoccupation with problematizing authenticity and blurs the distinction between authentic and inauthentic art. He not only highlights the dependence on literary forgeries of so-called authentic literary texts, but also underlines the culturally constructed nature of such definitions as deceptively authoritative.

Solway attempts to erase the distinction between inauthentic and authentic literature through his use of documentation. In his tracing the claim to authenticity of "official" documents, Groom suggests that "the word 'authentic' had shifted in meaning from the seventeenth century, when it indicated an axiomatic truth, to the later eighteenth century, when it came to mean the resident properties of actual documents . . . Authentic meant physical legal remains" ("From" 238-39). In *Saracen Island*, Solway uses a forged photograph, excerpts from invented criti-

cism, fabricated letters, and other documents that cumulatively lend currency to an aura of authenticity surrounding Karavis's existence. Solway uses that aura to validate his forgery. He uses his reader's assumptions against that same reader. However, since Karavis is an invented identity, Solway also undermines the power of such documents. Moreover, the exposure of his work as forgery simultaneously exposes valuing a constructed "authentic" as a false and fraught investment.

In *Saracen Island,* Solway's use of an authoritative photograph of the supposed Andreas Karavis both underscores his reader's assumptions and highlights the constructed nature of authentic documentation. Appearing on the second page, the photograph opens the collection. It is overexposed and grainy. There are no hard lines except for a few shadows that outline Karavis's left shoulder. The photograph has a spectral quality: Karavis's white shirt blends into his white beard and the white-walled background. His eyes are squinting under his black fisherman hat, and his expression suggests that the photographer had caught him off guard. It is the photograph's imperfection — seemingly poor quality and the subject's caught-off-guard look — that offers it an authentic luster. In an attempt to add to that imperfection, Solway includes a note on the photograph:

> what the photo does not reveal is the row of shot-glasses on the countertop and the cabochon ashtray overflowing with cigarette stubs. 'I wish you had managed to get them in too,' Karavis observed when he examined the picture, 'as a symbolic antidote to the terrible disease of self-righteous healthiness . . . that is infecting the country.' . . . Several photos which I snapped of Karavis aboard his fishing boat unfortunately did not turn out, spoiled by my inability to come to terms with the acetylene Greek light. These would have shown Karavis in his element, standing at the wheel and looking fiercely piratical. ("A Note" 134)

Several elements of this passage help make the photograph credible. First, there is the self-effacing tone. Solway criticizes his skill as a photographer and apologizes for not offering a photograph that captures Karavis in his true element. That is Solway's attempt to gain sympathy with his reader. The self-effacing quality of his note enables its reader to abandon skepticism of Karavis's existence — that is, if there were skepticism to begin with. (Indeed, who would have initially looked at it as a hoax?) Also, the note on the photograph comes at the end of the text,

taking on an appendix-like feel. Since an appendix tends to illuminate, with fact, some aspect of the text it follows, Solway's reader would have further reason to believe that the photograph is real. In the least, the note would help dispel initial doubt or questioning.

In addition, by including comments from Karavis, Solway employs *mise en abyme* to both bolster and undermine Karavis's authenticity. In the note, he has Karavis looking at, and commenting on, the fake photograph as it would appear in *Saracen Island*. Solway creates a picture, within a picture, within a picture, and so on. He reflects Karavis into an abyss of repetition. On one hand, since Karavis might be deemed (if he were real) to be a highly authoritative judge of his own work and picture, Solway, by quoting Karavis's observations, makes the photograph more genuine for his readers. However, on the other hand, since Karavis is his creation, Solway creates an image of perpetual forgery: the fake Karavis looking at a fake photograph in a fake note to a fake collection. In his attempt to authenticate a forged photograph, Solway underscores societal over-investment in the authority of purportedly factual documentation.

In *An Andreas Karavis Companion*, Solway evokes the epistolary mode of eighteenth-century travel literature as another verifying agent for Karavis. The book features an eidetic correspondence with Karavis, as well as excerpts from and comments on a fabricated travel brochure. Through the correspondence and the brochure — in addition to the photograph, criticism from some real and some not-so-real Greek critics, a forged interview, and an imagined essay from an undergraduate student at the University of Athens — Solway manages to shatter his reader's preconceived notions about authentic literary companions. "I furnish below an excerpt from a tourist brochure issued by the *dhimarcheion* of Lipsi," he writes before introducing the following excerpt from the brochure: "*Adding more to the charms of fabuled Lipsi there is existing here the great poet Andreas Karavis who is finding often in taverna Taj Mahal to play bagamon and chess with local fishermen and dancing traditional dances of Greece*" ("Tourist" 36). Solway later attempts to verify the claims made in the excerpt as "indeed the case": "I have happily participated in the venerable *chasapiko* dance with . . . Karavis . . . and *figura* punctuated by endless *Karelias*" (36). Solway's use of that travel brochure acts as a testimonial to his claims since it seems to be written by an unbiased party (by *unbiased*, I mean unbiased with respect to

Solway's claims) in a broken English (verbs are incorrectly conjugated; some words are spelled wrong, etc.). While the broken English of the excerpt plays on its reader's assumptions of how a small Greek-island travel brochure might read, the mention of Karavis's favourite brand of cigarette, *Karelia*, exemplifies the minute details that lend such documents an air of authenticity. In this sleight of hand, Solway is able to distance himself from the brochure by emphasizing his need to verify its claims. At the same time, by "verifying" the claims, he is able to attest to the authenticity of the brochure regardless of it actually having any "true" authority. While Solway goes to great lengths to create the most painstaking details (dates, names, places, and affiliations) in the *Companion*, most of the claims are unverifiable. Through the exposure of such documents as fraudulent (in the Romantic and even contemporary understanding of the term), Solway unveils both the dominant culture's insatiable desire for everything authentic and the cultural need to maintain an illusion of control over literary forgeries. In his compilation of forged documents, Solway aims to validate the study of Karavis as a canonizable poet and to authenticate Karavis's very existence.

In this attempt, Solway points to another particularly Romantic idea — that of the ability of creativity (read here as the source of both literature and literary forgeries, since they are arguably "allotropic states of one another") to inspire and raise the dead. "Inspiration is arguably the great unacknowledged mode of eighteenth-century writing," writes Groom after asking, "can literature raise the dead?" ("Ghost" 105-06). Groom goes on to explain that

> death stalks the forger, either literally as capital punishment or culturally as censorship. . . . Some writing, like spells and necronomica, is explicitly devoted to conjuring ghosts; memorials, testaments, biographies, and histories also try to 'bring their subjects alive', and *per se* all writing might be considered as evasive action against mortality. Such literature is inspirational, then, because it cheats the grave, and the trope is familiar in the morbid poetry of John Keats and other Romantics. . . . [If] literary forgery is accommodated within Romanticism as inspiration, is forgery the literature that characteristically raises the dead? ("Ghost" 105-06)

Connections between Solway's forgeries and Romantic literature and culture emerge from Groom's questioning and observations. First, the idea of creating personae or masks to cheat the grave is a familiar

Romantic trope, so Solway's attempt to "raise" Karavis, or give life to him, is a nod to the history of such tropes. Second, in my attempt to understand Solway's acknowledgement of a Romantic literary forgery tradition, Groom's statement suggests that Solway's work, as forgery, is inspirational (I will further elaborate on Romantic inspiration in my discussion of Solway's use of masks and personae). Third, through Groom's understanding of how literary forgery characteristically cheats death, emerges the notion that life can only be authenticated through an investment of others who deem such subjects alive. Through that lens, Solway's creation of Karavis raises him from the grave: by persuading others to acknowledge and invest interest in Karavis, Solway breathes life into him. Not only does Solway "raise [Karavis] from the dead," at the same time, he creates not only doubles but triples of himself and Karavis.

By placing Solway in a Romantic tradition, I am aligning him with both James Macpherson and his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760) and Thomas Percy and his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). While Macpherson claimed that *Fragments* consisted of the transcriptions and translations of the third-century highland bard Ossian, Percy's *Reliques* was "a three-volume anthology of ballads, songs, sonnets, and romance . . . [which] dramatize[d] the encounters between literate and oral media, between polite poetry and popular culture, and between scholarship and taste" (Groom *Making* 2). In his book *The Making of Percy's* Reliques, Groom argues that Percy was influenced by Macpherson's forgeries: "Percy could never have achieved what he did in the *Reliques* without the cautionary tale of James Macpherson. Percy tracked his career closely and learned from his mistakes. Macpherson was Percy's predecessor in the mythic construction of a national past" (73). I would like to suggest that Macpherson's and Percy's forgeries are the Romantic inspirations for Solway's Karavis forgeries. There are several similarities among the forgers; however, one aspect that sets Solway apart from both Macpherson and Percy is his reliance on the discovery of his hoaxing. Without the exposure of his own "fraudulence," Solway would not have been able to frustrate and shed light on societal anxieties and assumptions about authenticity.

To return to Solway's doubles and triples, Solway's "Note" on the photograph of Karavis, particularly Solway's use of *mise en abyme* (the fake within a fake within a fake), conjures the Romantic trope of the double or doppelgänger. According to the Oxford English Dictionary,

around 1830, the term "doppelgänger" (from the German word *doppel-gänger*, meaning "double-goer") referred to a double-ganger, or "the apparition of a living person; a double, wraith" ("doppelgänger" 1). The doppelgänger was also seen as a harbinger of death by several Romantic poets, particularly Percy Bysshe Shelley, who claimed to have seen his double around the time of his death by drowning. Moreover, the idea of the double is interwoven with Romantic notions about authenticity and literary forgery since the fear of the double, or of any replication, is at the heart of understanding the anxiety over the need for authenticity.

Further building on the idea of ghostly doubles, at the end of *Saracen Island*, Solway includes a commentary on Karavis's poetry. Solway's commentary relates to my previous discussion of forged "authenticating" documentation. Superficially, and before its reader can read it as forgery, the commentary purports to be a series of insightful readings of the translated poetry. However, read as a hoax, Solway's "commentary" *seems* to represent nothing more than his desire to comment on and illuminate his own work: his insightful readings, then, look more like the conceit of an attention-starved poet. Moreover, in the commentary, Solway writes on the poem "The Islander's Complaint," which was initially published in *Stones in Water* (1983) under Solway's name then subsequently published in *Saracen Island*. Here Solway claims that it had been first published "singly in a literary periodical, appearing in *Thalassa* in 1982 under the pseudonym [supposedly Karavis's] Christos Papandreas" ("Commentary" 126). Solway states that the appearance of his name as the author of that poem in *Stones in Water* was an accident, which he attributes to "not receiv[ing] the proofs from [his] publisher and so [he] could not check for errors and typos, of which the most glaring among a veritable peppering of blemishes was the omission of the author's name — not Karavis['s], of course, but the fictitious Papandreas" ("Commentary" 126). Within the same commentary, Solway includes Karavis's response to both Solway's "publishing mishap" and his use of Papandreas as a pseudonym:

> 'This is what I call a Greek irony,' he [Karavis] remarked, 'in the same way that in this country kouskous (gossip) [sic] precedes the act or Helen was in Egypt when everyone thought she was in Troy.' . . . Karavis claims he was merely testing the waters and never repeated the performance. . . . 'You might consider,' [Karavis] con-

tinued with a mischievous twinkle, 'that Christos Papandreas is the real and original Karavis' ("Commentary" 126).

Solway is forced to explain the poem's appearance in several collections under the name of different authors. In his explanation, he redirects suspicion of his own work as forgery onto Karavis. By exposing Karavis as having a pseudonym (Papandreas), Solway, in his trickster mode, not only effectively strengthens the aura of authenticity surrounding Karavis by leaving his reader captivated with Karavis's charm ("a mischievous twinkle"), but also points to his own use of pseudonyms: Solway, in essence, has his own double (Karavis) point to his "triple" (Papandreas, which Karavis claims as his own double). In addition to his doubles and triples (multiples), we learn in *An Andreas Karavis Companion* that Solway has a "quadruple," who he calls Karavis's "trippleganger," Andrew Carruthers ("Christos" 86). Karavis's "trippleganger" is, of course, another multiple of Solway since he and Karavis are one in the same. In extending the Romantic trope of the double to include multiple alter egos, Solway is able to raise into existence a cacophony of voices, each negotiating their surroundings as identifiably different entities. (We see this in how Karavis's poetry differs from Solway's, Papandreas's, and Carruthers's and in the different roles each plays: Karavis as Greece's "modern Homer"; Solway as Karavis's translator and a Canadian poet; Papandreas as Karavis's experimental alter ego; and Carruthers as a poet translated by Papandreas.)[9] Indeed, a superficial glance at Solway's current poetry collections shows him to be a great explorer of alter egos or personae, though he does not usually take them as far as to attempt to create their physical existence.[10] Solway's use of multiple personae points to the Romantic belief that multiplicity is a source of life, originality, genius, and creativity; for Solway, the exploration of multiplicity serves to authenticate the self.

In his use of multiple alter egos and in the subtle connections between each, which he discusses in both *Saracen Island* and *An Andreas Karavis Companion*, Solway highlights the impossibility of ever *knowing* or *locating* an original. He also underlines such a quest as not only frustrating but also futile since each double, and indeed any multiple, serves as a mask for a coherent stable identity. Solway's masks-underneath-masks underscore the illusory nature of a coherent, stable, and singular identity. His work reminds us that "since every *nomen* ('name') conceals

an omen, renaming is a way of revealing a hidden truth" (Ruthven, "Faultlines" 111).

The Man Behind the Mask

> Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth.
>
> — Oscar Wilde, "The Truth of Masks"

In the spirit of exploring the "Greek-ness" of Solway's literary exploration, I would like to move from a Romantic definition of authenticity toward one of the Greek etymologies of the word *authentic*. There are "violent meanings," notes Lionel Trilling, "which are explicit in the ancestry of the word 'authentic.' *Authenteo*: to have full power over; also, to commit a murder. *Authentes*: not only a master and a doer, but also a perpetrator, a murderer, even a self-murderer, a suicide" ("Society" 131). That etymology suggests that the quest for an authentic identity is fraught with violent self-sacrifice. In addition, the word "person," explains William Ian Miller, "comes from the word for mask, a theatrical term, still imbuing the word 'persona' with its sense of an assumed character" (121). Those definitions point to a poet's "self-murder" in the act of creating a mask or persona that has the power (and possibly even responsibility) to illuminate societal ignorance: in order to create a new "authentic" identity, the poet must sacrifice his own self to embrace the ideologies of an other. If we look at the use of the mask or persona in Solway's poetry through that lens, then we can start to see how his created identities become "authenticated" through the process of exploring each new self. Solway's creation of Karavis should not simply be dismissed as a worthless literary hoax. Indeed, his poetry asks us to look closer at what he is trying to achieve.

Solway's poem, "Light," (written through the mask of Karavis) highlights the violence associated with the Greek etymology of the word *authentic* while also pointing to the illusory control over the authentic/inauthentic. While we can read "Light" as a call for poets to exercise their responsibility to illuminate "truths" in the world, the poem also serves as a comment on societal anxieties over control of that which is seemingly inauthentic. It reads:

> Wield this light
> like the shield of Perseus.

> Whatever you must kill
> kill it by reflection.
> Do not look into the face
> of your peculiar terror
> or you will become stone.
> Do not look into the sun
> or you will become blind.
> Look into the space
> between stone and darkness.
> Look
> Into the burnished
> bronze of light
> and kill
> whatever demon haunts your solitude. ("Light" 79)

Both the content and form of this poem warn and instruct against the paradoxical quest for a stable and genuine original. In the poem, the speaker calls for an exposure of culturally suppressed "truths." The line "Wield this light," the first in a series of commands, finds its meaning through the simile "like the shield of Perseus." In one of the two best-known versions of the Perseus and Medusa myth, Perseus slays Medusa when she looks into her own reflection in Perseus's shield. In the other, Perseus locates the sleeping Medusa by the reflection of her image in his shield, after which he slays her. By using the myth of Perseus and Medusa as a vehicle to describe how to "wield light," Solway draws attention to a multifaceted definition of "light." The speaker refers to light as reflection and replication (mirror images), as a tool for illumination, and as representative of both truth and illusion. Solway underscores the paradox of "light" as both truth and illusion in the line "burnished bronze of light": a smooth, lit surface may offer a *true* reflection; however, the phrase "burnished bronze" suggests that polished and shiny surfaces offer little depth. "Burnished" becomes a verb that can describe the fervid attempt to maintain a bright, illusory surface. In addition, "Wield this light" reads as a call for poets to use "light" as a tool to reflect the "ugliness" (Medusa being the "ugliness" that Perseus must overcome) that "lurks" in the shadows of societal ignorance. At the end of the poem, the line "whatever demon haunts your solitude" suggests that the commands are directed to a lone person, or one existing in "solitude." This reference to solitude recalls the Romantic period since the concept of poetic solitude has been attributed to the Romantic poets,

particularly Lord Byron. By calling for the "killing" of societal ignorance, Solway suggests that the poet must be willing to sacrifice himself ("become stone" or "become blind") to illuminate that ignorance (read here as ignorance to the constructed nature of hegemonic cultural beliefs and practices). While he calls for a new poetic responsibility, the form of the poem further underlines the illusory nature of control.

The spaced couplets in the poem suggest that "neat," coherent patterns (perfect rhyming couplets), along with smooth, perfect reflections, are illusions since upon closer inspection such patterns in the poem are discordant and untidy. The poem is written in couplets that are marked not by rhyme but by space. Solway uses enjambment in an attempt to transcend the "boundaries" that are marked by the spaced couplets: the first two couplets are sentences, but that strict pattern fails to hold, and the sentences become longer, crossing into each following couplet. The sentence structure of the poem spills over into the neat-*looking* couplets. Absolute control over such perfection and, in turn, such authenticity is an appeal to illusion. Here, underlining the quest to control the original by "casting-out" the seemingly counterfeit, the form suggests that the desire for such control is insatiable.

Moreover, the rhythm in the first line of the second couplet, "Whatever you must kill," is interrupted by a rhythmic chiastic reversal. The first line of the couplet is written in iambs, while the second line, "kill it by reflection," takes on a trochaic scansion. The stressed and unstressed syllables in one line mirror the other: they are rhythmic inversions of one another. Such chiasmus is signaled not by the chiastic construction of words mirrored by the same words, but in reflected, opposite beats. The repetition of the word "kill" acts as the point of entry into the depths beyond light's "burnished" surfaces. Only after the reversal of rhythm occurs does the enjambment begin to "pierce" the "neatness" of sentenced couplets. That only happens after the repetition of the word "kill" pierces the rhythmic surface of the poem. Both the content and form of this poem show how reflection can "kill" control by pointing to that control as an illusion without an original. While Solway assumes Karavis's identity and draws on a tradition of Greek mythology to call for new poetic responsibility, he also inextricably interweaves control and chaos so as to frustrate any attempt to claim each as the opposite of the other. While Solway "slips" into the guise of Karavis to both criticize and unveil, his work also expresses the dangers of explor-

ing other voices. In *Creating Another Self*, Samuel Maio maintains that each poet rejects the self in favour of a persona, the speaker of a poem:

> a type of self-rejection was 'necessary to write the poem . . . [which can be likened to] Keats's informing and filling another body, Eliot's idea of escaping the personality, Valéry's idea of creating a superior self, Yeats's notion of the mask, (and) Auden's idea of becoming someone else for the duration of the poem.' [They] have as their basis 'an assumption that the self as found, as given, is inadequate and has to be rejected.' (Richard Hugo qtd. in Maio 1)

What Maio is pointing to here is that in assuming a persona, whether for the length of a poem or, as is the case with Solway's Karavis, over the course of multiple publications, the poet must sacrifice an "inadequate" self. The rejected self is inadequate in the sense that it works against the existence of the new persona or mask. That, as Solway explores in "The Truth about Vampires," can be detrimental to one's ability to see one self as a coherent fixed identity: [11]

> One morning I looked into the mirror
> and saw only the mirror,
> the walls and fixtures in reverse
> and water droplets like a fall of tears.
> After the initial shock
> I realized I had become a vampire.
> I opened my mouth to exclaim
> but could utter only shrieks and ululations.
> My words had been taken away,
> my ardor for proverbs,
> my everyday converse and my love of poetry.
> Worse! My self, I wanted to shout,
> my self, what has become of my self?
> It's no joke being a vampire
> despite the novels, the lore, the nocturnal myths.
> Do you want to know the truth about vampires?
> A vampire is a fragile, ephemeral thing,
> an exile from language,
> so easily subdued,
> without teeth and with a horror of blood. ("The Truth" 31)

In the commentary to his own poetry, Solway provides a short reading of the meaning of the poem. He describes the poem as "an odd piece . . . in

essence, a lament for the contemporary dilution or attrition of genuine, vigorous, exalted speech in a world that conspires against articulation" (30). The poem can also be read as a commentary on the hardships that the poet, exploring different masks or personae, might undergo: in the poet's quest to create, explore, and develop new identities, and in desire for multiplicity or poly-identity, the poet is unable to "enjoy" the illusion of a singular and particular identity. If we see this poem as a comment on the poet who explores multiple identities, we then can equate the poet to a type of "vampire" that "sucks" the life from new identities in order to satisfy the lack of a single, coherent identity. While the lack of reflection ("and saw only the mirror") points to the lack of a distinguishable identity, the lines "It's no joke being a vampire / despite the novels, the lore, the nocturnal myths" point to the solitude of a poet who ventures into the persona mode. The last four lines of the poem that offer a "truth" about vampires suggest that poets, like vampires, are not at all that they seem at first to be. The poet, like the vampire "exposed" in the poem, is "fragile" and "ephemeral" because of the lack of one stable identity. The poet who engages in the persona mode is continuously moving among identities. The lines "an exile from language / . . . / without teeth and a horror for blood" suggest that while the poet may exist in and for language and the vampire, in turn, for blood, each has a deep-seated "horror" of his or her dependence on language or blood. In "The Truth About Vampires," written through one of Solway's personae (Andrew Carruthers, whose poetry was supposedly translated by Karavis), Solway expresses the lonely journey of both the vampire in his or her quest for blood and the poet who explores persona.

Yet for Karavis (Solway), existing in poetic solitude among endless personae is better than existing as a "diluted" or "over-infiltrated" self. Karavis makes this point in his interview with Solway:

> [It is] my life long conviction that what we once called the 'self,' the centre of genuine, personal and reflective response to the grandeur and complexity of existence, is the greatest casualty of the age we live in. It has practically ceased to exist in any significant way. The self has been infiltrated by a political and economic and neoscholastic language that is dangerously abstract. We think in terms of slogans, generalities, clichés, words bound up like rice in vine leaves and deposited in cans for popular consumption. ("An Interview" 51)

On one hand, Karavis's observations point to current cultural modes of identity building through commercial brands or branding. Such modes offer the illusion of a unique and personal identity. On the other hand, his statement suggests that there is a "genuine" self, but that it is too infiltrated by political and commercial forces. Karavis's statement echoes Solway's own criticism (despite their being the same person, they are separate identities): "Canada has too little individual self and too much artificial unity. Our poets are most truly Canadian not when they are 'Canadian' but when they are eclectic, seeking tributaries from everywhere to swell the national brook. They are most truly faithful when they are most impenitently promiscuous" ("The Flight" 30). Here, Solway is pointing to his own "creative genius" since his own work (creating Karavis) attempts to "swell the national brook." We can also consider it "promiscuous" in the sense that it is deemed a forgery or hoax that is "unfaithful" to any quest for authenticity. His comments suggest that it is the "Aesopian ducks" that are truly "Canadian." In essence, and in the spirit of pointing to the Romantic notion of inspiration, Solway authenticates his poetic selves since his alter egos are inspirations manifested in poetry:

> Inspiration is a form of composition that guarantees the authenticity of the poetic self precisely because it lies outside that self, in some other region. In journeying to such a place, a writer 'loses' him or herself, or writes as if 'possessed' by another, and it is the transit between these two states of self and other that then authenticates the poet. But by being alien, inspiration is in a sense inauthentic — necessarily so — and perhaps literary forgeries (as inauthentic) can be read as radical examples of this inspiration, and therefore inspirational in themselves. (Groom, "Ghost" 106-07)

Under such a lens, Solway's poetry and his exploration of different personae are his ways of authenticating his self. He is evoking a radical form of inspiration through his writing in a Romantic, literary forgery tradition that transgresses the culturally constructed binary of authentic/inauthentic.

Conclusion: What of Past and Future Canadian Poet-Hoaxers?

> If one is true to one's own self for the purpose of avoiding falsehood to others, is one being truly true to one's own self? The moral end in view implies a public end in view, with all that this suggests of

the esteem and fair repute that follow upon the correct fulfilment
of a public role.

—Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*

Solway's *Saracen Island* and *An Andreas Karavis Companion* are forger-
ies that frustrate genre expectations. Under theories of authenticity,
Solway's hoax points to a return to Romantic values for the purpose of
redeeming current cultural quests for an illusory "genuine" authenti-
city. The complex layers of his work and his multiple personae uncover
cultural assumptions that attempt to reject or place value onto any text/
poet/identity. An examination of Karavis underscores the fragility of
the fluid and ephemeral definition of authenticity, which the current
dominant culture deems authoritative. It is our contemporary cultural
belief that "the inauthentic . . . taints and poisons, is disorderly and
abnormal, and requires vigilance to guard against it. . . . The forger
is treated, then, much as the villain, the lunatic, the bastard, even the
ghost are treated: as a social abnormality to be excluded, to be literally
treated as if sick" (Groom, "After" 295). Perhaps that explains Solway's
insistence on his exclusion from the "literary hegemony" that he equates
with Purdy, Atwood, Ondaatje, and Carson (writers whom he claims
are disingenuous).

In contrast to his poetry, which attempts to blur the separation of
authentic/inauthentic art, it could be argued that Solway's criticism
concretizes that binary as mutually exclusive since, in his own criti-
cism, he accuses highly canonized poets of counterfeit expression. To
that argument, it could be rebutted that the disparity in tone between
Solway's criticism and poetry is another exploration of voice — the
voice of David Solway, the literary critic. Indeed, Solway's meta criti-
cism supports the argument that criticism, like poetry, should include
investigations of the self: "I don't think that contemporary criticism,
brilliant as it may be at times, is genuine. The current critical process
instead takes us out of our essential selves. It doesn't permit us to explore
the self, but represents an almost determined effort to evade the heter-
onymous impulses of the self" (Starnino, "Interview" 152). However,
that topic should be the subject of a further, more in-depth study of a
greater sampling of Solway's — and other Canadian literary forgers'
— poetry and criticism.

In the spirit of trying to look toward a new understanding of
Canadian literary hoaxes and forgeries, I would like to end this paper

with a quote from David Solway, the Canadian Aesopian Duck, whose hoaxing asks us to consider Canada's long history of literary forgeries:

> Canadian poets have been given the unique opportunity of mak-
> ing an equally unique identity for themselves as a function of their
> unbehaust [sic] condition, hewing the wilderness of self into an
> unprecedented order. In so doing, identity is solidly founded in dif-
> ference, in the fact that each poet can work up the materials of place
> and language into that signature alloy we call individual style. The
> saving paradox is that the Canadian poet is ideally Canadian only
> inasmuch as he or she is distinctively unlike any other Canadian
> poet. . . . Eventually the synthesis [between the traditional and
> the local as inspiration] will 'take' and an identity will gradually
> arrive, a rich and composite identity, hybrid and syncretic, yet no
> less genuine for all that. But we must drop this 'Canadian' shib-
> boleth that so restricts and oppresses, this puerile, involuted and
> autistic pursuit of our mythical selfhood, and cultivate instead a
> healthy indifference to that collective self-consciousness which is
> at present one of our most distinguishing, if least distinguishing
> characteristics. ("The Flight" 30-31)

Author's Note

Notes

[1] Hays. Unless otherwise cited, the remainder of the depiction, in modest celebration of fiction for fiction's sake, is fictional.

[2] Downing writes, "It all began in October 1999, when the review *Books in Canada* ran a lavish spread on Karavis, touting him as 'Greece's modern Homer'" (screen 1).

[3] Hays writes, "There's a portrait of Karavis in the edition of *Saracen Island*, though some have noted that he looks suspiciously like the Solway family dentist" (screen 2).

[4] On 14 November 2009, I presented a portion of this paper at the Midwest Modern Language Association (MMLA) to an audience that included one of Solway's former students from Concordia University. That student told me that Solway had spent much of his time talking about the difficulties of translating Karavis's Greek poetry to English.

The class believed Karavis and his poetry to be "real" until late in the semester, when they learned Karavis was a forgery.

⁵ See Downing, particularly his mention of "conspirators" who joined in the "fun" by perpetuating Solway's "hoax" as real; I place the term "hoax" in quotation marks because it becomes a slippery term when one cannot clearly locate authorial intent. For example, is it a hoax if the author believes it is a hoax? I'm thinking of Grey Owl (Archibald Belaney), whom many would not classify as a man attempting a literary hoax but as an Indigenous man — and deep lover and protector of nature — born into a British man's body. Also, he had a strong belief that he was, indeed, half Native. Such a case is exemplary of the multiple degrees of hoaxing.

⁶ Carmine Starnino quotes Solway as saying, "I sense that I am the Aesopian duck of Canadian poetry . . . the one that doesn't get invited to the party because the other animals can't decide what they are dealing with, beast or fowl" (Introduction 8).

⁷ That is, "ever since competition for rank, property or power made its appearance . . . 'it became the interest of men to appear what one is really not'" (Rousseau qtd. in Ferrara 47).

⁸ "I am ready to challenge the literary hegemony of what we might call the Big Four —Al Purdy, Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje and Anne Carson — all of whom I contend are writers of such inferior quality that in a truly literate society they would be recognized as a national embarrassment" (Solway, Preface 10).

⁹ "I find the Papandreas poems strangely un-Karavian, despite the almost skeletal quality of the diction" (Solway, "Christos" 86). Here, we see that Solway is pointing to the subtle differences between Karavis and Papandreas, which is actually an exercise wherein Solway comments on his ability to successfully create different alter egos. For a commentary on some distinctions between Solway's poetry and Karavis's, see Starnino, "Who is Andreas Karavis?"

¹⁰ Although Solway explores voice in his more recent poetry collections, he does not go so far as to attempt to authenticate (as he does with Karavis) the physical existence of such "voices." For some examples of his other explorations of voice, see his collections *The Pallikari of Nesmine Rifat*; *Reaching for Clear: The Poetry of Rhys Savarin*; and *The Properties of Things: From the Poems of Bartholomew the Englishman*. It is also interesting to note that Solway explores race, gender, class, and culture in his other various explorations of identity (which would make a very interesting and fruitful further investigation).

¹¹ It is interesting to note that this poem is "buried" under several authors (pseudonyms for Solway). In *An Andreas Karavis Companion*, Solway claims that this poem was written by Andrew Carruthers and translated by Karavis (30).

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