

Simplified Speling Sosiëty Pamflet Nr. 4.

Dhe eesthetik argument bie William Archer, M.A.

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I

A distinggwisht novelist, diskusing dhe problem ov speling widh dhe prezent rieter, eksprest dhe vue dhat simplifikaeshon wood leev dhe langgwej baer and bauld, liek dhe whietwosht waul ov a Methodist chapel. "U must hav ornament!" he sed, waeving hiz sigaret, az if to ilustraet hiz point, "U must hav arrabesk!" Dhis iz probably dhe hapyest wae in which dhe eesthetik arguement haz ever been staeted. It haz dhe noetabl advaantej ov not tiing dhe speeker doun to an eksklusiv championshon ov dhe partikuelar konvenshonz ov dhe nienteenth sentuery. He simply deklaerz in faevor ov eny speling dhat haz "vienleevz in its haer," or, in udher wurdz, a taestfool garnishing ov suepurfluüs leterz. He iz an anty-rashonalist in jeneral, and iz not bound to defend in deetael dhe speshal formz ov unreezon nou dominant. If poot to it, he iz free to deklaer dhat dhe mor lugzueryant "arrabesk" ov (sae) Elizabeethan speling iz preferabl to dhe kornparrativly meeger ornamentaeshon ov todae. And, to duu mie frend justis, he probably wood not hav shrunk from dhis lojikal konsekwens ov hiz theesis. He wood hav maentaend widhout blenching dhe eesthetik suepeeryorrity ov dheez lienz oever dhe moderniezd vurshon -

"Seemes Maddam, nay it is, I know not seemes.
Tis not alone my incky cloake good mother,
Nor customary suites ov solembe blacke,
Nor windie suspiration of forst breath;
No, nor the fruitfull river in the eye,
Nor the dejected havior of the visage,
Together with all formes, moods, chapes of grieve
That can denote me truely." *Hamlet*, ed. 1604.

Heer Shakespeare, or hiz printer, dhoe he simplifiez "forst" and "havior," kontrievz to get in forteen suepurfluüs leterz widh which we nou dispens. But if we wont dhe langgwej paded and uphoelsterd, shuurly dhis deenedneshon iz puer los. Or hav we nou arievd, bie divien Providens, at just dhe riet amount ov pading, or "arrabesk"? Woz it a nies eesthetik diskriminaeshon dhat led us to kut of dhe **ke** in Shakespeare'z **musicke** and **physicke**, dhe **ge** in hiz **dogge** and **flagge**, but to retaan dhe **gh** in hiz **slaughter**, dhe **ugh** in hiz **though**, and to riet **compelled** whaer he roet **compeld**, **scanned** in plaes ov hiz **scand**?

Dhe eesthetik arguement taeks meny les injeenyus formz dhan dhat given it bie mie frend. Wun rieter (I hav unfortuenetly lost dhe referens, but I beleev I kwoet aulmoest literally) haz deklaerd point-blank dhat "English speling iz a thing ov buety, widh which irreverent medlerz shal not be suferd to tamper." Anudher rieter (straenj to sae, in dhe uezhuealy saen and moderet *Westminster Gazette*) haz been permitted to deskrieb dhe dezier for reformaeshon az "hidyus luenasy"; and dhe turm "Vandalizm," komonly aplyed to dhe eforts ov reformerz, asuemz an eesthetik value in dhe formz which dhe "Vandalz" atak. Dhe saem implikaeshon iz manifest in dhis pasej from dhe *Academy* -

“Eny propoezalz to chaenj dhe speling ov dhe English langgwej wood rekwier dhe sankshon ov dhoez huu uez dhat langgwej for dhe purpos ov buety in vurs and proez: *i.e.*, poëts and rieterz ov proez. To poot dhe kaes kwiet frankly, we kontend dhat a man huu haz riten eeven haaf a duzen buetifool sonets noez a good deel mor about dhe English langgwej dhan aul dhe ‘profest stuedents’ and aul dhe drie-az- dust eksperts in etimolojy poot together in a braket skwaerd.”

Dhe moest formal and kwaesie-filosofikal staetment ov dhe eesthetik pozishon widh which I am akwaented okurz in an artikl bie Mr. Max Eastman in dhe *North American Review* for February, 1909, from which I shal hav freekwent okaezhon to kwoet. Mr. Eastman sez -

“In an aej which reduesez aul thingz to dhe soe-kauld ‘praktikal test’ we ar proen to forget dhat a thing iz praktikal oenly bekauz it leedz to an inkrees ov sum plezher which iz not praktikal, but enjoid for its oen saek. If we ar goïing to maek our langgwej praktikal, we chaenj it in such a wae az to maek it mor uesfool to us in geting at dhoez thingz which we wont, not bekauz dhae ar uesfool, but just bekauz we wont dhem. Dhaer iz no ues saeving muny on skuulz unles we kan uez it for sumthing we lick beter.’ [1] Nou, wun ov dhe thingz dhat we liek, not bekauz it iz buetifool, but just bekauz we liek it, iz buety. A graet meny ov dhe truëst and best Amerikanz ar vietaly interested in buety az manifested in literary art. To dhem wurdz hav a value, not for whot dhae kan duu oenly, but for whot dhae ar.”

Dhis iz an unkornpromiezing and surtenly kwiet kornpetent staetment ov dhe kaes, which wood probably be aksepted, in the maen, bie aul huu taek dhaer stand at dhe eesthetik point ov vue. Let us, dhen, egzamin a litl into dhe merits ov dhe arguement.

II

Our furst step must be to drau a distinkshon which dhe eesthetisists (if I mae soe kaul dhem) habituealy oeverlook. Dhaer plee iz not singgl, but dubl; dhae argue sumtiemz for dhe puer buety, and sumtiemz for dhe ekspresivnes, ov dhe kurrent speling, widhout (apaerently) realiezing dhe diferens. But a diferens dhaer iz, kleeer and esenshal. Boeth pleez, or iedher plee, mae be valid or invalid; but dhae ar not wun and dhe saem plee. Let us konsider dhem in dhe order staeted.

Furst, dhen, az to dhe arguement from puer buety, which iz praktikaly dhe “arrabesk” ov mie novelist frend. Widhout plunjing into an abstruus analisis, we mae taek it, I think, dhat, in dhis konekshon, “buety” meenz dhat kwolity in objekts which givz plezher to dhe ie. But plezher must heer be understood to meen sum pozitiv sensaeshon aktivly prezent to konshusnes - not dhe meer absens ov paen or diskumfort. Nou I think a litl sinseer introspekshon wil enaebel eny intelijent purson to realiez dhat dhe araenjment ov leterz in a wurd givz him noe pozitiv plezher, dhoe dhaer disaraenjment, or rearaenjment in an unfamiliar order, mae giv him kwiet pozitiv diskumfort and anoians. Dhe *defeet ov ekspektaeshon* aulwaez tendz to be unplezant; but it duz not in dhe leest foloe dhat evry foolfilment ov ekspektaeshon iz pozitivly plezant, much les dhat it afordz us eesthetik gratifikaeshon. Dhe falasy ov our eesthetisists, dhen, liez in argueing, from dhe uglines (az dhae esteem it) ov simplified speling to dhe buety ov konvenshonal speling. Dhe sensaeshon ov uglines iz, for dhem, kwiet real. It iz a siekolojik daetum ov which aul rashonal reformerz must taek akount. It iz, indeed, dhe wun seeryus obstakl to simplifikaeshon. I wil goe furdher, and sae dhat fue reformerz ar dhemselvz unkonshus ov dhe shok okaezliond bie unfamiliar wurd-formz. But dhae noe dhat dhe uneezines ariezez from dhe interupshon ov habit, not from eny los ov pozitiv buety.

Dhae fiend bie ekspeeryens dhat a nue habit suun groez up, and dhat a form dhat satisfiez dhe reezon duz not long kontinue to jar upon dhe unreezoning nurvz. Moroever - and dhis iz dhe esenshal fakt - dhae rekogniez dhat for kuming jeneraeshonz, akustornd from dhe furst to reezonabl formz, dhoez formz wil hav niedher les nor mor eesthetik charm dhan dhe klumzy misspelingz ov todae.

It mae be sed, houevar, dhat I hav asuemd dhe point on which dhe arguement turnz - naemly, dhe rezult ov dhat "sinseer introspekshon" which iz to konvins dhe reeder dhat hiz disliek for chaenj duz not implie eny pozitiv buety in dhe konvenshonal forniz. It iz, ov kors, imposibl for eny wun purson to deturmin whot eny udher purson feelz or duz not feel; but it iz posibl to point to a good meny reezonz for douting dhe analitik insiet ov eniwun huu deklaerz dhat dhe wurdz ov dhe English langgwej, regarded az meer vizueal objekts, ar to him thingz ov inheerent buety.

It iz elementary, but perhaps not unnesesary, to insist dhat sonorrity haz nuthing to duu widh dhis arguement. Dhaer iz noe kwestyon az to dhe buetifool sonorrity ov meny thousandz ov wurdz. Dhe akueret and konsistent reprezentaeshon ov dhat sonorrity (dhe truu, dhe oenly, lief ov eny wurd) iz presiesly dhe objekt at which we ar aeming. We duu not propoez to aulter a singgl sound in dhe langgwej, eksept in soe far az a reezonabl orthografy wood tend to chek sluvnlines ov pronunnyaeshon. Whot dhe eesthetisists asurt iz dhat wurdz hav a buety for dhe ie, kwiet distinkt from dhaer buety for dhe eer; and it iz heer dhat we join isue.

Wel nou, let dhe reeder konsentraet hiz atenshon on eny wurd he pleezez, dievest hiz miend ov its sonorrity ank regarding it az a meer vizibl objekt, aask himself whaer its buety kumz in? It iz a longger or shorter string ov leterz, moest ov dhem ov ueniform hiet, but sum iedher riezing abuv or fauling beloe dhe normal level. Sum ov dhe leterz ar perhaps mor graesfool dhan udherz - we alou or denie dhem dhat kwolity in vurtue ov surten asoesyaeshonz not very hard to analiez. But not wun ov dhem haz eny remarkabl buety ov form: we did not chuuz dhem for dhaer buety, we duu not value dhem for dhaer buety. Dhaer ar meny alfabetz far mor pleezing to dhe ie dhan ourz - dhe Greek, for instans, and dhe Ierish. If we atacht eny real importans to dhe eesthetik aspekt ov dhe printed wurd, we aut at wuns to adopt a nue alfabet. Dhaer ar several in which dhe sukseshon ov kurvz realy duz produes dhe efekt ov a raadher buetifool arrabesk. In partikuelar founts ov tiep, noe dout, artist printerz hav striven to impart a surten buety to dhe Roeman alfabet; but not wun book in ten thousand eeven aspierz to dhis sort ov buety; nor iz it dhat which dhe eesthetisists hav in miend. Indeed, we mae at wuns poot asied aul kwestyon ov dhe buety ov individueal simbolz, for dhat wood not be afekted bie dhaer aranjment in rashonal, insted ov irashonal seekwensez.

Dhe vizibl buety ov a wurd, dhen, must rezied in dhe hoel wurd, not in its individueal leterz. But whot ar dhe elements ov buety? Ar dhae not outlien, proporshon, simetry, kolor, liet-and-shaed? Dhe laast tuu elements ar manifestly absent from dhe printed wurd. When we tauk ov dhe "kolor" ov a wurd, we think, not ov its leterz, but ov dhe asoesyaeshonz konekted widh iedher its sound or its meening. Az for dhe udher three elements, dhae must evidently be saut in dhe dispozishon ov dhe ekskresent leterz amung dhoez which keep to dhe level. Wurdz kompoezd entierly ov unekskresent leterz hav noe mor outlien dhan a bar ov soep, and konsiderably les dhan a poeker. But level wurdz ov eny length ar raer; kan we fiend buety, simetry, proporshon in dhe far korloner wurdz ov mor or les broeken outlien? If soe, dhaer must be sum lau or lauz deturmining, from dhe eesthetik point ov vue, dhe best distribueshon ov dhe ekskresensez; and wurdz must be mor or les buetifool akording az dhae konform to or sin agaenst dheez kanonz. But noe wun, I ventuer to sae, haz ever hurd

ov eny such kanonz, or tried to formuelaet dhem. Whot iz dhe moest buetifool form ov wurd? Dhat which beginz and endz widh an upward ekskresens? or dhat which beginz widh an upward and endz widh a dounward ekskresens? or dhat which haz tuu ekskresent leterz egzaktly in dhe midl? or dhat which formz a sau-ej widh three upward or three dounward ekskresensez? Dhaer iz noe aanser to such kwestyonz; dhae ar absouletly fuetiel: Az a mater ov fakt, ekskresent leterz okur at evry posibl point and in evry posibl order; nor haz eniwun ever dremt ov atempting to aulter or ajust dhaer distribushon widh an ie to "arrabesk." Dhaer ar a fue wurdz which prezent anomaliz or freeks ov araenjment - wurdz, for instans, liek **Hannah** or **level** which kan be red bakwardz az wel az forwardz. Dhae wil skaersly be klaemd, houeever, az egzaamplz ov dhe buety ov simetry; and eeven if dhae ar, dhaer iz not wun wurd in ten thousand dhat prezents eny such karrakteristik. Dhe asurshon. ov inheerent vizueal buety, in fakt, iz soe uterly empty dhat, in order to reezon agaenst it at aul, we hav to lend it mor substans dhan it aktuealy pozesez. [2] Wun fienal konsideraeshon iz perhaps wurth sujesting. If printed wurdz ar thingz ov vizueal buety, dhat buety aut to be az apaerent to a forrener, hoelly ignorant ov English, az to eniwun born to dhe ues ov dhe langgwej. Indeed, dhe forrener aut to be dhe beter juj ov such buety, inazinuch az hiz puerly vizueal persepshon wood be undisturbd bie eny irelevant asoesyaeshonz ov sound or sens. But we fiend, az a mater ov ekspeeryens, dhat dhe wurdz ov eny langgwej ar far mor apt to seem grotesk dhan buetifool to dhe ie ov an obzurver huu noez nuthing ov dhaer meening and kan maek oenly wield gesez at dhaer sound. Sily karrikatuerz ov dhe vizueal aspekt ov unnoen tungz ar amung dhe unfaeling resorsez ov cheep huemor. Whot Englishman iz giltles ov having laaft at dhe apaerent absurditiz ov Welsh? - in which, bie dhe wae, dhe speling iz fonetik in a hie degree. Yet dhaer iz noe reezon to dout dhat Welsh iz az buetifool in a Welshman'z iez az English in an Englishman'z; nor iz dhaer eny reezon to supoez dhat Welshmen huu ar ignorant ov English cherish an envyus admiraeshon for dhe vizueal buety ov English wurdz.

If wurdz, dhen, hav noe inheerent buety for dhe ie, hou kumz dhe iluezhon ov dhaer buety to be soe wied - spred and deep-ruuted? Dhis kwestyon iz partly aanserd abuv; but in mor jeneral turmz it mae be sed dhat we instinktivly atribuet to dhe simbol ov a buetifool sound and a buetifool iedea part ov dhe plezherabl sensaeshon which dhe sound and iedea evoek in us. Dhis efekt ov asoesyaeshon iz soe inevitabl dhat it iz perhaps rong to speek ov it az an iluezhon. Dhe eror ov our opoenents liez not in deklaering dhat surten wurdz ar buetifool in dhaer iez, but in faeling to see dhat dhis buety ariezez from asoesyaeshonz which, for dhaer children and children'z children, wil groe up kwiet az redily around a rashonal az around an irashonal araenjment ov leterz. And dhe rashonal araenjment wil pozes dhe real buety which liez in dhe just adaptaeshon ov meenz to endz.

It iz skaersly a diegreshon to point out dhat dhe sens ov uglines which arouzez soe much hostility to simplifikaeshon iz larjly due to dhe fakt dhat dhe very absurdity ov our kurrent speling haz tempted meny rieterz - Thackeray, for egzaampl, in England, and "Josh Billings" in Amerika - to maek huemorus kapital out ov it in dhe wae ov berlesk. Peepl regard dhe fantastik speling ov dheez huemorists az a satier upon "fonetik" reform; whaeraz, in fakt, it iz a satier upon dhe reklesly unfonetik naetuer ov our konvenshonz. In beter-spelt langgwejez dhaer iz litl temptaeshon to dhis form ov huemor, and it iz litl praktist. Meny ov dhe spelingz, boeth ov Mr. C. J. Yellowplush and ov Josh Billings, represent dhe respektiv dialektz ov dheez distinggwisht karakterz and hav no mor baering on our subjekt dhan, for instans, dhe broeg ov Mr. Dooley. [3] But a konsiderabl number ov Mr. Yellowplush'ez eksentrisitiz ariez from dhe atempt to represent korekt soundz bie methodz which ar aulsoe "korekt" - in udher wurdz. Such ar "emocean," "scentiment," "I boughed again," "if you're up to snough," "soughring," "say neigh to him," "mistek," "a phig for your politix," "troat," "roag," "the bell

was wrung,” “a pail fase and a pare of falling shoulders,” “yousual,” “nevyou,” “a pint of small bier,” “let me draw a veil over the seen,” “your write in giving them all possible prays.” Dheez spelingz ar a plaen testimony in sum kaesez to dhe ridikuelusnes, in aul to dhe wield inkonsistensy ov our establisht konvenshonz. Dhaer rongnes in dheez wurdz iz az arbitrary az dhaer rietnes in udher wurdz. Reezonably konsiderd, dhae ar a pourful plee for simplifikaeshon; but in praktis dhae akt az a stumbling-blok, bie reinforsting dhe tendensy to regard evry chaenj ov speling az luedikrus and vulgar. Josh Billings iz a far les injeenyus and amuezing leter-twister dhan Thackeray. Most of hiz spelingz meerly egzemplifie dhe haphazard fonetisizm ov dhe uneduekaeted. But dhaer iz a tuch ov satier in “oph” for “off,” “ced” for “said,” and “highsts” for “hoists.” I mension dheez huemorists meerly to shoe hou English speling iz fortified in its very badnes how dhe very pruufs ov its irashonality maek it aul dhe mor difikult to amend.

III

Let us paas, nou, from dhe furst plee, ov puer buety, to dhe sekond plee, ov ekspresivnes. Heer let me admit dhat dhe forgoing disekshon ov dhe puer-buety arguement iz a disekshon raadher ov a sluvlines ov langgwej dhan ov a real eror ov thaut. Noe saen eesthetisist realy beleevz in dhe puer buety ov wurdz; he oenly sez he duz when (az soe ofen hapenz) he tauks widhout thinking. Dhe moement he beginz to think and to analiez hiz thaut, he faulz bak on dhe plee ov ekspresivnes, dhoe he jeneraly kontinuez to uez dhe turm buety. [4] Dhe reezon iz prity plaen: whiel dhaer iz noe titl ov justifikaeshon for dhe puer-buety plee, it iz posibl in a very smaul number ov instansez to maek a mor or les speeshus kaes for dhe ekspresivnes imparted to dhis wurd or dhat bie its redundant leterz. A good egzempl ov dhis arguement okurz in a dialog, “Wurdz upon Wurdz,” bie Mr. Barry Pain, in dhe *Sunday Times* for February 21st, 1909. Sez wun ov dhe interlokuetorz -

“Noe, mie boi, apart from dhe eduekaeshonal kwestyon, apart from dhe fakt dhat it iz aulredy tuu eezy for peepl to lurn to reed and riet, I wood not chaenj dhe prezent sistem ov speling.”

“But U sed uerself dhat it woz aul rong - ilojikal and soe on!”

“Soe it iz. Nuthing, for instans, kan be sed to justifie dhe diferens in speling in dhe sekond silablz ov **precede** and **proceed**. But I’v noe taest for dhe kiend ov revolueshon dhat turnz whot iz bad into whot iz wurs. A nue and mor lojikal sistem wood simply destroi aul dhe piktoryal value ov riten or printed wurdz.”

“And whot duu U meen bie dhe piktoryal value?”

“I doen’t noe whedher it kumz from asoesyaeshon or from aksident, but I duu noe dhat it iz dhaer and dhat it iz good. Dhe speling ov **laughter** iz kwiet fatueus, when we konsider dhe pronunsaeshon ov dhe wurd. But dhat wurd **laughter**, whether riten or printed, iz a kiend ov simbolik pikture ov dhe thing it ekspresez. Dhe speling **larfter**, if it bekaem a pikture at aul, wood be a pikture ov sumthing thin, meeningles and diferent. Dhe wurd **anguish** az nou spelt iz a simbolik pikture ov distres. Dhen dhaer iz dhe wurd **uncle** - probably dhe uglyest wurd in dhe English langgwej. Dhat iz, to me, a simbolik pikture ov a midl-aejd man widh a hemisferikal waestkoet.”

I admit dhat, in mie jujment, **laughter** iz dhe best egzempl which haz yet been advaanst in suport ov dhis arguement. Dhaer iz a sujestyon ov dhe oepen mouth dhe gufau, in dhe kombinaeshon **ough**, which wood be absent from a simplified form. (Dhis form, bie dhe wae, wood surtenly not be **larfter**.) Dhe sujestyon iz not buetifool, but, in surten konteksts, it iz, az Mr. Pain sez, “piktoryal” - liek a Rowlandson or Gillray karrikatuer. It iz apt enuf in such lienz az “And **laughter** hoelding boeth hiz siedz”: skaersly soe apt in -

“Whot iz luv? ‘Tiz not heeraafter.
Prezent murth hath prezent **laughter**”; (*Shakespeare*)

or in -

“When from krimzon-threaded lips
Silver-trebl **laughter** trileth”; (*Tennyson*)

or in -

“Hiz deep ie **laughter**-sturd”; (*Tennyson*)

or in -

“Dhe deliet ov hapy **laughter**,
Dhe deliet ov loe repliez “; (*Tennyson*)

or in -

“Aepril, Aepril,
Laugh dhie gurlish **laughter** . . .
Laugh dhie goelden **laughter**,
But, dhe moement aafter,
Weep dhie goelden teerz!” (*William Watson*)

Dhe konteksts, indeed, ar raer in which dhe Rabelaezyan sugestyon ov dhe **aug** haz eny real fitnes.

Anguish, agaen, iz in truuth a moest ekspresiv wurd proseeding az it duz from a ruut asoeshyaeted thruu kountles jeneraeshonz widh dhe iedea ov a sufokaeting ekstremity ov paen. On dhe udher hand, it iz probably a meer iluezhon to supoez dhat eny part ov its ekspresivnes iz due to its vizueal aspekt; and eeven if dhat wer soe, it hapenz to be a wurd soe rashonally spelt az to kaul for noe aulteraeshon from dhe point ov vue ov simplisity. It iz posibl dhat, for dhe saek ov konsistensy, sum udher simbol miet be substitued for dhe **u**; but it kood skaersly afekt dhe wurd’z “pikoryal” kwolity. Az for **uncle**, Mr. Pain’z arguement iz skaersly to be taeken seeryusly; but if uglines be dhe buety to be aemd at in dhis kaes, moest ov Mr. Pain’z feloe-eesthetisists wood probably hoeld dhat it woz mor thurroly acheevd in dhe form **unkl** dhan in dhe aksepted form.

IV

Dhe formoest champyon ov dhe eesthetik arguement, houeever, iz Mr. Max Eastman. He bringz forward tuu instansez ov ekspresivnes in suepurfluüs leterz, which, if not kwiet soe good as Mr. Barry Pain’z **laughter**, ar at leest sufishmently speeshus to dezurv egzaminaeshon. I duu not think hiz analisis ov dhe efekt ov dhe sueperfluitiz iz partikuelarly hapy; but hiz arguement iz nun dhe les interesting. He sez -

“A man ov leterz, esaing to riet gruusum poëtry, huu shood leev dhe **h** out ov **ghost** and **aghost** and **ghastly** and **ghostly**, and dhe **w** out ov **wraith**, and chaenj dhe **re** ov **spectre** to an **er**, wood be a fuul. [5] He wood dezurvedly die ov starvaeshon. A **ghost** widhout an **h** iz litl beter, for dhe purposez ov poëtry, dhan a goet. Dhe **h** not oenly iz konekted bie kustom widh dhe brethles and vizhonary moement, but for obvyus reezonz it *aut* to be. Dhe wurd **ghost** iz not at prezent asoeshyaeted widh **post** and **most** and **roast** and **toast**, and a hoest ov daeliet ekspeeryensez, and it iz esenshal to dhe literary art dhat it shood not bekum soe. It iz, widh wun or tuu udherz, a wurd bie itself - a straenj wurd, esenshaly unpronounst, unmuskuelariezd, suepernatueal.”

And agaen, az to **wraith** he riets-

“Not oenly iz dhat wurd a juël bekauz ov its sujested sound and its apeerans, boeth esenshaly depending upon dhe **w**, but it iz preshus for tuu udher reezonz. Wun ov dheez iz its ueneeknes. Dhaer iz nuthing els in dhe wurd liek it, and dhaer shal never be. Dhe udher reezon iz dhat its vurbal and literal asoeshyets ar toetaly diferent from whot dhae wood be if dhe **w** wer omed. It wood be wun ov a vulgar kumpany - **rail**, **raid**, **rain**, ets. - widhout its unuterabl begining, whaeraz widh dhat begining it iz az litl liek eny ov dhoez wurdz az dhe vizhon itself miet be. It iz potenshaly asoeshyaeted widh **why** and **whither** and **where**, wurdz ov hezitaeshon and wunder.”

Dhaer iz soe much injenuuity in dhis reezoning dhat it seeniz kwiet refreshing, aafter aul dhe stael oeld falasiz widh which we hav konstantly to deel. Wun aulmoest hezitaets to brush dhe iridesent dust from dhe wingz ov such a buterflie arguement. Yet, eeven adopting Mr. Eastman’z oen standpoint, I kanot kwiet agree az to dhe reezon for dhe vurtue which he klaemz for **ghost** and **wraith**. To mie miend dhe fors ov dhe **h** in **ghost** liez in its sujestyon ov dhat sort ov eelonggaeshon which iz part ov our iedea ov spektral horror. We think ov a long whiet figer riezing up befor us and thretening us widh klauliek handz held up liek blinkerz to its fosforesent iez. Sum such piktuere iz, I think, sujested to mie imajinaeshon bie dhe **gh** ov **ghost**, and miet be lost - oe sad dizaaster! - to jeneraeshonz which shood dispens widh dhe **h**. Az for **wraith**, I duu not beleev dhat dhe asoesyaeshon widh **why** and **where** haz enithing to duu widh its efekt, but raadher dhe asoesyaeshon widh **wreath** (in such ekspreshonz az “cloud-wreath,” “snow-wreaths in the thaw,” ets.), and perhaps widh **writh** and **wry**. Dhe jeneral efekt ov dhe **w** iz to sujest sumthing waevering, waening, sumthing ov dim, unsurten, and shifting outlien. And for dhat very reezon dhe wurd haz lost its historrik sens, and iz konstantly misapplied. For a man’z **wraith** iz not properly a waevering, filmy goest, but a seemingly substanshal lieknes ov himself, apeering just befor or just aafter hiz deth.

Dhoe **ghost** and **wraith** ar Mr. Eastman’z happyest instansez, hiz injenuuity iz bie noe meenz egzausted in defending dhem. He nekst taeks a hiely orijinal pozishon [\[6\]](#) and ekspoundz whot mae be kauld dhe Fonetiks ov dhe Inaudibl, chuuzing az hiz egzaampl dhe wurdz **rough** and **ruff**, which to him hav very diferent “flaevorz.”

“Not oenly dhe apeerans, iedher, deturminz dhe diferens, but very larjly dhe muskuelar sensaeshonz ov dhe throet and mouth. I ventuer to sae dhat, wer our eerz sutly awaer ov dhe fienest oevertoenz, we shood fiend dhoez wurdz diferently pronounst. Our muskuelar sens iz awaer ov dhe fienest oevertoenz. **Rough** iz a very diferent wurd from **ruff**, asied from its meening, to dhe most praktikal man. To me, az it hapenz, **rough** iz mor sharply distinggwisht from **ruff** dhan it iz from **bough**, dhe apeerans being mor efektiv in dhat kaes dhan dhe sound.”

If dhis laast sentens haz eny meening at aul - if, dhat iz to sae, it reprezents eny aktueel mental ekspeeryens ov Mr. Eastman’z, and not an empty kontrovurshal parradoks - it amounts to dhe abandonment ov dhe hoel piktueresk pozishon. If dhe leterz **rough** duu not produes on Mr. Eastman’z miend an efekt sharply distinggwisht from dhat produest bie dhe leterz **bough** - soe uterly disimilar in meening - dhis meerly impliez dhat dhe vizueal efekt kounterakts and nulifiez dhe normal ekspresivnes ov dhe sound. Dhe morral wood be dhat we shood haesen to get rid ov dhis parraliezing kombinaeshon ov leterz, and riet **ruf** for **rough**. Dhat wood, in fakt, be eminently dezierabl, but not, I think, for dhe reezon Mr.

Eastman's remark suggests. I venture to believe that there is no real significance in his account of his experiences, or, indeed, in the Inaudible Phonetic argument as a whole. It is possible that in sum of the **wr** words - such as **writh**, **wring**, **wriggle** - the unpronounced letter has a surtense effect, not pictorially, but as a suggestion of pronunciation which would be expressive to the ear if we took the trouble to produce it. The Danish **vride** is, I confess, more expressive to me than our **(w)rithe**, the Danish **vrang** than our **(w)rong**. The **w** may be said to represent the ghost of an old and expressive pronunciation. But this is a very peculiarly - almost a unique - case, and the loss we should suffer in the loss of such ghosts would be very slight indeed.

Mr. Eastman then proceeds to make a galant list for what he calls onomatopoeic words, his chief instances being **numb**, **scythe**, **solemn**, **gazelle**, **thumb**, **scimitar**, **harangue**, **kissed**.^[7] Now there are not, in the scientific sense, onomatopoeic words at all. As Mr. Eastman uses the term, it is simply a longer way of saying "expressive"; and the superfluous letters render these words expressive to him simply because he has had his ear been accustomed to associate them with the ideas in question. Most people of the present generation, perhaps, are subject to the same effect of habit; hence, speaking for myself, I am clearly aware of it only in the words **numb** and **solemn**. For the rest, **siedh**, **thum**, **harang** and **kist** are, to my sense, quiet as "onomatopoeic" as the commonest forms. **Simitar** and **gazel**, again, have for me a distinctly romantic flavor; but that is a matter of mere idiosyncrasy. When Mr. Eastman, under this head, discusses a really onomatopoeic word, the distinction is at once apparent. "**Buz**, he says, is very good logic but very poor poetry compared with **buzz**." Yes; because the second **z** implies a prolongation of the imitative sound - **buzz** is more expressive than **buz**, and **buzzz** than **buzz**. So when we want to make **hiss** or **hush** very expressive, we write **hiss-s-s** or **hush-sh-sh**. But there are extra letters are not meaningless superfluous like the **le** in **gazelle** and the **ue** in **harangue**. In other words, there value is no effect of associative habit, but arises from the fact, or intensity, of utterance which have expressive.

V

It would be tedious to follow Mr. Eastman through all the meanderings of his argument. Sum words he holds "prejudicial" because "there present form makes them unique, whereas change reduces them to vulgarity." Now of these "unique" words is **nitre**; has Mr. Eastman never heard of a **mitre**? Another is **build**, which is unique only if we simplify **guild**. Again, if **although** is unique, how does Mr. Eastman spell **dough**? This manifest absurdity is an instance of the streets to which otherwise reasonable people are reduced when they set forth to defend unreason. There is no plausibility in the argument that "courtesy belongs to the letter of the **court**; it would die in a **cut** atmosphere." But the true complaint in this case is against the lack (hence very absent) pronunciation **kurtesy**. If there were any clear relation between pronunciation and spelling, there would be some chance of a general revival of the nobler sound of the word. The humorous expression, "a kurt atmosphere," encourages Mr. Eastman to a further indulgence of his admirable vivacity, and he proceeds as follows -

"No music could ever flow from a **tung** ^[8]; it could proceed as well from a **lung**, which it never has in the history of metaphor. And when it comes to trying to make a 'lamb' **lam**, all poetry and religion protest. A 'lamb' *kaan't* lam. He is too blunt. You might as well try to make a cow scream as to make a 'lamb' **lam**."

On dhis I refraen from koment; but I must point out a very sad misadventuer which oevertaeks Mr. Eastman when he faulz to pruuving dhat dhe wurd **choir** iz pekuelyarly and indispensably poëtik. He sez -

“ ‘Where the stars choir forth eternal harmonies’ singz to me from an oeld translaeshon ov Bruno - a fraez ov which **choir** iz dhe vietal spirit. **Choir** iz a wurd, so far az I kan remember, absoluetly ueneek, a wurd widhout eny puur relaeshortz. **Quire**, on dhe udher hand, besiedz a distinktly paepery feeling ov its oen, haz a hoel rabl ov disrepuetabl loe Latin vurbz kuming aafter it. Dhe starz never stuup to it. **Choir**, sez dhe historrikal-propriëty man, ‘iz wun ov dhe wurst spelingz in dhe Inglish langgwej. It iz a blundering mikstuer ov dhe modern French speling **choeur** widh dhe real Inglish speling **quire**.’ Let us thank God, dhen, dhat we ar blundering Anggloe-Saksonz!”

Whot kan Shakespeare hav been thinking ov when he roet -

“Still quiring to the young eyed Cherubins”?

It soe hapenz dhat skaers wun ov dhe graet poëts ov dhe langgwej woz a “blundering Anggloe-Sakson” in dhe sens in which Mr. Eastman iz proud to be wun. Ten minits’ study ov dhe *New English Dictionary* wood hav saevd him from dhis egreejus blunder. He wood hav found in Shakespeare, besiedz dhat imortal lien, which miet hav okurd to him widhout eny rekors to dikshonariz, dhe skaersly les faemus -

“Bare ruin’d quiers, where late the sweet birds sang”;

in Milton -

“Let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voic’d quire below”;

in Cowley -

“What Princes Quire of Musick can excell
That which within this shade does dwell?”

in Dryden -

“Some run for buckets to the hallow’d quire”;

in Byron -

“The silenced quire”;

in Shelley -

“Like a quire of devils
Around me they involved a giddy dance”;

in Campbell -

“In thundering Concert with the quiring winds.”

Haz Mr. Eastman enuf? Or duz he stil konsider it a mark of ekskwizit poëtik sensibility to fiend in **quire** a “distinktly paepery feeling”?

VI

I hav tried to shoe - widh whot sukses dhe reeder must desied - dhat dhaer iz skaersly eny fors in dhe eesthetik arguement, eeven when akueretly staeted, and eeven when aplied to dhe handfool ov speshaly choezen wurdz on which dhe eesthetisists found dhaer kaes. Mr. Eastman konfesez, justly and kandidly, dhat “eluesivnes iz dhe esens” ov dhe “imeedyet buetiz” to which he klingz. “Liek hapines itself,” he sez, “when U look straet at dhem dhae run awae into a korner and ar not.” Kwiet soe; and if dhis be dhe kaes eeven for a jeneraeshon to which unreezon iz endeerd bie habit, hou smaul wood be dhe los, on dhe eesthetisists’ oen shoing, to jeneraeshonz habitueaeted, on dhe kontrary, to reezon! Aafter urnest and sinseer endeavor, I have faeld to diskuver eny real ekspresivnes dependent on misspeling in mor dhan sum haaf-duzen wurdz; but supoez dhe eesthetisists kood maek out a plauzibl kaes for twenty - or fifty, or eeven a hundred wurdz in dhe langgweij - wood dhat be an adekwet reezon for burdening our children, tiem widhout end, widh dhe inuemerabl anomaliz ov our speling? If oenly our eesthetisists wood trie to kultivaet a ruudimentary sens ov proporshon, and to kontraast dhe litl plezher dhae deriev from dhaer **gh**’ez and **wr**’z widh dhe laebor and los ov tiem - which meenz los ov lief - entaeld bie dhaer retenshon on ilimitabl hoests ov lurnerz, I kan not but think dhat dhe amaezing egoizm ov dhaer pozishon wood kum hoem to dhem.

Wun wurd az to dhe kontenshon dhat poëts ar dhe oenly truu jujez ov speling, dhe trezhererz ov its “imeedyet buety.” We hav furst to noet dhat dhe buety our English poëts trezherd woz diferent from sentuery to sentuery, until les dhan tuu hundred yeerz agoe. To dhe novelist huu rashly asurtd dhat “dhe speling ov Shakespeare woz good enuf for him,” Profesor Brander Matthews maed dhe aptest retort bie printing a paej from wun ov hiz novelz in “dhe speling ov Shakespeare,” and shoing dhat in oeever thurty per sent ov dhe wurdz dhe modern speling had departed from Elizabeethan uezej. Sins, dhaerfor, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton wer kontent widh a sistem ov speling mor or les wiedly diferent from ourz, iz dhaer eny posibl reezon for supoezing dhat dhe formz nou kurrent hav, bie sum mirakl, ataend a perfekshon ov buety unnoen to our graetest poëts, which it wood be an outraej and a deseakraeshon to aluter? Obzurv dhat aul dhe aulteraeshonz which hav taeken plaes (eksept a fue chaenjez for dhe wurs, due to etimolojikal pedantry) hav been diktaeted bie noe eesthetik konsideraeshon, but bie puer konveenyens, and dhat meny ov dhem hav been veeheemently opoezd on dhe very groundz our eesthetisists ar nou alejing. Ar we to konklud dhat duering aul dhe sentueriz down to Dr. Johnson our speling woz graduealy impruuing, and dhat he arievd, bie a misteeryus dispensaeshon ov Providens, to petrifie orthografy just at dhe moement when in its fluid staet, it had hapend to acheev a mirakuelus maksimum ov “buety”? Dhe kontenshon iz manifestly absurd. Speling haz been shaept thruout dhe sentueriz bie dhe kontending influensez ov habit and konveenyens. About tuu sentueriz agoe, habit got dhe uper hand, and konveenyens went to dhe waul. It iz hie tiem dhat dhe kontest shood be rezuemd, and dhat konveenyens - anudher wurd for reezon - shood shaep dhe langgweij ov a fuetuer which, realiezing dhe value ov lief, wil hav noe tiern to waest on fuetilitiz.

Nun dhe les iz it truu dhat poëts, whether in vurs or proez, wil probably be dhe laast to akseed to chaenj. [\[9\]](#) Dhe reezon iz very kleer. Poëtry rekwierz dhe undisturbd atenshon ov dhe reeder. Hiz miend must be in a kondishon ov unklouded, unobstrukted reseptivity. Evrithing dhat tendz to distrakt hiz thauts from dhe sheer artistik and emoeshonal kwolity ov dhe lienz he iz reeding, bie soe much dulz and weekenz dhaer apeel. Until dhe nue speling, dhen, haz taeken such hoeld ov dhe publik miend dhat it distrakts atenshon les dhan dhe oeld - dhat, in short, it paasez unnoetist - poets kan skaersly be ekspektd to adopt it. Heer we hav, indeed, dhe iedeal ov speling az aplied to poetry - dhat it shood paas unnoetist. [\[10\]](#)

He wood be a very puur poët huu shood seek dhe aed ov speling in maeking hiz vursez buetifool. Eeven if redundant leterz duu lend a surten ekspresivnes to a vanishing mienorrrity ov wurdz, hou mekanikal, hou unwurdhy iz relies on dhis ekspeedyent!

Mr. Eastman, it must be oend, iz not dhe man to shrink from dhe konsekwensez ov hiz doktrin. He deklaerz dhat “our speling iz suepeeryor to dhe speling ov French and Jurman, and far suepeeryor to dhe speling ov Italyan and Spanish.”

“Dhe fienal, and posibly moest important, efekt ov simplifikaeshon wood be dhe los ov variëty itself. Dhe eksentrisity ov a given wurd, such az **through** or **enough**, mae seem to hav litl intrinsik merit, but it iz ov untoeld value to dhe literary artist dhat hiz mateeryal be dievursified bie dheez venerabl prodijiz. Dhae help him to endou evry fratz widh a separet karakter. For evry wield wurd or bundl ov wurdz dhat iz trimd down and fited into a grup, an invalueabl resors iz lost to dhe poët.”

.Yet Italyan iz not thaut to be a langgwej hoelly unfited for poëtry. Az wun reedz Dante, duz wun seeryusly mis dhoez “venerabl prodijiz” to which our eesthetisists kling? Iz Ariosto graetly impoverisht for lak ov dhe “wield wurd or bundl ov wurdz” which, when Mr. Eastman givz us an epik, he wil fiend at hiz komaand? I hav had dhe onor ov sum tauk widh Gabriele D’Annunzio, but hav not hurd dhat maaster ov dhe luvlyest ov langgwejez lament dhe austeer simplisity ov its speling, and envy us dhe manifoeld “arrabesks” ov ourz. When I kum, indeed, to dhis part ov Mr. Eastman’s arguement I kan noe mor widhhoeld dhe turm dhat haz for long been trembling at dhe point ov mie pen, and must taek leev to tel him dhat he and hiz feloe-aesthetisists, widh aul dhaer injenucity, tauk, in dhe maen, preposterus nonsens. Literaly preposterus: for dhaer arguement invurts dhe order ov reezon bie plaesing dhe ie, in materz ov langgwej, befor dhe eer.

Footnotes

[1] Dhis sentens iz kueryusly infelisisitus. In dhe furst plaes, noe wun wunts to “saev” muny on eduekaeshon in order to aplie it to udher purposez; our kontenshon iz dhat dhe paerents’ muny and dhe children’s tiem aut to be aplied to dhe akwizishon ov nolej at wuns mor uesfool and mor delietfool dhan dhe kontradiktory konvenshonz ov speling. Fue thingz, surtenly, kood be *les* delietfool to dhe averej chield - for Mr. Eastman wil skaersly pretend dhat dhe eesthetik value he klaemz for speling iz apreeshyaeted hie dhe uethfool miend. He seemz kueryusly to ignor dhe chield - az dhoe dhe kwestyon wer whedher “we” groen-up peepl kood saev muny and aplie it to sumthing “we” liekt beter dhan eduekaeshon. “We” ar not dhe pursonz to be konsiderd; and az for dhe children, dhaer kan be noe dout dhat eny muny saevd kood very eezily be uezd for sumthing *dhae* wood liek beter dhan eduekaeshon - in speling.

[2] Dhaer iz perhaps a shaed ov eesthetik value in dhe final **e** - a sort ov twist or flurrish which endz a wurd jently insted ov abruptly. Wun understandz hou, to dhe eesthetik ie, **hav** and **liv** seem unfinisht, liek a Manks kat. But dhat dhis, tuu, iz a meer efekt ov habit bekumz apaerent when we remember dhat modern English haz been dokt ov thouzandz ov fienal **e**’z which noe wun nouadaez misez. If **program** ofendz dhe ie, whie duu we not goe bak to dhe **anagramme** and **epigramme** ov our faadherz? If a taelles **hav** and **liv** look ugly, much mor shood a taelles **dogge** and **hogge**.

[3] A profound kritik in dhe *Burton Daily Mail* (from huum I shal hav to kwoet agaen on a laeter paej) aasks, “Hou wood Burns apeer if dhe Aershir dialekt wer represented

fonetikaly?" Our oponents hav akustomd us to brilyant flashez ov jeenyus, but dhis iz perhaps dhe moest dazling ov aul. Burns did hiz best, az aul dialekt-rieterz must, to reprezent hiz dialekt fonetikaly; and had he found mor akueret instrouments redy to hiz hand, huu kan dout dhat he wood hav uezd dhem gladly?

[4] Mr. Eastman, huuz hoel plee iz for ekspresivnes, iedher thruu onomatopea or asoesyaeshon, neverdheles telz us dhat "dhe truu trezhererz ov dhe langgwey ar and aulwaez hav been dhe noerz ov its *imeedyet buety*."

[5] Milton, houeever, woz soe far behiend Mr. Eastman in dhe sens ov vurbal piktueresknes az to riet "With shuddring horror pale, and eyes agast." Az for Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate, dheez lukles poëts, living befor Caxton had introduest dhe majikal Duch **h** into **ghost**, wer forst to poot up widh such formz az **gost** and **gooste**. In dhoez unenlietend daez dhae trusted to dhaer poëtry raadher dhan to dhaer speling for dhe rekwizit "brethles, vizhonary, and suepernatueral" efekt.

[6] Yet not kwiet pekuelyar to himself. Dhe *Burton Daily Mail* deliverz itself az foloez: "Fonetik speling iz not realy fonetik at aul. Dhaer iz a sud distinkshon, for egzaampl, between **doubt** and **dout** which, auldhoe, perhaps, inapreeshyabl at wuns to dhe eer, iz detekted at wuns when asisted hie dhe ie . . . Our present sistem ov speling iz dhe moest truuly fonetik, for it realy atempts to reprezent suttiz ov sound and sens which dhe eer kanot eezily or imeedyetly distinggwish." Mr. Eastman wil no dout welkum dhis sagaeshus alie, huu aulsoe heerz widh hiz iez.

[7] In dhe kaes ov **kissed**, Chaucer and Shakespeare shoed a straenj bliendnes to dhe "onomatopoëtik" efekt soe kleeer to Mr. Eastman. Dhe former roet - "She hath hit kist ful oftë for his sakë"; and dhe later - "We have kist away Kingdomes and Provinces." Dhe rashonal form okurz in meny udher poëts.

[8] Spenser seemz to hay thaut udherwiez, for he roet in dhe Introdukshon to *The Faerie Queen* - "O, helpe thou my weake wit, and sharpen my dull tong."

[9] Yet Alfred Tennyson woz a member ov an "English Spelling Reform Association" founded in 1884, to which, bie dhe wae, Charles Darwin aulsoe belongd.

[10] Unles dhe poët hapenz to be aeming at an efekt ov sarkaizm.