



CREaTE

Canterbury Research and Theses Environment

Canterbury Christ Church University's repository of research outputs

<http://create.canterbury.ac.uk>

Please cite this publication as follows:

Merchant, P. (2018) "With collies graven on his heart": The canine projections of Thomas Anstey Guthrie (1856-1934). *Cahiers victoriens et éduardiens*, 88. ISSN 0220-5610.

Link to official URL (if available):

<http://journals.openedition.org/cve/3800>

This version is made available in accordance with publishers' policies. All material made available by CReaTE is protected by intellectual property law, including copyright law. Any use made of the contents should comply with the relevant law.

Contact: create.library@canterbury.ac.uk



With Collies Graven on His Heart: The Canine Projections of Thomas Anstey Guthrie
(1856–1934)

Peter Merchant

Canterbury Christ Church University, U. K.

‘In our nursery at St. George’s Terrace there was a wood-engraving of Landseer’s ‘The Shepherd’s Chief Mourner’—a collie with his head laid on his dead master’s coffin—which affected me with a secret and delicious melancholy’ (Anstey 1936, 43). Thomas Anstey Guthrie, otherwise ‘F. Anstey’, here describes a childhood encounter with an image that was to have a lasting influence on his life, creativity and career. How it affected him would vary considerably over time: the dog, as we shall see, was to be the subject of many of his comic stories as well as a way of focusing and marshalling a variety of human emotions.

A truth generally acknowledged in Victorian bookselling was that a publisher preparing for the Christmas market would want either a school story or a dog story. In 1881, James Nisbet & Co. boasted both, with a pair of new novels which might not quite have been the talk of London but which between them accounted for the first two of the ‘Literary Notices’ carried on Thursday 24 November 1881 by the *Liverpool Mercury*. The school story was *Dorrincourt: The Story of a Term There* by Bernard Heldmann (‘Bernard Heldmann’ being a pseudonym used by Richard Marsh, who would go on to write *The Beetle*), and it contained, according to the *Mercury*, ‘many graphic pictures of school life, which now and again remind us of “Tom Brown”’. The

dog story was R. M. Ballantyne's *My Doggie and I*, whose opening sentence by insisting on that diminutive suffix—'not a dog, observe, but a doggie'—dissociates the book as decisively as possible from the leering indecency of the ballad entitled 'My Dog and I' in the Pepys Collection (Skeaping 100–101). Ballantyne's title still risks being a little misleading. Certainly that strand of his book which in the words of the *Mercury* ponders 'the civilizing and evangelising of the lower strata of society' would surprise any reader who judged it only by its cover. However, because amid these more earnest and adult concerns 'the "doggie" itself plays a considerable part', the reviewer considers on the whole that Ballantyne's story has justified both its title and its endorsement by *The Boy's Own Paper*, in which it had already run as a serial.

Between Christmas 1881 and Christmas 1882, no writer enjoyed a more rapid rise than Anstey did. Anstey was entirely unknown when this edition of the *Liverpool Mercury* appeared. Already, however, he had in *Vice Versâ* a school story ready to be sent out to publishers and editors; and it would not be long before he had a pair of dog stories too. His emergence in both of those fields was facilitated by James Payn, whose actions in respect of *Vice Versâ* were later recalled by George W. E. Russell:

My friend Mr. James Payn ... was 'reader' to Smith and Elder, and in that capacity declined the manuscript of 'John Inglesant'. [...] Against this story of his failure to perceive merit Payn was wont to set his discovery of Mr. Anstey Guthrie. The manuscript of 'Vice Versa', bearing the unknown name of 'F. Anstey', came in ordinary course into his hands. He glanced at the first page, turned over, read to the end, and then ran into Mr. Smith's room saying, 'We've got the funniest thing that has been written since Dickens's "Christmas Carol"'. (Russell 242–243)

Thus it was that *Vice Versâ*, which had been turned down in manuscript both by Arthur Locker and by George Bentley, was sold to Smith & Elder in the spring of 1882 for an initial £25 and by the autumn was rolling off the firm's presses at the rate of a fresh edition every week.

As he pursued his literary ambitions, Anstey had not staked quite everything on the school story. The dog story was evidently at the heart of his Plan B. By the end of February 1882, and within days of Bentley declining to publish *Vice Versâ*, he had written an initial outline for 'a tale of Moral Cowardice', as he then described it, entitled 'The Black Poodle' (Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54276, fo. 82v). James Payn, having persuaded Smith & Elder to take *Vice Versâ*, sent both 'The Black Poodle' and another of Anstey's dog stories, 'A Farewell Appearance', to the publisher C. J. Longman.

'The Black Poodle' builds its plot around the same situation that Roald Dahl would posit in *Esio Trot* (1990): a man slyly replacing the pet of a neighbour whose heart he hopes to win. Anstey's narrator, Algernon Weatherhead, finds that the couple next door have a niece called Lilian (or, in the original outline, a daughter called Laura) to whom he is attracted; but the apple of her eye is the family's pet poodle Bingo (originally Jumbo). One night, unobserved by the neighbours, Weatherhead accidentally shoots the poodle. He has to conceal the evidence by burying the body in his garden, which next morning makes him 'feel like Eugene Aram' (Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54276, fo. 83v). Some days later he decides that he must 'cautiously disinter' the corpse—'an unpleasant business' with which when writing up his outline

Anstey would discreetly dispense (Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54276, fo. 84r)—in order to retrieve the dog's collar, and casts about for a substitute poodle. He purchases one very similar in appearance to Bingo, puts the old collar on the new dog, and basks in the glory of his sweetheart's gratitude. Bingo, to her, is no longer missing presumed lost. When the true owner of the second poodle turns up, however, Weatherhead's deception is discovered; and so too is the body of the first poodle. A memorial tablet is made for the unfortunate Bingo, 'cruelly put to death [...] by a neighbour and friend' (Anstey 1882, 124), and Lilian transfers her affections to a rival who presents her with a fox-terrier instead. So it is Weatherhead, not Bingo, who finds himself passed over and replaced; and the story's purposes mistook fall upon the inventor's head.

It was for 'The Black Poodle' that Longman reserved most of his praise when on Thursday 6 July 1882, the week after Smith & Elder published *Vice Versâ*, he wrote to Anstey accepting both of the dog stories which Payn had submitted:

My dear Sir

I have read both your Dog Stories. Of the two I like the 'Black Poodle' the best. It is most amusing. One cannot help feeling keenly for the unfortunate Algernon Weatherhead.

The 'Farewell Appearance' is good though I think less good. Others however might think differently. It depends for its point on pathos. Now in dog-stories it appears to me that pathos is a very telling element but a very ticklish one to deal with. The danger I think lies in the risk [of] verging on the ridiculous by making

too much of a dog's mental & moral powers. It is true that it is as you say intended for children who are ready to believe to any extent in dogs.

I shall be very glad to publish *The Black Poodle* in an early number of Longman's Magazine—possibly the first which will appear in November next. I hope to be able also to use the *Farewell Appearance* shortly after. I shall be much gratified if you will let me see any further work you may do.

I am yours truly

C. J. Longman

(Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54262, fos 15r-16v)

Longman kept his promise. The first issue of *Longman's Magazine*, in November 1882, carried 'The Black Poodle' (Anstey 1882, 99-124); and the fourth issue, in February 1883, carried 'A Farewell Appearance: A Dog Story for Children' (Anstey 1883, 463-478). Despite the fact that both were dog stories, the two together would have alerted regular readers of the magazine to Anstey's versatility. They revealed a range far wider than the surface similarities might indicate. In 'The Black Poodle', for instance, the figure of the dog-stealer—William Blagg—is played for laughs. The shady seizer of dogs in Kensington Gardens is himself seized upon, and treated by Anstey as an opportunity for the display of what became one of his trademarks, the comic imitation of uneducated speech. On the other hand 'A Farewell Appearance', the story of a small terrier called Dandy snatched from his owners to perform in shows and finding his way back home only to die there of exhaustion, requires the dog-stealer to be a cruel and

violent man, and the comic vein which 'The Black Poodle' had hit upon remains untapped. 'A Farewell Appearance' was still a story that Anstey needed to write and to publish, however, in order to see whether anything about its reception would contradict the preference which Longman had expressed for the more amusing of the two stories. In the event, the only conclusion which Anstey could draw was that 'The Black Poodle' had after all done more to map out a direction for his future writing. He duly consented to its being made, in the year following, the title piece for his first volume of short stories: *The Black Poodle and Other Tales* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1884).

'A Farewell Appearance' was another of the stories included, but of course had a title far less fitting for a début collection. 'The Black Poodle' was a better choice in any case because, as Longman had foreseen, this was the story that aroused most interest and drew most admiration. It was translated into French for publication in the *Revue des deux mondes* in 1883, and in 1891 a pirated version exploited its continuing appeal in France ('Rape', 644). Charlotte Yonge had by then recommended the story as material suitable for a comic reading (Yonge 1887, 114). Stanley J. Weyman made it a model for his own writing:

I tried short stories for the magazines, and failed at that; until one day there came into my hands Anstey's tale, *The Black Poodle*, about which everybody was talking [...] I took it home and read and re-read it, till I came to the conclusion that its captivation lay in the fact of the extreme carefulness of its workmanship. I pulled it to pieces, sentence by sentence, and saw that each sentence had been polished and elaborated till no further elaboration was possible. (quoted in Sherard 681)

Later, a Williams College professor of rhetoric identified 'The Black Poodle' as a perfect example of how to conduct a story to a catastrophe or point of culmination (Maxcy 222–223).

By the time *Longman's Magazine* published 'The Black Poodle', Anstey was hard at work on *The Giant's Robe*. The idea for this novel 'may have' occurred to him several months beforehand, he came to believe, 'some time in the early summer of 1882' (Anstey 1936, 195). If that is a correct guess, it further abbreviates the interval between, on the one hand, both 'The Black Poodle' and *Vice Versâ* and, on the other, the second full-length novel. It was only to be expected, perhaps, that alongside the school story and the dog story Anstey would place a third narrative driven by a highly unusual substitution. *Vice Versâ* had revolved around the experience of a character, Paul Bultitude, who is caused by enchantment to step into the shoes of another, his own school-aged son. In *The Giant's Robe*, however, stepping into another man's shoes is what Mark Ashburn unscrupulously chooses to do. With Vincent Holroyd presumed dead, he makes over to himself not only the literary laurels which properly belong to Holroyd but also Holroyd's intended, Mabel Langton. When Holroyd turns out not to be dead at all, in a genuine comeback no less surprising than the feigned comeback of Bingo the poodle, Mark Ashburn is completely confounded. Anstey's central character is seen to have been an impostor, which means that effectively *The Giant's Robe* is—like *Vanity Fair*—a Novel without a Hero. It disappointed Margaret Oliphant by being a book in which 'nobody is at all good or great [...] Nobody has our approval, nobody has our sympathy' (Oliphant 311). The closest approach to conventional heroics that

The Giant's Robe permits itself is Mark Ashburn's decision to risk his life in a fog-bound railway carriage, with which another train is set on a collision course, in order to retrieve a wicker basket containing Frisk, the pet dog of Mabel Langton's nine-year-old sister Dolly. After making Dandy the terrier that did not survive, Anstey made Frisk the terrier that does.

In Anstey's later fiction, such animals as appear tend to be placed at the humorous and fantastic heart of the story, absorbed directly into the acts of substitution from which everything flows. The publication in 1892 of *The Talking Horse and Other Tales* made it apparent that *Vice Versâ's* substitution of parent for child—the father packed off to boarding-school in the son's stead—had itself been replaced, and that Anstey was now having regular recourse to the substitution of animal for human. As the *Times* noted in reviewing the volume, the 'whimsical humour' attaching in the title story to the horse 'endowed [...] with a human voice' extends into 'two dog stories, "Don: the Story of a Greedy Dog," and "A Canine Ishmael," the humour of which is assisted by a liberal attribution of human intelligence and feeling to the dogs in question' ('Recent Novels and Tales'). For an author intent (at least some of the time) on comedy, Longman's warning that 'making too much of a dog's mental & moral powers' may entail 'verging on the ridiculous' was proving no discouragement but a positive incitement. Already Anstey had pushed that anthropomorphism to its comic limits in a story called 'The Dog Demagogue' (1886), published in Canada and America but set in London, and narrated by the wife of a man who believes that radical social reform can come through canine education and canine suffrage:

'The future saviors of this unhappy country will be its dogs [...] That their views will be of a levelling and generally Democratic tendency, I do not personally doubt for a moment; the long degradation of being compelled, as they have been, to subserve the selfish sports of a pampered aristocracy, must have enrolled them long since in the crusade against landed interests. They own no property, and can thus have little interest in defending it; they have no desire for military glory, and, therefore, no mischievous impulse of patriotism; no religious principles of any kind, and, consequently, are free from any superstitious reverence for a state protected church'. (Anstey 1886, 6)

The *Times* review of *The Talking Horse and Other Tales* sits at the top of a column which also contains comment on a new three-decker novel, *A Wasted Life and Marr'd*, by Lady Gertrude Stock. The previous year, at the first Crufts show, Lady Gertrude Stock had chaired the meeting which led to the creation of the National Canine Defence League. The novel lends its weight to that cause when the heroine's defenceless dog is killed by her sinister husband purely because the animal can recognise him for what he is. For the *Times* reviewer, the regularity with which fiction depends on the discernment of dogs is wearying: 'Is it not time that sagacious dogs [...] even in fiction, gave up manifesting intuitive dislike of dark, mesmeric baronets?' ('Recent Novels and Tales') Anstey would continue to emphasise canine intuition, however, in his mystery thriller *The Statement of Stella Maberly, Written by Herself* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1896) and in the 1916 silent film scenario, 'An Evil Spirit', which he quarried from that text. Here he verges on the ridiculous by making much of

the extra-sensory powers of a collie and a spaniel (changed in the film scenario to a Pekinese). The former is poisoned on account of his ability to smell out evil. The scenario then has a happy ending, albeit clearly cast as dream, in which the poisoned collie comes back to life again and Stella has her heart's desire (Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54308, fos 142-143). Such hopes and fears about the end of life and the unknown hereafter as 'An Evil Spirit' permits itself to hint at, therefore, were to be carried in the final frames by the figure of the dog. The dogs in Anstey's work increasingly serve to crystallise his reflections on mortality and survival.

In 1920, Anstey's interest in writing silent film scenarios led him back to the first of his dog stories. 'Began outline of Black Poodle for Minerva Film Co.', records his diary for Monday, 31 May (Anstey 1880-1934, Additional MS 63573, fo. 280r). Once Anstey had identified 'The Black Poodle' as a suitable case for treatment, he pressed hard—with the help of A. A. Milne—but ultimately in vain for the film to be made. Had it gone into production, a substantially altered and augmented narrative would have been placed before the public. In the scenario, for instance, the action is updated from 1881 to 1919, which enables the major male characters to be shown as shaped by their wartime experience. Further comic possibilities are drawn out of the figure of the dog-stealer, William Blagg, who sells Azor the black poodle to Algernon Weatherhead as 'a perfect facsimile of the outward Bingo' (Anstey 1882, 114). And the third dog in the story—the fox-terrier given to Lilian as a replacement for Bingo by the man who himself replaces Weatherhead in Lilian's affections—comes far more to the fore. From his previous passing mention in the closing lines this dog advances to a place at the centre of Anstey's design. Anstey now names him Spot, which evokes the contrast

created in *The Old Wives' Tale* between Spot the 'healthy and unspoilt' fox-terrier (Bennett 566) and the airs and graces of Sophia's poodle, and writes several new scenes around him.

The most dramatic of these added scenes has Lilian and Weatherhead's rival (without a name in the original outline, named Frank Travers in the published text, but now called Cuthbert Warrener) accompanying Lilian and Spot on a riverbank picnic. Weatherhead looks forlornly on from a distance until, while retrieving sticks thrown for him to chase after, Spot gets caught in some weeds and is seen 'paddling violently'. Panic soon sets in: "'He'll be drowned if he isn't got out'" (Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54309, fo. 110). The draft-dodging Warrener is reluctant to attempt a rescue; but the plucky Weatherhead (who joined up in 1915 and was wounded in the war) plunges in, pulls Spot clear of the weeds, and deposits him safely at Lilian's feet. Having accidentally shot Lilian's previous dog, Bingo, he has now saved her new pet, Spot the 'well-bred white fox-terrier' (Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54309, fo. 105), from what but for him might have been a fatal accident. Lilian writes him a thank-you note as if from Spot, fastens the note to Spot's collar, and drops the dog into the Weatherheads' garden (Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54309, fo. 117). The previously accusing inscription on the memorial stone is soon altered accordingly:

'In Loving Memory of

"Bingo"

Accidentally Killed

Friday the 13th of June 1919

Also
In Gratitude for
The Timely Rescue of
“Spot”
His Successor
from Death by Drowning
by a
Neighbour & Friend
Saturday the 26th of July 1919’
(Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54309, fo.120)

This new inscription records a humane intervention, saving Spot from danger in the river, which balances and cancels the heartless intervention of William Blagg, snatching Azor from his owner in ‘a secluded part of Hyde Park, or Kensington Gardens’, and posting the following notice in the window of his shop:

‘Follered a Gentleman
Black Poodel
Unles Clamed within nex fortnite & finder
Hansumly Rewarded

Will be Sold to pay Expenses

To be Seen Within'

(Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54309, fos 73, 76)

William Blagg may have secured his ransom money, but a reward more handsome than Blagg can imagine goes to Weatherhead in the scenario's happy ending; for Warrener, no longer in favour, slinks off crestfallen and, forgiving each other, Lilian and Weatherhead renew their relationship. Along with the love of Lilian he might even stand to win (unlike Mark Ashburn) one of the silver medals that the National Canine Defence League had since 1912 had the power to award to those saving the lives of dogs.

The alteration of the memorial tablet appropriately completes Anstey's 1920 reinscription of a story first planned and published in 1882. It is as if his own long-buried 'Black Poodle' were begging to be brought back up and making a muffled plea for a chance of fresh life. He cautiously disinters it, just as Weatherhead had once cautiously disinterred the body of Bingo. The interval on that occasion had been several days. On this occasion nearly forty years have elapsed. When the 1930s dawned, however, and Anstey came to write *A Long Retrospect*, he was to reach even further back into the past, in an attempt to recover not one dog, or even three dogs, but seven dogs all at once. This time they were his own dogs. Between them, Bran, Bogie, Jock, Garry, Solomon, Saul and Mac were the last dogs that Anstey wrote about, and—as if they had been his seven sons—they filled what a little reshuffling turned

into the final chapter of his autobiography (Anstey 1936, 396–413), after it had been far less strongly positioned in the manuscript draft (Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54312, fos 256–272).

In the printed text, by contrast, all that separates this final chapter from the index at the back of the book is a list of Anstey's published writings, ordered both chronologically and according to their designation for either page or stage. *A Long Retrospect* therefore offers the customary bibliography of works written, in which novels, stories and sketches predominate; but put directly up against it is a roll call of animals owned in which, as it happens, terriers occupy pride of place. It is as if the life that Anstey has led might just as appropriately be measured out in terms of the dogs he has let into it as in terms of the publications with which he has punctuated it. The illustration inserted into the chapter—'The Last Photograph, 2 March 1933' (Anstey 1936, plate facing 410)—reinforces this impression. It shows Anstey holding in the crook of his right arm the Cairn terrier called Mac that he had chosen some years before from a crate of puppies and that stayed with him to the end. The delicacy with which the camera captures the bond of affection between dog and owner is matched in the manuscript draft by the delicacy with which, as the owner begins his account of the dog, the marks on the page signal a break in the voice and a lump in the throat: 'I decided that Mac would turn out to be the right sort of dog for me & bought him a ~~decision on which he has never [sic] since given me ever increasing reason to congratulate myself~~' (Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54312, fo. 268). On the side of the photograph to which the eye moves next Anstey's left hand is holding, firmly closed and tilted to match the angle of his trilby, a book that looks very like his own

career-retrospective omnibus volume *Humour and Fantasy*, brought out in the summer of 1931. The photograph is so composed as to suggest a weighing up of the rival claims of literature and dog ownership; and, read from left to right, it gives precedence to the terrier over the book. The story which the picture tells is that, late in life, Anstey finds himself feeling more pleasure and taking more pride in his dogs than in his writings. That the frontispiece for *A Long Retrospect* should be another photograph of Anstey with Mac, while less prominence is given to the illustration which shows Anstey working at his desk (Anstey 1936, plate facing 370), is entirely consistent with this.

Both in the manuscript draft of *A Long Retrospect* and in the printed text, the title of the chapter given over to Bran, Bogie, Jock, Garry, Solomon, Saul and Mac is simply 'My Dogs' (without Ballantyne's 'And I'). For readers of Harriet Beecher Stowe, that title attaches the chapter to Stowe's 'Our Dogs'. And the fluctuations of tempo that Anstey manages when he strings together sentimental climaxes with little lulls interspersed—'After Bran's death it was two years before I could bring myself to have another dog [...] It was some months before I replaced Jock [...] I allowed a decent interval of doglessness before I thought of replacing Garry' (Anstey 1936, 400, 403, 407)—are an effect to which Stowe too had found that the subject lent itself: 'After the sad fate of Rover there came a long interval in which we had no dog. Our hearts were too sore to want another' (Stowe 1867a, 109). As Stowe and Anstey take the story on from Rover to Stromion, or from Bran to Bogie, they themselves are lining up behind Walter Scott, then the classic case of the author known by the dogs in his life. According to Richard Holt Hutton in 1878, 'Scott's life might well be fairly divided—just as history is divided into reigns—by the succession of his horses and dogs' (Hutton

72). Stowe had by then already written a piece on 'Sir Walter Scott and His Dogs' (Stowe 1867b, 167–175), and E. E. Kellett's review of Anstey's *Long Retrospect* would likewise invoke Scott: 'there is, at the end, a very delightful chapter on the canine friends of whom Anstey had as many as Sir Walter Scott' (Kellett 948).

This chapter at the end also needs to be seen in the context of the author's opening statement. Anstey's Preface, in which he confesses to a life that 'has had no adventures, and no vicissitudes' (Anstey 1936, v), shows him even less confident than David Copperfield of turning out to be the hero of his own book. The seventh chapter of the autobiography, on 'Friends and Acquaintances', and the sixteenth and final chapter, 'My Dogs', then become distinct stages in Anstey's attempted elevation of others to that position of hero for which he feels himself unsuited. The former lists the men and women he has met and admired: 'It was in the summer of 1887 that I had the honour of meeting Tennyson [...] I had the privilege of lunching with another great poet—Swinburne' (133, 135). The latter catalogues the dogs he has owned and either loved or tried to love, one after another, over a period of forty-five years; and the tales told of each make 'My Dogs' the kind of chapter with which Charlotte Yonge had hoped to conclude one of her own books, 'a chapter of canine deeds, almost deserving the name of golden' (Yonge 1866, 446). Among the adventures recounted are deeds of reckless courage, like those of Garry with his 'mania for attacking dogs three or four times his size, Alsatians or Airedales for choice' (Anstey 1936, 411), and incidents whose very absurdity renders them priceless, such as Bran being chased around a field by a hen (397–398). Another of Bran's escapades seems to be behind the mishap at the riverside picnic which Anstey later added to 'The Black Poodle':

For four years Bran was my constant companion and the longest tramps never seemed to tire him. Then one hot spring morning at Tunbridge Wells we were starting for a walk and I saw him plunge into a pond and appear to be enjoying his swim immensely until as I came nearer I found that he was actually in some kind of fit. I waded in up to my knees and got him out a mask of mud, and for a time as he lay on the bank I thought he was gone. He came to eventually and I carried him to the nearest vet, who said that he would be none the worse ... (398)

The drama he can use them to create ensures that his dogs' brushes with danger will be incorporated into the successive portraits of Bran, Bogie, Jock, Garry, Solomon, Saul and Mac which Anstey is constructing here. Their tricks and idiosyncrasies are also set down, together with the purchase details (where remembered), the dates and manner of their deaths (except in Mac's case), and where they lie buried. The chapter's emotional fulcrum, however, is the vivid and varied experience of separation and reunion to which Anstey's dogs have exposed him. Even to a life supposedly without vicissitudes, it seems, pet ownership can bring peculiar highs and lows. The close conjunction of the two is seen when the irrepressible Jock first goes missing in Kensington Gardens, only to find his own way home (like Dandy in 'A Farewell Appearance') through the hazards of the busy streets: 'I thought he was lost and gave information at the Police Station ... but when I got back to my flat Jock was calmly waiting for me, not in the least apologetic' (Anstey 1936, 402). A later crisis ends in Kensington Gardens, as opposed to beginning there. Having long languished at a veterinary surgery nearby, too sick to be visited, Mac recovers and is discharged: 'So we went once more into Kensington Gardens and there is a seat by one of the entrances

which I never pass without remembering how we celebrated our reunion there' (410). With Mac's restoration to Anstey comes a conjuring of jubilation from despondency which is only matched when the roles are reversed and Anstey returns to Mac:

it is a very sad little dog that I see in my housekeeper's arms as my taxi starts for the station [...] And when I return it is to hear hysterical barks before the door is even opened, and then to be met with squeals of joy and frantic caresses that would assure me, if I needed assurance, that I have never been really forgotten. (412)

The taxi ride which marked the parting of owner from dog was not always to the railway station, however, and the homecoming would not always be a happy ending. With Jock, Anstey had experienced the following:

in 1922, when I returned from the country, having been obliged to leave him at home, [...] I was shocked to see from the way he blundered against the furniture that he had become almost blind. He was obviously very ill in other respects, and the next day, which happened to be my birthday, I took him in a taxi to Mr. Batt's in Oxford Street with a sad foreknowledge that nothing could be done. Poor Jock thought he was once more going into the country with me and nestled against me in the cab and licked my hand with a pathetically feeble attempt at his old delight in such excursions. But I knew it was our very last ride together; Mr. Batt's verdict was that the most merciful course was to end Jock's sufferings by painless extinction, so I said goodbye to him for the last time and on my way back

arranged for his burial in the Dogs' Cemetery, where he now lies. I have spent happier birthdays than that 8th of August 1922. (403)

Anstey's final farewell to Jock, preceded by an agonising taxi ride and followed by a blank and joyless homecoming, resumes the main elements of an experience that Anstey would decide to cut out of his autobiography completely, even though he described it in some detail in the manuscript draft (Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54312, fos 175-176). On the evening of Monday, December 23, 1918, Anstey had taken a taxi to Kensington Infirmary knowing what he would find there: his younger brother Leonard, just struck by a tube train at Notting Hill Gate and—as Anstey told Edmund Gosse ten days after the accident—

so badly injured that he died early on Christmas Eve. He was cut off just when he had at last attained the recognition & success as a specialist in children's & nervous diseases which he had so long deserved. I was always exceedingly fond & proud of him, & his death is an overwhelming blow. You can imagine what this Christmas has been for us, & indeed I do not know how more hideous ironies could well have been crowded into those six dreadful days.

(Guthrie 1887-1925, fourth letter of six, dated '2: Jan: 1919')

The first of the hideous ironies took hold as soon as Anstey arrived at his brother's bedside: 'outside in the street, we could hear the Carol-Singers. "Noël" and "Good King Wenceslas" were the carols, I remember, & it was some years before they lost the

hideous irony of that night' (Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54312, fo. 175). Another announced itself the next evening, when Anstey began putting his late brother's affairs—and the house which he had shared with their other brother Walter—in some sort of order. By walking through the door he revived the hope to which his brother's dog Scottie still pathetically clung of the brother himself, Scottie's owner, walking in afterwards. The account in Anstey's diary of the 'six dreadful days' to which first the accident itself and then the inquest and the funeral subjected him and Walter and their sister Edith accordingly notes, on the night of the 24th, 'Scottie barking excitedly every time the front door opened, expecting Len' (Anstey 1880-1934, Additional MS 63573, fo. 119v). On the following day, Christmas Day, Anstey writes of a celebration overshadowed in even ghastlier fashion than his birthday in 1922 was to be: 'There may be as bitter Christmas Days left for us—there can never be worse' (Anstey 1880-1934, Additional MS 63573, fo. 120r).

All of this remains beneath the surface, however, in *A Long Retrospect*. Readers of the book are not exposed to anything that might ruffle the apparent placidity of the life 'singularly deficient in adventure' (Anstey 1936, 370), and blessedly devoid of trauma, which the Preface has sketched. The published text of Anstey's autobiography says nothing at all about what he had to endure on Christmas Eve in 1918. We are led away from that date to another, August 8th 1922, and to a chain of events that (in ways of which the reader cannot be aware) are associated with the buried trauma. A memory too painful for direct revival is dealt with by displacement. The pain of losing Jock stands in for the anguish caused to Anstey by his brother's death. Just as palpably as in the double entendre of the ballad 'My Dog and I,' though far less deliberately, the dog

is used as a diversionary device. For Anstey, perhaps, this is what dogs had always been. The first dog that Anstey solely owned, after sharing the care of various family pets, was Bran the Yorkshire terrier; and when he bought Bran—‘in the summer of 1889 in Leadenhall Market [...] for, I think, thirty shillings’ (Anstey 1936, 396)—the sorrows from which dog ownership might have the power to distract him were coming in battalions. Earlier that year his father had died, after a distressing decline about which *A Long Retrospect* preserves a proper and predictable silence; and Anstey had also just learnt that the brother-in-law whom he had known since their schooldays and who was a kind of Arthur Hallam to him was dying too (207–208). Anstey’s doubts over whether Bran would settle with him or not were worries far less weighty than these, of course, but took over for a time, ‘until one afternoon when he decided, as I was sitting on a chair in Kensington Gardens, that I suited him, and sprang on my knee and covered me with kisses’ (396–397). Behind Anstey’s rescue of Bran from a pond near Tunbridge Wells, it appears, lies Bran’s previous rescue of him from a personal Slough of Despond. One golden deed deserves another.

The Anstey who picks up his pen to compose his autobiography, therefore, is not just a writer whose work has often pivoted upon strategic substitutions but a man whose life has shown him that where a chasm opens a dog may help to fill it. It is scarcely surprising to find Anstey transferring into the chapter on his dogs much of the emotional turbulence which elsewhere in the book—because he is suppressing most of the details of his loved ones’ deaths—he is unable to recount, let alone resolve. That transference, by virtue of the reshuffling which turns this chapter into the closing statement of *A Long Retrospect*, also becomes a postponement. By the time the reader

reaches 'My Dogs,' the death of Anstey's mother has been tentatively tackled—'What her death meant to us all [...] I shall not try to put into words' (Anstey 1936, 94)—but almost everything else about the deaths of his other first-degree relatives has been withheld. The death of his father is got through in fifteen words: 'In February 1889 my father died and our home life in Phillimore Gardens was ended' (207). The deaths of both brothers, Leonard's in 1918 and Walter's in 1932, are altogether omitted. Anstey was seventy-five when Walter died, and the sadness he felt at a passing which not only reminded him of the three earlier deaths but forced him to contemplate his own is palpable in the manuscript draft: 'He died early on Thursday the 19th of May & lies in the grave at Kensal Green in which my Mother, Father & Leonard have lain for so many years & to which it cannot be very long now before I too am borne' (Anstey 1877-1960, Additional MS 54312, fo. 198). Yet in the published text, with that passage cancelled, all of the sadness seems siphoned off into Anstey's accounts of his first four dogs dying and of the fear he has of his seventh dog, little Mac, following them. The last two sentences of the autobiography refuse to imagine the death of Mac: 'He is still young, so I have a good hope that he will be with me to the end. I do not want to outlive another of my dogs' (Anstey 1936, 413). 'Outlive' in this most movingly understated of all Anstey's reflections on survival and mortality really has the force of 'live without.' Anstey was a man who, by his own admission, 'could never get on without a dog of some sort for long' (401).

The seriousness of those canine commitments is hauntingly depicted in the so-called 'Last Photograph'. Here, the holding on to Mac is a clinging for dear life; but it is Mac's life rather than his own which Anstey is committed to protecting, and which he

wishes he could extend. Since he could not bear to mourn Mac he hopes that Mac will mourn him, like the collie mourning his master in the Landseer engraving that Anstey had stared at seventy years before. If Lilian's Bingo (evolving out of Laura's Jumbo) was the first dog that F. Anstey the writer came to conceive, the first dog that caught the imagination of Thomas Anstey Guthrie the child was Landseer's collie. Now, as he waits to be borne to Kensal Green, Anstey is effectively dissolving away into the engraving he remembers being struck by in his boyhood nursery. He himself will be next month's or next year's Old Shepherd, and Mac will become the devoted dog he leaves behind. To the last, Anstey can be seen projecting feelings so intense onto the dogs he owned in real life as to make it no wonder that his fiction had often, like Ballantyne's, given the 'doggie' a considerable part to play.

WORKS CITED

- ANSTEY, F. 'The Black Poodle.' *Longman's Magazine*, 1.1 (November 1882): 99-124.
- ANSTEY, F. Diaries of Thomas Anstey Guthrie ('F. Anstey'), author (1856-1934); 1880-1934. Additional MS 63551-63582. Millar Bequest, vols. XCVIII-CXXIX. British Library.
- ANSTEY, F. 'The Dog Demagogue.' *The Sarnia Observer*, Friday, Jan 22, 1886. 6.
- ANSTEY, F. 'A Farewell Appearance.' *Longman's Magazine*, 1.4 (February 1883): 463-476.
- ANSTEY, F. *A Long Retrospect*. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1936.
- ANSTEY, F. Papers of and relating to 'F. Anstey,' Thomas Anstey Guthrie, uncle of E. G. Millar; 1877-1960. Additional MS 54258-54312. Millar Bequest, vols XXXII-LXXXVI. British Library.
- BENNETT, Arnold. *The Old Wives' Tale*. 1908. Ed. John Wain. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983.
- GUTHRIE, Thomas Anstey (pseud. F. Anstey). Letters to Edmund Gosse, 1887-1925. Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, U.K. BC Gosse Correspondence.
- HUTTON, Richard H. *Sir Walter Scott*. London: Macmillan, 1878.
- KELLETT, E. E. 'F. Anstey.' *The Spectator*, Friday, May 22, 1936, 948-950.
- MAXCY, Carroll Lewis. *The Rhetorical Principles of Narration*. Boston, New York, and Chicago: Houghton Mifflin, 1911.

OLIPHANT, Margaret. 'Three Young Novelists.' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 136 (September 1884): 296–316.

'The Rape of the Black Poodle'. *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* 71.1857 (May 30, 1891): 644.

'Recent Novels and Tales.' *The Times*, Saturday, Feb 27, 1892. 5.

RUSSELL, George W. E. *Seeing and Hearing*. New York: Dutton, 1907.

SHERARD, Robert Harborough. 'Stanley J. Weyman.' *The Idler; An Illustrated Magazine* 7 (July 1895): 671-689.

SKEAPING, Lucie, ed., with a foreword by Andrew Motion. *Broadside Ballads: Songs from the Streets, Taverns, Theatres and Countryside of 17th-century England*. London: Faber Music, 2005.

STOWE, Harriet Beecher. 'Our Dogs.' *Queer Little People*. Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1867a. 91–140.

STOWE, Harriet Beecher. 'Sir Walter Scott and His Dogs.' *Queer Little People*. Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1867b. 167–175.

[YONGE, Charlotte.] *A Book of Golden Deeds of All Times and All Lands; Gathered and Narrated by the Author of 'The Heir of Redclyffe'*. 1864. London: Macmillan, 1866.

YONGE, Charlotte. *What Books to Lend and What to Give*. London: National Society's Depository, 1887.