Postgraduate English
www.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english
ISSN 1756-9761

Issue 14 September 2006

Editors: Ollie Taylor and Kostas Boyiopoulos

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Tom Slingsby*

* University of Sussex

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Tom Slingsby
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Postgraduate English, Issue 14, September 2006

Mary Butts was an English modernist novelist, short-story writer and reviewer, born in Dorset in 1890, and who died in Cornwall in 1937. This argument concerns her text "With and Without Buttons," a rural ghost story written in 1931. It is proposed that the ghost story genre offered Butts the ideal repository for the oblique expression of fears and insecurities which her other fiction refused to dramatize explicitly. This reading draws some of its motivation from the critic Ian Patterson, who writing on Butts' 1932 novel "Death of Felicity Taverner" argues

> If a writer becomes estranged from a culture which is nevertheless felt intensely to be both a homeland and the source of spiritual and intellectual nourishment, and at the same time adopts the position of its advocate or defender, some displacement or reworking of this estrangement is likely to be figured in the writing.[1]

The present argument applies this notion of displacement to the pivotal image of the ghostly body, and detects an historically illuminating relationship between this, and some of the formal tendencies of the short ghost story.

However, since Butts remains something of an outsider to the literary canon, the argument begins with an overview of the biographical themes upon which it is founded. For the feeling of displacement expressed in "With and Without Buttons" has its roots in Mary Butts' childhood. Her autobiography*The Crystal Cabinet*: *My Childhood at Salterns* tells us that her childhood was shaped by a sense of being "a person apart"[2]. She had a rarefied life in Salterns, a rural, ancestral estate west of Poole in Dorset. Butts was an aristocrat, and recounts spending much of her childhood playing in the hills around the house. She

preferred to seek out precious stones and fir cones than to play with other children, and this taught her the value of loving nature, and "something of the inward being of each separate thing"[3]. Inside the house were more precious things: notably, a collection of William Blake paintings that had been in the family since the time of her great-grandfather, Thomas Butts, who had been one of Blake's main patrons. Butts felt intimate above all with her father, with whom she felt she shared a "secret knowledge" and who raised her on "cycles of antique story telling"[4]. When Butts was fourteen her father died. This left Salterns in the possession of her mother, who in Butts' opinion "und[id] in less than half a lifetime the work of centuries"[5]by selling beloved family heirlooms to cover his death-duties. Butts felt cheated of a cultural legacy through which she had felt able to connect to her father's spirit. Shortly after this bereavement she was sent to boarding school in St. Andrews, Scotland, and was even further from her homeland. A shy child, she felt isolated, for her schoolmates were largely from a new social class: the children of northern industrialists, whom she thought embodied materialistic values, with their "thrusting" and "flaunting" personalities. [6]Butts found escape in the poetry of Shelley and wrote that she was "leading a life entirely in two worlds – the school world with its deadly pressure, and a world within, where every song that Shelley ever wrote sang in a kind of super-chorus together"[7]. As an adult Butts underwent periods of experimentation and exploration with urban life and its associated values, but such periods only produced even stronger reactions against those lifestyles.[8]Loss of home and inheritance found a wider corollary in the detachment she felt from a contemporary society whose "fashionable immoralities"[9]seemed vastly removed from those values with which her father had raised her. All were to remain key themes in Butts' life and work until the end of her life. My argument shows that the crisis of identity detectable in this biographical narrative is displaced in a manner which relies on the ambiguous spaces offered by the short ghost story for its unsettling, uncanny charge.

In “With and Without Buttons” two unnamed sisters, and a man named Trenchard share two halves of a house. Trenchard dismisses religion as “dramatised wish-fulfilment” [10]. Like Mary Butts herself, the sisters regard this view as

> a set of pseudo-rationalisations, calling the bluff, in inaccurate language, of God, the arts, the imagination, the emotions. That is not even chic science for laymen today. (*ACP* 22)

To test, and punish this rational scepticism they decide to construct a ghost story with which to haunt Trenchard. They find a box of gloves, and leave them lying around in Trenchard’s side of the house to suggest paranormal visitations. They feed him a story about a Miss Blacken “a musty old maid in horrible clothes, but nice about her hands” (*ACP* 27). However, when gloves start appearing of their own accord, on either side of the house, the sisters feel that “it was as though … it had already started itself” (*ACP* 27). Enquiries in the village reveal that a real Miss Blacken had lived in the area before the two sisters moved in. The three characters are horrified to be swooped upon by her flying petticoat, which descends through the loft skylight, and to find gloves in their clothes, and on the food they have prepared for a dinner party. The petticoat is said by a local to contain holes, which form the image of a face, and at the story’s end the sisters have to prevent it from suffocating Trenchard. Over the course of the tale, agency is gradually, and shockingly reversed. It is a deeply visual and metonymic haunting, which disturbs as much by the body it conceals as through the dislocated parts it reveals. The metonymic power of these images suggests that the constraints of a short and tightly worked-out narrative appealed to Butts’ childhood sense of the*mana*-charged object, whose “inward being” [11] is valued for its capacity for dramatic, supernatural impact.

The ghostly body is the focus of my reading of “With and Without Buttons”, and it should be viewed in the context of other bodies created by Butts. For the capacity of fictional bodies to sustain and redeem identity was vital to her attempts to resolve those problems of belonging which have just been outlined. In

her 1925 novel *Ashe of Rings*, the re-connection of the heroine Van Ashe to the magic of a set of Rings on the family estate protects those lands against the threat of intruders. This saviour-heiress theme is continued in "Death of Felicity Taverner". Here Felicity's family look to solve the mystery of her death and defend the estate against the developments of her former husband Kralin, a Russian-Jewish businessman. They view Felicity as having been the land's protector, and it is conceived of as an image of her body: "the hills were her body laid-down, and 'Felicity' was said, over and over again, in each bud and leaf"[12]. Butts' autobiography *The Crystal Cabinet* imagines the land around the estate in very similar terms:

> The green body of the Purbeck hills, like a naked god laid down asleep. Place I shall never see again, now they have violated it, now that body has been put to such vile use, such as men from cities do to such places as these; [13]

In these images, wholeness of identity is defined by the degree to which heroines stand in a fulfilled relationship with the body of the land. Their wholeness is the correlative of wholeness of self. Violation of the land entails a crisis of personal identity. The theme has clear historical foundations. By the early 1930s, when Butts was writing "With and Without Buttons," and settling in Cornwall, the land around "the green body of the Purbeck hills"[14]was under threat from a number of literal and conceptual incursions. Nearby Bindon Hill had been purchased by the War Office for use as a tank firing range[15], and land near the picturesque Lulworth Cove was also used.[16]At the same time, the expansion of nearby Poole,[17]Swanage andBournemouth, and the popularity of Lulworth Cove as a day-trippers' haven[18]meant that the aristocratic sanctity of the land was being threatened by a new wave of popular tourism. Certain local nobles and newspapers cited this popularity as grounds for rejecting the tanks, one squire "commissioning a scheme to convert Lulworth into a fully commercialised 'plage'"[19]. But for hard-line devotees of the land, such as Mary Butts, this "Boom to-day in the English countryside" was perhaps more of a threat than the

tanks themselves, "a mass-wish exploited by the wrong people for ignoble ends" [20]. It led some Lulworth inhabitants to retreat inland "into the Tynham valley, where they tried to reintroduce exclusivity into the landscape"[21]. Refusing to side with the discourses of popular tourism, Butts attempted her own, poetic feats of retrenchment, via the invention of imaginary bodies of the land. It is as a fictive rebuttal to her sense of dis-location that her work suggests that the recovery of psychic identification with the intact body of the homeland will rejuvenate wholeness of self. For instance in *Ashe of Rings*, it is Van's faith in the Rings, "sanctuary of my race," which protects her from rape by Peter and Judy, outsiders and "amateur invocators" who have designs on her family estate.[22]The novel shares with the language of the more rarefied anti-tank protesters an invocation of the metaphysical and of an "imagined community"[23]of race, in order to legitimate the identity which is felt to depend on an intact landscape. Wright explains that some would-be defenders of Dorset felt the need to circumvent the popularist rhetoric that was accompanying protests against the tanks, and like Butts, to evoke a more abstract realm of meaning:

> the writer faces the additional problem of being unable to defend Arish Mell without breaking its secret. So he resorts to an ingenious patriotic abstraction, concluding that the people who have risen up … are actually champions of a deeply felt image … an 'inherent' English geography that others would know from elsewhere, and it is this more abstract landscape that is to be defended against the War Office.[24]

If, as Wright puts it, "rustic time was thrown clean out of joint"[25]by the changes to the Dorset landscape, then it makes sense that the unspoiled body of the land would be imagined as having an abstract being. For Butts it was capable of endowing a supra-historical sense of self. At the end of *Ashe of Rings*, Van's identity as heiress to a magical legacy is reasserted. Because of her re-acceptance by the "sanctuary of my race" she feels able to reassure her brother "nothing shall alter us. I'm not going to die"[26]. Most importantly to the present argument, it is in this explicit relationship between heroines and the land that Mary Butts

demonstrates her desire to imagine herself as a defender of the region and its history. As Patterson suggests, her desire to realise fantasised solutions to the problems of modernity meant that she was unlikely to address their potential failure explicitly in her fiction.[27] We need to look for the ways in which this failure is displaced, rather than depicted in her work.

In her essay "Ghosties and Ghoulies: Uses of the Supernatural in English Fiction" Butts describes the aims of the ghost story as follows:

> Their common purpose is to "make our flesh creep". And by that we mean, not simple horror or terror at a new and generally evil world, usually invisible but interlocked with ours; we mean also a stirring, a touching of nerves not usually sensitive, an awakening to more than fear – but to something like awareness and conviction or even memory.[28]

Butts acknowledges the ghost story's kinship with the detective story, in that it allows the reader to enact transgressive impulses not permissible in everyday life: "a battle; crime-at-home in an arm chair, with no after regrets, complications or visits from police"[29]. Her analysis of fear also hints that the best ghost stories, are capable of evoking something of the animistic, savage man in the reader.[30] The "memory"[31] which Butts suggests is at the root of the power of the supernatural story, seems to relate to beliefs and fears supposed "to be dead and buried,"[32] but which in fact lie dormant in the popular imagination. She tells us

> people still write and turn out tolerable or even excellent work on the subjects they are not supposed to believe in at all – the old motif of ghost and spirit; and of our occasional sense of awareness of other forms of life other than those shown us by our senses.[33]

Thus the responses provoked by the ghost story may be a means of rousing currents of thought suppressed by contemporary culture. Appealing to an "occasional … awareness"[34] of this, the ghost story may arouse a dialectical conflict between an otherness summoned up in the reader, and the sameness of the civilization with which he or she typically identifies. In that "With and Without

Buttons" uses this dialectic to advance a sense of the local, we should recognise the story's commonalities with those of M. R. James, whose work had a great impact on Butts. James enlists the irrational fears provoked by local, supernatural centres of power to initiate an implicitly felt critique of the modern worldviews of his unfortunate protagonists. In his "A Warning to the Curious" an amateur archaeologist is on holiday in East Anglia, having just lost his job in the city.[35] He is on the trail of a legendary Anglo-Saxon crown, thought to be defending England against invaders. But no sooner has his search begun than he finds himself being stalked by a dark figure. His pursuer is a ghost and the last representative of a long family line which had protected the crown for generations. It eventually kills him. Refraining from moral judgement of these events, the story nonetheless deploys its unsettling effects to expose the distance between what Butts called "a new type of man with a new type of consciousness" and "the life of the earth"[36]. The disjuncture between modern man and a regional order of meaning is used to emphasise the difference between contemporary attitudes to the provinces, as resources to be co-opted into a modern, instrumental economy, and their 'true' being as nexuses of distinct identities, meanings and histories. Similarly, James' '"Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad'", much like "With and Without Buttons", depicts an archaeology professor's modern, rational scepticism as the cause of his haunting, which occurs when he finds a supernatural whistle on his holiday to the provinces. The whistle summons a ghost, from which the professor has to be rescued by a local protestant gentleman. This man understands that the dangers of such metaphysically charged artefacts lie beyond the grasp of mere academic archaeology[37]. As well as going on to gushingly review James,[38] Butts mentions his stories in "Ghosties and Ghoulies", describing them as "pure evocations of man's still latent fear that there is an animal life outside the animals he knows, less than human life and more"[39]. We may thus think of his stories as exemplars of the method of using an enigmatic "stirring"[40] to embed a debate with modern society.

It is on this suggestive, Jamesian level in "With and Without Buttons" that we can detect a displaced rendering of Butts' fear that her project of redeeming identity in fiction would fail. This is apparent when we read the story's disintegrated body against those whole bodies with which she works elsewhere. The story inverts the spiritual hierarchy within which she typically resolved problems of identity: a hidden, evil body, rather than a magically revealed body of the land controls the fates of the characters. The hands and petticoats are "signatures"[41] of a suggested, invisible being, whose presence offers a coded dramatisation of the fear that cultural and spiritual regeneration of the land would never come to pass. Because the ghost is presented as deriving from a story created by the sisters, the text emphasizes its own artifice. It purports to put its own operations ahead of historical referentiality. Yet, this in itself is a strategy for concealing autobiographical content which the author was reluctant to portray openly. It is contained behind an apparently self-reflexive concern with the revelatory operations of the ghost story. Autobiography is present, yet displaced, like the ghostly body which haunts without being seen.

The discussion now turns to how the image of the body is situated in relation to some formal tendencies of the short story form. For the self-reflexive capacities of the medium offered Butts ways of continuing her Jamesian use of evoked dialectical meanings. Virginia Woolf described the potential of great essays to "haunt the mind and remain entire in the memory"[42]. Given that this is the purpose of the ghost story, I am minded to work with Valerie Shaw's proposition that Woolf's words apply just as well to the short story form.[43] For this reason we might see the modernist short story as especially prone to self-reflexivity: designed around the notion that it can be reflected upon as a whole, it may be more likely to contain written-in reflections on its own structuring and progression. This is certainly the case in "With and Without Buttons". In the work of other modernist ghost story writers, such as Elizabeth Bowen, narrative tension derives in part from the modelling of interiority, which allows an exploration of the dramas which spring from varying states of consciousness and emotion.[44] If

Butts' is a self-reflexive story, the 'I' of the narrator is notably un-self-reflective. Butts was not fond of theories of the unconscious mind;[45] yet, she was interested in the nuances of consciousness and emotion. Instead of setting out to model internally felt experiences, she transferred the facets of consciousness onto the conventional structure of the ghost story. Hence, the sisters in the text embody varying states of activity, passivity; cunning and fear. One of them is the narrator, and this is foregrounded by the fact that she seems to be less of an agent of the ghost story, more of a witness. When Trenchard finds the first glove, the narrator resentfully thinks that her sister has started the game without her. This passivity emphasises the power of the metaphysical dynamic which the story reveals around the characters, thus foregrounding the operations of the text itself. The sisters are characterized through an unresolved dialectic of sameness and difference, sometimes appearing to think and speak from the same mind. To indicate this, Butts attributes speech with "we said" (*ACP* 23) and has the narrator repeating her sister's speech in a mantra-like fashion:

> "Shiny black kid and brown, with little white glass buttons and cross-stitching and braid. All one size, and I suppose for one pair of hands. Some have all the buttons and some have none and some have some –" I listened to this rune until I was not sure how many times my sister had said it.
>
> "With and without buttons," I repeated, and could not remember how often I had said that. (*ACP* 25)

In this passage we see a complex play between three identities: the blurred relationship between the two sisters, and ironizing this, the increasingly dominant agency of the invisible ghost. The sisters' shared thoughts and impulses evoke the possibility that the ghost is acting through them. Yet, set against this is their sense of guilt. On finding an outstretched glove over an immaculate pile of strawberries, Trenchard's exclamation induces a sense of responsibility for the way the story has unfolded:

> "What witches' trick is this?" he cried, and stared at us, for we were women. And like a wave moving towards us, rearing its head, came the knowledge that we were responsible for this; that our greed and vanity in devising this has evoked this … (*ACP* 35)

There is an unresolved confusion of agency between the sisters and the ghost, on top of the confusion of identity between the two sisters. The functions of the text are emphasised by this confusion: one sister is narrator, the other potential agent, and the ghost actual agent. In this self-conscious game of identity we see reflected Butts' sense that the short story "has also become an elaborate craft; and for the reader an intricate, intelligent and enthralling game, allied to chess, insight into the spirit *in extremis*"[46]. It is clear that rather than choosing an interiorized narrative of the fragmentation of identity, Butts dispersed such a narrative over a conventional, yet heavily ironized ghost story structure. The interpreter of this structure is posited as a detective, piecing together the scraps of meaning and history which are dispersed throughout it.

Michael Chapman has argued that the self-reflexive capacity of the short story "alerts us to the fact that … characters … are within the text part of the design that bears and moves them"[47]. The ghost story, more than any other short story embodies this, with its emphasis on the revelation of a concealed design: the Butts' sisters endure a tormenting process of discovering that they are not the authors of the ghost story, rather it is authoring them. As gloves, buttons, and the filthy petticoat manifest themselves, the house comes to seem more like a cage than a space in which a beautifully planned party can be hosted. This reminds us that the characters are the objects of a carefully worked-out literary system. The haunting is described by one of the sisters as "dirty things done in a delicate way" (*ACP* 34). The tale's emphasis on design points us to the fact that its ghostly agent, or concealed body, is in fact a parallel of the author herself. We should thus read the hidden, ghostly body as an indirect self-portrait by Butts. We may see the

"nice[ness] about her hands" (*ACP* 27) of the ghost as an embedded "signature" [48], signifying Butts' own authorial dexterity. But at the same time, we may also see the two sisters as versions of Butts. Like them, the Butts of 1931 who had recently returned from France, was attempting to settle in a strange part of rural England, experiencing a sense of displacement, and a fear that the body of her homeland would not accept her back. Through the ghostly body, autobiography, apparently suppressed by the tale's concern with its own operations, returns like a forgotten belief, "returning and rising to the contemporary surface like a bubble from some foul bottom, breaking on some clear pool where men usually whip for fish"[49].

We have seen how Mary Butts' position as defender of an imaginary homeland prevented her from writing explicitly about her threatened sense of personal identity. Instead her text stages a displaced exploration of these themes, which relies upon the self-referential capacity of the short ghost story. The text's focus on its own operations is used to conceal autobiography. Yet it also draws attention to the ghostly body, which I have read as an indirect image of authorial power. This body is an image of fragmentation, and through the tale's self-reflexive qualities, it is implicated in a dialectic of identity, which reflects Butts' sense of dislocation from the body of the homeland she loved. In conclusion, I hope to have shown how the short story form provided an ideal medium in which to embed autobiographical themes which ran contrary to the explicit trajectories of Butts' other fictions.

Endnotes

[1] Ian Patterson. "'The Plan behind the Plan': Russians, Jews and Mythologies of Change: The Case of Mary Butts." *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'*. Bryan Cheyette, Laura Marcus, eds. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998: 126.

[2] Mary Butts. *The Crystal Cabinet: My Childhood At Salterns*. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1998: 18.

[3] Ibid 19.

[4] Ibid 17, 19.

[5] Ibid 13.

[6] Ibid 208.

[7] Ibid 189.

[8] This is a complex movement, worthy of thorough exploration in itself. For the sake of the present argument I will outline it as follows. In Patrick Wright's words, Butts' experimentation involved "intoxication, destabilisation, disruption, an impulse towards new and transient forms of affiliation and urban society" (Patrick Wright. 'Coming back to the shores of Albion: The Secret England of Mary Butts (1890-1937).' *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain*. London: Verso, 1985: 103). It occurred with Butts' first move to London, when she experienced "A first year of almost incredible release" (*The Crystal Cabinet* 239), and throughout the 1920s, a decade which she spent mostly in France, working, socializing with writers and artists, and at times experimenting with occult magic (see Nathalie Blondel. *Mary Butts: Scenes From the Life*. New York: McPherson & Co., 1998). We may also see it in her literary explorations of London life, and the new forms of consciousness which she felt it produced (for instance, "In Bayswater." *From Altar to Chimney-piece: Selected Stories*. New York: McPherson & Co., 1992: 74-116). However, this exploration ultimately produced what Wright calls a movement of "settlement" (*On Living in and Old Country* 103), which saw Butts expressing her underlying dissatisfaction with new ways of living in a move to western Cornwall. The move was soon followed by her most anti-modern writings, "Warning to Hikers." *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings*. New York: McPherson & Co., 1998: 274-295; "Traps for Unbelievers." ibid 299-315; and "Death of Felicity Taverner." *The Taverner Novels: Armed With Madness & Death of Felicity Taverner*. New York: McPherson & Co., 1992: 163-365.

[9] Frank Baker. *I Follow But Myself*. London: Peter Davies, 1968: 119. Baker was a close friend of Butts in Cornwall during the mid-1930s.

[10] Mary Butts. "With and Without Buttons." *From Altar to Chimney-piece: Selected Stories*. New York: McPherson & Co., 1992: 22. All further references included in parentheses of the main text, with the abbreviation *ACP*.

[11] *The Crystal Cabinet* 19.

[12] *The Taverner Novels: Armed With Madness & Death of Felicity Taverner* 191.

[13] *The Crystal Cabinet* 15.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Patrick Wright. *The Village that Died for England: The Strange Story of Tynham*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1995: 56.

[16] Capt. D. G. Browne. *The Tank in Action*. Edinburgh and London, 1920.

[17] *The Crystal Cabinet* 16.

[18] *The Village that Died for England* 72, 83.

[19] Ibid 69.

[20] Mary Butts. 'This England.' *The Bookman*. 83.495 (Christmas 1932): 274, 280.

[21] *The Village that Died for England* 83.

[22] *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings* 187.

[23] Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1994: 6.

[24] Arish Mell is a bay near Bindon Wood in Dorset which was threatened by the War Office's plans to expand its firing ranges in the early 1920s. *The Village that Died forEngland* 68-69.

[25] Ibid 53.

[26] *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings* 187, 227.

[27] *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'* 126.

[28] Mary Butts. "Ghosties and Ghoulies: Uses of the Supernatural in English Fiction." *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings*. New York: McPherson & Co, 1998: 334-335. First serialised in *The Bookman*. 83.469 (Jan. 1933): 386-389; 83.497 (Feb. 1933): 433-435; 83.498 (Mar. 1933): 493-494; 84.499 (Apr. 1933): 12-14.

[29] *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings* 333.

[30] Ibid 334-335.

[31] Ibid 335.

[32] Ibid 337.

[33] Ibid 334.

[34] Ibid.

[35] M. R. James. *The Collected Ghost Stories of M. R. James*. London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1931.

[36] *The Bookman*. 83.495 (Christmas 1932): 274.

[37] The critical juxtaposition of modern scepticism with regional wisdom is echoed on a religious level in the text. The troublesome whistle comes from a ruined Knight's Templar chapel, and so by implication, the tale taps into a Protestant tradition of suspicion against perceived Catholic fallacies and idolatries. This is important because it means that much like "With and Without Buttons", James' text depicts an excess of scepticism as equivalent to superstition or misplaced religious faith.

[38] Mary Butts. "The Art of Montagu James." *The London Mercury*. 29.72 (Feb 1934): 306-317.

[39] *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings* 335.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid 347.

[42] Virginia Woolf. "William Hazlitt." *Collected Essays*. Vol 1. London: Hogarth Press, 1966: 158.

[43] Valerie Shaw. *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction*. Harlow: Longman, 1983: 227.

[44] For example, Elizabeth Bowen. "The Demon Lover." *The Demon Lover and Other Stories*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1945: 80-87.

[45] For instance, her unpublished essay on Bloomsbury cites that group's "playing the Freud game" as evidence of what she saw as a faddish intellectual culture of "suspended beliefs, agnosticisms … indifferences" (*Mary Butts: Scenes From the Life* 399). In "Death of Felicity Taverner", the villain Kralin's interest in psychoanalysis is used to suggest a voyeuristic personality. His desire to bring "all the new sex films" (*The Taverner Novels* 265) to the west country is equated with his desire to publish his dead wife's personal diary, which he says is in the interests of psychoanalytical research. Psychoanalysis was felt to be a symptom of an overly rational culture which was destroying social values, and a key opponent of the intuitively felt aesthetic life which Butts favoured (See *Mary Butts: Scenes From the Life* 399-402). Freud himself was at odds with her belief "that the fears of the stone-age" were still extant (ibid 82-83), the truth of which she felt was evinced by the enduring appeal of the ghost story (*Ashe of Rings and Other Writings* 334-335).

[46] *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings* 333.

[47] Michael Chapman. "The Fiction Maker: the Short Story in Literary Education." *CRUX: A Journal on the Teaching of English*. 18 (1984): 5. Qtd. in Dominic Head. *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992: 8.

[48] *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings* 347.

[49] Ibid 337.

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First Response

This is a sophisticated and cogently argued account of the work of an author whose prose has often been neglected in recent critical debate. The thesis is original and multifaceted, and takes on board both formal and thematic concerns, as well as a consideration of genre (the short story). The prose is fluent and well-structured, although at times one would have wished for more close textual analysis and keener attention to Butts' language. Nonetheless, the essay is informed and very well contextualised. Compelling work.