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Criminally Funny: Sarah Caudwell's Inverted Janeism

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The four crime novels of Sarah Caudwell are full of witty and self-conscious literary allusion, as might be expected from the daughter of Jean Ross, supposedly the model for Sally Bowles in Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* (the source of *Cabaret*), and of Claud Cockburn, whose 1972 book *Bestseller* explored what made books catch on. (Caudwell was her middle name.) Above all, there are several striking parallels between the novels of Sarah Caudwell and those of Jane Austen. This connection may seem surprising given that Austen wrote novels about young women growing up and marrying and Caudwell wrote detective fiction, but, as Susannah Fullerton has suggested, "If Jane Austen were alive today she would, according to P. D. James, be writing mystery novels" (Fullerton 217). Austen has had something of an afterlife as both detective herself (in a series of books by Stephanie Barron) and as a source for detective fiction (in books by Reginald Hill, P. D. James, and Carrie Bebris; see also McDermid and Wells). In the long-running British TV crime series *Midsomer Murders*, an episode entitled "Death by Persuasion" has a series of Austen-themed murders in the course of which Detective Sergeant Winter observes that he's never read any Jane Austen and asks if this is what she's like. Ostensibly the question is comic, but there is a sense in which it is what Austen has become. After all, "There must be murder; and government cares not how much" (*Northanger Abbey* 112).

Criminality is not, however, what Caudwell finds in her. Rather, the qualities that attract Caudwell to Austen can be summed up in three words: irony, elegance, and, above all,

pleasure. Throughout Caudwell's four books there is a sense that Austen represents a gentler, older, more gracious world that Caudwell's characters cling to as hard as they can in the face of some distasteful pressures from modern life (though luckily not too many pressures; their cases are rarely criminal, and the various murders with which they become involved are presented in a manner wholly arch). There is a typically Austenian concern with manners. In *Thus Was Adonis Murdered*, Julia, one of the two heroines of Caudwell's books, records that when she invites Eleanor to slope off from the glass-blowing factory and have coffee, "Eleanor would naturally have preferred to stay and have a row with Graziella; but she could not, with much colour of politeness, say so" (59). The other heroine, Selena, is like Austen herself in at least one respect: "herself much attached to her native land, she is inclined to take personally any disparagement of it" (28).¹ Despite the difference of genre, Caudwell shares an ethos and an aesthetic with Austen, and indeed Julia obliquely evokes the plot of an Austen novel when, lusting after Ned, she muses, "We were in a city full of canals. How could this circumstance be turned to my advantage? One possibility would be to fall into one and be rescued by the beautiful young man" (40). This kind of rescue is of course what happens to Jane Fairfax in *Emma*, a similarity underlined by the fact that in *The Shortest Way to Hades*, where there is a sailing accident that nearly leads to a drowning, the twins' surname is Fairfax. There is too an apparent verbal echo when Julia tells the Major, "The travel agents . . . had no title to include me in the package. If they claimed to do so, your remedy is under the Trade Descriptions Act" (20), for in *Sanditon* Tom Parker says of his own health that "once at home, we have our remedy at hand you know" (*Minor Works* 367).

There is also a sympathy in narrative techniques, not least in Caudwell's marked and unexpected preference for both the form and the manners of the epistolary novel. This technique is one of a number of signs of an interest in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as when in *Thus Was Adonis Murdered*, Timothy "went and stood for a while on the bridge,

from which, I am told by the waiter, one can see Byron's house" (165). In addition the use of letters is a deliberate narrative choice employed both for revelation of character and also in support of a puzzle-plot: as in *Pamela* and *Evelina*, information can thus be conveyed to the reader without the writer of the letter ever being consciously aware of the fact. The first of Caudwell's four novels was published in 1981, before mobile phones were common, but even the later books continue to feature letters, varied in the third book, *The Sirens Sang of Murder*, by Cantrip's mania for faxes, a form of communication that he seems to believe is untraceable if not signed. (The names of the two principal male characters are Michael Cantrip and Desmond Ragwort, but they are known only by their surnames unless they are in disgrace.) Early in the first book we are told that Selena "had impressed on Julia her duty to write daily, for the edification and amusement of those left in Lincoln's Inn" (*Thus* 13). The first letter is written from Heathrow and begins,

Dearest Selena,

"Twelve adulteries, nine liaisons, sixty-four fornications and something approaching a rape" are required of me for your innocent entertainment. Well, you will have to be patient—the aeroplane is not designed to accommodate such adventures. I am beginning, however, as I mean to go on, and in accordance with your own instructions—that is to say, with an exactly contemporaneous account of everything that happens. (14)

Julia is, in short, writing to the moment.

Both Julia and Caudwell, however, also have an eye to the longer term:

Dearest Selena,

My letters to you—are they mere ephemera, stop-gap economies for telephone calls? Or are they to serve, in half a century's time, when you are retired from high judicial office and I, too improvident to afford retirement,

still pursuing the vain chimera of paying last year's income tax, am advising my clients from the comfort of a Bath chair—are they to serve then as a journal or memoir, when we seek diversion in reminiscence? (*Thus* 111)

It is at the time of writing not yet half a century since Julia, ventriloquized by Caudwell, wrote these words, but it is already clear that the books were not ephemeral: they have survived and been reprinted because, as Caudwell clearly hoped, readers have recognized them as literary. Part of this literariness is a characteristically Austenian awareness of the material form of the book, as in *The Sirens Sang of Murder*, where Hilary observes, “It will be, I fear, with some surprise, perhaps even with irritation, that you remark, dear reader, how many pages yet remain before my narrative reaches its conclusion, wondering, when the truth concerning the deaths of Grynne and Malvoisin is already plain, with what maundering irrelevancies I can have contrived to fill them” (183). This obviously glances at the “tell-tale compression of the pages” at the end of *Northanger Abbey* (250) and reminds us of an important aspect of our engagement with literature, the sheer pleasure of having a book in one's hand.

This particular pleasure is stressed in the most consciously Austenian of the books, *The Shortest Way to Hades*. When Julia and Selena inadvertently find themselves at a party where the rest of the guests have stripped off and are taking cocaine, Selena “took from her handbag a paperback edition of *Pride and Prejudice* and sat on the sofa reading it, declining all offers of conversation,” a course of action that leads Julia to observe later that “[s]he cast off all conventional restraints and devoted herself without shame to the pleasure of the moment” (53). Julia's term is an apt one, because “pleasure” is a key word for Austen, and the irony of Selena's finding pleasure not in sex and drugs but in reading *Pride and Prejudice* can help alert us to the fact that for Austen too “pleasure” is a complex and potentially ironic word. A search on Kindle texts finds that *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* both have 99 uses

of it, along with 30 of “pleasant” (and variations such as “pleasantness”), 77 of “please,” “pleasing,” and “pleased.” (The fact that the figures are the same for both novels suggests that the methodology is not robust, but the words certainly crop up many times.)

It is obviously impossible to undertake a proper analysis of so many occurrences, but there are some striking and suggestive examples. For one thing, not all instances of the word connote genuine, simple, unalloyed pleasure. Sometimes there is a more complex emotional tonality, as in *Persuasion* where an encounter with Captain Wentworth causes Anne to feel “agitation, pain, pleasure, a something between delight and misery” (175). Sometimes the word is used to essentially formulaic effect: Austen’s characters do not simply meet someone but have the pleasure of meeting them (something which is also true of Caudwell), and politeness often forces them to refer to something as a pleasure when in fact it is by no means so. Only occasionally is something guaranteed to be “real pleasure,” as in *Emma*, where the heroine is aware of her own good behavior towards her father, which, ironically, is secured only by foregoing what might more obviously seem to be pleasure, since “she was giving up the sweetest hours of the twenty-four to his comfort” (377). As Bruce Stovel has observed, “Austen considers that the greatest pleasure lies in following duty and obligation” (64). By contrast, the morally weak characters of *Mansfield Park* can take pleasure only in things: when Tom’s extravagance causes the Mansfield living to be diverted away from Edmund the narrator comments that “the younger brother must help to pay for the pleasures of the elder” (23), and Miss Crawford observes, ““You would look rather blank, Henry, if your menus plaisirs were to be limited to seven hundred a year”” (226). Whatever the precise nuance, the prevalence of the word “pleasure” in Austen’s books is in itself a source of pleasure to the books’ readers, not only by the creation of an atmosphere of pleasantness but also by the implicit invitation to determine for ourselves the precise shade of meaning to be attached to each use of the word. In turn, this decoding is likely to be governed by our sense

of what many readers might consider the principal pleasure to be found in Austen's works: her use of irony.

"Pleasure" and its cognates are also key terms for Caudwell. Early in *Thus Was Adonis Murdered* we find the narrator Hilary's description of the four lawyers as "a decorative little group—it would be a difficult taste that was pleased by none of them" (4), supplemented by the observation that "it is for those whose pleasure lies in the conquest of virtue that Ragwort's delicate profile and demure autumnal colouring have a most particular charm" (4) while Cantrip is "more pleasing to those whose preference is for a savour of iniquity" (4). Shortly afterwards Hilary asks if Timothy's absence is "attributable to pleasure" (6); it is not, but Julia's proves to be. Selena explains that "Julia has been working very hard all summer . . . and has had few opportunities for pleasure" (11), so she has gone to Venice in search of willowy young men to seduce. Julia herself later recalls the "pleasure" of being taken to the pantomime as a child (40) and writes of Marylou buying "many . . . things of pleasure and delight" (66) on the Rialto, of herself having "a day of many and diverse pleasures" (69), and of the fear of "a holiday altogether unenlivened by the pleasures of the flesh" (93). She writes to Selena from Venice of "the pleasures of writing to you and of drinking Campari before dinner" (52), and she also reports that neither the major nor Eleanor "is in Venice for pure pleasure" (62). "Pleasure," "pleased" and "pleasant" all continue to crop up throughout the four books.²

In particular, Selena observes of Rupert Galloway's party that the constant exhortations to remove her clothes "made it very difficult for me to concentrate on *Pride and Prejudice*. Isn't it curious how intolerant some people are of other people's pleasures? Was I pestering Rupert to put his clothes on and read Jane Austen? No, I wasn't" (56). I am indebted to the anonymous reader of this article for the suggestion that Selena's words might be a glance at *Emma*, where Emma says to her father, "'One half of the world cannot

understand the pleasures of the other” (81). I wonder whether there might also be an echo of *Persuasion*, where Captain Harville says to Anne of Benwick, “I hope you do not think I am so illiberal as to want every man to have the same objects and pleasures as myself”

(218). Like Austen, Caudwell is alert to the potential complexities of pleasure.

In *The Sibyl in Her Grave*, Julia’s Aunt Regina notes that after buying a Virgil frontispiece her friend Maurice, the vicar of the parish, “had a bad conscience about spending so much purely on personal pleasure and made a large donation to the fund for maintaining St. Ethel’s. And then he realised that St. Ethel’s also gives him personal pleasure, so he gave the rest to a charity for the homeless” (14).³ Later Maurice hopes that Julia may find “pleasure” in the Virgil frontispiece (315), which he intends to give her as a Christmas present, since it is now tainted for him by the fact that he was tricked into thinking that Derek, whom he loves, had stolen it, and broke off the relationship as a result. Maurice resolves to kill Daphne, the person responsible for the trick, and writes her a letter in which he tells her that before he knew her, he “found it incomprehensible that anyone could take pleasure in causing pain” (342); now, however, he tells her that “you have stolen all the hope and pleasure from my life” (344). Daphne’s crime is a kind of emotional vampirism that has led her to resolve that “no one was to do anything for Maurice except Daphne herself” (353), echoing what Mrs. Gardiner tells Elizabeth of Darcy’s attitude to Lydia’s marriage (*PP* 324). Because Maurice does not return Daphne’s affection, such apparent generosity becomes oppressive and unpleasant. Ultimately Maurice wishes that he had simply not reacted to Derek’s apparent theft of the frontispiece: “I would rather have lived in a world of absolute illusion than one from which irony and elegance had so utterly perished” (341). Here one finds the heart of Caudwell’s ethos and what is for her (and many others) the heart of Austen’s: irony and elegance are the hallmarks of both writers, and the principal sources of the reader’s pleasure.

In particular, both Austen and Caudwell authors consistently invite their readers to construe meaning in a discriminating, alert and nuanced way. In *Northanger Abbey*, Austen deliciously has Catherine ask Isabella, ““are they all horrid, are you sure they are all horrid?”” (40), only for Isabella on the next page to say, ““Sir Charles Grandison! That is an amazing horrid book, is it not?—I remember Miss Andrews could not get through the first volume”” (41–42). In Caudwell too language is used precisely, economically, and enchantingly, as when Julia writes to Selena,

I hope there is not going to be any unpleasantness—I mean I think there is. At any rate, no one can say it is my fault—I mean they certainly will say so. Well, I will describe to you in full the events of the weekend: I leave it to you to judge whether I have at any stage or in any particular done more than politeness and good nature required of me. (*Thus* 64)

Here, as in *Northanger Abbey*, there is a sleek awareness that words can mean both themselves and their exact opposite: as Julia says, it is for the reader to judge what lies behind the surface of language. Caudwell was dying when she wrote *The Sibyl in Her Grave*—dying not as young as Austen though, at 60, still too young—but she still appreciated style, in the sense both of language use and of personal demeanour, and style is what she saw in Austen.

There are, however, also several ways in which Caudwell directly or indirectly inverts Austen. Among the most striking of these is the fact that Caudwell’s narrator, Hilary, is simultaneously a character in the books and a person of whom we know surprisingly little, not least in that we do not know whether Hilary is male or female. There are perhaps some clues: in *Thus Was Adonis Murdered*, for instance, we are told of Timothy that “Returning to the table, he refilled Selena’s glass. . . . Then he filled his own. Ragwort and I were left to fend for ourselves: a trifling discourtesy, but not like Timothy” (32); it might be implicit here

that Timothy fills Selena's glass because she is female but neglects the two men at the table. There might also be a hint in *The Shortest Way to Hades* when Hilary says "My dear Timothy, you cannot imagine that I propose to engage in any adventure of a physical nature" (200); such an excuse might come more naturally from a man than from a woman, since Timothy presumably would *really* not expect violence from a woman. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the final book, *The Sibyl in Her Grave*, Hilary slyly notes that "Some of my readers, it is true, have been kind enough to say that they would like to know more about me—what I look like, how I dress, how I spend my leisure hours and other details of a personal and sometimes even intimate nature. I do not doubt, however, that these enquiries are made purely as a matter of courtesy" (2). There is certainly no answer offered to any of them, and the back cover refers to "the greatest mystery of all: Hilary, him- or her- self."

One probable reason for Caudwell's refusal to specify Hilary's gender is that she is fiercely aware of the restrictions imposed by conventional gender roles. (Caudwell herself, a lifelong pipe smoker, once abetted two female friends to infiltrate the Oxford Union in male disguise.) The plot of *The Shortest Way to Hades*, like that of *Pride and Prejudice*, is shaped in part by an entail. Cantrip attempts to explain entails to Hilary as Elizabeth and Jane do to Mrs. Bennet, but without the same need:

Though a member of the Faculty of Laws in the University of Oxford, I am the first to admit that I am an historian rather than a lawyer. The concept of the entailed estate, however, was well developed by the end of the thirteenth century, and I may claim without immodesty to be familiar with it. I did not tell Cantrip this, for I knew he would not have believed me. (8)

Ironically, it is Cantrip himself who shares something of the thought processes of Mrs. Bennet when he says, "If a bird's all set to come into five million quid . . . you don't need to meet her to know she's fantastically attractive" (10). It is Selena, however, who draws out

the less pleasant ways in which entails can impact on women when she says, “‘Sir James may be said to have preferred seniority to sex—that is to say, daughters of an elder son come in before sons of a younger son. I suppose,’ she added with a sigh, ‘that that’s really rather progressive’” (8). It is perhaps a little bit progressive, but by the same token it also draws attention to the fact that the primary purpose of an entail was to privilege male primogeniture.

A similarly modern sensibility animates the behavior of Julia. Julia may evoke *Emma* in her talk of rescuing people from water, but she is no Jane Fairfax; she is, if anything, more like a female Frank Churchill, as when she says of the Inland Revenue: “‘Shall I, if Ned’s virtue were the dearest jewel they own, show more forbearance in pursuit of it? No, I shall not. ‘Canals if necessary’ is my watchword now’” (*Thus* 52). The language is Austenian, but the note of sexual predation could hardly be less so. An equally ironic spin on Austen is Julia’s tax advice to Eleanor that “[y]ou must find yourself a husband with no money at all” because “a single lady with income from both sources should take immediate steps to acquire a penniless husband” (60)—an almost perfect inversion of the famous aphorism of *Pride and Prejudice*. And Julia’s most characteristically eighteenth-century epistolary moment is also her least so:

Wednesday evening.

The deed is done—Clarissa lives. No time to write more.

Yours, as always,

Julia. (105)

Julia may have read Richardson, but the character with whom she is identifying here is not Clarissa but Lovelace.

Caudwell also consistently applies to a male character, the barrister Desmond Ragwort, characteristics which in Austen’s day would be associated with women. Early in the first book, Hilary recounts a typical Ragwort moment: “‘Perfectly scandalous,’ Ragwort

was saying as I entered the coffee house. The object of his disapproval might have been almost anything—Ragwort has such high principles” (*Thus* 5). Later, Ragwort puritanically declares that “Julia, however much she may practise, will never achieve the appearance of truly formidable propriety. Her shape is against it” (20), while we are told that his own features were “composing themselves in that expression of cold decorum which would have been so useful to Julia” (20). Julia herself ends one of her letters with a postscript which assures Selena, “The above, I need hardly say, is entirely without prejudice to my devotion to the virtuous and beautiful Ragwort, to whom please convey my respectful regards” (22). Virtue and beauty are for Austen qualities for a heroine. Ragwort resembles an Austen hero in only one respect: he, like Henry Tilney, can price women’s clothes:

“The dress,” said Ragwort, “is Yves St. Laurent. The shoes and handbag are Gucci. The scarf is Hermes. And if that young woman,” said Ragwort, admiration for her elegance contending with puritan disapproval of the cost, “is wearing a penny less than six hundred pounds on her back, I’ll be—I shall be very much surprised.” (89)

Perhaps the most revealing and characteristic Ragwort moment comes in *The Sibyl in Her Grave*, where Selena observes that Sir Robert Renfrew requires more of her than a client usually wishes from counsel, and Ragwort, “preparing to be deeply shocked” (150), is disappointed to learn that all that is expected of her is spying. Prurient, feline, interested in women’s clothes but also able to run very fast, climb across balconies, and play cricket, Ragwort is almost as ambiguously gendered as Hilary.

These are, however, all externally observed behaviors; we are never offered a glimpse of Ragwort’s thought processes because, for Caudwell, it is women who are subjects and men who are objects, as we see in Julia’s complaint: “Men, Selena, are very odd creatures—I shall never understand them. There seems to be in their conduct no reason or consistency of

purpose—they are blown like feathers this way and that on every changing breeze of mood or fancy, so that it is quite impossible to predict, on any rational basis, what they will do next”

(*Thus* 131). Similarly in *The Sirens Sang of Murder*,

“The trouble is,” said Selena, “that you and I, Julia, have been brought up in an era of emancipation and enlightenment, and we have got into the habit of treating men as if they were normal, responsible, grown-up people. We engage them in discussion; we treat their opinions as worthy of quite serious consideration; we seek to influence their behaviour by rational argument rather than by some simple series of rewards and punishments. It’s all a great mistake, of course, and only makes them confused and miserable.” (111)

For Caudwell’s clever young women, fulfilment is to be found not in relationships with men but in relationships with clients, and in this Caudwell echoes Austen’s insistence that real pleasure is to be found in duty. In *The Sibyl in Her Grave* Selena observes, “it’s the duty of Counsel, so far as humanly possible, to keep the client happy” (73); in so doing, she herself is also kept happy.

Partly because of this emphasis on professionalism, Caudwell’s most pronounced departure from Austen (and also from much golden-age detective fiction) is to eschew the marriage plot entirely. In *Thus Was Adonis Murdered*, Graziella explains to Timothy “that when the Vice-Quaestor refers to happiness he means marriage—that, in the opinion of the Vice-Quaestor, is the greatest happiness that any woman could hope for” (161). Caudwell’s two heroines defy such classifications. Selena takes the dominant role when she goes sailing with Sebastian—as they prepare to set off for the sailing trip Sebastian wonders “whether I should begin immediately to address you as ‘sir’ or may continue to call you Selena until we are on board” (*The Shortest Way to Hades* 132)—and indeed she implicitly casts herself as male when she observes of Camilla’s accident that “[t]he engine behaved as any true sailing

man would expect a first-class engine, properly maintained, to behave in an emergency—it refused to start” (166–67). When Sebastian proposes she reminds him that “you have said in public, and on several occasions written, that marriage is a bourgeois and degrading institution designed to reduce women to the status of mere chattels” (157).

Selena does think Camilla could conform to the classic role of heroine—“Beauty and riches . . . are not the only attributes which she shares with the heroine of a romantic novel: she has also, it seems, the same indestructible quality” (149)—but Camilla turns out to be the murderer. Moreover, she resembles Miss Bingley rather than Elizabeth: Camilla and Lucinda “naturally proposed those forms of amusement which would show them to best advantage” (173). In any case, Caudwell knows that “outside the conventions of the romantic novel, intensity of passion affords no guarantee of reciprocity” (*Sirens* 116). In *The Sirens Sang of Murder*, Hilary observes that “People do what books have taught them to do and feel what books have taught them to feel” (254–55). Caudwell’s own books deploy their allusions to Austen to teach her readers to feel in new ways and to choose what they do from a wider range of options than Austen’s readers had. At the same time, though, they acknowledge the charm and appeal of Austen and use allusion to her to assert the continued importance of elegance, irony, and the choice of appropriate sources of pleasure.

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¹ One of the charms of Caudwell’s novels is their resolute Englishness: America is lampooned in Marylou in *Thus Was Adonis Murdered*: “‘Julia, honey,’ she said, somewhere around the second *grappa*, ‘do you think that marriage can be a valid inter-personal relationship in a life context?’” (68). The adulteries and jealousies to which foreigners are notoriously prone are burlesqued in *The Sirens Sang of Murder*, while the final book, *The Sibyl in Her Grave*, is very self-consciously a classic English village murder mystery during the course of which one would not be surprised to encounter Miss Marple.

² Hilary says of Selena and Sebastian, “I would not for the world encroach on the pleasures of either” (*Thus* 107); Julia observes that because Italian waiters are very busy “the duration of the pleasure given is not always commensurate to the enthusiasm with which it is offered” (126); Hilary observes to Marylou that the visit to Verona had apparently been “one of unqualified pleasure” (142); Graziella notes that Julia “likes to please people” (160); Hilary asks Benjamin Dobbie to think of a possible ancestry for the stolen painting “to please me”

(178); Kenneth says he “wouldn’t do down Richard to please Eleanor” (229); and the lawyers take leave of Marylou with “expressions of pleasure in having met and hopes of meeting again” (260). In *The Shortest Way to Hades*, Selena is displeased by the solicitors’ failure to prepare the family tree properly (5); Julia tells her friends “I don’t think you’re going to be pleased” (16) by the result of her meeting with Deirdre; Selena is “quite pleased with the result” (49) of her work on the case of Rupert Galloway; Hilary rhapsodizes about Victoria, “starting-point of all true journeys, all southward voyages of pleasure or exploration” (70) when setting off with Ragwort to view “the celebrated pleasure gardens” of Godmansworth College (71), where Hilary “had the pleasure . . . of displaying more learning than I was truly possessed of” (75); Deirdre seemed to be unusually “pleased” just before her death (82); Julia says that she can forgive men much “for the sake of the incomparable pleasure which they are sometimes capable of giving” (117); Julia shows “every sign of pleasure” at seeing a photo of herself and Selena (136), even though the other two people in the shot are both naked; the Greek sailors who rescued the Fairfax twins and Leonidas “seemed very pleased” when Sebastian addressed them in Greek (150); when the weather is fair, Sebastian is “very pleased with these conditions” (157); Selena says of jealousy, “I have met few people who are not just a little pleased to be its object” (196); and finally Selena suggests to Camilla that if too many accidents occur “people may begin to make unpleasant remarks” (229).

In *The Sirens Sang of Murder*, Julia observes of Clementine Derwent that “[o]ne doesn’t feel she would take kindly to six months’ deprivation of the pleasures of the flesh” (14); Ragwort remarks of Cantrip getting stuck on Sark that “[f]rom the point of view of his own pleasure and convenience, he seems to have arranged things admirably” (73); Hilary refers to the “pleasure” of Julia’s encounter with Patrick Ardmore (124) and writes that “[a]pparently pleased with the role of hostess, Selena poured further cups of tea” (140); Basil Ptarmigan expresses his “pleasure” at Hilary’s presence in his room (158), though the party is

interrupted when “Henry entered, his brow dark with displeasure” (168); on arriving in Monaco to see Cantrip, Hilary is “touched by a greeting which seemed to express no less pleasure than astonishment” (185); Mr. Justice Welladay was wearing “the flannel trousers and cotton shirt which are the customary apparel of the Englishman seeking pleasure abroad” (197); the chambermaid who alerts Hilary to the bed-trick “could not at once be persuaded to relinquish the pleasure of teasing” (216); and when the Colonel discovers that there is a helicopter that he can steal, he is “pleased” (239).

³ A Kindle search of Caudwell’s first three books finds 19 uses in *Thus was Adonis Murdered*, 9 in *The Shortest Way to Hades*, and 9 in *The Sirens Sang for Murder*, but *The Sibyl in Her Grave* is not available on Kindle. Other uses of the word and its cognates there include: “If I thereby have the misfortune to displease the Bursar, I must be resigned to enduring his displeasure” (1–2); “Regina Sheldon herself, whom I had once or twice had the pleasure of meeting” (8); “I’m not at all pleased with Ricky at the moment, and I don’t want to do anything to make him think that I’ve stopped not being pleased” (31); and Regina saying of Isabella when asking her to come in and have some sherry, “That looks, when one writes it down, like quite a normal and pleasant thing to say, but it didn’t sound like that” (35). In addition, Hilary wonders what Sebastian has done to “displease” Selena (63) and tells Katharine Tavistock that to meet her is “an unexpected pleasure” (79), while Regina says of the chocolates Daphne gave her, “Still, she ate several while she was here, so at least she did get some pleasure out of it” (111). The directors of Renfrews’ were in Cannes “for work, not pleasure” (151); Julia assumes that Selena’s meal out was “one evening devoted entirely to pleasure” (155) but soon sees that it wasn’t “an evening of unmixed pleasure” (156); Ragwort promises Edgar Albany discretion so long as there is no “unpleasantness” for Natasha (218); and Regina says of Maurice’s will, “Several people one would have expected

to know better have really been quite unpleasant” (261). Finally the four young lawyers are “pleased with” Hilary’s theory because it exonerates Terry (270).