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The Gospel of Freudian Psychology in *Couples*

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When I first read John Updike's much discussed novel *Couples*, I couldn't help noticing the explicit references to Sigmund Freud and his works and the numerous uses of psychological terminology by the men and women of Tarbox, the fictitious small town in Plymouth County, Massachusetts. Very early in the book, we read that a major character, Freddy Thorne, loves to discuss psychology with his friends at weekend parties. His bedside shelf contains, among other books on modern psychology and sexuality, "*Sigmund Freud*" in Modern Library edition (59). One character tells a newcomer to Tarbox that Freddy "wanted to be a psychiatrist but flunked medical school" (43). Though a dentist by profession now, Freddy often talks in psychological terms and analyzes the people he associates with, especially the protagonist Piet Hanema. He discusses Freud's books with Piet's wife Angela, who has read *The Interpretation of Dreams* in college and is now reading it and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*; and advises Janet Appleby and Marcia Smith to see "a therapist," an "analyst" for their marital problems. Freddy is by no means the only person who talks in psychological terms. Most of the ten couples in the book seem to be well immersed in such phrases as "projection," "neurotic," "analyse," "fixated," "arrested," and in the concepts of inhibition, forbidden wishes, suppression, Oedipus complex, id-ego-superego, etc. As I finished the book, questions rose in mind. Why does Updike make so many references to Freud, his works and his theoretical concepts? What role does Freudian psychology play in the novel?

These questions made me wonder what Updike has to say about his own book. I soon located a statement he made in his radio dialogue with Eric Rhode in 1969. "The book is, of course, not about sex as such: It's about sex as the emergent religion, as the only thing left" (*Picked-Up Pieces* 505). Although his remark does not directly explain the presence of the textual details I have observed, it does give me the clue that the overt preoccupation with sexuality in Freudian terms has its thematic significance. To avoid reading my own interest in Freudian psychology into Updike's novel, however, I started to read criticism on *Couples*. A little to my surprise, few critics seem to have paid much attention to the Freudian concepts in the text. In a largely sociological study of Updike's novels, Judie Newman briefly comments upon "Piet's deep-seated Oedipal desire for security" in a chapter entitled "The Social Ethic" and discusses Piet as a man whose individuality is threatened by an antagonistic society (23). In his scrupulous and ingenious book, John Updike and the *Three Great Secret Things: Sex, Religion, and Art*, George Hunt addresses the psychology of sexuality in Couples in Kierkegaardian terms of guilt, dread, and original

sin, ignoring whatever textual details concerned with Freudian concepts (117-138). Although David Lodge recognizes that in Piet "the struggle of id against ego and super-ego is most intense and dramatic," he does not discuss how the struggle takes place (86). The findings of my research certainly did not satisfy my curiosity about the significance of the overt Freudian psychology in *Couples*. So I went back and did another reading, hoping to find an explanation for myself why the textual details are there and what purpose they serve.

The second time round, I noticed even more significant details. Gradually, I became convinced that Updike's theme of "sex as the emergent religion" is largely presented in Freudian terms. I began to see that Freud's psychology of sexuality is parabolically portrayed as a kind of gospel and that it is being taught through the minister figure Freddy Thorne and is well accepted and quite faithfully practiced by the couples, who, as Freddy thinks, have "made a church of each other" (12). And more significantly, the truths of Freud's gospel have found testimony among the church members.

The action of the novel takes place in roughly a year's time, between the spring of 1963 when a new couple, the Whitmans, move to Tarbox and the next spring when the Whitmans are divorced and move away. Against this time frame, ten couples are described to live in "a magic circle." They are a select group whose upper middle class status enables them to afford time and money for endless games and parties and weekend ski trips. Most of the couples are in their thirties and have children. Typically, they have come from well-to-do and conservative families but have rebelled mildly against the traditional values of the older generation. Most of them have abandoned formal religion. As the book begins, only five of the twenty people still go to church, and the number will be significantly reduced as the story continues. "Having suffered under their parents' rigid marriages and formalized evasions, they sought to substitute an essential fidelity set in a matrix of easy and open companionship among couples" (114). They are determined "to be free, to be flexible" and "to improvise here [in Tarbox] a fresh way of life" (114). For this group, "[d]uty and work yielded as ideals to truth and fun. Virtue was no longer sought in temple or marketplace but in the home -- one's own home, and then the homes of one's friends" (114). As a group, the couples acknowledge the need for each other in their day-to-day lives. One major character admits that he "gets frightened if he doesn't see us [the other couples] over a weekend" (12). To fill in the void left by the abandonment of traditional religion, the couples have established "a magic circle to keep the night out" and have "made a church of each other" (12). In fact, in one of his interviews, Updike himself characterized the couples as "a religious community founded on physical and psychical interpenetration" (*Picked-Up Pieces* 503).

As a church, the couples meet every weekend in their homes, drinking liquor, playing games, and conversing with each other. In these weekly communions, Freddy Thorne plays the role of a minister. He preaches to

his church members, organizes all sorts of games for fun, talks to individuals about their problems, offers counsels, and helps solve their problems. Freddy's most important role as the minister is to preach the truths he finds in Freudian psychology. The single most important lesson he delivers is Freud's view of libido as the primary force of life. On one night, Freddy is inspired by "a beauty he had felt" and "a goodness the couples created simply by assembling," and goes on for over an hour, preaching his message of love and trying to shake the couples out of whatever puritanic values that may remain in their mind. He says

> People hate love. It threatens them. It's like tooth decay, it smells and it hurts. I'm the only man alive it doesn't threaten, I wade right in with pick and mirror. I love you, all of you, men, women, neurotic children, crippled dogs, mangy cats, cockroaches. People are the only thing people have left since God packed up. By people I mean sex. (155)

One major feature of Freddy "sermons" is to equate, as Freud does, love with sex. To love, for Freddy (or rather "Freudy"), is to humanize and to sexualize. At one time he says, "It just came to me. A vision. We're put here to humanize each other" (158). In his spare time Freddy invents games and writes what some couples call a "pornographic play" to sexualize their daily lives. Happiness is measured in sexual terms: "To fuck is human; to be blown, divine" (158). Freddy's ideas of love and sexuality, though radical, are quite reflective of the post-War consciousness-raising period. When characterizing Janet, the narrator says, "All her informal education, from Disney's *Snow White* to last week's *Life*, had taught her to place the highest value on love. Nothing but a kiss undid the wicked apple. We move from birth to death amid a crowd of others and the name of the parade is love" (167). Everyone seems well informed of Freud's psychological theories. Angela, with her reading of Freud, can explain what a neurotic is and tell Piet how the id, ego, and superego work and how dreams are "a way of letting out" sexual suppressions (218-19). Even Matt Gallagher, the regular church-going Catholic, is able to apply Freud's concept of Oedipus complex to real life situations (232).

Freddy's Freudian gospel is well accepted by members of his church. They apply his teachings to life. Extra-marital sex becomes a casual practice. Freddy's own wife Georgene is sleeping with Piet. When inviting her lover, who is worried about contraception, to bed, Georgene says, "Welcome to the post-pill paradise" (58). Frank Appleby and Harold Sittle-Smith are sleeping with each other's wives. After hearing one of Freddy's "sermons," the two men decide to swap wives for the night. From then on the two couples make a foursome, which is jokingly called by the other couples as the "Applesmithsville." Most significantly, the protagonist figure, Piet Hanema, quits going to his Congregational Church and moves from one affair to another, trying out different sexual practices, including

oral sex with pregnant Foxy. All in all, the couples seem to live happily, testifying to Freud's theory that "there exists in the mind a strong tendency toward the pleasure principle" (Freud 9).

Freddy does not teach just love and sex. A faithful servant in Freud's kingdom, Freddy also preaches on truth, deception, and death. When playing a game called "Wonderful," Freddy tells his church members, "The most wonderful thing I know is the human capacity for self-deception. It keeps everything else going" (253). To elaborate "self-deception" at one member's request, Freddy says

> People come to me all the time with teeth past saving, . . . subconsciously they don't want to lose a tooth. Losing a tooth means death to people; it's a classic castration symbol. They'd rather have a prick that hurts than no prick at all. They're scared to death of me because I might tell the truth. When they get their dentures, I tell 'em it looks better than ever, and they fall all over me believing it. It's horseshit. You never get your own smile back when you lose your teeth. . . . You're born to get laid and die, and the sooner the better. (255)

When Piet and Foxy start arguing with him after hearing this, Freddy rebuts authoritatively, "Stop fighting it, Piet baby. We're losers. To live is to lose" (255). Freddy's ideas of self-deception and death concur with Freud's theory in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.* According to Freud, "the course taken by mental events is regulated by the pleasure principle. . . . [It] is invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension." People invariably strive for "an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure" (7). Applying Freud's theory to his daily observations, Freddy suggests that people, mistaking death as the ultimate unpleasure, try to avoid it as much as possible, even at the expense of deceiving themselves. But decay and death are unavoidable. For those who are disillusioned with the nature of human existence, like Freddy himself, death is even more desirable, for, in a sense, "the aim of all life is death," and inanimate things existed before living ones" (Freud 38). That is why, according to Freud, human beings not only have "sexual instincts" or "life instincts" but also "ego-instinct" or "death instincts" (52-53), and conscious or unconscious, they all have a death wish. Indeed, Freddy says, "Death excites me. Death is being screwed by God. It'll be delicious" (387). As if to testify Freddy's unwelcome truth, deaths occur in *Couples.* Violent death ends President John F. Kennedy's life, illness and decay brings John Ong, one of the men among the couples, to a peaceful rest, and Foxy's fetus by Piet is wilfully put to death before it even has a chance to live.

Updike's use of Freudian psychology in *Couples* does not stop at the parabolical level. To enable the reader to have a deeper understanding of the Freudian gospel, he presents case studies. Of the ten women, at least three (Janet, Marcia, and Angela) are seeing a psychiatrist. Janet and

Angela are described as being alike in many ways. One of the similarities is their fear of frigidity. having been raised in "good families," the two women "have big bottoms and try to be witty and get pushed around." Having born a couple of children and getting into their middle thirties, they both feel frigidity threatening them. They have little desire for their husbands and enjoy "being nice to creeps" (220). Clearly, Janet and Angela are both sexually inhibited, the former because of her sense of inferiority (she never went to college), and the latter for her deep-rooted puritanic values passed down from a strong father. Janet gets extremely frustrated in her relation with her husband and their foursome relations with the Applebys. Angela frustrates her husband by not letting him make love to her and masturbates to satisfy her suppressed wishes.

The most revealing case, of course, is Piet Hanema, the thirty-four year old builder, who is called "the biggest neurotic in town" (32). In Piet we see two major psychological problems manifested. On the one hand, he is psychologically arrested because of a traumatic experience, the accidental death of his parents, which resurfaces again and again in his conscious, often bringing him nightmares. He was a sophomore at Michigan State when an auto accident killed his parents. He was unable to continue in school and let himself be drafted. "Since this accident, the world wore a slippery surface for Piet; he stood on the skin of things in the posture of a man testing newly formed ice, his head cocked for the warning crack, his spine curved to make himself light" (24). The accident sowed the fear of death in his unconscious. He desires to be a non-believer in God, but he can't for the lack of courage. At the narrator points out, Piet's nerve had cracked when his parents died" (25). Piet is also "mad at the world for killing his parents" (388) and desires to destroy and take revenge upon it. In fact, he is accused by Ken Whitman of being "The Red-haired Avenger" (421). His successive affairs with different women do suggest some truth in Ken's accusation.

The other psychological problem with Piet is his Oedipus complex. Throughout the book, Piet is presented as a child who yearns for Oedipal security. Freddy calls him "an orphan" (32), and he admits it. Desperate for attention from his wife, as a child would desire from a mother, Piet whines to Angela one night, "I'm dying. I'm a thirty-four-year-old-fly-by-night contractor. I have no sons, my wife snubs me, my employees despise me, my friends are all my wife's friends, I'm an orphan, a pariah" (217). He is also portrayed by the narrator as a child in many scenes. Lying next to his lover Georgene, he is thus described: "Discarded beside her, he felt as weak and privileged as a child. Plucking needs agitated his fingers, his mouth" (61). The baby's sexual interest in the fingers and mouth here is clearly a suggestion of Freud's theory of sexuality in children. On another occasion, Piet is in the bathroom with his second lover Foxy. He asks Foxy to let him see her milky breasts and begs her to nurse him. Here is the nursing scene:

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Saint Hubris' Ode

Written on the Twentieth Anniversary
of Hubris' Electrification

Louie, Louie, Baby
Can you tell me why
you had to go and die?

The sky went black
and silenced every bird
clinging desperately to the flailing
boughs in the vortex noon.

The bitch crystal will fall
from the sky, the Roc screaming
free, crimson eye, golden beak
scythes the leaden clouds.

Gigantic black blasts of wind beat
through the frightened twilight,
stars aghast at sudden revelation,
and Hubris, leveled, furiously called
"Louise! " "Lillith!" -- snakeskin torn,
flesh sublimed to fog --
red, black, and gray heat
ripped by flashing claws.
Shredded remnants of atmosphere
unfurled, fell -- peeled from the ether.

Hubris, paralyzed, the void voices
broke, thundered down:

"We are the faceless ones!
We live nowhere and delight
in lifeless dances of unlife.
You exalted life -- untrue!
Yet life and death are one!
All life untrue -- for the choice of life,
so will death be your portion!"

Hubris, blinded, the Roc's shadow's rolling,

pulsed in his bones;
launched in the shattered world,
he blinked, breathless, no more air.

Episode II: Teresa

A black room. Her flesh phosphoresced
in dim amber and ultra-violet light,
an excrescence of pastel shadows issued
from her pores, concealed her aura,
doubled its tangible envelopment.
Teresa sat openly upon a pillow,
on the dark floor, little star-like sparkles
surrounded her, beams that collided
with shards of broken glass,
her glowing body amid these glints
pulsed in this shuttered space,
the walls heaved in response.

"Take off your clothes,"
this vision breathed to Hubris,
who, sick with desire, darted gazes
from the corner to her breasts,
to the small platform
to her dark belly invitation
to the bare, colored bulbs that converted
this shattered place into a waking dreamscape.
Slowly, her tones insinuated into him;
he gathered desire into resolution.
They would only be allowed some minutes,
accidental seconds traded for years of consumation.
This paradoxical prize, shaken from the random night,
twisted barbs of hope taunted his organ flesh,
enforced tenuousness. He wondered at this
new condition. Was he still alive?

They were the show, this Hubris knew,
had accepted since the wealthy man
had tossed the knife man the bills
while Hubris remained locked
in Teresa's electric stare,
the yellow impression of her translucent dress,
her turgid nipples, her body faintly swelling,
her black eyes demanded his, called him to her.

They all had consented to the passion
they would share; they slipped
the lines of prohibition,
so Hubris and Teresa would be the midnight exhibition,
still, they would not watch.
The moneyed man, the guard, the whores,
and the others caught in this moment
remained in the front, lying in plush.
They let themselves feel the passion in this ruined place,
breathed the ionized musk ambience,
savored a resistance to the absent master,
let the meters run unreasoned.

"Do you want me to suck your cock?"
She reached him to her.
[They smiled at his false innocence discomfitted]
He asked her if she was legend or angel.
"Just a girl. If you don't give me your money,
they'll beat me"; then she spoke to his body
in long, slow breaths.

Hubris, afire,
looked on her, dislocated, split between
pleasure and futile desire to love
this prisoner of material gloom.
She held him on the brink of the rush,
and told him how the cops had taken her.
Beautiful, but no longer free,
the jail women raped her hourly.
A bondsman had sold her to the master.

"If I have to fuck, I'd rather fuck men than women,
but you're no routine trick"
She had learned to let the moments
roll away from her, refused to possess them,
but, could Hubris learn?

"Fuck me now," her voice broke
on his body, she produced a rubber,
Hubris refused, but she insisted,
rolled the ring along his length;
this cock-collar of enslavement.

On the platform, in her with her in him,
muscular winds battered his eardrums,
an ironic sense of loss as he possessed her,

he rushed on her completing enclosure;
they touched.

Words danced in his brain while he stared,
tried to hold her in his memory,
and a vortex of remembrance howled inside him:

"Had a wife, but couldn't keep her!"
"Humpty Dumpty had a great fall"
"She had only stared at the clock on the wall"
"So they took my love potion
to make a puddle of lotion"
"SO WILL DEATH BE YOUR PORTION!"

Hubris started, echoes of the lords of unlife,
from that dream, but was he now awake?
They rolled on: crashing, coming, flying,
flinging themselves to fill each other
with rare wonder. In afterglow she whispered
"You came in me," susperated kisses.

Breath slowed as knowledge and risk stole over them.
Already too late for anything more.
Hubris, unstuck, tore the broken condom from him,
faced her and the paradoxical night,
gave her his money. Twice more or twice less
made no difference. They would watch for each other.
They could do nothing more.

Hubris, beneath the buzzing parking light
wandered on, breathed the traces of her smell,
wished fervantly for death,
but wasn't he already dead?
For some, death constituted no difference.
Was he dead or only free?
Neither could allay his desperation.
A soft voice rose within him, modulating sorrow:

"Make a lover of the night,
attend her desire without remorse,
and the earth will yield up her secrets,
but like the ground that holds a nail
anything you grasp can only fail"

Hubris, foresworn to doom,
disappeared into the gloom.

Episode III: Louise

Babs awakened Hubris one bright afternoon,
"Check the TV -- Rockefeller's dead."
She wore an ambivalent smile;
Governor Rockefeller was down for good,
a heartstopping blowjob, the double organ come
had sent him to hell with the rest of the scum.
She kept grinning, "with those old guys
there's always that chance, glad nobody ever died on me"
Hubris smiled too, then straightened, spaced.

He remembered that black silk rustle,
her bare-backed dress, cocktale time,
the party was getting loud, Louise faced Hubris.
She wanted him to make it; Hubris, sick,
just couldn't face it -- oh no -- a bad scene;
Hubris loved her -- oh yeah -- had loved her before,
last century, last millenium, over and again,
had loved her in snakeskin
when she could only speak in weird geometries.

Louise, Lillith, mother of time,
daughter of the warp and woof.
But something had shifted, too much, too strange,
no thread to grasp, Hubris had gasped and hid out.
That night memory flooded back, torturous...
no curtains covered the latticed windows
in the pallid streetlamp penetration,
Hubris slid past forties' silk, reached the moon
of her breast, absorbed by the soft promise.
He flowed forward, parted wet lips,
tongue and cock enclosed together.
Louise took all of him, mouth above, maw below.

Hubris, bow sprung, lost in that moment,
desire without foresight shook
him into her white shadow sky,
baby small now in her.

This imperfect dissolution,
born of too much anticipation,
too much interfence left them stranded in the viscous dark,
without words of love or of history.

Sickened, they fled into the alcohol night
and purchased some calm, but not clarity.

For days they raged within themselves
no tongue to break the angered stillness,
to break upon covered breasts and distant thighs,
just furtive, sidelong looks,
just thwarted, estranged sighs.
Hubris, adrift, had come out of himself into shock...

Some time passed, a week? a month?
Hubris seldom left his room;
she rarely came by her own,
staying with the street party,
but it was winding down, soon would end.

Hubris and his drugs: acid, pot, 'ludes;
girls came by to see if he'd come to,
not yet.

Now came an acid night.
The air was wet, the mist without color,
suddenly, she was with him,
but not in his room.
She was singing in his skull,
"Sally go round the roses"
licking inside his ear,
standing inside his cock.
Thunder blasted, rain so thick .
the window had no view, gray ocean.

Down in Attica, the inmates walked the walls,
frustrated by the standoff,
they would blow a hole in space itself,
but they only had time, nothing else.

Hubris was changing, his body turgid,
sappy, basso, metamorphosizing throb,
crowing cock in the lightening gray waterwall;
he twitched in jism visions of approaching years,
of sweet girls in unlikely corners.
Still she sang inside him from her room,
each word eroded his gloom,
floated him in an ecstatic sea,
mojo, mojo, pumped into the dawn.

The troopers and the guards charged,
ripping lead into hostages and malcontents.
Red bodies filled the prison yard;
sober Rockefeller said, "It had to be!"
Corpses in the mud, watery pink,
all that was left of freedom's dream.

The day waned, but not the storm.
Hubris, upon her threshhold, knew only drum and rain
pounding in his cells and in his brain,
beating away the accumulated pain.

Being one, they held the high ground
watched the water come, awaited the recession.
Elsewhere the flood tore down towns;
water washed away the blood.

Too soon, the rain and Louise were gone.
Hubris searched everywhere for some clue
while her whispered words kept on coming true.
That last kiss had bound them,
how could they be alone?
"Where oh where can my baby be?"

At last he caught word, she'd gone west.
Hubris reached for the address,
an answer came: Louise was dead,
found at a rope's end, but by whose hand?

"Ninety-six tears," more like ninety-six thousand.
Hubris trailed her ghost across the mountains,
nothing, broken at the fountain of despair;
then a voice came out of the black air:

"To all this sadness, there can come an end:
take these nettles together and bend
them into a net to catch the bright crab
that will scuttle to your shore;
it's a poet's right to settle the score."

Hubris, stunted by confusion,
took himself off into seclusion.

Episode IV: Caroline

Hubris was feeling grey.
He'd stood under the reaper's glare for a year and a day;
he'd grown sick of this spleen,
those hellish minions with their undisclosed schemes,
useless dreams knocking around in his skull,
whispers about how he was their gull.
Every brick in this town sucked up all the air,
proclaimed his dead-end fate.
"Fuck 'em all!" Hubris snorted;
he got in the merc, headed for the interstate.

Darkness fell as he hit the old town,
a familiar carnival crowded with Indian ghosts.
The downtown streets had already thinned as the night-weird
wound through the alleys where the hustlers were pinned,
while astral horns caressed naked dancers' tatooed breasts.
Tired folks dozed by lampshades;
later, they'd be out to catch the midnight heat
and get high, or fuck, or just grab a hot dog,
before the night rolled over like a burned-out log.

Hubris looked for Iggy-Joe, discos, corner bars, and dark dives,
where the reet meet to tweet while they make their scores.
Although it had been a couple years, Hubris knew he was there,
moving through the shadows' seams.
There was still a big demand
for Iggy's soft, psychedelic dreams.
Iggy'd been contacted by that legendary army team
who'd fixed the elusive crystals of delta-six THC,
ripped them off, and laid them on selected streets;
soon everybody wanted to share Iggy's sweets.

Hubris remembered those hazy nights,
Suzanne's careful thumb on the plunger . . .
the taste in his mouth turned to sweetness . . .
the short oblivion train . . .
awakening to colored rain . . .
he'd turn to his room where lay Mabeline,
lady of the bestial streets, her naked disarray
swelled his cock to outlandish proportions
in the distorted "T" perceptual suffusion,
and they'd slowly fuck into sleep, rocking and falling through
the cool moistness of a dimensional tunnel . . .

Afghan hash for breakfast, the smoke culled tears

as Hubris stared at the cakes' embossed, crossed scimitars
before turning back to the come-cold sheets
where she splayed her warm center,
and he cracked all her eggs . . .

Now it was late, Hubris sipped his beer,
watched the girl dance to that "Tube-Steak Boogie"
while gamblers waved fifties from the floor.
"She's fine, but she ain't mine."
He left the club, headed for the buttery
to take one last look for Iggy.
The whores were gathered over coffees;
a familiar face nodded a distant hello;
this was a busy night, another time for play.
This town had been Hubris' oyster,
compensating him for cloistered years;
though he'd been gone, it still felt the same,
but things were winding down, and Iggy wasn't to be found,
so Hubris hit the street, cranked the merc.
As he pulled away, a small car whipped by,
a blurred face framed in its window.

Under the red light, she beamed at him,
fine and friendly, wild brown hair
poured over her dark green dress.
At the wheel was a mountainous man,
bald and severe... could be trouble.
Back in motion they paced each other;
Hubris looked over as she shucked her dress,
and leaned her tits into the cold glass.
At the next light, the windows came down!
"Wanta party?" Hubris hollered,
"Yeah!" she shouted "Where's your hotel?"
"Ain't got one, but there's lots of room in here."
They both pulled over on a wide warehouse shoulder;
she walked over to the far door;
Hubris met her, helped her in,
a white fur jacket cuddled her breasts,
and stand-up, silver-sparkle stockings
left bare her soft, slender thighs.
He held her, kissed her, whisked off
her insubstantial panties, and whispered,
"You won't be needing these."
"How do you know?" she teased.
"What's your name?" -- "Caroline"
"Who's that guy?" -- "A friend"

"Do you like giving head?" -- "Do you?"
She kissed him out of his clothes,
soon Hubris was musing, his nose,
buried in her pubes, savored the flavor of her favor,
while her tongue licked along
the first leg of their proverbial world tour.
"We're the class of sixty-nine!
I'll eat yours if you'll eat mine!"
This exquisite moment gave him pause:
"What's the story? Did baldy have claws?"
But his cock wasn't worried as they fucked to and fro,
and that head wasn't empty, he'd learned that long ago,
so they wound on up to that commingling cum
in the watery starlight, and burst for each other,
sad to know, in afterglow, they would have to go.
Occasional cars went screaming by
as they related inconclusive details.
"Where was she from?" She named a small town.
"How old was she?" Sixteen.
"How long had she been on the fly?"
A moment is free, but soon is gone.
They hugged, parted.

Starluck is one thing nobody owns.
Hubris, Baldy, fine Caroline, birds of a feather,
perched on a wire that snapped in a fire.

Iggy would wait, lunchtalk tomorrow,
they'd get high, search for clues in the mess.
The radio crooned: "Transmission-transition,
transition-transmission . . . oh my!"*
A woman's name floated up to him,
but Hubris didn't know anyone named "Tess."
Then her now familiar voice drifted on musk:

"When you're caught in the reaper's speculation,
reach out for some compensation;
when that chill wind starts biting through your bones,
you should know you can take some consolation,
and legends don't need telephones!"

* David Bowie, "TVC15"

Pope, Inside-out

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A hesitation between the sound and the sense.
-- Paul Valery

In literary theory, where verse and prose inveterately commingle, and oppose, Pope could be more felt, for his absence shows. From Cleanth Brooks at Yale to Paul de Man, Pope has retired, and Wordsworth has come on. For as one poet broke the other's rules, so might be read the interchange of schools, and where Brooks studied form, de Man reads trope, a shift reworked in Wordsworth's change from Pope. Thus Christopher Norris, charting theory's growth, links Brooks with Pope, and linked, dismisses both:

> [Brooks's reading of *The Rape of the Lock*] produces a series of implicit equations that associate poetry (or poetic convention) with 'the intricacies of the feminine mind,' and criticism -- or Brooks's kind of formalist criticism -- with the masculine power to comprehend and sensibly judge those intricacies ... [hence] the cruder forms of irony and the patronizing tone that enter Brooks's language when he lines up with Pope on the side of male 'realism.'

So too, can Neil Hertz, still from de Man, dismiss Brooks' soulmate Earl Wasserman:

> What Pope [in *The Rape of the Lock*] offers in a variety of forms -- explicit statement, hint, coded allusion ["Nor bound thy narrow views to things below"] ... Wasserman presents as an inquest: he marshals his evidence sequentially, as if preparing for the moment when he can confront Belinda with the unacknowledged signs of her desire: 'Perhaps this will refresh your memory!' What comes through in the tone of his argument...is the intellectual energy and muted glee of a particularly zealous juge d'instruction. It is not unlike the tone of the teacher confronting the plagiarist, nor is it entirely out of touch with the tone of a teacher teasing his seminar: 'How far can I go? Tell me when to stop!'

A staunch "new critic," for Norris, as for Hertz, plays mournful Baron, while Belinda flirts. As if the poem lived a second time, each reading links the critic with the crime. While Hertz sets out the rape, and Norris the rope, Wasserman woos, and Brooks "lines up with Pope."

It is not clear why so much recent work should choose, not just to bypass Pope, but shirk. For Wordsworth may foreshadow deconstruction, but Pope is probably closer to de Man. "An Essay on Criticism," from the start, disturbs where reading leaves off, and where art. Each verse, prescribing what a poem should be, makes up a poem that never can agree. In this the poet clouds the critic's view, who first unfolds, in verse, what critics do. In *Quests of Difference*, deconstructing Pope, G. Douglas Atkins comments on this trope:

> Why *An Essay on Criticism* does not achieve the closure and totality it seeks...becomes clear with the help of [Jonathan] Culler's discussion of Brooks's essay on 'The Canonization.' Culler shows how, in Donne's poem, an excess prevents it from closing itself in. With 'The Canonization' -- the point applies equally to *An Essay on Criticism* -- the excess occurs in the poem's becoming what it asserts and thematizes. The apparent unity and totality that Brooks labels a well-wrought urn exceeds 'itself,' for in celebrating itself as whole, the poem incorporates into what it is that very celebration. It may even be, as Culler claims, that 'if the urn is taken to include the response to the urn, then the responses it anticipates...become a part of it and prevent it from closing.' ... As Culler puts it, 'The structure of self-reference works in effect to divide the poem [from] itself.'
>
> Each maxim, self-divided, stands alone, not just from later authors, but its own. For readers may appropriate the verse, but it might be the couplets that coerce. Longinus-like, held up by his own laws, the poem is "the great sublime" it draws:
>
> Adopting Derrida's formulation, we might say that when *An Essay on Criticism* seeks to do and be what it describes and advocates, folding back upon itself, it creates an invaginated pocket. (p. 34)

In Pope's first "critical" poem, verse rivals prose; next in "The Rape," Belles battle with their Beaus.

Pope always was to controversy prone, not just for later periods, but his own. John Dennis protest lines that Addison praised; years later, Addison lowered, and Dennis raised. In later poems, Addison proves untrue, while Dennis is forgiven his review:

How chang'd from him, who made the Boxes groan,
And shook the Stage with Thunders all his own!
Stood up to dash each vain Pretender's Hope,
Maul the French Tyrant, or pull down the Pope.

But while Pope's readers might adjust their view, so Pope himself to Pope could prove untrue. Once he might worship power, and kneeling down, pay youthful tribute to a youthful crown:

Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take, and sometimes tea.

"Great Anna" rules a world supremely seen, but in the *Dunciad*, "goddess" unseats "queen":

Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall,
And universal darkness buries all.

"Great Anna" turns "great Anarch," and three realms that right had overruled, wrong overwhelms. For Pope, on left or right, caught every whim, and what he said of rivals, goes for him:

'Tis all from Horace, Horace long before ye
Said Tories called him whig, and whigs a Tory.

If Pope with Pope no constancy could find, is it so odd, then, critics prove unkind?

In Wordsworth most of all, Pope is opposed, but as in theory, gaps are also closed. Even when critics firmly part the two, as does James Chandler, twilight still creeps through:

What he [Wordsworth] says about Pope makes him out to be the antithesis of himself, which is of course to say a poet not entitled to be enshrined among the nation's 'select spirits.'

Here Wordsworth is as far as one could hope, but "him" in "makes him" is both him and Pope:

What he says about Pope makes him out to be the antithesis of himself.

So in the canon Pope's a kind of pause, now flesh and blood with Milton, now in-laws. For though all weigh the odds, none wins the wager, or major minor more, or minor major. Nature and Homer were, for Pope, the same, but in opposing, Wordsworth makes that claim. "Up! Up! my friend, and

quit your books," he writes, but writing, as that poem begins, invites. In the next line, the warning is the trouble, the hint the harm: "Or surely you'll grow double."

II

A dangerous, rash, abstruse, equivocal hour;
One Barthes "The Flea," one Baudrillards "The Tower."
Long time and strange, since first unbottomed night
Burst open by the vigorous Stagirite,
Long time yon swains the scholared harrow drop,
To wake the fruits of learning, so much crop.
Some are bewildered by the maze of schools,
And some made coxcombs nature meant but fools.
A deconstructionist first, a Marxist past,
A pragmatist by degrees -- at last, at last.
These only love, or only loathe, the new,
And fly it while it shines, or when its through,
Take up the fashion, or the fashion drop:
You open up their book, they open shop.
Those all their powers in equal rank display,
Content, if not to gain, to give no way.
The list of schools so various is and long,
Some add their own just proving several wrong.
In olden times, when learning was more awed,
One knew the golden mean, and worshipped God.
Then scholarship was easy to reward,
And tripped on truth, so much was unexplored.
A wit today must harder wages earn,
With less and less to find, and more to learn.
Now each new age, still piling on the old,
Leaves more unsaid than ever Plato told.
Great lights of old whole generations lit;
Now students say more than those critics writ.
The merest insight now, so rare they are,
Is greeted like a traveller from afar.
That reason's best, that reasonably thrives;
We live to live, not analyze, our lives.
What if the boisterous waves should halt offshore,
And frown to bathe the sands, till told what for?
Or one day cease the sun, and loud decree,
"I warm the world, but what's in it for me?"
The schools of metawisdom bloom and fade,

So many painted floats in some parade,
Or more like shrubs, that, hungering for the sky,
In one spot only root, shoot, fruit, and die.
Should aught be said it should, from fireworks free,
Say who we are, or else who we could be.
Where knowledge, truth, and industry abound,
Young minds spring up from academic ground,
Spread tender leaves and in the light grow taller,
Shoot forth in stalk, and vegetate a scholar.
Thus Criticus was born, but late degreed,
With all the theory Criticus could need.
Take him to dinner, "Sir, we have no stew."
He'll deconstruct the menu. "Now you do."
His book is out -- more rightly of the scroll,
Discerning from the style, out of control.
He's been in France, the prose would seem to say,
All out of Derrida, or else Roget.
Great schools of schools swim idly through the style,
That wrecks on Freud, then beaches on Carlyle.
He gets a journal every other day;
They're waiting at the door if he's away,
That gate at which, to better judge, we ring:
A charming Christmas party, in full swing,
The bubbling punch, the lights, the tree so tall,
And Criticus in the midst, "Best welcome all!
Disjuncturing light from dark, yon gamecock trim!
And Maevius, prove that Scrooge is Tiny Tim.
Yea feast, ye merries, feast, drink up ye grog!"
He said; they gathered round the Yale-tide log.
"Be Paul de Man your study and delight;
Read him by day, and meditate by night.
Learn there the rigorous mind, the generous heart,
That pushes criticism into art,
That pushes thought one irony too far,
And leaves you where you were not, where you are.
A work to outlast Rome must long appeal,
Must build with irony, and dans le style.
Some, baffled that a prose can be so clear,
See not themselves, and think there's nothing there,
Or moan the lack of countercultural cares,
As zookeepers might moan, 'There are no bears.'
Left thinks him right, and right believes him wrong;
Some find him too unsteady, some too strong.
For frail it is, and strenuous, to divide,

That both see you, and each the other side,
To join extremes, and each peculiar strike,
Or like a planet shine on all alike.
Let others by an obscure prologue curse,
Whose own tax dollars buy the same and worse.
Left pulled by one, right by a second will,
So strained a style would burst, were't not so still."
He said; a hush descended on the room,
Till broke by Maevius, "Sir, shall I presume?"
So he began, and many stayed to hear
"The Ghost is Dickens" -- others poured more cheer.
Some to a somber manger scene are bid;
Two lambs, a mule, the Virgin, hay, no kid!
Some cheer the fruit, not chafe the mortal growth;
But most do neither, deconstructing both.
Yet all must pass, must pass! so croaks the raven,
And what was Rome is once again New Haven.
So hours roll on, and late the guests must leave.
"Come back next March, and we'll do New Year's Eve."
  Yet rages on the ancient-modern row;
The only difference, Pope's an ancient now.
'Twould but be natural, were it only so;
But there are ancients from ten years ago,
And ancients still, and ancients yet unborn,
As coats go out of style before they're worn.
Still old and new, 'twould seem perpetual war,
And humanists are fighting as before,
But now repelling, where they once attack:
God knows what all this theory will drive back,
On what confirm its power, or dash its hope,
Except some monstrous school of night, or Pope.
  'Tis said that all is figure, foot to head,
Which can't be true, or else it can't be said.
That trope should turn, and figure figure doubt,
Is something trope could never figure out.
Such labored knottings, in so strange a style,
Amaze the unlearned, and make the learn/d smile.
Yet 'tis a truth, and dangerous to ignore,
That every truth begins with metaphor,
A bush no plucking ever could unbound,
And one that grew, 'twould seem, before the ground,
A law that governs thought, and still commands,
Where knowledge, or where power, changes hands.
The mind itself is minded like a text,

As nature fashions laws by which 'tis checked.
Here's fifty, all politically correct,
And fifty more, politically perfect.
Hilda by heart, and Brontes on the brain,
They've read *The Awakening* twice, and never Twain.
Complex, profound, fierce, wild, profuse, and wry;
This is *King Lear* -- they say, "The women die!
Try Che Guevara, if you're after strong;
Why read *King Lear*, when you can watch *King Kong*?
Besides the Bard, from several veiled remarks,
Had children by the Queen, had not read Marx."
Come MLA, no talk is too precise,
And then the Marxist Cash Bar -- "Jamesons, ice."
'Tis thanks to Reagan other critics thrive
Ten books affirm, in nineteen eighty five.
Strange school, to flourish in its own despite,
A new left phoenix-sprung from the far right.
Close are the bands, and narrow 'tis to divide,
Where power and poetry 'lide, and unallide.
Here poets are thrown in jail for breaking rules;
Where a free press prevails, they're thrown in schools.
'Tis less they hail abuses on the throne,
Than show that power's a poem of its own.
'Tis true that poetry flourished in the court,
Less clear if to amuse it, or amort.
For poetry and power are closely grown,
And every treaty, finally, is their own.
Now gender thrives, each work with studied care
Weighs sex with sex, and finds its answer there.
Mysterious school, and spared for an elect;
Far more than circumcision guards the sect;
Nor comes it in one even manner taught,
But of a thousand contradictions fraught.
One foe unites, and with no civil rod
A peace at home is kept by wars abroad.
"Let bias die!" some shout along the strand,
And plant a flag, and found a no man's land.
Strong readings, stronger, likely, than we know:
Pope shows how deeply power and gender go.
The danger is to damn him for his "views,"
And king-like, kill the sender for the news.
Real art is always level, like the shore,
And like the tide, but rises to fall more.
The thing it loves the most it oft dislikes,

And where it kneels to power, there most it strikes.
In Pope alike, each verse with studied care
Weighs sex with sex, and finds its power there.
The doubtful beam to patriarchy dips,
And while Belinda wails, the poem clips.
  One maps out influence as it rolls through schools,
And proves that sons can think their fathers fools,
That where they most from their original verge,
Their air their heir, and bearing bearing urge.
Fine thought, to plumb where heritage is hid;
Too bad I had it years before he did.
Nor is it clear, through prominence, and decline,
That influence is a circle, or a line.
Influential bonds from Donne to Gray
Look influential turned the other way.
  All systems with their native soil agree,
And color truth with nationality.
The universal Geist, the German shows,
Flows through all things, but most through Jena flows.
The proud Parisian is as quick to say,
What Plato started stopped with Mallarm).
('Twas no doubt fixed in astrologic chance,
The sun that rose on Greece should set on France.)
Next comes the surer Yankee, still more fit,
All guileless in a pioneering wit,
Yet like the Pilgrim, lately to arrive,
Yearns to return, and struggles to survive,
Besieged at once by crippling blasts of snow,
Afeard his heart that here 'tis always so,
Doubts where he be, but questions this the more,
Who braved the sea should have to brave the shore,
When lo! the frosts retreat, the clouds unspan:
Behold, ye gods, the Emersonian man!
Know well the limits of your native clime,
Nor seek, but for a relative sublime.
  Here's Duke, a Duke of schools, but buyer, beware:
That's all the Marx the market-place may bear.
Enroll, Ephebe -- fate sooner proves inclined
To change the world, you'll learn, than change their mind.
"Always historicize!" the Dukes decree,
But "history" and "always" don't agree.
Nor be too bold, all suffering to enlarge;
One's not a Bolshevik by yelling "Charge!"
Critiques of culture are themselves a trend,

And politics wise, and industry an end.
The Deist thinks he's found a kind of key,
And mingles theory with theology.
God wrote a play, some show, a passing story,
A tragical Medieval allegory,
And wondering what to tell, what fields to plow,
He set the thing on earth and timed it now,
Got Nature to direct, gave Chance a wheel,
And making a producer, made a deal,
Auditioned widely, set a date, cast Pan,
Rehearsed it once or twice, and called it Man.
See Seraphims and Cherubs, dressed in light,
And all Olympus mingling opening night,
Now Mars and Vulcan, both in rented brown,
Now Ceres in an unfamiliar gown.
Apollo hopes 'tis light, Minerva clever;
Cassandra prophesies 'twill run forever.
There, Satan also shows, with angels stirring,
To scalp before the play, and whisper during.
(God wrote the script cathartically, they say,
And staged the Fall that Lucifer might stay.)
But see! The curtains rise, now breathes the play,
As eagles bear the painted cloth away.
What eager colors strike their waiting eyes,
How green the earth, how blue the spreading skies,
Where nodding groves conform to Zephyr's will,
And rolling acres, wrapped in autumn, fill.
Conferring floods like lovers intertwine;
Whole clumps, like gems, draw down the bending vine,
Whose pleasing curve, and colors too, imply
The thousand hues that infiltrate the sky.
The host of heaven, charmed with all before,
More specialized than most, are pleased with more,
With things that season action, lifts and gears,
The light of stars, the music of the spheres.
All that the earth, the sea, the air affords,
All forms of life the changing scene records,
The ranging lion, countenanced like the sun,
Now flocks and schools through liquid pastures run,
All bathed in breathing light, each as it should,
So innocent, so magical, so good!
Enter Man, to fire a pleasing rage;
'Tis fun to hiss a villain off the stage.
Long folly played on learning, in its youth;

But now matured, must learning play on TRUTH?
Does force or spirit need a throne and rod,
To make a godlike man a manlike god?
What next? When Adam's wretched writ was signed,
God had an aching head, or had not dined?
  Know then the hour, and your own province, know;
Nor venture forth unarmed, where'er you go.
Of old, who sought for light was well received,
And still could be beloved, if not believed.
Now every critic scrambles for the crown,
And only rise by pulling others down.
"The rest are knaves," Pride swells, "I mount towards Fame!"
Some glory that, that knaves should know your name.
Meet every author in the terms proposed,
And every text complete, as though composed.
Who judges thus, need never judgement fear:
Though earnest, honest; civil, but sincere.
  Then be not dull, and meditate on sources,
But better North than Antony loves horses,
Better too quiet, than too sure to seem;
Shun the middle, but shun each extreme.
To justly criticize, the laws are few:
Stay close to what you read, and close to you.
Some seem to lose themselves along the way,
Nor ever really seem to find the play.
'Tis scarcely more demanding, or more rare,
To bring a piece to life, as keep it there.
Nor is it clear, when first the Ur-work came,
The author hadn't really done the same.
The words are there, and hard 'tis to decide,
If it goes in or out, but there's a tide.
For in or out, a letter can divide,
Where starts the scholar and where ends the scribe.

Endnotes

1. Christophr Norris, "Pope among the Formalists," in *Post-Structuralist Readings of English*, eds Richard Machin and Christopher Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), pp. 141-42.

2. Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985), p. 158.

3. G. Douglas Atkins, *Quests of Difference: Reading Pope's Poetry* (Lexington: University P of Kentucky, 1986), p. 33.

4. Regarding "shook the stage with Thunders all his own," Maynard Mack notes how "Dennis had invented a new method of producing stage thunder for his tragedy *Appius and Virginia,* which failed. In 'all his own,' Pope may allude to the story that Dennis, when his method of making stage-thunder continued to be used in other plays, went into a paroxysm of fury and exclaimed: "'Sdeath, that's my thunder'" (*Alexander Pope: A Life* (New York: Norton, 1985), p. 589). "Shook the Stage" may also allude to Lewis Theobald's attack on Pope's edition of Shakespeare, which goes out of its way to praise Dennis ("no Man in England better understands Shakespeare" [Mack, p.889n])/

5. James Chandler, "The Pope Controversy: Romantic Poetics and the English Canon," in *Critical Inquiry* 10:3 (March 1984), p. 492.

A Dwem Before My Time: The Tragical StoryOf a Professor Who Learned the Error of His Ways

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When, in a blitzkrieg of speed and directness,
The tidal wave of political correctness
Overwhelmed all academe, filling each hall,
Classroom and textbook with its clarion call,
"Cast out the DWEMS!" I was shocked and irate.
"How dare they thus," I fumed, "blather and prate
And sermonize on 'justice' and 'oppression,'
Extracting from each DWEM text its confession
Of crimes inflicted on the weak and poor,
When the least masterpiece offers far more
Than all this jargoned bilge and propaganda."
Stewing such dreary thoughts, on my veranda
I chanced to be sitting up late one night,
Turning the pages under an old desk light
Of the Norton Anthology, that book
Which was my Bible, when I heard unhook
The screen door latch and someone enter in.
I froze, but in the silence heard begin
A heavy breathing. "O my God," I said,
I'm finished! In a moment I'll be dead!"
Breaking at last from my paralysis,
I wheeled around, and what I saw was this:
A stalky, leather-jacketed skinhead
With swastika tatoos in black and red
On his bald pate, and switch-blade open wide;
His motorcycle he had parked outside.
"Now how did you get in," I asked the bugger,
And who are you? Are you some kind of mugger?
Don't you dare mess with me--I'm a professor!"
"I am the ghost of the white male oppressor,"
My visitant intoned. "Down through the ages
I'm he who authored all the worst outrages
Against women and the minorities--
And of all men, 'tis you who most me please.
Therefore declare your wish: you shall receive."

"Now wait," I said, "just why should I believe
If I ask, you'll be able to deliver?
You don't look much to me like bounty's river
Flowing through my life. It's true, I'd like the chance
To prick the bubble of the arrogance
Of all these prigs whose righteousness allows
No criticism of their holy cows,
To make these snobby puritans eat crow,
Occasioning debacles that will show
They're really just like all the rest of us,
Although they think they're much the best of us.
But sadly, none of this will ever be."
"Boon granted!" he replied. "Just wait and see.
I'll give you all the daring and invention
That keeps them in continuous apprehension
Of what trick you'll try next; you'll have such cheek,
They'll have no piety you will not tweak.
For twenty golden years thus you'll be free;
But after that, then you belong to me."
At this my anima began to shout,
And into visible shape projecting out
Like Spielberg's Tinkerbell, she pleaded, "No!
Don't follow where he's leading you! Don't go!
He's just a chauvinist! Dear Ward, forbear!"
"O, shut up, you!" I snarled. "But now, look here,"
I told the Nazi, "Why have I been picked?"
"Because you are best suited to inflict,"
He said, "the persecutions I desire;
Yes, your credentials are just what I require.
It's a deep mystery; don't ask me why.
But hey, why let your good luck pass you by?
So come on, man, let's make the deal and lock it."
With this, he whipped a contract from his pocket,
And pricked my index finger with his blade,
So that blood trickled out. "Don't be afraid,"
He comforted, "I have your good in mind.
Just sign here on the dotted line." I signed.
Seeing this, my anima collapsed down dead,
My Nazi roared off, and I went to bed.
From that night forth I was a man transformed.
Before, I generally had conformed
To PC rule; but now, I would defy it.
In ideology I wrought pure riot,
Invading texts through magical infusion,

In theory books inserting sane conclusion,
Interpreting along sensible lines,
Restoring centers, adding dollar signs.
To everyone's disgust and sheer abhorrence,
Out from my office window, like death warrants,
I hung the Stars and Stripes; where all could hear,
I'd praise George Washington and Paul Revere;
Dismaying college chancellors and regents,
I opened classes with the Pledge of Allegiance.
In my department, I did such deeds of badness,
I drove my colleagues to the brink of madness.
I haunted meetings in the gruesome fetch
Of Jesse Helms; each time I saw a sketch
Of Marx or Freud I made them look like asses
By adding Groucho mustaches and glasses;
I set a woman's studies class to route
When I invaded in my Grendel suit.
Thus twenty years slipped by, the term allowed,
I wrecking havoc on the PC crowd,
Entirely immune from retribution.
But through the long, slow course of devolution,
As I was slipping down toward disaster,
I came to dread the hour when my master
Would be returning, and the fun would halt,
And all my borrowed powers I'd default.
At last, arriving at the very eve
Of twenty years, unable to deceive
Myself about my folly any longer,
Hoping that I might feel a little stronger
If someone knew about the snare I'd spun,
I told a friend, and he told everyone.
They called a meeting to deliberate
What should be done. A few were so irate
At my mischief, they shouted, "Let him burn!
Why should we save him from himself? His turn
Is up. All right; now let him pay the piper.
He's just a racist, chauvinist male viper."
But others disagreed. "Show some compassion,"
They urged. "This vengeance thing is out of fashion.
Besides, some moderation would be smarter.
We don't want him to seem to be a martyr."
Prolonged and vehement was the dispute,
But finally they found a plan to suit
The crisis, all agreeing to insist

I visit with a New Age therapist.
One such was called; and he and I retired.
"I've seen your files," he said. "Never so mired
Was any client of mine in all this crap
Of DWEM-dom. You're a most peculiar chap.
What I can't figure," here his eyes were pensive,
"Is why you're so unnaturally defensive
About these white male literary bigots
Whose poems, novels and plays are open spigots
Discharging sewage into a fetid slough;
But what I mean is, what is this to you?
And why did the DWEM Demon pick you out?
Unless we can detect what he's about,
I fear I'll never save you from his grip."
"Gee, Doc," I peeped, a quaver in my lip,
"What are my prospects? Have I got a chance?"
"I think I'll have to put you in a trance,"
He answered slowly, "digging through your past.
For understand, your soul has amassed
Experience from countless incarnations.
From there originate those sick formations
That prompted you to make your deadly deal.
The memories of past lives will reveal
The tap-root of your folly and your sin.
When we know that, your cure can begin.
Only this process, Ward, can make you whole,
And drive the DWEM oppressor from your soul."
"All right," I acquiesced. "Then close your eyes,
Breath deeply, give permission to arise
Whatever images occur to you."
"I think I see a motley pilgrim crew,"
I said, "riding along a country road.
We're in the Middle Ages. Hey, that toad!
A miller poked me. Quiet now! Keep still!
Some words are coming up....'Whan that Aprill--'"
I stopped abruptly. Times like this, speech fails.
"I think I wrote the Canterbury Tales."
"You were that scoundrel," said my therapist,
And from his voice I knew that he was pissed,
"Who rose so high, but never stirred a finger
To help those in the economic wringer?
Great poet, ha! You're traitor to your class!
You spent your whole lifetime kissing ass
To the nobility. You were a hoax!

Your poems were nothing more than dirty jokes
Harassing and demeaning womankind.
You ought to be branded in the behind
Like Nicholas with Absolon's hot poker!"
"Hold it," I said, "I may be mediocre
From standpoint of my ideology,
But do recall, the fourteenth century
Was long ago. I ask you, is it fair
To treat me now as if I were still there,
Harping on crimes committed way back when?
Hey, Doc, give me a break, I've changed since then."
My therapist replied, sullen and glowering,
"I find your logic less than overpowering;
But all right, then, we might as well go on.
Dive deep once more: see what you come upon."
I did; and as my vision cleared again,
I saw, through ink-streams flowing from my pen,
Three crones prancing around a bubbling pot,
All croaking "double, double," and more such rot;
And then the Thane of Cawdor--I caught my breath:
"Great jumping junipers--I wrote Macbeth!"
At this my guide and mentor clutched his fist.
"You venal, prostituted dramatist,"
He barked, a long-suppressed anger igniting,
"Can business profit justify the writing
Of such a foul screed, whose leading pitch is
Discrimination against harmless witches?
You should be burned alive!" I hung my head.
"There are redeeming features, though," I said,
"In other plays. I penned many a part
Showing the virtue of the female heart.
I always thought Ophelia was nice."
"And that excuse," he growled, "will not suffice.
Why did you drive her mad and kill her off?"
For this I had no answer. "Well, enough
Of that," he said concluding, and he cursed.
"So let's go on and find out all the worst."
And when I searched again, the scenes were these:
I felt the blowing of a stiff salt breeze,
From the deep ocean swell a spout arose,
Someone behind me hollered, "Thar she blows!"
The surface broke, we saw a flapping tail,
And just a moment later, a great white whale;
A man was clinging to the monster's neck,

Looking for all the world like Gregory Peck.
"I hate to break the news," I said, feeling sick,
"But I'm afraid I authored Moby Dick."
I kept still, daring not open my eyes,
But feeling my therapist's anger rise.
"Herman," he said, trying to keep control,
"Perhaps you'll think this question rather droll,
But while you were building your reputation
As the premier novelist of the nation,
Did it ever occur to you, you goon,
Perhaps some comfy, bourgeois afternoon
After a fat royalties check came through,
To think of whaling from the whale's point of view?"
"Golly, I never did!" I said in shame.
"These creatures are the victims of your fame,"
He thundered, and voice sinking into a hiss--
"I never thought it'd be as bad as this."
And so we labored on through our long session,
Braving the horror of each new regression,
Whistling like a train through each new station,
Through incarnation after incarnation--
John Milton, Homer, Aeschylus, Racine,
Vergil, Dante, and all who lie between,
Spenser and Donne, Pindar and Sophocles,
Moli/re, Corneille, Pope and Euripides;
But concentrating in Romantic times,
For Shelley, Keats, and Blake I wrote the rhymes,
And Coleridge, and William Wordsworth too--
A strategy insidiously new--
Oppressing thus on simultaneous fronts,
Inhabiting five authors all at once.
And as the age drew on into its autumn,
To show that my perfidy knows no bottom,
I tried to lure women into the gulf,
Born as Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf.
In short, from Gilgamesh through times ensuing,
All the entire canon was my doing,
I wrote it so that all folk would be slaves
In misery from their cradles to their graves.
When we were done, my therapist seemed awed.
"Now I can can understand," he said. "My God!
No wonder you're so utterly despicable,
A ripe fruit for the Demon's harvest pickable.
What can be done in such a hopeless case?"

He groaned, and in his hands buried his face.
Just then, our meeting room door opened wide,
And all my colleagues filed back inside.
I've never seen a crowd of faces bleaker,
For they'd been listening on an outdoor speaker.
They sat in silence, looking pale and glum;
Disgust and horror had stricken them dumb.
Beyond despair groping for a solution
To save themselves and me from this pollution,
In deepest meditation each did delve.
But as we sat, the watch-tower bell struck twelve.
Far off, upon our conference encroaching,
We heard a motorcycle fast approaching;
It stopped outside, and bursting through the door,
The Demon DWEM strode out across the floor.
His eyes were burning with a madman's glee;
His swastikas were whirling furiously.
"I've come," my Demon crowed, "to claim my prey.
For it was twenty years ago today
That you signed this"--he waved a parchment sheet.
"It's useless now to whimper and to bleat
'I never meant it--it was just a game!'
I'll cart you off to prison just the same.
And now," he cackled, "you want to know your fate?
Despair, O Ward--repentance is too late!
For all eternity your soul will be
Paraded, gross and hideous to see,
Exposed through the effluence of your pen,
Republished and reprinted time and again,
Paroled--alas!--by no apology,
Right here, in the Norton Anthology."
And he produced, like evidence of libel,
That well-leafed tome that once had been my Bible.
"O no, no, anything but that," I squealed.
"Help, save me!" to my colleagues I appealed.
"Rise up, and exercise your critical powers!
Raze low my past of literary flowers!
How can you suffer the perpetuation
Of such gross works of vile desecration?
Now is the time to censure and condemn;
I'm nothing but a wimpy, wicked DWEM!
And you," I told my Demon, since my friends
Seemed frozen, realizing that the ends
Of all those works might not be so agreeable,

Since their worthy replacements weren't foreseeable,
"Can't you perceive that you've outlived your time?
It's true, you know my catalogue of crime,
But by what right and justice can you claim
Works that were never meant to feed your flame?
Your narrow boundaries never could contain
The inspiration of the Muse's strain.
But never mind; I give it up, I drop it.
Whatever gives offense, I swear to stop it.
I'll abdicate, and turn away from DWEM-ery,
I'll purge these vile authors from my memory,
Just let me off the hook, O spare me, please!
I'll burn my books, ah, what a curse were these!"
I pleaded thus; and like an act of grace,
A deus ex machina then took place.
For my therapist, suddenly revealed
In the true authority he had to wield,
Stood boldly, and the Demon DWEM accosted:
"Give up," he cried; "your hopes are now exhausted.
You thought you'd easily win this affray?
You thought that this would be a Demon Day?
Behold, an adversary blocks your way,
For I'm the president of the MLA!
Me my constituency deputized
To cast you out, thus!--are you exorcized.
For listen," and with these words he towered taller,
"You hypocrite, I've got you by the collar!
For what have you to answer to the charge,
Last Mardi Gras in drag, along the marge
Of Bourbon Street, where vice is unafraid,
I saw you dancing in the gay parade?"
"Nonthenth," my Nazi lisped. "Me? What a laugh!"
"But I have proof. I took a photograph,"
My Savior said. "It's time you had your outing.
But my veracity perhaps you're doubting?
Here, take a look." With this, he passed around
A picture that did not fail to astound.
"Doomsday has come! You should have taken care.
You fool, didn't you guess that I'd be there?"
My Demon DWEM uttered a piercing shriek,
And blanching, took off like a lightning streak;
His anguish and chagrin became so keen,
That never since that day has he been seen.
This is my story, then, my tragic tale,

Of how I let the evil force prevail
Within me, till I lifted up my gaze
And learned to see the error of my ways.
And so today I pour out my confession,
After a long career of oppression.
Of course, I still require various crutches:
For once a soul has fallen in the clutches
Of the DWEM Demon, he's never really cured:
Always there is the hazard he'll be lured
Back into DWEM-dom; therefore, to forestall
Such a relapse, to save me from a fall,
In a support program I've been enrolled,
A twelve-step plan to keep me in the fold.
It's true, although I know how much it's crippling,
Sometimes I do some literary tippling:
Occasionally, when no one is looking,
I open Chaucer, just to see what's cooking.
It's hard, having once had, to be deprived.
Meanwhile, from death like Lazurus revived,
My anima continuously bitches,
So much, I'd rather have back Shakespeare's witches.
But basically, however much I suffer,
I know it's for having been such a duffer--
For writing that literature, I mean.
And in conclusion, not to overween,
But out of my experience I say,
O people, from the DWEMS keep far away!
Take warning from the one who knows his crime,
For I have been a DWEM before my time.

Bears and Appetites in David Mamet's *The Woods*

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The Woods by David Mamet was first produced in 1977 to varied reactions. The jacket of the Grove Press edition described it as a modern dramatic parable in which a young man and woman, spending a night in a cabin in the woods, experience first passion, then disillusionment, but in the end are reconciled by mutual need. The commentary then went on to quote the *Chicago Daily News* as terming the play a beautifully conceived love story. Richard Eder of the *New York Times* wrote that Mamet's "language has never been so precise, pure, and affecting" and John Hurst characterized the play as an uneventful event with randomly sequential, at times poetic discourse" (G9). All of these reactions sound as if they were written about someone else -- anyone other than Mamet whose plays are cynical, misogynist, urban and whose language is explosive, derivative of the street. So, an audience's first impression of *The Woods* is that it is atypical, a departure from the established norm for Mamet. However, the sylvan setting and affecting language constitute a deliberate trap constructed by Mamet so as to lure the audience into anticipating and hoping for loving communication between the couple, and then brutalize such hopes by a reconciliation based not on human need, but on mutual despair.

Most critical comments about Mamet's work center around his use of language, his ear for dialogue, and his accurate portrayal of dysfunctional characters, an obvious reflection of his deliberate craftsmanship. Therefore, the dialogue in *The Woods* is carefully planned; it is not an accident or some whimsical aberration on Mamet's part. The play totals 10,029 words, but the actual vocabulary used is only 1107 words. Such strict economy indicates that Mamet knows exactly how to get the most out of words, how to speaks to an audience and use a sparse vocabulary to create communication and emotion. Further, it establishes a basis for an assumption that the language in The Woods is deliberately and carefully constructed for a definite purpose, and that purpose is to make the audience think that Ruth and Nick are symbolic babes in the wood with the concomitant implications of both innocence and loss, when in reality they are just another city couple who have decided to spend a weekend in the country in a stereotypical back-to-nature endeavor (Dean 28).

The dialogue in *The Woods* is very formal and strict in its rhythms, actually ritualistic most of the time; it makes much use of repetition, some of it apparently trivial, so a tension exists between the heavy rhythm of

what is being said and the nebulous meaning of the words. These features underline the nervousness the lovers seem to feel in the wilderness, away from the disturbance and noise of the city and away from their customary behaviors. As Ruth says, "In the city we can never know each other really" (43). Here in the woods, they have only each other, so the usual masks don't fall into place -- they actually have to talk to each other. Direct conversation becomes mandatory, and they just can't handle the one on one intensity of their relationship, so they fall into ritualistic discussions of their environment as well as story-telling as might be expected according to Bigsby who has stated that storytelling is fundamental in Mamet's work (46-7). A major focus in their discussions is a bear, probably once an actual inhabitant of the woods, now a sort of minor legend that echoes in their dialogue and becomes a vehicle for their desire and a symbol for the inadequacy of their language.

Early in the play, as they sit on the porch of the summer house, looking out at the September dusk, Ruth tells Nick, . . . "I thought our appetites are just the body's way to tell us things that we may need" (20). And, she adds, "The liking we have for things -- desire -- is just our body's way to tell us things" (20). They continue to explore the connection between appetite and need and desire as all relate to the cycle of life, in terms of all things returning to the earth naturally, evoking thoughts of William Cullen Bryant and Thanatopsis, "To him who in the love of Nature holds / Communion with her visible forms, she speaks / A various language. . ."

These two city people continue their attempt to converse in the various language of nature. Ruth says, "Nothing lasts. This is what I thought down on the rowboat. It had rotted. / It had gone back to the Earth. We all go. / That is why the Earth is good for us. / When we look for things that don't go back, we become sick" (23). This speech attracts the audience, eliciting more pastoral memories from American mythology. But Nick and Ruth are grasping with unfamiliar tools. They are cosmopolitan dwellers trying to explore a side of themselves that they share with the bear and the beaver -- but it is so far back in their consciousness that they are clumsy with its shape -- just as they are clumsy in their rural setting.

The woman, Ruth, carries most of the dialogue for the first two-thirds of the play as if she feels the burden of making the trip to the country as well as the relationship work. She talks about the cycle of life she observes, the animals around them, then begs Nick to tell her stories of the area and himself. "Nick is mute if not opaque. He's not so much inarticulate as dis-articulate" (Hurst G9). He says only enough to keep her emotional momentum going even when he relates bits of stories. One such story is about visits he made to the summer house with his grandfather.

> We used to sit around, we'd make a fire.
> Sometimes he'd tell us stories of the

Nick was only saying what he knew from experience would elicit the response from her that was a requisite for his comfort. She is a woman, an object of passion, and a source of warmth, so he tells her phrases and stories that have enabled him in the past to get women guests to comfort him sexually.

Ultimately, his stereotypical language fails; she doesn't respond predictably, so he resorts to violence. He hits her, knocks her down; he cannot subdue her with words or passion, so he strikes her physically, as she had struck him verbally.

Until this point, Ruth has been the articulate one, pouring out words, many of them symbolically loaded (Indians, outlaws, pirates, Vikings, cabin boys), evocative of subconscious cultural emotions, and Nick has been very hesitant in his speech, relying on fragments and monosyllables to convey his thoughts, depending on the mood-provoking woods to maintain the emotional side of their relationship. Now, in his attempt to keep her from leaving, he struggles with articulation, trying to express his inner turmoil. But his speech produces more violence, only this time she hits him. He says, "I don't feel good. I am inside this hole" (111); he begs her not to leave him to his dreams:

> I cannot sleep. I have these dreams at night. I dream.
> No, wait. I'll tell you. I see the window, and
> the shades are blowing. There has come a breeze, all the curtains blow.
> They are on fire.
> It laps around the window. On all sides.
> Someone is calling my name. Nicholas.
> I swear to you.
> I hear them in a voice unlike a man or woman. When
> I look, I do not want to know. I know that there is
> something there. I look. I see a bear. A bear
> has come back. At the window. Do you hear me, Ruth?
> Do you know what this is? To crawl beneath my house.
> This house is mine now. In its hole it calls me.
> In the Earth. Nicholas.
> He's standing upright. On his legs. He has a huge
> erection. I am singed. He speaks a human language, Ruth, I
> know. He has these thoughts and they are trapped
> inside his mouth. His jaw cannot move. He has
> thoughts and feelings. BUT HE CANNOT SPEAK.
> If only he could speak.
> If only he could say the thing he wants.
>
> Ruth: What does he want?

Nick: I DO NOT KNOW! (113)

And Ruth hits him. Over the next few minutes, she hits him several times. The bear speaks with a human language, Mamet's language -- but, no sound leaves his mouth. Words are trapped in him the way they are in Nick, the way they are in all humans. Language is trapped with our appetites, our desires; but also, language is a trap because humans so seldom say what they mean. People speak prepared words to evoke desired responses; when such words fail to produce the expected actions, humans resort to violence.

Mamet leaves his audience with the terrible thought that, like the bear, we are instinctual appetites, and when we don't get what we want, we hurt something or someone. And while this metaphor is not new, it is nevertheless chilling to have it brought home that we are still operating on that behavioral level. And if, as critics say, Mamet's play is a parable, the lesson is that man's much vaunted language is simply a trap, an opening to the cave of the bear, and that the veneer of civilization is very, very thin.

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A Day to Remember

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Sometimes when I'm sitting here on the cottage porch in this rocker, I see a sparrow moving in and out of the wisteria shoots along the ground there at the edge of the porch and for a minute I think it's Samson and LaCuite playing, and then I remember the day the guards come with the rifles and shot them and all the other cats on the grounds.

Samson and LaCuite used to play for hours in and out of the wisteria vines up and down that trellis and along the ground while Musella sat right over thee in that rocker where you're sitting and I sat here. We would sit here and crochet hours and hours on the bedspreads or the afghans. Then when we went in the flowerbeds out in the yard, seemed like those two kittens would go rollicking crazy chasing in and out of the shadows and grabbing the wiggling stalks of the zinnias and marigolds while we weeded and worked all through the flowers.

Musella had been doing fairly well after she moved here with me until they come and shot the cats. Now I don't wonder that she's gone back over to that other building, the one over behind the receiving ward. She's confined now to that building where they give the shocks here at Richmond. If there's anything I know and dread myself, it's that treatment. I taken it at first when they brought me here. I just draw up inside now when I remember how they took off my clothes to put that openbacked gown on me and how they strapped me down and then put those peculiar feeling pads on my temples. After I would come to a week or so later, I had to work in my mind a long time to remember who I was and that I was in the state institution here at Whitfield. It would take me for the longest to remember.

Looking back on it, I reckon Musella and I got to be friends while we worked in the flowerbeds around these three cottages in this cluster, for they had moved her into the next cottage over there on the left with Amy Wilson. Then we found out that we both had started crocheting on a bedspread in the pineapple pattern. It was just natural then that we'd like to move in together but when we asked the matron about being cottage mates, she was her same crabbed, spiteful self and at first she wouldn't let Musella move again so soon. But then she changed her mind and told us to go ahead.

"I'm awful tired of filling out forms for you girls to move every other day. Now, Musella, you get in that cottage with Zettie and stay there

because I ain't filling out any more forms for you to move," she finally said, and she fairly gritted her yellow false teeth at us.

Well, she needn't have worried, for we had our flowers and our crocheting and later on we had the cats. Just about everybody in every cottage had a cat, and there was a new litter of kittens every day or two. For sure, we didn't have a problem getting hold of a kitten of our own.

It was a real settled summer for us, crocheting on the porch on rainy days and working in the flowerbeds on pretty ones. Sometimes though a rash would develop on my arms, I reckon from the weeds and grass, but at the infirmary they would give me a lotion that cured it up pretty fast.

There was nothing we enjoyed more than the everblooming cape jasmine bushes or the red floribunda roses that grew just about nine inches up from the ground and put their red petals out all over their crowns. They looked for all the world like those pucker cushions Lizzie Bascom used to make for everybody. Let me tell you, they shot Lizzie's cat too, her big blue Persian cat named Narsha. After that, they had to stop letting Lizzie go play the piano over at recreation. You see, she used to be a piano teacher and after she come here to Whitfield, she's play for our dances. After they shot Narsha and the other cats, Lizzie would go over there to practice and she's take the strings out of the piano. She said the world didn't deserve piano music anymore. It changed everything, I guess, in some way when they sent the guards out here to shoot all our cats down like they did. And it was awful the way they went about it too.

You see, it was like this. Late that afternoon in July we were working in the zinnia beds where I was showing Musella how to take the big limbs off of the zinnia plants and transplant them. You know, it's the big limbs that have roots already showing beneath their green skin about that time of year. The ground was wet and steamy for it had rained off and on for three days. But it was just right for transplanting because this ground's mighty high here at Richmond and there's awful good drainage, a whole lot better than it used to be in Papa's yard up in the Delta. I never saw plants grow like ours here at Whitfield.

We were deep in the plants up to our waists, working and listening to the thunder rolling faraway off in the east, before we notice anything wrong. I was being careful to show Musella how to snap the limbs off without skinning the stalk. It's hard to get them off clean without a razor blade or a pair of scissors. Samson, he was my big tom cat, was rubbing against us, zipping his sides and back by on our legs and hips when we knelt down. All the time he was humming "peas and punkins" so fast that sometimes he's skip the punkins and just go "peas and, peas and." LaCuite was laying over under a cape jasmine bush. She was a Siamese cat, and she always acted like she was sort of better than all the other cats. I asked Musella why in the world she had named her cat such a peculiar name. She laughed and said she remembered something a long ways off down in New

Orleans where she used to live when she was a little girl. She said she thought LaCuite's nose was exactly the color of burnt molasses.

Sometimes now before I get up out of my rocker I look back to see if either Samson or LaCuite is lying under there where I might mash them. It's awful hard to get used to the lonesomeness. I would like just to hear from Musella, too, every once in a while but the matron says she doesn't know anything about her. Nobody ever seems to know anything about anybody in that building. I reckon somebody from the paper like you or another outsider maybe could find out about people over there.

Well, anyhow, that afternoon last summer we were out yonder deep in the zinnias gathering the limbs to transplant down by the fence, and I reckon we were so happy and busy we didn't notice anybody coming up on us. Musella looked up first and I don't know just why I happened to glance at her then, but I did, and I saw her go white around the base of her nose, like she always did when she'd hear a sonic boom and I'd have to hold her up to keep her from falling. Before I could get to my feet or even get a word out of my mouth, I heard the head guard talking. I knew his voice before I looked at him. His name is Fleming.

"Now, ya'll get over behind your cottage, girls," he said. He always talks with a rattle in his throat, like he needs bad to clear the phlegm out. Musella broke and run, stomping on the zinnias and even the rosebushes, something she never would have done if she's been at herself. It taken me a minute to realize the guns, fir I reckon I wasn't expecting nothing like that out there in the flowerbeds. Samson and LaCuite never moved a muscle, fir they's never even heard of a gun. Some of the others said later that their cats acted the same way. Like Jesus being crucified, that's what it was like I still say.

Then I moved out through the flowerbed over toward Musella, and Samson and LaCuite taken in to following me like they always did when they thought maybe I was going to feed them inside the cottage.

"Make them cats come back here," Fleming said. Then he saw that I couldn't and he said, "You just hold still." I did while he motioned to the other guard he had with him. The other one brought a paper sack and Fleming took some ground meat out of it and put it on the dirt and started calling, "Kitty, kitty, kitt-y."

Samson trotted over and fell to eating the meat and growling at LaCuite when she went over and sniffed at it. Then Fleming told me to go on over and stand close to Musella behind the cottage. She was trembling so bad she was about to fall down and she held on to me and the window sill while we both peeped around the back corner of our cottage.

I saw Fleming step back right on thumbelina plant, and then he aimed at Samson. The other guard was aiming at LaCuite at the same time. Fleming's gun went off first and I saw Samson jump straight up over the tall zinnias before he broke to running toward us, poor thing. But he didn't

go over two long jumps until Fleming shot again and this time he tore Samson's stomach off. LaCuite just fell quick when the bullet struck her between the forefeet. At least her's was merciful. We could hear shots all over the grounds and then screams, some of them from the cats.

I reckon just can't believe it at first when I see something like that. I just couldn't help but go over to where Samson was lying to see if it had actually happened. Fleming picked him up his back legs that were still jerking and the blood dripped fast all over several purple zinnia blooms and his entrails slung down, big and little, and I could smell them. They smelled like glue on an envelope after you lick it.

There was lot of talk about why they killed the cats. Some said Dr. Matthison thought the cats weren't good for our health, and that fleas were all in the cottages. They said he was sorry that he'd let us get hold of the cats and keep them against the rules here at Whitfield. I know, though, that our cats didn't deep fleas on them, for we picked off every one we could find at night on Samson and LaCuite. And you understand, we hardly ever did find one.

Somebody else said the cats were causing ringworm, but I don't believe that. I've certainly never had ringworm. I haven't even had poison ivy or a rash on my hands since they shot the cats; for you see, it's so lonesome without Samson and LaCuite and Musella that I don't go in the flowerbeds at all. There's nothing growing in them now, as you can tell, except grass that they keep mowed neat and tidy.

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Crossing

We walked over a bridge on a sun-magic day,
A narrow, iced bridge, in the gorge of winter.
I ran my hand along the rail, the smooth, cold rail,
And I thought, "This is my bridge."
But then you came up behind, laughing
And slipping and urging me on,
And I did not hear what I was thinking.
I hear it now. That is how getting to the other side is:
A gleaming, narrow way, slippery and smooth,
Exciting for its little dangers, the warning signals going off
In the head, and the hand that clings to the cold rail.

You would misunderstand me if you thought I feared falling.
A plunge into icy waters, onto hard rocks, is something
I know, and even thrive on,
After so many plunges. It isn't that
That made me go too slowly, too carefully, for you.
It's the destination that I don't long for:
The promise of a soft-lapped hillside,
The threat of a flower-strewn meadow,
All those exquisite cliches that spangle the eye,
The lovely treacheries that lure the ever-credulous heart.

I turn away from the seduction of it, and return to this:
A walk on a bridge on a sun-magic day,
A narrow, iced bridge, in the rapture of winter.

Violets

Some spring
Between my ninth
And this,
The old wood shacks,
Creaking in wet weather,
Leaned and sank.

Their old woman
Has gone on too now,
And no one cares.
At night,
After days
Of warm rain,
The moss begins again
To bury the alley.

II

We two
In alleys were
Violet-deep in spring
Where the wooden shacks
Smelled of earth, old leaves,
And years of rain and violets.

We came
In the long summer twilight
Both afternoon and evening,
Feeling the full air,
Listening to crickets,
Creakings in
Wet wood shacks.

We had been children
Looking for luna moths
Strayed under streetlamps
Before we came here
Where Old Miss Jenny
Had trapped a ghost
And held it in these shacks.

We did not believe it, really,
But at that age,
When three green
Moths were mine
In my own hands,
What else was there to do
In the summertime?

Or nearly summertime.
That was really still spring

When we could smell
Violets in the alleys,
Frailer than ghosts,
Or moths.

III

I wish
I had kept the luna moths.
Hiding my treasure
In the wood of shacks,
I dreamed others
Would come by
And not pick the violets.
I hoped someone could look
For the ghost,
Unafraid and adventuresome,
Guided by ghosts,
Luna-green and soft.

But creaking wood is not a code
Breakable by everyone.
Lunas taken from under lamps,
Placed in coffins,
Lose their light.
I wish--
I would have kept them.
No other ever
Could have held them,
And they should have
Crumbled to dust
In my own hands.

IV

Violets
Cannot be
Transplanted.

When pressed
They fade.
If waxed,
Dissolve.
Violets
Can only be

Anyone's once.

The Drowning Beach

The week we were on the beach
It was like ten beaches; it was
Like twenty days. It was like a dream
Of many dreams. At night
The sound of the wind was beaten back
By the sound of the helicopters
Low over the sand, low over
The waves, searchlights
Searching for the drowned
As the moon rose like a bubble
Of blood out of the sea.

There are some who try to walk on the moon path, who are drawn into the ocean and are carried away. The beach, after all, is such a thin ribbon, insubstantial and fragile, while the sea is all power, fullness, massive. The pull is irresistible; it must draw some in.

The week we were on the beach
Ghost crabs, great grandfather ones,
Stalked us. We sat in the dunes
And watched the planet turn away
From the sun, into the star sky.
Sometimes they moved, suddenly,
Silently, swift streaks of white,
Mysteriously appearing, instantly gone.

There are those who try to swim in the ocean. They drag out beds into the surf and would like to sleep there, on the swells, beneath the sun, on the earth's bright moving mirror. But they are thrown back upon the sand, crashed upon the shore. They pick up bits of sea stuff to keep, and they carry home sand in

their shoes.

The week we were on the beach
Dark dolphins dashed through the sea.
We saw them whenever we looked up;
They were always there, like something moving
In the back of the mind, incommunicable.
Then the sea turned dark, and it rained
Hard, and all that water returned to itself,
Into the water, violently. At night we,
Too, returned to each other, became one
Again, forcefully, like a storm
Pouring on the sea, moving in wild waves.

There are many who just walk on the water's edge. They march up and down, only ankle deep, letting the sea dip in and out of their path, their narrow world. They are careful of their clothes and rinse the salt from their feet before they go into their houses. They are dismayed to see their children run into the waves.

The week we were on the beach
The giant turtles came up out of the sea
Bearing their eggs to the warm sand
Like gifts, like buried treasures, like
Life, hidden beneath us, waiting
For the turn of the moon, the sun,
And the running full tide. Waiting for
Everything to fall into place and time.

Some people drove out of the south over the beach in trucks. They came and placed cages over the eggs. They pounded in sticks and nailed up signs, and then they went away again. They never even looked at the sea.

The week we were on the beach
We rode up into the sky one night,
Up on a swift circle of color
High above the carnival, overlooking

The sea and the silver moonpath
On the water. It was like a dream
Containing many dreams. It was
Like a movement of the mind circling
Up over time, looking for the horizon.
I held on to you, and you enfolded me,
And we cast our lives into the future.

I went to you on the beach that year when you asked me to come. The stars came up that week, and the rain poured down. We watched the sun sink into the bright red sea and the moon rise out of the dark water. We saw the shooting stars and the blazing lightning, heard the wind and the thunder, and the soft sound of shifting sand. And one night, a night like ten nights, I found I had married you, somehow, out on the sun-bright sand, sometime, under the shimmering stars, tied by a bright ribbon of light, like the breath of God.

Dark Window

Through this same window that light once came
The darkness now streams. It moves
In whorls and vortices, creeping inward.
Far beyond it, what little, little light is left
Is reduced to flickering pinpoints only half
Believed. My reflection faces me,
Demanding something I refuse to give it,
Backed by the darkness, awash in the light
Reflected by the glass. Where my image is,
On that thin pane, the darkness and the light
Meet. The pinpoints of the far away lamps
Shine through that looking-glass likeness
Like stars in a distant galaxy, like a
Star body, immense and remote,
Demanding nothing. I refuse to give it.

Nancy S. Ellis
Mississippi State University

Rain Songs

1

Hey, Mister! How do you do that?
Carry all that stuff and smoke that cigar too?

Your left arm is crooked and full of books
and you're holding an open umbrella with your left hand.

Your right hand grips two white bakery bags,
your right thumb is hooked in your pocket,
you're chewing on your cigar.

Yet your lips are pursed
like you want to whistle
in spite of your cigar
in spite of the rain
in spite of your load.

With your hands so full,
and it raining and all,
how will you get the cigar out of your mouth?

2

Hey, you Puddle Ducks,
duck duck, Ducky ducks!
You! Three stories down below,
in L. L. Bean jackets and Sportos,
sloshing through puddles
plodding through the rain

hurrying to get to class
or to your cars,
back-packs held close like treasure.

I see you down there.
I watch you hurry.
I watch you slosh and plod.
I know the mess.

But I wonder

where are you really going,
Ducky ducks,
duck, duck, Puddle Ducks?

3

You there, Lady,
standing on the sidewalk
with red plaid umbrella poised over your head
and tan coat wrapped tight
and belted against the rain,

don't you know
in spite of your care
you're still exposed to wet and cold?
You can't escape the rain!

I'm inside
dry and protected.
I watch you through the window,
my window, streaked with slow rain.

In the rain drops
your face melts.

4

The wind catches my coat
and strains at my umbrella
as foolishly I struggle
against the driving rain.
I keep my head down
choosing each step
avoiding the standing water
and other people
who also seek to maneuver
by watching only legs and feet.

I reach the street
flooded at the curb
with a flood wider than I can overstep
but I have to wait for the light
so I stand back, hoping assaults
splashed by turning cars
won't reach me.

While I wait I lift my head
letting my face get wet
in order to see the light
to watch the traffic
but now I see you
across the street
in your wheelchair.

You can't spare a hand to hold an umbrella,
to clutch a hood tight against the wind.
You have no way to avoid the puddles
not even the ones forming in your lap
as you too wait at the curb
in the driving rain.

Swing Mode

I.

Outside rain curtains the sky, endlessly pouring itself out.

Earth sucks back at every step.
No pollen is left in the trees to be washed out,
to fill the gutters, to chalk the sidewalk.
The cat forages forth in the wet madness soaking its fur,
drags bloated bullfrogs belly up to the back door.

Inside mildew multiplies.
Cloth-bound dictionary, leather New Testament, high school annual
overnight are rebound in motley,
overnight become polka-dotted volumes of stale bread.
Chair legs, baseboards, cabinet doors change wood grain;
hand towels don't dry.
This multiplication is a wet madness,
is understanding the bloated bullfrog belly up,
gray-green blotchy skin, legs sucked off by the mud.

II.

Against almost forgotten blue, the clouds pose thick solid white.
I want to squeeze them in my hands and feel their substance.
I want to hold Michelin Man and the Pillsbury Dough Boy
like giant Matel toys
and maneuver them to meet the gentle Bog Man waiting in the East.
I want to go belly up under the forgotten blue and watch what happens.

Emily's Shadow

In late afternoon
Autumn stood at the grave
brown and silent over grey stone.
Companion nor Comforter
neither was she,
but a Presence recognizable, known
by hints of a cloth of former days.

As light flickered and
smoke and shadows increased,

she joined the wind
in softly singing
a mute song, a late lullaby,
and gently tucked in the day.

Dream Scape

A corner of my dream slides forward
And you are standing before me on a turn-table
All bound up and whimpering
Shoulders heaving in small silent but discernable movements
Eyes pleading or apologizing--I cannot tell which--
And it makes me mad.
You make me mad
Because of the mess you are
Because of your whimpering that I cannot understand
Because I cannot read your eyes
Because you are bound up and I cannot reach you.

I start beating you with my fists
You only cry more and tuck your head.
I see your tears though I cannot hear them
I see you though I cannot reach you.
Though you cannot feel me I still beat you with my fists.
You are you--then you are not you
You are your mother, then you are me
and you are sliding and turning
and still I cannot reach you.
I cannot read your eyes
I cannot understand your whimpers.
And it makes me mad, then madder
And I hit hard, then harder
Wanting you to know my anger, to know me
Until finally you are turned away and we slide apart.

Diary Fragment from a Maddened School Teacher *

"Truth is beauty and beauty is truth."

I'm here to tell you
IT'S NOT ALWAYS SO!
Sometimes there's only
the good, the bad, and the ugly.

But then, in all honesty,
I must admit,
there's always light and dark.

I had been programmed to believe
Light penetrates Darkness
that all the darkness,
even of the broad ocean at night,
cannot quench the light of one tiny match...
. . . even if it's just for the duration of the match . . .
that total darkness is -- for that duration --
shoved back, overcome, conquered.
So I believed.

So I believe --
sometimes.

I'm here to tell you
Experience and belief conflict.
Darkness is powerful.
It quenches light.
Night finally strangles the tiny match --
unless that match can catch something else aglow...

What I cannot tell you
is whether or not the match makes a difference.

Sometimes, it seems,
light doesn't stand a chance!

*** Alternate title: "Mad Diary of a Fragmented School Teacher"**

Seduction

Mardi Gras seduces
Her hesitant unsure Novice,
Melting reluctance and reserve
Appropriate in other times and other places,
In the same way an unsure smile
That starts slowly and controlled
At the corner of the mouth
Can be coaxed into a
Genuine wide-mouthed grin.

The crowd, the movement, the noise, the night
The lights, the litter, the expectation, the participation
Become a rhythm that undermines the Night
With an insistence that
Becomes an infection
Rampant in public places.

Jostled, ignored,
Greeted, initiated,
Mesmerized, seduced, infected . . .
Slowly and surely
The Neophyte
Warms with the Crowd
Catches the chant and feel of the Team
Heating to cut-throat rivalry
Vying to be best, to win
Giving all
Body and soul and voice
In the irreverent Race
To achieve the goal,
A goal measured in heady handsful of
Plastic jewels and coins of aluminum.

The Competition, cheered on
By On-lookers and Players alike,
Squares off at the foot of floats
Where the age-old system of Masked Men
Robbing others is reversed
And instead the Masses

Chanting "Throw me something, Mister"
Demand of the Masked
Their wealth of jewel and coin.

Such power is Madness
Such Madness is magic.

Even the usually Sensible
Join in the aerobic retinue
Jumping and yelling
And reaching and stomping
Because they are sure that the prize goes
To the swift of foot and reach.

The crowd, the movement, the noise, the night
The lights, the litter, the expectation, the participation
Accompany the rhythm that undermines the night
Feeding the insistent infection
Running rampant in public places
All the while turning
Novice, Neophyte, into Knower.

Moving through Sex and Violence to History: The Black Male in The Novels of Gayl Jones

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At the age of twenty six, Gayl Jones produced one of the most damning witnesses to the physical brutality which exists in black male female relationships. Her novel, *Corregidora* (1975), depicts intense sexual relationships gone awry: angry, violent men who seek to escape victimization by themselves becoming victimizers. Jones also uses *Corregidora*, as well as her second novel, *Eva's Man* (1976), to underscore the relationship between past and present, delineating clearly how history, both individual and collective, shapes and defines. To do so, Jones uses the metaphor of slavery and its oppression and sexual victimization of black women. Also, Jones provides two clearly distinct types of black men as they function within the community.

Black men, for the most part, have been viewed historically as victims of racial, social, and economic oppression. Literature, also, has echoed this rather one sided belief by depicting male characters who have served as symbols of injustice and abuse. Richard Wright's Bigger Thomas comes to mind. Most often considered collectively and rarely individually, the black male character has been viewed primarily as victim, whether the recipient of gratuitous violence and cruelty or himself the victimizer. Many critics, while finding such wholesale acceptance of male behavior unacceptable, nevertheless recognized its validity. On the whole, society has come to accept two factors: first, black men have been systemically emasculated and denigrated; second, black women, because of their more "superior" standing, are as much to blame for this as white men and white women. Gloria Wade Gayles summarizes the social and historical events which helped create such a powerful myth. She notes political and economic factors as two primary forces which helped establish socio sexual schisms between black men and black women (22 56). The myth also supported depictions of black male anger directed against black women which were, if not wholly condoned, at least understandable and acceptable to the larger society which fostered such images from the very beginning. In *The Sexual Mountain and Black Women Writers*, Calvin Hernton examines the double standards applied to black men and black women. He notes:

> Black men write about the 'castrating' black female and feel righteous in doing so.... Black male writers ... band together and write

about the camaraderie, competition, cooperation and brotherhood of black men in the struggle for manhood. This is viewed as manly and fitting by the men (46).

Again, Wright's novel of black male experience in America is a fitting example. When Bigger Thomas rapes and then murders his girlfriend Bessie, we are to understand that he murders not only what he hates in her, but also that which he, because of his status in society, cannot openly castigate and kill. Bessie, described by Hernton as a "pathetic nothing" (39), then, represents all of Bigger's frustrations and rages. He attacks the one person whom he feels comfortable destroying with the only weapons at his disposal, his penis and his hands. And, in destroying Bessie, he destroys the one person within his immediate ken who has brought him to such a pass.

The generation of women writers who emerged after Wright, though, have made such posturing blase and cliche ridden. Whether influenced by the women's movement of the sixties and seventies or by the growing concern for the dearth of realistic depictions of both black men and women, these writers have created characters who must be accountable for their own actions. For Jones, especially, while the weight of history remains, it no longer serves to validate or excuse behavior. Instead, Jones posits that the historical link between past and present and present and future is one which must be "claimed" before the individual can exist in his / her own historical present. As a result, Jones's characters carry a "double burden of consciousness" (Rush 67), an awareness of both the sexual and historical treatment of blacks.

Jones's two novels principally explore the image of the male who is excluded from the community at large because of his own acts: acts of violence and sexual aggression directed against women. This male character, who is crucial to the thematic center of Jones's fiction, can also be identified as one whose natural patterns of spiritual growth and development have been arrested because of two major factors. First, the character must create his own reality as he sees or thinks it to be. Second, the character's actions have placed him on the periphery of the community. As such, he functions as a loner and an outcast, and can be considered a marginal character. Both the inability to function within the confines of a given community and the desire to create his own contexts and realities doom this marginal character. But Jones's novels also offer characters who exhibit more promise that the marginal character. Those male characters who are able to effect some form of significant, personality-altering change in themselves or in another are neither categorically "good" nor "bad," but, as catalysts, do offer a revised view of the black male character.

In both *Corregidora* and *Eva's Man*, characters struggle with themselves and each other in an attempt to control their own historical contexts.

For the female characters, principally, Ursa in *Corregidora* and Eva Medina in *Eva's Man*, the movement takes on the scope of a life-sustaining act. For the male characters, however, the historical movement is an added dimension in determining the roles and behavior they should emulate as men. Mutt Thomas (*Corregidora*) is just one of the men who attempts to control the "community" he inhabits and the women with whom he comes in close contact. In part, this behavior can be viewed as a result of patterns of socio-historical behavior generated before his existence. However, Jones's female characters are also equally victimized. The means by which they come to terms with their histories are characteristically different from their male counterparts.

Because the metaphorical implications of human slavery and sexual abuse suffuse the lives of the Corregidoran women and the men with whom they are intimate, a rejection of these women can be viewed as a rejection of the historical past. Ursa, especially, is enslaved by the legend of Corregidora. From the time she is five years old, Ursa is told repeatedly the story of Corregidora, the Portuguese slave owner who fathered her great grandmother, grandmother, and mother. Although written records are destroyed when slavery ends, the Corregidoran women, however, keep the records alive through the oral tales transmitted to each other and to Ursa. Ursa, though, is prevented from passing on her family's history when she falls down a flight of stairs one night. She loses both the child she carries and the ability to produce future generations. Unable to fulfill the destiny for which the Corregidoran women have prepared her, Ursa spends twenty-two years trying to reconcile her present and past.

Ursa's first husband, Mutt Thomas, has been taught that women are the rightful possessions of men. Despite Mutt's love for his wife, he nevertheless believes she is his to command and that her life is his to control. It is when his "commands" are not obeyed (Mutt insists that Ursa stop performing at Happy's, a nightclub where she sings the blues) that Mutt begins his metaphorical journey from a "slave owner," a somewhat modern Corregidora, to the husband he truly believes himself to be from the very beginning. Melvin Dixon writes:

> When Ursa is abused by Mutt and forced to come to terms with her femininity, the images of Corregidora and Mutt merge, and she feels abused by both simultaneously (*Ride* 111).

The conclusions Mutt reaches, however, are quite different from those implied in Dixon's statement. Frightened by Ursa's independence, he feels wronged in his position as husband, as provider, and as dominant influence in Ursa's life. Mutt's subsequent actions, especially the violent argument during which Ursa falls and is injured, support the level of insecurity he feels at this stage. At this point in the narrative, Mutt's character exists

on the fringes of the community and is violently destructive, especially in his actions toward women.

Just as each character's past affects his / her present and future, each is also directed, whether consciously or unconsciously, by the social codes that have been learned. The most persistent of these codes relates secondarily to the role and function of "husband" and primarily to the position of the male character as dominant factor both in his household and in his partner's life. It is Mutt Thomas who raises one of the most crucial questions of the text. Using his cousin Jimmy to speak for him, Mutt asks Ursa, "What's a husband for?" In raising this question, Mutt establishes a need for appraisal on two levels. First, his question challenges the notions Ursa has of a husband's function. Second, he argues for the rights of husbands, the unspoken and unquestioned community rights of the man to control. He is, in effect, speaking for each male character whose relationship with his wife or lover must be redefined or reexamined.

One criticism leveled against male / female relationships in Jones's novels is that "they exist in an atmosphere of looming confrontation" (Olderman 526). Yet this very sense of "confrontation" is what brings these relationships into focus. And, in the case of Mutt and Ursa, it is this confrontation which purges the relationship of its anger and allows it to survive after a twenty-two year separation. The freeing confrontation between these two characters takes place on several levels. Mutt forces both Ursa and himself to reevaluate the role of husband. Seemingly, Ursa's understanding of the role is colored by what she knows of her mother, grandmother, and great grandmother and the two men who entered these women's lives. Through these female ancestors, Ursa learns she needs a man only to create new generations of Corregidoran women. A husband, then, is one who performs sexually, an inverted counterpart to Corregidora and his need to breed and sell female slaves. Mutt's refusal to become Ursa's sexual slave begins the spiral which releases them both from this myth of husbands. When he denies her his complicity in the sexual act, he denies her also the seeds of her past. And in doing so, Mutt releases her and himself from bondage.

Mutt's release is important because as a result he comes to understand he is more than Ursa's protector. Melvin Dixon says of Mutt: "Mutt is also what Albert Murray has called an 'antagonistic cooperator'; he helps Ursa break the stranglehold of the past" (*Ride* 116). And, while Mutt's spiritual journey is one that is not directly charted in the novel as Ursa's is, he nevertheless travels such a road. By the close of the novel, the evolution of Mutt's character is in direct contrast to his earlier depiction. As a result, the concept of revisionist character can be applied to Mutt, because the stance with which he begins the novel, that is as a man who exists on the very periphery of the community, gradually shifts until he is viewed as one

who both aids Ursa in her renewal and actuates his own crucial movement back to the community.

In the novel *Eva's Man*, however, black men are more destructive and less tender than those in Jones's first novel. Too, male characters tend to function primarily as marginal constructs in their inability to exist within the community and in their destructive and violent relationships with women. Their characterizations as marginal black men are unrelieved by acts of kindness or understanding which take them beyond themselves. The quintessential representation of this character type is Davis, the most prominent male character in *Eva's Man*. He is a man who is not rooted in the community, as his drifter's status attests. What Davis tells Eva of himself and of his past is, at best, sketchy. He deliberately obscures the truth, concentrating on what he wants most -- to have sex with Eva. It is only later that Eva learns of Davis's marriage. Keith Byerman classifies Davis as an "obsessed man" ("Intense Behaviors" 455), another male who sees only Eva's sexuality.

Eva, who has been incarcerated for five years for the murder of Davis when the narrative begins, is not a wholly reliable narrator because of her insanity. She describes a life of mistreatment and sexual molestation at the hands of nearly every man with whom she comes in contact. The lone male who does not attempt to abuse her sexually is her father. From the time Freddy Smoot deflowers her with a dirty popsicle stick when she is quite young, Eva is the object of men's lusts. Her anger against this treatment culminates when she meets Davis. Eva poisons Davis, and in an act of revenge, orally castrates him. However, this act of revenge does not "free" Eva from her past and the abuse she has suffered. Once imprisoned, she provides the basis for the narrative by recreating the events of her life. Her disordered mind creates a chaotic narrative. As a result, little attention is given to sequential order, and layers of distortion and half-remembered events give rise to a confused and oftentimes incoherent tale. Yet what does remain true in this story are the dramatic results of the tales of sexual horror Eva recounts.

As well as indicating her own problems, Eva's confrontation with Davis also reveals the ways in which Davis is found lacking. The most obvious of these is his inability to acknowledge any link with the community. In fact, that Davis keeps Eva locked in a hotel room indicates his need to create and control the world in which he lives. That he keeps his past from Eva, revealing only that which he deems necessary, binds him to other men in the novel who also seek to control Eva by ignoring her humanity and reducing her to the role of sexual orifice.

While some black male characters in the fiction of Gayl Jones embody what could be considered "positive" or redeeming traits, Davis does not. Nor does he aid Eva in gaining self-knowledge. Instead, he typifies all the men in Eva's life who have tried to isolate her from her humanity and from

the community she shares with other women. Davis does so by literally imprisoning Eva in his hotel room. He keeps her locked in the room, not even allowing her to comb her hair. Addison Gayle notes:

> The symbolism is apparent and reaches back to Corregidora: the white society (male dominated) imprisons Blacks, denies them freedom of movement, the freedom to expand their consciousness, to be themselves. Black males treat black women in much the same fashion; thus, Black males differ little from white ones. Reacting against such a history, Eva, in rebellion, subsequently poisons her mate and bites off his penis" (Review of *Eva's Man* 50).

Davis's confinement of Eva creates an environment of sexual slavery from which she cannot escape. His primary motivation is, seemingly, the subjugation of Eva, since, as Keith Byerman notes, Davis does not attempt to satisfy Eva's sexual desires ("Intense Behaviors" 455). In fact, he ignores all her appeals, even forgetting her name at one point. The complete absence of redeeming characteristics in Davis' personality can be seen also in his ahistoricity. While other black male characters in the novel have and are able to relate to an historical past, Davis does not. The absence of such a past further separates Davis from other male characters in the novel, metaphorically illustrating the black male's historical and cultural isolation, an isolation fostered by a culture which does not acknowledge his existence. While Davis comes to represent for Eva all the men in her life who have physically and emotionally abused her, he also represents for the reader the results of being black and male. Unlike *Corregidora*, *Eva's Man* suggests black male marginality as an endemic, socially and historically based condition, the norm rather than the exception.

It becomes increasingly evident in these two novel that male characters, for the most part, do not allow women to function as viable human beings. Although these black male characters do often aid in female characters' spiritual growth, they do so almost unwillingly. As such, each man who aids a woman, in his own way exacts something from the female self in order to validate his own inherent maleness. The patterns of characterizations Jones has established are clear: the black male who, for whatever reasons, must isolate himself from the community, the male who creates the world in which he can best survive, the male who physically and sexually abuses women, and the male whose actions, directly or indirectly, enable the women he encounters to come to a better understanding of themselves. In imparting these qualities to nearly every black male character she creates, Jones has reexamined the contexts which inform the lives of black men. And, she has refused to validate their rhetorical stance which, like Bigger Thomas's, denies the existence of women as viable human beings.

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Reading at Columbus, Mississippi
(February 7, 1992)

I came into the darkened room
and raised all the blinds
upon a great deodar cedar
like a yew but larger
with solid round trunk
and large limbs rising up
and long branches and needles
like a yew swaying with the breeze
up and over and down
all its branches awake
and not a single sound but softness
as of ages past and to be
oh marvelous himalayan tree
how far I have been from you
that enters on my day to grow again
with me who only says himself in words

I Had A Farm She Said

I had a farm she said
what did you grow on yours
I bet you had peas and beans
naw I said I didn't grow anything like that
she went on we had chickens I learned to shoot
crows came every day we had chicks
a thousand at a time I'd get out there
shoot all I want them crows was clever
but I waited till they came close
and couldn't resist blam I went
what'd you do on yours
I don't think I had a farm
I said my grandaddy had twenty thousand
chickens and hawks he couldn't hit even
when he shot every day I don't think
he could put a hole in a hawk's wing
well what did you have on your farm
she said well I said nothing grew there

but weeds I liked the way my grandaddy missed
and how he ran out there with a hole
in his straw hat a ridiculous overseer
I think I started growing poems
a few at a time when he wasn't looking
big ones grew inside me oh oh she said
we never grew no pomes we'd never wanna
get sick like that what'd they do
to make you get rid of em

Poems of Return

I

some said why is that hair
missing on your beard
you look funny I fled
from grace I can't put it back
I said the great one
came too close to me today
with his great shaving
machine took a whack

II

I am gradually cleaning up
my house my yard my life
I pull the curtains open
a rainy day but my birds come
for seed for a view of me inside
and they look for me
if I do not come

III

what if I pray and walk
around my house like a monk
and be silent and pray hail
mary full of grace and our father
and hold my fingers together with my thumbs
and love my self and love my neighbor
and wander the streets at night
and think of kabir his jug of water

in his ocean and along the shore
this queer sight the dark-eyed one
lithely looking for me making her eyelashes dark

Now You Want To Come Back

Now you want to come back
you with your smiles and your
half-lingering at my doorway
I can't believe you would ask me
the time of day first in parian white
why is it women come on
in white when they want
to start over in life
and then a week later
in that pink-and-white dress
covered all over with pale roses
the color of your lips
as if you remembered a bedspread
you had seen on my bed
and now wished to match
oh lips body and bed
I tell you that one day
I nearly drowned
against a strong current
trying to save myself
and your three kids
scared all four of us so bad
we couldn't say a word
I was out of breath
I remember now the big swell
I was on my body being
carried out to sea with them
your father saw us
through binoculars
and i saved them
against all odds
my back arching
with each wave
now you are done
with your husband again
and look once more to me
I hear what you never knew

the waves afar as they resound
and I know what it is to drown

I Am Everywhere Today

I am everywhere today
I am so excited to be my thought
my clean clothes feel good
my necktie looks just right
soup warms on the stove
everything in the mail is good
the television is gone
outside it's overcast
a librarian's day in the garden
the cardinal who has been absent
comes and my dark rabbit hops
in the brown grass my son calls
me the same day as my daughter
is there anything more this day
can have yes if but a note
from you saying you've noticed
I've quit feeling sorry for myself

300
(For Phil Niekro, who saves
baseball from itself)

It ended this year with your victory,
The satisfying shock that three-hundred games
Were yours, and all the dance you did before
That last pitch was already a strikeout in your head.
He whiffed for sure, and Butch jumped up with the final ball.
The pictures prove it all in the papers;
Your smile and wonder at the sudden ending
Were all something you started with years before.
At 46, you must have just missed Feller and Newhouser,
The pitchers I watched when I was twelve,
And they had their great days during the great war.

But over the years you, too, gave something,
Besides that incredible knuckler,
The pizzazz and character that make baseball
What the whole crowd loves. The game has fallen
Into statistics. It's not baseballs but high salaries
That go out of sight. This season I still saw flashes
Of your character in your gray hair
Under the Yankee cap, and when this day came,
You threw no knuckleballs till those last three pitches,
And then Jeff Burroughs got his look at it, Yes: three times.
But I don't know, we might go back over all those 120,000
You threw. They were knucklers all right. But what was
That last pitch, anyway? Wasn't it just you, carving
Character as always, throwing the best thing
You had, the one that came through the screwballs,
Change-ups, and dead-fish fastballs, just me, my pitch, after all?

Rabiul Hasan
Metairie, La

Earth Calling the Earthly Home

Men work day in and day out to build their castles by the woods;
sailors steer their ships round the world to the Galapagos at dawn.
Earthworms, digging on sleek potter-clay, burrow back into the earth at night;
shepherds call their cattle home under the foothills before clouds clash;
mothers wait long hours to receive their sleeping sons at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware;
and bury them alongside in Mayport, Florida.
And the caribou return home at the edge of the tundra, far north
in Alaska, frightening by the words of the Interior Secretary.

And the Tibetan monks pray all night before the Buddha
and fall asleep inside the pagoda.

What do the Tibetan monks pray to the Buddha?
Why do they pray? Why do they fall asleep?

They pray for the peace of all things on Earth,
for the living who return home and for the dead who do not.
And they pray for the men returning home from the battle,
from the center of the earth, from Mars and Jupiter.

And the Buddha takes them in.

So the longing man in the office looks at his watch--it is 5 o'clock
in the evening--and returns home to his longing woman,
and the eider duck outspreads her eiderdown
warm under the black, briny sea.

After A Long Illness

Fancy: recovery after a long illness.
Somebody hums a tune inside you.
You simmer with joy.

I praise your hands without gloves and needles.
I inhale the crisp and thin air coming from Lake Sardis.
How I owe my now to you: thank you, thank you.

I renew myself the way a dawn is born of the sun
with a day in the offing. But just in case you turn around:
keep watching. Watch me lest I falter or fall.

For Miriam

Sixty days and the postman has not rung my doorbell.
Down the valley hawk winds rock and roll my haystacks.

From the cliffs of Maine I can still recognize you,
no matter how far away, and in any other hue.

I spend my sojourn in this stone house surrounded by ferns
and mosses. I am alert enough to notice the season change,

and hear waters move relentlessly at the river bend.
Ah, what a way to undo the deeds of my undone!

Memories are the keepsake. Memories keep you from self- effacement.
The sheep are calm inside their fold but weary and sleepy goes the shepherd

like the setting sun. Now the dark winds blow and dishevel my hair.
I crave to be with you, but you are not here.

Laboring Under a Curse: Harry Crews and the Burden of William Faulkner

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I.

In his *Nobel Prize Address* (1950) William Faulkner offered some advice for the up-and-coming generation of writers. In perhaps its most famous section he warned the young writer to leave

> no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed--love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice. Until he does so he labors under a curse. He writes not of love but of lust, of defeats in which nobody loses anything of value, of victories without hope, and, worst of all, without pity or compassion. His griefs grieve on no universal bones. He writes not of the heart but of the glands. (723-4)

In the wake of his Nobel Prize, Faulkner, of course, achieved the critical and popular recognition that had long eluded him. And in the decades following the address -- as Faulkner achieved almost mythic status as the preeminent Southern writer -- these words have become an Apostle's Creed for those who would follow in his footsteps. Their message is clear: like Faulkner, the young Southern writer must create his or her own Yoknapatawpha County, his or her own universe in a nutshell, in which the timeless spiritual verities can play themselves out.

However, as Faulkner has developed from a literary star into a Southern Icon, from an author into an industry, his Nobel words have taken an unintended, ironic meaning. The curse under which the young Southern writer labors is not so much the lack of metaphysical ground for his work, but more simply the towering influence of Faulkner himself. Faulkner has defined not only Southern Literature but also the mythos of the South. The enormous breadth of his work, his Shakespearean range of character, mood, and style, have set the parameters for love and honor and pity and pride, etc. It would seem that any young writer who would write about the South must do so in terms of Faulkner's parameters, his metaphysical assumptions.

Harry Crews is one Southern writer who for much of his career has wrestled with the ghost of Faulkner. In eleven novels written over the past

two decades, Crews has tried to create his own parameters based upon a physical rather than metaphysical code. In effect, Crews has completely inverted Faulkner's famous advice: he would write about the glands as much as the heart. Indeed, "victories without hope" would typify the thrust behind most of Crews' novels. Whether in the form of the non-believing Gospel Singer, the legless gymnast Marvin Molar, the car-eating Herman Mack or the snake-lover Joe Lon, Crews' protagonists achieve a kind of victory as they give up hope of a metaphysical code that might give heroic resonance to -- or at least sanction for -- their often bizarre activities.

Crews' fourth novel, *Karate is a Thing of the Spirit* (1972), offers a philosophic rationale for his other work. It is his most "critical" novel in that it most directly attacks Faulkner and the metaphysical code articulated in the *Nobel Prize Address*. One suspects that with *Karate* Crews consciously realized what he had been doing in his first three novels: subverting the enormous influence of Faulkner to create room for a post-Faulknerian Southern novel. This perhaps explains the "him-or-me" attitude of the book. Indeed, one almost gets the sense that if Crews had not somehow "defeated" Faulkner, that is, overturned his metaphysical assumptions, he might never have written another book after *Karate*.

The story's protagonist is the typical Crewsian non-hero. John Kaimon is a young man who would like to be a writer but who has never written anything. The only thing he has managed to produce is a word-for-word copy of the first twenty pages of *The Sound and the Fury*. Though filled with plenty of Crewsian action (karate bouts, street-fights, homo- and hetero-sexual rapes) the novel is clearly a parable about literary influence. Sandwiched between roundhouse kicks and a dubious love story, this parable hinges on young Kaimon's deliverance from his Faulkner fixation. Cews is none too subtle in announcing his parabolic intent. Kaimon enters the story with Faulkner literally on his back: his t-shirt has Faulkner's head blazoned on it. For Kaimon this is no ordinary t-shirt. The flat disembodied head is his personal totem -- symbol of the Faulknerian metaphysical code, the purely transcendental realm of "spirit," to which he, as a young writer, aspires. Kaimon talks to the head as if it were alive in some transcendental Beyond, mutely watching, and perhaps even composing, the absurd occurences of his life. Indeed, the head (in aluminum paint) does not merely watch but literally reflects the action it observes.

A karate *gi* soon replaces the Faulkner t-shirt as Kaimon joins an outlaw band of karateka. Yet Faulkner's head hangs on the *dojo* wall and oversees most of the novel's subsequent action. For example, Faulkner's impassive visage looks on when Gaye Nell Odell, the novel's "love interest," rapes Kaimon. Later, when Kaimon rapes this Southern belle / brown belt in return, Faulkner is still watching. It is on the basis of this "love" (or mutual rape) that Kaimon and the pregnant Gaye Nell flee the karate *dojo* at the end of the novel. Compared to the insanity of karate and the violence of

Gaye Nell's affections, the transcendent calm of the Faulkner t-shirt would seem the only breath of sanity in the novel. However, by the end of the story one realizes that the real root of Kaimon's problems is not Life, as senselessly savage as karate, or even Love, as brutish as Gaye Nell's, but a transcendental Art as signified by Faulkner's hypnotic, silver eyes.

II.

In "Getting It Together," a critical essay written in 1971 (the year before he wrote *Karate*), Crews makes a comment that may help to explain the symbolic value of the Faulkner t-shirt. Crews offers the young unpublished writer a lesson in how to create believable fictional characters:

> How does a writer go about making a character who,in Faulkner's words, "will cast a shadow," i. e. a character who has substance, who lives and breathes, who will bleed if you cut him? One way or another . . . the writer is going to have to deal with those great abstract nouns: love, compassion, pity, honor, and hope. And the only way for the fiction writer to deal with an abstract noun is to render it specific and concrete. (10)

Needless to say, this hardly seems the same Crews, who a year later would argue for physical rather than metaphysical code -- an instinctive knowledge in the blood as opposed to Faulkner's "great abstract nouns." Indeed, the Faulkner t-shirt in Karate seems a direct parody of the passage just quoted. With the t-shirt, Crews not only takes a jab at Faulkner but also breaks his own Faulkner-inspired rules on how to create character. Even though John Kaimon constantly addresses the Faulkner t-shirt as if it were a combination inquisitor/psychoanalyst, Crews never allows it to "come to life." The face painted on the t-shirt is literally a "flat" character, lacking both substance and shadow. Hung from a nail on the dojo wall, the two-dimensional representation is Faulkner bled dry, or rendered as a metaphysical ghost. Most ironically, the gutted figure on the t-shirt can show none of those virtues Faulkner extolled in his *Nobel Prize Address*: love, honor, pity, pride, compassion, and sacrifice.

Thus one cannot agree with reviewer Bruce Cook's assessment:

> Faulkner's guest shot in *Karate is a Thing of the Spirit* is as a kind of patron saint . . . . Although brief, [Faulkner's] appearances are anything but casual; they invoke Faulkner, pay him homage; they are genuflections in print. (52)

Clearly, the Faulkner t-shirt is too problematic to be explained away as a form of subtle homage. To use Crewsian language, *Karate* does not bow down to Faulkner but keeps putting him in the reader's face -- as if to

scream, "Faulkner's dead and gone! Sure, his books are still around -- but there's no presence of the author, no 'Faulkner', in them!"

Clearly, Cook's essay (titled "New Faces in Faulkner Country") tells more about Faulkner's almost unassailable position in the Southern Literary Establishment than it does about Crews' novel. After all, Crews seems to have aimed *Karate* as a kind of death-blow at the cult of Faulkner--only to see it misread by Cook into a "genuflection." This kind of misreading helps to explain Crews' exasperated complaints that his work has been misunderstood, that he is not a "Southern" writer, and, most importantly, that he is not a "Faulknerian." For instance, in a 1974 interview with Sterling Watson, Crews declares: "I don't understand what 'Southern Novelist' means. It is true that there have been a large number of Southern writers: Faulkner, McCullers, Eudora Welty and on, and on, but I don't think any novelist wants an adjective put in front of the word "novelist"--I sure as hell don't" (64). In a 1972 interview with Anne Foata, Crews makes the distinction even finer. He claims that he is not "Southern" in the sense of belonging to a tradition based on metaphysical beliefs -- a tradition he implicitly associates with Faulkner: "On any given day I am a believer or not a believer, just as you might ask me .... I feel myself cut off from everything. The South I came out of is very different from Faulkner's -- Faulkner was out of the aristocracy of the South, or his people anyway; mine were not" (209). Crews' distinction is not so much one of social class as of ideology: living far from the daily press of reality, Faulkner's "aristocracy" may have time for lofty metaphysical beliefs, but Crews' "people," struggling simply to survive, do not have the luxury of them.

III.

How then does *Karate* aim to undermine Faulkner's influence? While John Kaimon tried literally to rewrite *The Sound and the Fury*, Crews himself seems to have chosen a much different Faulkner novel as model (or perhaps "foil" is a better word). Early in *Karate* Crews offers the reader a clue as to his choice. As John Kaimon makes uncomfortable small talk with a pair of lecherous gay men, he explains that the figure on his jersey is Faulkner. Yet this announcement does not keep the conversation on a safe, "literary" level. Instead it prompts one of the gay men to hiss lewdly, "*Sanctuary*," as if to justify what follows -- the molestation of Kaimon (33).

With a kind of defiant absurdity, Crews chooses to "revise" the book Faulkner himself wrote off as "a cheap idea . . . deliberately conceived to make money" (v). In re-writing *Sanctuary*, Crews selects the Faulkner book that seems to break Faulkner's own metaphysical code for novel-writing. To the Faulkner of the canonical masterpieces and the *Nobel Prize Address*, Crews hisses lewdly, "Hey Bill, remember *Sanctuary*?"

One need look only to setting to find a connection between *Karate* and *Sanctuary*. Crews simply moves Faulkner's wasteland of junked cars and

ramshackle farms to the Florida beach. The karate *dojo*, the burned-out shell of a sea-side motel, updates the delapidation of the Old Frenchman Place. Like Popeye's gang in *Sanctuary*, Crews outlaw karatekas inhabit a marginal landscape which nature has reclaimed as quickly as civilization has abandoned it. This landscape, a Conradian "heart of darkness," breeds senseless violence and sexual perversity -- often with little separating the two.

As in *Sanctuary*, Karate depicts a world in which the most unnatural of acts become natural, in which all sexual relations degenerate into rape. As a result of living in such a world, of literally being raped, the lead characters of both novels experience a deep confusion as to his/her sexual identity. *Sanctuary*'s Temple Drake lives up to her androgynous name: she psychologically combats her violation by imagining that she has become a boy. Similarly, John Kaimon is raped by both men and women. Indeed, Crews amplifies the sexual confusion by stocking his novel with plenty of transvestites and predatory homosexuals. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Crews' reconstitution of Sanctuary's degenerate underworld would seem a kind of homage. At times, it must be admitted, Crews and Faulkner seem almost identical. In a scene from *Sanctuary*, for instance, the horny "feeb" Tommy crawls into the captive Temple Drake's bedroom and his eyes "glow green, like a cat" (196). Almost to a word, Crews translates this depiction of animal lust into his own portrait of Gaye Nell Odell. Just before she rapes Kaimon, Crews reports: "She is crawling across the floor toward [Kaimon]. In the shadow of the room, her eyes look green" (77).

Yet it soon becomes clear that Crews has come to bury Faulkner rather than praise him. Though they use the same scene, the same symbol, the "eye" for Crews represents the direct opposite of what it represents for Faulkner. In *Sanctuary* the eye symbolizes the possibility (though rarely realized) for a realm of spirit, of transcendental values. Tommy's human eye becomes an animal eye when his lust blinds him to the possibilities of spirit. In *Karate*, however, the eye is not really a symbol -- a sign grounded in some transcendental source -- at all. Gaye Nell's is a literal, corporeal eye. If it is cat-like, one can only say that man is, after all, a physical animal driven by certain instincts in the blood. Crews takes the dark vision of *Sanctuary* (perhaps Faulkner's darkest book) and makes it even darker. Despite its title, *Karate is a Thing of the Spirit* denies the existence of spirit or of a spiritual eye.

To understand the breadth of the divergence between Crews and Faulkner, one must first examine the spiritual blindness which afflicts almost every character in *Sanctuary*. Though his treatment of it is morbidly ironic, Faulkner seems ultimately to believe in the Renaissance trope that the eye is the window of the soul. The black unseeing eyes of the novel's cartoon-like characters are merely a symptom of their soullessness. Popeye, the first character introduced, sees the world through "two soft

knobs of black rubber" (2). By the same token, Temple Drake's eyes sit "black in her livid face" (209) -- as if a measure of her dissolution. Nor can the innocent escape this blindness: Ruby Godwin's baby is born with "lead-colored" eyes. Indeed, Faulkner outdoes himself to provide fresh descriptions of this universal condition. Ruby herself has "eyes like holes burned by a cigar" (110). In an even more grotesque vein there is old Pap Goodwin, a blind and deaf man whose eyes are "like two clots of phlegm" (12).

Except for their eyes, Faulkner seems uninterested in describing his characters. Endowed with the same black holes for eyes, all of *Sanctuary*'s characters become reflections of Popeye. Like him, they are beyond good and evil only because they are less than human. For Faulkner, this dehumanization is the natural consequence of a modern world which has divorced itself from its spiritual traditions, its "eternal" metaphysical values.

Yet in the final analysis Faulkner cannot maintain the nihilism of his darkest novel. At the end of the story Popeye becomes more victim than villain. He was born into the same predicament as Ruby Goodwin's baby (who, presumably, will become another Popeye): at Popeye's birth his mother "thought he was blind" (363). Yet Faulkner is not merely blaming bad genes, or the sexual sins of the father, for Popeye's condition. Popeye is simply another victim to the modern malaise which refuses to accept the existence of spirit. Popeye becomes the modern Everyman, alien in an alien universe, when Faulkner describes him as "a man who made money and had nothing to do with it, spend it for, since he knew that alcohol would kill him like poison, who had no friends and had never known a woman and knew he would never" (370). To understand how Popeye is cut off from transcendent values, one need only look at the word "know." Faulkner is not simply being modest. Even if Popeye were physically capable of it, he could never "know" a woman (in the biblical sense) because he is divorced from a metaphysical code that gives resonance and meaning to all human activity, including the grittiest act of physical reproduction. Popeye's body traps him with the finality of Pap's deaf and blind frame. However, at the end of the novel Popeye achieves deliverance from this trap. He achieves a kind of metaphysical victory; he becomes capable of embodying at least two of Faulkner's "old universal truths" -- pride and honor. In dismissing the lawyer who might have easily exonerated him of "killing a man in one town and at one hour when he was in another town killing someone else," Popeye chooses, with absurd nobility, to die (370). Clearly, Popeye and the other blind victims in *Sanctuary* show that, in the words of Louise Gossett, "violence and distortion prove how much man can endure for the sake of discovering that his spirit is indestructible" (47). Certainly the only "sanctuary" offered to the novel's grotesque cast of characters is a spiritual one for having endured the savage, brutalizing

experience of the physical world. Indeed, that Faulkner affords Popeye, a character with no apparent "redeeming" value, a measure of spiritual victory suggests the depth of his belief in a metaphysical code. Perhaps Faulkner later rejected *Sanctuary* not so much because of its supposedly "cheap" sex and violence but because it had too liberally, or automatically, granted that spiritual victory.

Crews' characters in *Karate*, however, are not victims of a hellish world but dwell in a hell of their own making. Like cheap imitation of Oedipus, they deliberately choose blindness in search of karate's much vaunted spirit. Tunnel vision, if not blindness itself, are prerequisites to study with Belt, leader of the outlaw karatekas. In practice his students must hold themselves motionless -- as "blind men" (16). When one student looks up at Gaye Nell's exposed breast, she gives him a kick in the groin for his lack of "spirit." Belt, Gaye Nell and the more advanced students practice a kind of selective blindness as they gaze into the "middle distance" (16).

As envisioned by Crews, karate winds up being not so a much "a thing of the spirit" as a masochistic program of sensory deprivation. After John Kaimon pummels a group of homosexuals (would-be pupils) they show up later for more of the same. After their "lesson" they

> forgot they were queer, forgot what they had come to this place for, and at the very end forgot even their terror. They were reduced to their senses. And it was on the ragged edge of their senses--the bitter tongue, the bleeding hands, the ringing ars, the blurred eyes--that they began to understand what karate was. (119)

The beginning of this passage recalls Faulkner's famous admonition in the *Nobel Prize Address*: "[the would-be writer] must teach himself that the basest of all things is to be afraid; and teaching himself that, forget it forever, leaving no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities" (723). However, where Faulkner offered love, honor, pity, pride, etc., as the metaphysical reward for overcoming the "universal physical fear," Crews can offer only "the bitter tongue, the bleeding hands, the ringing ears, [and] the blurred eyes." For Crews, actually to see, hear, touch and taste reality is its own reward. Having been "reduced to their senses," the pummelled homosexuals are no longer lost in the dreamworld of metaphysical assumptions. Ironically, only after having been beaten half to death do they realize that they are alive -- alive in such a way that no metaphysical abstraction could ever begin to do justice to the complexity of their experience.

For Crews sex is analogous to karate: it does not -- as might be expected -- deliver one to some transcendental realm of spirit but instead bears one back to the pure physical reality found at "the ragged edge of the senses." Thus at one point John Kaimon "wants to fuck [Gaye Nell] until he goes

deaf, dumb and blind" (73). Later, in performing this feat, he literally goes "blind and deaf"; like an infant devoid of metaphysical presumptions, he sucks Gaye Nell's "tit as if it were a source for sight" (84). Sex and karate are twin aspects of Kaimon's initiation, his "rebirth" -- not into a metaphysical realm -- but into the pure, unmediated life of the senses. When he views them as avenues to "spirit," both are merely forms of self-serving masochism. However, when he views them as an avenue to the life of the senses, they become meaningful activities in and of themselves.

Neither Miss Drake nor the rest of *Sanctuary*'s manichean crew can look on the body as a "temple." Yet at his moment of truth, John Kaimon realizes that the body is sacred in and of itself -- because life is sacred -- and not because it is merely a way-station for some transcendental spirit. Crews climactically overturns Faulkner's advertisement for spirit in a discussion between John Kaimon and the karate master Belt. Kaimon complains, "I carried [Faulkner's] face all over the country and I still don't know a thing" (144). Responding in the jargon of pop-Buddhism, Belt tells Kaimon to "look inside" his own spirit for an understanding of Faulkner. However, Belt's transcendentalism leaves Kaimon cold:

> John Kaimon couldn't really think about the insides of himself. All that came to him were images of veins and arteries and livers and other damp organs that went squish squish in places cast in the perpetually pink haze of blood. (144)

Belt's "spirit" of karate seems pollyanna compared to Kaimon's corporeal view of life. Indeed, Kaimon faces a mystery more essential than either Faulkner or karate: the simple, undeniable reality of his body which lives, feels, breathes, sees, hears and reproduces.

Crews takes quite literally the old cliche, "seeing is believing." Early in the novel John Kaimon boasts: "I'm the world's champion believer. After what I've seen, I believe it all" (50). Problems arise for Kaimon when he tries to believe what he cannot see: namely, the invisible spirits of Faulkner or of Belt's karate. Indeed, Kaimon's t-shirt is a miserable attempt to render the dead spirit of Faulkner visible, or believable, to the eye. For the lunacy of believing what cannot be seen, Crews provides an emblem that in some ways is analogous to the Faulkner t-shirt. Among Belt's band of karate misfits there is an especially crazed brown belt who wears a glass eye. On the simplest level, this glass eye is Crews' parody of karate's "inner vision." But on a more complex level, this unseeing eye acts as an objective correlative of John Kaimon's confused state.

Kaimon first sees the glass eye in a box filled with false teeth, hearing aids, and eyeglasses which the students have removed before a lesson. Kaimon touches the eye to make sure it is fake as Gaye Nell drones her spiritual, or anti-sense, message to the students: "Breathe out the ills and

failings of the flesh, breathe out the eyes that will not see, the ears that will not hear" (96). Later, when Kaimon attacks the crowd of homosexuals, the glass eye significantly reappears. In a frenzy of anticipation, the crazy brown belt mistakenly puts the eye in backward (as if he needed it!) to watch Kaimon pummel the gay men. This "glass eye looking inward" corresponds to Kaimon's savage feeling that he is "inside at last" (112). Of course, this triumph is delusory. The glass eye pops out of the brown belt's head and fractures on the ground: karate's "spirit" turns out to be an absurdly violent, one-sided fight.

Just before Kaimon assaults the homosexuals, the glass eye shamefully reminds him of being raped by Gaye Nell -- and, more specifically, of the Faulkner t-shirt, "hanging from a nail, looking down with one eye on the passionless rape" (110). For a moment the glass eye of karate and the aluminum eye of Faulkner merge into a single evil eye. Yet the crazy brown belt and the Faulkner t-shirt have more in common than Kaimon's momentary hallucination. Both are Crews' reinterpretations of *Sanctuary*'s weird symbolic character, the blind and deaf "Pap." The crazy brown belt, for instance, shares Pap's habit of staring blindly at the sun -- though with a far different symbolic import. Wholly shut off from the hellish world of the senses, Faulkner's Pap is purer than the other characters in *Sanctuary*: with face toward the sun, he sits in calm oblivion to the rapes and murders going on around him. By contrast, the crazy brown belt thrives on violence and perversity. He ogles the sun out of spiritual pride and self-absorption, as if he alone could apprehend Absolute Truth. (One might add that the more the crazy brown belt carries on "spiritually," the more John Kaimon begins to think that "spirit" is a total sham.)

If the crazy brown belt is a hyperactive, inverted Pap, the Faulkner t-shirt is a tar-baby version of Pap: more impassive, uncommunicative and, finally, inanimate than Faulkner's blind and deaf character. In the celebrated scene from *Sanctuary* when Popeye rapes Temple Drake with a corn-cob, she hallucinates that she lies at the feet of Pap. In the throes of her violation, she receives some spiritual solace from his calm, almost divine figure: "she screamed, voiding the words like hot silent bubbles into the bright silence until he turned his head and the two phlegm-clots above her where she lay tossing" (122). Faulkner can allow this anagogical communication because *Sanctuary* presumes a world of spirit beyond the senses. But Crews will have none of this. Twice the Faulkner t-shirt coldly watches Kaimon being violated -- first by a pair of gay men and then by Gaye Nell. In vain Kaimon waits for Faulkner to give him the kind of consolation that Pap offers Temple.

Turning Faulkner into Pap, perhaps his most grotesque creation, is Crews' climactic gesture of throwing off the "curse" of Faulkner. In *Sanctuary*, by good Faulknerian morality, Temple Drake's rape leads to her spiritual ruin. John Kaimon's rape, on the other hand, jars him from his

sweet dream of the spirit and back, literally, to his senses. Thus by the end of the novel, the "wakened" Kaimon can realize that the man Faulkner is more inert and powerless than a "Pap": Faulkner the man is dead and gone, and his only remains are the flat, two-dimensional pages of his books (like the flat image on the t-shirt).

IV.

One might summarize Kaimon's "progress" by saying that in the end he learns to live in accordance with his name. *Kai mon* is the classical Greek adverb meaning *verily* (when doubled, this is the expression Christ uses so often in The Gospel of John: "Verily, verily . . ."). More like *ergo* than *amen*, *kai mon* is the rhetorical device for proposing conditional truths--as opposed to the absolute, universally transcendent truths of Faulkner's *Nobel Prize Address*. Kaimon learns to take experiences as they uniquely come rather than reducing them to the latest spiritual format (such as Faulkner or karate). He learns that to be an artist he must be true to his blood rather than some transcendental spirit.

This, then, seems to be the moral of Crews' artistic parable: though the denial of spirit may seem to limit the artist, in fact it frees him. With no Transcendent Spirit dangling him like a puppet, the artist is wholly responsible for his creations, which are testaments to the bloody facts of life rather than lip-service to eternity. If the world is the violent chaotic place *Karate* makes it out to be, it takes far more courage to say "*kai mon*"--to accept life in its fullness and perversity -- rather than to strive for some Faulknerian metaphysical courage that is ultimately nothing more than an attempt to escape from life into a platonic dream.

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Photographs and Photography in The Great Gatsby

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In the 1974 film version of *The Great Gatsby*, (Paramount), Director Jack Clayton used Irving Berlin's "What'll I Do?" as a theme song and emphasized the line "What'll I do with just a photograph?" by displaying numerous clippings and pictures of Daisy Buchanan (Mia Farrow) at the beginning of the film. Although this was quite successful in portraying Gatsby's veneration of Daisy, the reader of the novel is aware that there was no photograph, portrait, or any other simulacrum of Daisy mentioned in the novel. Although the film's photographs of Daisy are a distortion of the novel, Director Clayton may have been influenced by Fitzgerald's successful use of other photographs and allusions to photography in the novel.

The 1920s was a period of much artistic experimentation of which the main purpose was to expand the boundaries of realism in order to depict more deeply seated feelings and emotions. Expressionism in the theater and surrealism in art were both attempts at such effects. While moving pictures were obviously capable of such results, the still camera in the hands of people like Alfred Steiglitz and Man Ray also became effective for such purposes. Since Nick Garraway's experiences in the summer of 1922 were not just a surface look at life, but were "riotous excursion is with privileged glimpses into the human heart" (2), which literally turned into a nightmare, it is quite appropriate that Fitzgerald frequently reinforced the surrealistic quality of the novel through the use of photographic devices. As might be expected of a work set in the early twenties, there are references to the motion picture industry; and while these serve mainly to reflect the glamour of the period, they also emphasize the fantastic quality of Gatsby's dream. However, allusions to still photography appear more widely in the novel and are structurally more important to it. Some of these photographic elements, like the references to the motion picture industry, reinforce the surrealistic element of the book and help emphasize the illusiveness of Gatsby's dream. The earliest use of such is the groaning of a picture on the wall of the Buchanan home just before Tom Buchanan closes the windows in the first actual scene of the novel (8).

In Chapter II another picture appears on a wall:

> an over-enlarged photograph, apparently a hen setting on a blurred rock. Looked at from a distance, however, the hen re-

solved itself into a bonnet, and the countenance of a stout old lady beamed down into the room. (29)

Nick Carraway's description of Myrtle Wilson's mother's portrait over the mantel in Tom's and Myrtle's New York apartment allows him to reveal his blurred, alcohol-induced perception which is prevalent in much of the scene; it also suggests the surrealistic quality of Nick's whole experience in the East. The picture further helps explain the presence of the McKees at the impromptu party. The fact that Mr. McKee is a photographer who has both materialistic (he wants an entry into Long Island society so he can make money photographing the rich) and artistic aims (he shows Nick his portfolio: "Beauty and the Beast . . . Loneliness . . . Old Grocery horse . . . Brook'n Bridge . . .[38]) makes him a parallel character to Gatsby who has his own romantic dreams and who, although having socially arrived at West Egg, is still seeking entree into the East Egg world of Daisy. When Tom Buchanan sarcastically suggests that Myrtle give McKee a letter of introduction to Long Island society, he is also calling attention to the fact that Myrtle has this same goal"and, of course, so does Gatsby.

Photography is also used several times on a more or less realistic level strictly as a method of revealing information. When Nick first meets Jordan Baker, his prior knowledge of her is revealed through references to photographs of her which he has seen, as well as things he has heard about her. Her dishonesty is foreshadowed at first simply by his comment, "It occurred to me now that I had seen her, or a picture of her, somewhere before? (11). Soon after he recalls, "I knew why her face was familiar its pleasing contemptuous expression had looked out at me from many rotogravure pictures of the sporting life at Asheville and Hot Springs, and Palm Beach" (19). He later recalls, however, that the story was about her cheating in her first big golf tournament (58).

Images from the photographic process are also used metaphorically in the book. Ironically Mr. McKee sleeps on a chair "with his fists clinched in his lap, like a photograph of a man in action" (37); later, when Myrtle stares from her apartment over the garage at Jordan Baker in the car below with Tom Buchanan, she thinks that Jordan is Tom's wife and becomes so engrossed that "one emotion after another crept into her face like objects into a slowly developing photograph" (125).

There are four photographs that are directly associated with Jay Gatsby. One of these, the picture of his home that he sent to his father, Henry Gatz, which he shows to Nick (173) is significant only because it reinforces the fact that Gatsby considered houses one of the most important indications of success. (One might recall that the importance of having Daisy to tea at Nick's bungalow was so that Gatsby could show her his house, which was next door to Nick's [80]). To Gatz the actual picture is the tangible evidence of his son's success rather than the house itself. Nick tells us: "He had shown it so often that I think it was more real to him now than the house

itself" [173]. This comment might also serve to point out that Gatsby's use of photographs to create his own fantastic "truths" rather than accept the actuality of the pictures.

The "large" photograph of Dan Cody in Gatsby's bedroom (94) is referred to three times and serves as a reminder of Gatsby's background and education. Cody "brought back to the Eastern seaboard the savage violence of the frontier brothel and saloon" (101); his picture is a "token of the forgotten violence' (166) in Gatsby's life, but also serves as a harbinger of the destruction yet to come.

The two other pictures serve to help authenticate Gatsby's Platonic conception of himself, as revealed to Nick on their ride to New York:

> I am the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West"all dead now. I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford, because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition.... My family all died and I came into a good deal of money.... After that I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe -- Paris, Venice, Rome -- collecting jewels, chiefly rubies, hunting big game, painting a little, things for myself only, and trying to forget something very sad that happened to me a long time ago. (65-66)

The first of these, a picture of Gatsby with the future Earl of Doncaster and four other young men "taken in the Trinity Quad" (67) is produced by Gatsby on the trip to the city with Nick and serves to support Gatsby's assertion that he was educated at Oxford, which ultimately proves to be not exactly true, Gatsby himself admitting "I really can't call myself an Oxford man," (129) having spent only five months there. Nonetheless, this photograph, along with the medal from Montenegro, allows Nick, who has had to restrain his "incredulous laughter" (66) to believe that at least part of the story of Gatsby's earlier life is in some way true. After being shown the photograph, Nick states: "I saw the skins of tigers flaming in his palace on the Grand Canal; I saw him opening a chest of rubies to ease, with their crimson-lighted depths, the gnawing of his broken heart" (67).

The same conclusion can be drawn from the other photograph of Gatsby: "a small picture of Gatsby, also in a yachting costume, on the bureau -- Gatsby with his head thrown back defiantly -- taken apparently when he was about eighteen" (94). Even though Nick should know better, the photograph encourages his belief in Gatsby's fictitious past. After he sees the picture, he tells us: "I was going to ask to see the rubies when the phone rang, and Gatsby answered it. Gatsby's phone conversation, dealing with one of his shady activities, forces Nick to a more realistic judgment of Gatsby; but the picture is more deceptive to Daisy, who, upon seeing the snapshot, declares: "You never told me you had a pompadour -- or a yacht"

(95). Of course the pompadour was his, but not the yacht, which was the Tuolomee, Dan Cody's boat on which the young Gatsby had been employed in a "vague personal capacity" (101). Instead of telling Daisy the truth, Gatsby immediately changes the subject thus letting her falsely believed that he owned a yacht. Nick had already, perhaps subconsciously, intimated the deceitfulness of the photograph when he described Gatsby as being dressed in a yachting "costume," thereby suggesting role playing.

While on the simplest level the repetitiveness of words and images related to photography serves as a unifying element in the novel, these also serve a more important purpose: they help Nick Caraway see Gatsby in a more favorable light than he really should. At the beginning of the novel Fitzgerald has Nick speak with great admiration of Jay Gatsby's "extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in another person" (2). Fitzgerald has also endowed Nick with this same "romantic readiness" so that he may present Gatsby's quest in such a manner that it be worthy of the reader's concern. Even when there is contradictory evidence, such as Gatsby's relationship with Meyer Wolfsheim and what it involves, Nick still sees Gatsby as an heroic figure "worth the whole damn bunch" (154). When reality interferes with this image, Nick ignores it or at least softens the effect as best he can. Most of the photographs allow Nick freer interpretation of events and facts. By interpreting them in keeping with his own romantic readiness, Nick is able to depict Gatsby in the most favorable light, or in the case of Jordan Baker's rotogravure pictures, in a less favorable one. But the use of photography also helps Fitzgerald to convey to the reader the unreal surrealistic feeling that Nick gets from his experiences in the East in the summer of 1922.

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"through skirt and darkness"

Woman as Source of Creative and Destructive Power in Miller

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Arthur Miller has been criticized for using events in his life as subject matter in certain of his works. Most maligned is his rendering of Maggie in *After the Fall*, who many take for an exact portrayal of his second wife Marilyn Monroe. If this were the only Miller work that reflected his life experiences, charges of his misuse of Marilyn's tragedy would carry more weight. But the fact is that every Miller work draws in one way or another on his life experiences. (For example, Willy Loman and his two sons are modeled after Miller's uncle Manny and his two boys (*Timebends* 123).). The difference in Marilyn's case is simply that it is drawn from the more public part of his life.

In his autobiography *Timebends*, Miller gives many details about his life that clearly connect certain themes and tendencies in his work with concerns and experiences in his life. Nowhere is this connection more clearly apparent than in the role of women in shaping his consciousness. From his earliest memories Miller recalls, "As innocent as I was at five or six, I was still aware of an exciting secret life among the women" (*Timebends* 16) and he attributes this awareness to the women themselves. He says, "the new excitements of the Jazz age I perceived from a few feet off the floor came to me chiefly through women, my mother and her friends" (16).

Miller, in fact, remembers that his very first pictures of the world around him began with observations of his mother talking on the telephone to her two sisters. As Miller puts it, these impression came to him, "through skirt and darkness" (3). In his short story "I Don't Need You Anymore" Miller's has a young boy protagonist use almost the same words when he tells about noticing that when he comes into a roomful of women who stop talking when he enters. Here, he says, "under their skirts it was dark" ("Need" 5). Miller must have regarded these overheard and nearly overheard conversations as reconnaissance into another realm as he encountered them from what he calls, "my homeland, the floor" (*Timebends* 20).

Along with their status as a source of news about the world, Miller also credited women with other powers as he shows when he tells how he thought about this bicycle as female:

In my childhood, my bike was my solace, my feminine, my steed of escape carrying me forever toward some corner around which would suddenly appear the magic of myself at last, mere ectoplasm no more. (*Timebends* 108)

An unsettling idea about this source of knowledge and power enters the picture with Miller's above-mentioned story.

In this story, the five-year-old boy goes for a walk with his mother and they encounter a man identified as "the dentist." The boy observes that when his mother stops to talk with the man, "She was talking with such a strange laughter, a dense excitement, posing very straight ("Need" 12). After they continue their walk, the boy's mother tells him that the dentist was once in love with her and wanted to marry her, but her father had forbidden it. As she tells her son this information, she laughs, and the sound of her laughter makes her alien to the boy. The narrator says:

> He had never heard her voice that way and it had made him resolve instantly never to let on that he had noticed the new tone and the rather strange woman who had made it. ("Need" 12)

The boy is upset by his mother's laughter. He thinks that, instead of laughing, "She should have howled and screamed and been horrified" (13). What is so horrifying to the boy is that the mother had a life and thoughts before her husband, his father. This news threatens the very fabric of the young boy's existence because that thought brings with it implicitly the thought that she might have chosen another, and that he might never have been conceived. At some time in his childhood the same thought must have occurred to Miller.

The idea that creation rests on the caprice of woman's desire must have been a frightening idea for the young boy, since the possibility that other choices would have brought into being other worlds, carries the possibility for, even, perhaps, the necessity for the destruction, or non-creation of the world as it exists, the world in which mommy marries daddy, and the boy as observing consciousness, exists.

And the little boy would not be alone in his fears. Feminists have examined the fear-based roots of masculine attempts to control female desire. Elaine Showalter, for example, in *The Female Malady* discusses the phenomenon, and shows its extreme manifestation by recalling the surgery performed by some Victorian doctors on female patients to "excise their sexuality" so that they "gave up their independent desires . . . and became docile childbearers" (Showalter 77). Thus the Victorian doctors eliminate the danger of those alternate worlds women might conceive by

making their own choices, the worlds of "what if" that extinguish the world of "what is."

But Miller doesn't want to excise the worlds of possibility created by choices. Instead he often explores the worlds of "what if" in his plays. For example, the spectre of Willy's brother Ben is a past that keeps intruding on the present in *Death of a Salesman*. Ben is an alternative past that haunts Willy. Miller's fascination with alternatives extends to the work of other writers. He wrote the play *After the Fall*, as a way of rewriting Camus' novel *The Fall*, to answer the question "what if," instead of letting a woman drown, the protagonist had rescued her (*Timebends* 483). The mechanism that facilitates Miller's exploration of lost alternative pasts which intrude into the present, must be shaped by a spectre of "what if Mommy hadn't married Daddy?" And Female sensuality is the constant reminder of that "what if."

This frightening "what if" also does much to explain why so often in Miller's plays, women who are associated with sensuality are associated also with destruction; Abigail Williams in *The Crucible*, the woman in Willy's hotel room, the self-destructive Maggie in *After the Fall*, and finally, Angela Crispini in *Everybody Wins*. It might also account for the way that Miller's female characters tend to fall into two categories. The categories are superficially similar to but substantially different from the traditional madonna / whore categories. They might be called stable versus chaotic, or domestic versus creative. The difference is that Miller's women are not divided by simple morality, but by some intrinsic qualities. Stable women have focus and direction but lack imagination and energy. Chaotic women have imagination and energy, but lack focus and direction. Stable women are conservative; chaotic women are revolutionary. The stable Linda Lomans and Kate Kellers want to preserve the world that is and their family's niche in it, even when preservation is based on illusion. These women never exhibit any sensuality, and they also lack a kind of creative vision that is connected to the chaotic woman, the kind of vision that would enable them to imagine different worlds, to confront and challenge the existing order. The vision thing.

For example, Linda Loman wants Biff and Happy to help Willy by going along with his dreams about a big business success for Biff. She tells them, "You see how sweet he was as soon as you talked hopefully" (*Salesman* 59). In contrast, The woman in Willy's hotel room is not concerned about preserving the safety of illusion. She comes out of the bathroom at just the moment to shatter Biff's illusions. You can bet that if Linda Loman had found herself in that bathroom in a similar situation, she would have stayed there.

Robert Corrigan sees Miller's work as being divided by *The Misfits*. Before that time, Corrigan says, women were background figures; starting with *The Misfits*, women became more central. (intro). This division seems

to me a useful one. Partly because other changes also take place at this point. As Miller brings the woman to the more central place, it is the chaotic woman that he brings. Before this play, the domestic woman occupies the larger stage presence. After this, the chaotic, woman has the larger presence, and she becomes a more positive force.

The stable / domestic woman in *The Misfits* is Guido's deceased wife, and she is altogether outside the frame of the story. She is present in the film through Guido's and Roslyn's discussions of her. Guido tells Roslyn that his wife was, "as uncomplaining as a tree." Roslyn's insightful reply is, "maybe that's what killed her . . . I mean, it helps to complain sometimes (*Misfits* film).

The character Roslyn has, herself, evolved from a character who is only spoken of in the short story version of "The Misfits." From comments other characters make about Roslyn, we know that she doesn't approve of their work of roping wild horses. ("Misfits" 12). A similar character appears in a short story, "Please Don't Kill Anything." In this story a woman runs along the beach throwing back into the water, the fish that some fishermen have dumped on the beach. The story, which Miller wrote for Marilyn, is based on a real-life incident involving Marilyn, and this character seems like a sketchy version of Roslyn, and an earlier incarnation of a later character, Angela Crispini. The woman's concern for the fish is the same as Roslyn's for the mustangs in the film version of *The Misfits*, Angela Crispini's for falsely convicted Felix.

By the time she evolves into Roslyn of the screenplay, the female chaotic character has energy and vision to challenge the status quo, but she doesn't have a clear program about how to make any real changes. Roslyn challenges the capture of wild mustangs but only at the level of her cowboy friends who are merely pawns in the larger scheme of things.

Angela Crispini, in the 1990 Miller screenplay *Everybody Wins* is perhaps the ultimate example of Miller's chaotic-creative woman, and she has a more definite program in mind, and some power to carry it off. Angela knows the truth about the corruption behind a murder case, and she knows that truth could "bomb the whole police department plus both parties in this town . . ." (68). Angela wants to free a young man named Felix, who has been falsely convicted of murder. But she has the knowledge to do more. She says at one point, "This case goes all the way to the top of the mountain, Tom, the top!" (*Everybody* 69). She holds the keys to change, but also to destruction. The choices she makes could realign things, set right an imbalance of justice, but it could also destroy existing order.

Although Angela knows the truth about the past, her own hold on reality is so fragile and intermittent, that she threatens to unravel herself, and in the process to unravel whichever version of the world she takes with her. The extent of Angela's mental instability clear later on when she tells Tom, the detective she enlists to help her, that she doesn't want to go on

the witness stand with what she knows because, "The thing is . . . if I ever got on a witness stand, God knows what I might start saying . . . I might have made it all up . . . I'm not absolutely sure" (94).

Angela describes what it is like at the center of chaos where creation and non-creation are possible. A bit later Angela says, "Maybe now you get the feeling -- do you --? that everything is possible and impossible at the same time, right? You feel it? This is what I live with all the time!" (96).

To keep Tom on the case, Angela taunts him with both her secret knowledge and her sexuality. Christopher Bigsby, speaking of these same characters in a shorter stage version of this play ("Some Kind of Love Story") says,""both perhaps have a vested interest in the game which they play, a game in which truth is pursued on the understanding that it must never be discovered" (Bigsby 254). Bigsby also points out that the relationship between Tom and Angela consists of Tom's attempts to get the truth from her "So long as she refuses to reveal the whole truth, assuming her to posses it, he continues to visit her."

The domestic / stable character in conflict with Angela is Tom's sister Connie, who came to live with him when his children were small and has never left. Connie is a teacher by profession, but she appears in this play in scenes that take place in Tom's house. She sits in the kitchen, she comes in with groceries, she answers the phone. In general, she tries to preserve the domesticity of Tom's home against the intrusion of Angela's incessant phone calls. At one point she tells Tom, "I can't stay here. Not with whores calling up in the middle of the night" (76). The screenplay, doesn't show her having any kind of love life. Although she might be assumed to have one outside the frame of this story, her lack of one seems remarkable because it is so consistent with the trend in Miller's work, dividing women into stable-domestic women who are not sensual, and chaotic-creative women who are.

At the end of *Everybody Wins*, Tom's sexless domicile with Connie is preserved, and Angela has saved Felix but has not used her secrets to change the corrupt system. The ending suggests that had Tom been able to form a lasting relationship with Angela the corrupt structures they had exposed would not have been able to stand. The final frame is troubling. Angela is left literally in the arms of that very corruption. But contained in the troubling aspect is knowledge of possibility; the hope that next time the chaotic, creative woman will not just throw a few fish back in the water, not just save a few wild mustangs, not just free one innocent convict, but shake the very fabric of the universe. Who knows what is possible under all that skirt and darkness?

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Love in the Cathedral: Heraclitus in D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*

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In the summer of 1915, while D. H. Lawrence was revising his rejected novel *The Wedding Ring* into what was to become *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, he discovered the philosophy of Heraclitus in John Burnet's textbook *Early Greek Philosophy*. Lawrence was so excited about what he read that, in July, he wrote to Lady Caroline Morrell:

> I shall write all my philosophy again. Last time I came out of the Christian Camp. This time I must come out of these early Greek philosophers. (*Letters* II:364)

A few days later, Lawrence announced his discovery to Bertrand Russell:

> . . . I go on working very hard in my soul. I shall lift my voice in the autumn [when *The Rainbow* was published], and in connection with you, not apart. I have been wrong, much too Christian, in my philosophy. These early Greeks have clarified my soul. (*Letters* II:367)

With the discovery of Heraclitus, Lawrence realized that he must abandon the Platonic idealization of the concept of god which permeates Christian thinking. For Heraclitus, as for Lawrence, god is not an ideal form, but a potent force in nature which can be discovered scientifically, through "sight, hearing, learning from experience" (Fragment XIV), by any soul which understands the language (Fragment XVI). To see the results of Lawrence's discovery of Pre-Socratic philosophy, let us turn to the language of Lawrence's discussion of church architecture, as seen in Anna and Will's visit to Lincoln cathedral in chapter seven of *The Rainbow*.

As they approach the cathedral, Will sees the church as "the sign in heaven, it was the Spirit hovering like a dove, like an eagle over the earth" (186). In his language, the church is emblematic of both the dove of peace or love and the eagle of war, law, and predatory power. The duality in the spirit of Christianity that Will presents Anna is characteristic of Lawrence's perception of Christianity. Will's first comment about the fa'ade rings with unintended irony. He announces that "It is a false front," one which the narrator suggests was designed to hide the close connection between the

castle and the cathedral in European history (186). In *Apocalypse,* Lawrence explains how Christianity, steeped in a philosophy of absolutism, resolved the duality of the image of Jesus as the "Good Shepherd" and the image of "Christ the King" to the exclusion of all "lesser," mundane, values by contending that:

> The Christian doctrine of love even at its best was an evasion. Even Jesus was going to reign in the "hereafter", when his "love" would be turned into confirmed power. This business of reigning in glory hereafter went to the root of Christianity, and is, of course, only an expression of frustrated desire to reign here and now (14).

The medieval association of castle and cathedral symbolized, for Lawrence, the true intention of the church: to use its power to dominate culture so that it could present its absolute values as the only values worthy of consideration in a hierarchically structured world. This is precisely the situation described in *The Rainbow*'s opening paragraph where Lawrence introduces his Heraclitean theme by presenting the world, ordered by the Church and its clocks, existing in contrast to the order imposed on man by the clocks of nature (9).

Will and Anna's different perceptions of Lincoln cathedral, especially of the effect of the cathedral's great arches, define another pair of Heraclitean opposites in dynamic tension, one which directs us into ancient history for sources of explanation. When Will looks at the arches, he sees a "timeless consummation," the "all," the "everything" "locked on the keystone of ecstasy" (188). Anna too is overcome by the sight, "the leap and thrust of the stone, carrying a great roof overhead." It "closed her in," in the "ultimate confine." She cannot help thinking that outside the sky was not a confining dome, "but a space where stars were wheeling in freedom, with freedom above them always higher" (188). When Will finally steps out of the cathedral, the free, careless, joyous thrushes and the glowing yellow dandelions provide convincing evidence that his confidence in the absolute world of the shadowy cathedral is misplaced. His loss of confidence, however, is not viewed negatively. It leads him to insight, to synthesis, for: "He thought of the ruins of the Grecian worship, and it seemed, a temple was never perfectly a temple, till it was ruined and mixed up with the winds and the sky and the herbs" (191). For a moment, Will's vision is in accord with Lawrence, who personally liked:

> to think of the little wooden temples of the early Greeks and of the Etruscans: small, dainty, fragile, and evanescent as flowers. We have reached the stage when we are weary of huge stone erections, and we begin to realize that it is better to keep life fluid and

changing than to try to hold it fast down in heavy monuments. (*Etruscan* 25)

Lawrence concludes these comments with the observation, "Burdens on the face of the earth are man's ponderous erections" (25).

The denial of absolute categories is the primary manifestation of Lawrence's break with Christianity in *The Rainbow*, but even that break is not complete, for Lawrence as a Heraclitean, does not seek the annihilation of those who oppose his vision of the world. Rather, as Lincoln cathedral demonstrates, without a vision of what a thing (especially a human endeavor, a work of art) is not, it is hard to see what it is. In the "Study of Thomas Hardy," Lawrence argues:

> every work of art adheres to some system of morality. But if it be really a work of art, it must contain the essential criticism on the morality to which it adheres. And hence the antinomy, hence the conflict necessary to every tragic conception. (476)

Though Lawrence disagrees with the thrust of Christianity, he sees the cathedral as a true work of art, a model for his own ovre.

In the cathedral Anna stands "arrested" before the "wicked, odd little faces carved in stone" (189). In them, she finds the energy to take flight on her own, to escape entombment in absolutism:

> They knew quite well, these little imps that retorted on man's own illusion, that the cathedral was not absolute. They winked and leered, giving suggestion of the many things that had been left out of the great concept of the church. "However much there is inside here, there's a good deal they haven't got in," the little faces mocked. (189)

Anna's positive apprehension of the grotesque figures in the cathedral is the fictional manifestation of an argument Lawrence advances in the "Study of Thomas Hardy" where he asserts that in the cathedrals:

> a blind, collective impulse rose into concrete form. It was the profound, sensuous desire and gratitude which produced an art of architecture, whose essence is in utter stability, of movement resolved and centralized, of absolute movement, that has no relationship to any other form, that admits the existence of no other form, but is conclusive, propounding in its sum the One Being of All.

> There was, however, in the cathedrals, already the denial of the Monism which the Whole uttered. All the little figures, the gargoyles, the imps, the human faces, whilst subordinated within the Great Conclusion of the Whole, still, from their obscurity, jeered their mockery of the Absolute, and declared for multiplicity, polygeny. (454)

Lawrence seems to assign these grotesques the same role that he saw for the beaked griffins of the Etruscans. They are combined images of the earth and of the sky, the guardians of "the treasure of life, the gold, which we should perhaps translate as consciousness" which is in danger of being stolen by the thieves of life (*Etruscan* 108).

Lawrence's metaphoric destruction of the cathedral in *The Rainbow* is part of his attempt to spread his vision that the concept of god is generated by the physical structure of the cosmos. For Lawrence,"the true God is created every time a pure relationship, or a consummation out of twoness into oneness takes place" ("Crown" 94). This Heraclitean vision, though clearly defined without absolutes, generates a consistent standard of morality in which "that which is good and moral, is that which brings us into a stronger, deeper flow of life and life-energy; evil is that which impairs the life flow" ("Him" 130). Thus, Anna's victory over Will, presented by Lawrence as a victory of Love over learning from experience (190-191), as the Chapter entitled "Anna Victrix" demonstrates, is evil in and of itself. It is evil because it destroys the flow of Will's life. In "The Crown," Lawrence explains that "anything that triumphs, perishes. The consummation comes from perfect relatedness. To this a man may win. But he who triumphs, perishes" (17). In terms of personal relationships and everyday decision making, Lawrence sides with the strategy of the ancient Greeks, who:

> made equilibrium their goal. Equilibrium is hardly a goal to travel towards. Yet its something to attain. You travel in the fourth dimension, not in yards and miles, like the eternal serpent.
>
> Equilibrium argues either a dualistic or a pluralistic universe. The Greeks, being sane, were pantheists and pluralists, and so am I ("Him" 134-135).

> ... As for ideal relationships, and pure love, you might as well start to water tin pansies with carbolic acid (which is pure enough in the antiseptic sense) in order to get the Garden of Paradise ("Him" 141).

Lawrence goes on to insist on a balanced relationship between polar opposites. He reminds us that in the Heraclitean world, we are always subject to and reacting to the forces around us. Our every act is an assertion

of power over the forces that push against us and if this power were not asserted, if we do not assert ourselves, nothing new is created and we are in danger of annihilation and annihilation of one or the other ends the life preserving flow of the Heraclitean river. Thus, for Heraclitus, conflict is justice. Lawrence emphasizes the difference between Power and Love in a Heraclitean relationship:

> Love is simply and purely a relationship, and in a pure relationship there can be nothing but equality; or at least equipoise.
>
> But power is more than a relationship. It is like electricity, it has different degrees. Men are powerful or powerless, more or less: we know not how or why. But it is so. And the communion of power will always be a communion in inequality.
>
> In the end, as in the beginning, it is always Power that rules the world! There must be rule. And only Power can rule. Love cannot, should not, does not seek to. . . . Power rules and will always rule. Because it was power that created us all. The act of love is itself an act of power, original as original sin. The power is given us.
>
> And as soon as there is an act, even in love, it is power. Love itself is purely a relationship. ("Blessed" 153-154)

There is no stasis under the rainbow of Lawrence's Heraclitean world. All is movement. All is dance. Each entity in the cosmos asserts itself against the other, asserts its own existence. In the "Study of Thomas Hardy," Lawrence put it this way:

> it is as if life were a double cycle, of men and women, facing opposite ways, travelling opposite ways, revolving upon each other, man reaching forward with outstretched hand, woman reaching forward with outstretched hand, and neither able to move till their hands have grasped each other, when they draw towards each other from opposite directions, draw nearer and nearer, each travelling in his separate cycle, till the two are abreast, and side by side, until even they pass on again, away from each other, travelling their opposite ways to the same infinite goal. (449)

That is true love, the positive exercise of power. The wise, the moral, strive for a graceful dance in which all are winners. The unwise, the immoral, strive for victory as if life were a barroom brawl. It is this Heraclitean perspective which Lawrence attempted to present in *The Rainbow* and it is from this perspective that Lawrence expected his later fiction to be read. The Heraclitus who, through Burnet, spoke to Lawrence in 1915

informs not only *The Rainbow*, but also, in varying degrees, the entire corpus of Lawrence's later work.

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On Being Stuck with Trying to Improve the World: Robert Penn Warren and His Views on Race

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". . . but what is any knowledge
Without the intrinsic mediation of the heart?"

Robert Penn Warren
Brother to Dragons, 212

Did Robert Penn Warren's views on race change significantly over the years? The obvious answer is "Of course . . . how could the views of the man who wrote "The Briar Patch" (his essay in *I'll Take My Stand*) NOT have changed in order to write *Brother To Dragons, Segregation*, and *Who Speaks for the Negro?*" They had to, but in accepting the fact that Warren's views changed over the years, it would be easy to write off his early career as that of a "hardline white supremacist" (Sosna, 56) and to canonize him for his later change of heart. It is true, as Hugh Ruppersburg points out, that "with few exceptions Warren kept blacks in the background of his writing before 1953 (150). It is also true, according to Warren himself, however, that the race issue had "always been on [his] mind in some way or another. There was some sort of confusion of mind about it" (Edgar, 106).

This confusion of mind was apparent as early as 1930. In the first chapter of *Who Speaks for the Negro?*, which was written in 1964, thirty-four after "The Briar Patch" was written, Warren talks about the "vague discomfort" (*WSN* 11) he experienced while writing that essay. He notes that upon his return to the South and during the decade that followed the writing of it, he came to "the slowly growing realization that [he] could never again write the essay" (12). His willingness to question his stance on a subject so loaded for Southerners and his awareness of his changing attitudes attest to the "constant nag" (Edgar, 104) that the race question was for Warren.

Aldus Pace Nielsen sees Warren's questioning stance as a state of "radical uncertainty" (103). "Uncertainty" implies a lack of vision, however. Anyone reading "*Brother To Dragons, Segregation*, and *Who Speaks for the Negro?* cannot come away without a sense that Warren deliberately chose to ask questions as the best way of creating that vision. His penchant for questions is less a show of "uncertainty" that a show of his conviction of the need for such questions to be asked, of others and of ourselves. As a thoughtful man fully aware of his place in time, Warren knew that his

views developed over the years in response to his experience with history, and the questions he raised effect the reader both on a personal and a profound level.

Arguably, Warren reached a profound level of understanding of the race issue when he wrote *Brother to Dragons* in 1953. His choice for the setting of the poem, "Any time" and "No place" (BTD, 4) was Warren's way of saying "that the issues the characters [here] discuss is, in [his] view at least, a human constant" (xiii). On one level, the poem tells the tale of Lilburn Lewis, who, on the night of December 15, 1811, "with the assistance of [his brother] Isham and in the presence of his Negroes, butchered a slave named George, whose offense had been to break a pitcher prized by the dead mother, Lucy Lewis" (ix-x). Had Warren simply stuck to this grisly tale, his poem would have been historically interesting, a macabre piece of frontier folklore made especially fascinating by the relation of the murderer to Thomas Jefferson. But, as Warren told Ralph Ellison, "The relation of George's experience to other people, not the experience itself, merely, was what [he] wanted to play up" (Talking, 45).

How does *Brother to Dragons* fit into Warren's views on race as they apply to society in general? On the one hand, Warren has specifically stated that "*Brother To Dragons* isn't about him [George]" (*Talking* 45) both in his comment to Ralph Ellison and within the poem itself:

> It takes something more to bring the End of Time
> Than what came there that night in your meat-house.
> For that, as a matter of fact, was no end and no beginning,
> Just an episode in the long drift of the human
> Narrative, and impressive chiefly for
> Its senselessness .... (*BTD*, 64)

But if the poem isn't about George and his brutal murder, if it is only one "episode in the long drift of the human/Narrative", then what is it about? It is a story which provides a specific context for a discussion of many issues, racism being only one of them. Nielsen describes racism in the poem as "symptomatic of the evil that is in men and that has entered into American history to await expiation by later generations" (Nielsen, 118-119). Warren makes clear, in the poem itself, that those issues raised by the characters involve not only the characters themselves, but also the "later generations" reading the poem:

> No, the action is not self-contained, but contains
> Us too, and is contained by us, and is
> Only an image of the issue of our most distressful self-definition.
> (43)

The issue of self-definition is addressed in *Segregation* as well. Initially published in 1956 as "Divided South Searches Its Soul" in *Life* magazine, *Segregation* was Warren's first attempt to directly explore the issue of race in a non-fictional context. He interviewed numerous Southerners, both black and white, in an attempt to ascertain their views on the subject. Ultimately, what Warren says in *Segregation* is, in may ways, no different from what he said in *Brother To Dragons*. In his interview with himself at the end of the book, Warren reaches this conclusion:

> A. I don't think the problem is to learn to live with the Negro
> Q. What is it then?
> A. It is to learn to live with ourselves. (111)

The issue of self-definition, for Warren, is central to the issue of race relations. His sensitivity to this issue, both as a poet and as a journalist, is what makes his writing on race so powerful. As Oscar Handlin observed in his review of *Who Speaks for the Negro?* nine years after *Segregation* was written and twelve years after *Brother To Dragons* was written, "the value of Warren's work lies in the fact that it is more than it professes to be. Warren is not a mere recorder but an active participant" (Handlin, 3).

Warren's degree of participation reached new heights in 1965 with the publication of *Who Speaks for the Negro?* Four hundred and forty four pages long, the book is an impressive collection of interviews with and insights into the minds and hearts of black Americans. In the book Warren, in essence, does what he did with the story of the slave George in *Brother To Dragons:* he takes events in the lives of individuals and holds them up as representative of events in the lives of us all. He also emphasizes, as he did in *Brother to Dragons,* the importance of the process of living. He writes

> For we know from history that you do not achieve an ideal spiritual condition and then set up a society to express it. Ideals grow out of the act of living, out of the logic of life; and in a long dialectic, even as they grow, they modify living. (*WSN,* 413)

It is the "long dialectic" in which Warren engages his readers. Ironically, several critics of *Who Speaks for the Negro?* have failed to see the book as a part of an ongoing dialectic. Hugh Ruppersburg claims that "in many ways it now seems outdated" and that "many of Warren's concerns in the book -- so pertinent in 1965 -- now seem either moot or irrelevant" (Ruppersburg, 131). Forgetting, for the moment, the deeply philosophical commentary about the nature of self and identity both within and between races which permeates the book, *Who Speaks for the Negro?*, can hardly be deemed "moot or irrelevant" based on particular issues Warren raises in the text which are, to this day, issues with which the South is still grappling. For example,

Warren discusses the two trials of Byron de la Beckwith (*WSN*, 30, 82, 113). His final comment on the two hung juries, "There has been no third trial" (113), makes one wonder what he would write today were he alive to witness the case going to trial for the third time twenty six years later. Warren might also find another current court case of interest based on this remark of his about the state of Negro colleges in 1965: "Recognition should be made of exceptions, but in general, and especially in state-supported institutions, the Negro colleges are drastically inferior in competence of instruction, standards of performance, and quality of equipment; and in the South they are inferior by Southern standards" (357). Lawyers for the plaintiffs in U.S. v. Mabus 90-1205 successfully argued that very point before the Supreme Court only a few months ago.

Who Speaks for the Negro? "is not a history, a sociological analysis, an anthropological study, or a Who's Who of the Negro Revolution. It is a record of [Warren's] attempt to find out what [he] could find out," and it is as much a record of the present as it is of the past. In his interviews and in *Brother To Dragons*, Warren continually forces those with whom he speaks and those for whom he speaks to confront the reality that the faces of the Lilburns of the world are "only a mirror of [our] possibilities" (*BTD*, 191). As Hugh Ruppersburg puts it, the question becomes, "In a world often hostile and indifferent, in an environment which minimizes individual human worth, how can the black American, how can any individual, define himself? (146). This question of identity, both of Southern identity in general and of identity for blacks and whites in particular, can be resolved, according to Warren, only by people, both black and white "confronting the terror of [their] condition" (*BTD*, 192) and by examining the issue of self-definition in their individual lives. In retelling Lolis Elie's story of getting to know white soldiers during World War II as men and not as white men, Warren emphasizes the human dimension of the race issue. Ruppersburg notes, "Though it is clear in *Who Speaks for the Negro?* that Warren viewed the civil rights movement as a political and economic phenomenon, it is clear to, as in *Segregation* and in the fiction and poetry, that he preferred to view it as a human one" (160). It is "the human recognition and appreciation" (*WSN*, 413) which distinguishes Warren's later work from his 1930 essay. As Leonard Casper writes, in Warren's later works, he "clearly recommends that each man, without qualification, be allowed to explore and report on the unique nature of his own potential (Casper, 28). This is quite heavy praise for a man who, in 1930, wrote that "by temperament and capacity" the negro chiefly belongs in small towns and on farms (*ITMS*, 260).

In *Democracy & Poetry* Warren discusses the role that poetry plays in this continuing quest by man to discover the nature of his unique human potential. "What poetry most significantly celebrates," he wrote, "is the capacity of man to face the deep, dark inwardness of his nature and his

fate" (*D&P*, 31). Certainly in *Brother To Dragons* Warren's characters face the "deep, dark inwardness of [their] nature[s]." As Lucy Lewis tells Jefferson, "whatever health we have is not by denial, / But in confronting the terror of our condition" (*BTD*, 192). One finds the echo of Lucy's words resounding, not only in Jefferson's ears, but in one's own upon reading *Segregation* and *Who Speaks for the Negro?* By definition, neither book is poetry, but in spirit, they celebrate the same "capacity of man to face the deep, dark inwardness of his nature and his fate." James Justus writes what "In fiction and nonfiction alike Warren typically stresses the contradictions, the internal tensions, the gaps between aspiration and achievement, and even the healthy uses to which such jarring flaws may be put" (Justus, 143). Warren's emphasis on the contradictions inherent in human nature and his willingness not only to celebrate those differences but also to insist that his characters and, ultimately, his readers confront those differences are what make even his nonfiction read like poetry. Perhaps it takes a poet to ask the kind of questions that need to be asked about an issue as divisive and personal as race, because the poet knows that in asking those questions "he is, in fact, not only going to find out what he really wants. He is going to find out what he himself really is" (*WSN*, 430). Clearly for Warren, without self-knowledge, the northern liberals, the black and white Southerners the Lilburs and Jeffersons of the world, the "very nature of man" (Justus, 60) and the ability of man to experience "freedom . . . and joy" (Bradbury, 223-4) are called into question.

Warren's method for promotion "understanding" and for discovering "freedom" and "joy" also centers on the use of history (the past) as a means for comprehending the present. In *Democracy & Poetry* Warren writes

> . . . for the contempt of the past inevitably means that the self we have is more and more a fictive self, the self of a non-ideographic unit, for any true self is not only the result of a vital relation with a community but is also a development in time, and if there is no past, there can be no self. Furthermore, a society with no sense of the past, with no sense of the human role as significant not merely in experiencing history but in creating it can have no sense of destiny. And what kind of society is it that has no sense of destiny and no sense of self? (*D&P*, 56)

The need for self-awareness, in the context of history, is a recurring theme in Warren's writings on race. In *Brother To Dragons*, Jefferson acknowledges that "without the fact of the past we cannot dream the future" (*BTD*, 193). In *Segregation*, Warren insists that "the essence of individuality is the willingness to accept the rub which the flux of things provides, to accept one's fate in time" (Seg., 97). As Jefferson could only come to terms with his complicity in the events of the poem by accepting responsibility

for his actions, so Warren argues that the reader must accept responsibility for his actions by putting his actions in the context of history. Warren is not a naive idealist, however. He recognizes that history often imposes itself upon unsuspecting victims. In reflecting upon the role of black leaders in the Civil Rights Movement, Warren writes: "The whirl of history created a vacuum, and they were sucked in" (*WSN*, 405). The emphasis in Warrens' writing, however, is not on the random whirl of history but on the responsibility of each individual to accept "the burden of our time . . . [to] live with a thousand unsolved problems of justice . . . to deal only with those which the moment proposes to us" (*SEG.*, 113-4). The alternative is "self-destruction or disillusionment" (Edgar, 3).

Without question, Warren does not see "self-destruction" and "disillusionment" as inevitable. In terms of the issue of race, he recognizes that "the problem is to permit the fullest range of life into racial awareness . . . see the protest in relation to other things" (*Talking*, 48). If, to be useful, history must be placed in context of the present, so must all issues be placed in an appropriate context. Part of that context for Warren is one of an awareness of "the human paradox . . . complicity and innocence, necessity and freedom" (Casper, 79). If "none is without guilt" (Justus, 41), each man is responsible for the state of his own soul. In terms of racial awareness, Warren discusses the "absolution of guilt" (*WSN*, 71) by Northern liberals who come South and the recognition by man blacks that "the iniquity of the white man" (422) is not the only impediment to better race relations. Warren also acknowledges the "relief from responsibility" (SEG., 90) that accompanies him as he flies out of the South. It is, he reveals time and again, never easy to face one's self, one's soul, but it is necessary. As R.P. W. observes in *Brother To Dragons*, "Fulfillment is only in the degree of recognition / Of the common lot of ourkind. And that is the death of vanity, / And that is the beginning of virtue" (*BTD* 214). Facing one's self and facing the fact that we are all a part of time and history and, ultimately, fate, involves confronting one's guilt and accepting one's complicity. What Warren does, however, is not to point a moral finger at his audience, as if to say that he or his characters or the people with whom he speaks have the "right" answers. He makes "distinctions rather than judgement" (*Talking*, 153).

The most important distinction Warren makes is, in fact, a moral one. Accepting one's guilt implies, for Warren, accepting one's moral responsibility. One may seek the "relief" from that responsibility, but ultimately one cannot escape it. Just as Lucy Lewis in *Brother To Dragons* recognizes that she must " . . . accept it, / The responsibility of my love, I mean . . ." (*BTD*, 187), so did "six hundred and fifty white citizens" of McComb, Mississippi recognize that they must accept responsibility by issuing a public statement condemning the "acts of terrorism" against blacks and taking "a stand against violence" (*WSN*, 128). Just as Gilbert Moses be-

lieved that "the individual himself could make a great deal of difference in any system" (*WSN*, 68), Warren believes that if the South can "face up to itself and its situation, it may achieve identity, moral identity. Then in a country where moral identity is hard to come by, the South, because it has had to deal concretely with a moral problem, may offer some leadership" (*SEG.*, 115). The moral responsibility of the individual and of society lies at the heart of Warren's writing.

Warren recognizes the "cost" of racism (*Talking*, 32). He also recognized that society cannot be changed "easily and without pain" and "that it can[not] be changed without some pain to our particular selves -- black and white" (*WSN*, 444). Warren felt "that pain would be a reasonable price to pay for what we all, selfishly, might get out of it" (444). Are the "pain" and the "cost" worth it? For a man who believed that "we are stuck with trying to improve the world" (Watkins, *SR*, 9), for a man who moved from a politically acceptable stance on racial issues to a morally laudable one, for a man who believed that "distinctions" were more important than "judgments" and that "moral responsibility" was not a luxury but a necessity, the answer can only be a resounding "YES!"

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Waking By Moonlight

Cloudburst

Before our eyes
we saw the earth in a fall,
aspens letting their leaves
two months early go in a cloudburst.
We rode it out in the car.
Afterwards the rocks weren't themselves--
they had deepened, holding water
until dark. Water slick
on the ice chest, a small pond
on the canopy, rain-beaded sweaters--
we got out and camped in a shambles.
And feet approaching twenty pounds,
heavy with mud, we were
pulled down in sleep.

Stone Dream

Stones are waiting
for the moment to fall.
Balanced by night or day
it could be any time.
They might find slippage in the dark
and fall toward morning into water.
Then one might be one
she gathers into her hand
and lifts until it clears the water.
Or one she drops without a thought.
Or one she digs from the sand
and throws hard to where
it would never be dreamt.
Or one she holds on her tongue.

Seeing You By Water

First you are water
standing, clear in spirit,
but you love the dark river
that breaks white on the stones.
You lift a thin wheel of it
with one quick kick.
You kneel down and turn it,
the brilliance of the sun
gathers in your hair.
The aching from the cold water
climbs into your fingers,
clenches your hand.
Then you rise to wave,
your hand wet in the sun.

Rendezvous

There is something dead about my face
reflected in water, something
subtle about my eyes that deepens.
Even the trees behind me
deepen and push for space.
And I want to be the air
that will carry your voice
out of the wood. I want your words
to fall through me, like leaves.
And to see my face dimming
nearly out of the pond,
I think I hear your voice
from somewhere. And rising, now,
I am clear of the location.

Sleeping Through Wind

The wind climbs into the mountains,
a wing beating in one motion
something near to a gale.
The trees give their support
as the wind glides through,
wave their limbs wildly.
Some before could not stand it
and lie now of neglect, hollowing.
The wind carries the afternoon
into a calm, the cold sets in.
A bird overhead grows rigid
in sleep on a low branch. The grass
stiffens on the slope towards night.
We leave it all in bags of down.

Climbing

June we've come to snow.
Stones drift the year round
in the sides of glaciers
that brought the ocean inland
and sun themselves on the cliffs.
And the space you leave in a knot
the stiff nylon rope unties
like slack conversation.
You drift off in thought,
reasoning a found seashell
to this elevation. Then you tell me
you could climb years out of your life,
and cinch yourself for the ascent
without a thought falling to your hands.

More Climbing

We backpack the morning
across the timberline, the sun
melts down our shoulders
like honey and our strength . . .
it goes without saying.
The ascent reaches deep
into our lungs and is felt
taking our breath, our words.
We had hours of energy.
Now, erosion comes to mind
about the area that burned
several weeks, uncontrolled,
like the thought of marriage
four years today.

The Emergent

Snow on Rabbit Ears Pass
can be heard sliding
in drifts from time to time--
the past winters that finally fall
to the foot of a cliff.
We sit now, half filled with sun.
And in the slow avalanche
of memory, I am buried, like a stone,
the pit of some great body.
I would have to become an ember
burning off the accumulation of years
to forget everything. And someone
would find me, dimmed of thought,
and say, "I think they used to call this fire."

A "Twoman"

Unfolded from its nylon nest
it reeks of the dusty flights
into the basement. We stake it out,
like a shadow that has no bearing
with the sun. The wind
bothers it. It flops up and down
as I lift its center with a pole.
It starts to spread and flap,
a sheer awning, until it flies
down over me. We stake it out agin,
a spread-eagle. You steady it
and I lift it into the shape
it fits. It grows dark.
We climb inside. We don't sleep.

Being By Fire

Nothing is left of the day but fire
we've kept alive since afternoon.
But we want only fire of the night--
enough to float our hands in its heat,
enough to fill out our bodies.
And burning the dry wood
we burned our strength gathering,
our eyes close on tiny flames,
the dim embers of orange
that dribble yellow and blue--
the fire runs down in the pit.
And sinking into the cold air,
our faces fill with shadow,
eyes adrift in their widening basins.

Keeping Whole

The pin log rings with years
of sound growth, and the axe
with forged perfection.
As in my dream, my body,
the center of motion, is still
vivible wheeling the steel at dusk,
sending sound down the valley
for the echo among the trees.
And in the stillness the timber splits,
I imagine the wood flying
back whole, as it was come to
in sleep, when before waking
I stood beside the tree, my body
but a breath from it.

Waking You By Moonlight

You slept sound in Golden,
attuned to the voluminous pine
which seemed to depart downwind
and return with a rush . . . .
The night's smoke spewed from green logs,
and I nudged awake the fire as early
as five-thirty. A sleepless night,
wandering through the woods.
I walked the lake twice,
touched my foot once
to the water, and the moon
caught in the wavering net my toes
sent out, then came back full,
ready to be touched again.

His Changing Nature: Comparing Dickens's Two 'Autobiographical' Novels

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> Dickens's writing changed noticeably after the publication of *David Copperfield* in 1850, when he was thirty-eight, and critics frequently compare the early works of Dickens with the later [ones]. The earlier works tend to be more humorous and optimistic than the later [ones]. The later works are more complicated, more symbolic. There are differences in both style and content. Even his manuscripts changed, showing a new mode of composition much less spontaneous in his later years, the passages worked over and over as they had not been in his youth. He was having a harder time writing, but his imagination was in many ways more powerful than ever, if less spontaneously inventive (166-67).
>
> --Phyllis Rose, in *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages*

Although several chroniclers of Dickens's life have conjectured with Rose that the novelist's illicit relationship with Ellen Ternan contributed greatly to his disillusionment with Victorian values and mores -- and ultimately with himself as a frustrated spokesman for that society, it is not the purpose of this paper to try to trace the exact causes behind the darkening of his mind. Yet by accepting Rose's assertion that *David Copperfield* was created before Dickens's personal "mid-life crisis" and *Great Expectations* after it, one might compare and contrast these two "autobiographical" novels both to trace the extent and the direction of Dickens's changed mind and to detect thematic evolutions and stylistic changes in his writing.

One theme occurring in both books is the relationship of man and nature. It is a worthy angle from which to read the novels, for Dickens's English contemporaries exhibited strong, ambivalent attitudes toward the natural world. Victorian society both romanticized it and feared it, alternately reorganizing it in their beloved formal gardens and exploiting it in their filthy industrial cities. Dickens understood these attitudes, for both his "autobiographical" novels incorporate (as vehicles through which to comment on the above theme) garden motifs, natural imagery, and animal metaphors. By examining examples of these literary vehicles from both of the "autobiographical" novels, this essay seeks to detect whether or not the darkening of Dickens's mind had any demonstrable effect on his own

attitude toward the natural world -- and if it did, to determine the direction of his changing attitude toward nature.

In the two novels, the most obvious clues to Dickens's interest in the theme of man's relationship to nature are garden motifs, which are used by the novelist to comment on the universal motif of the garden as sanctuary, usually in reference to the biblical myth of the Garden of Eden. Of the three aforementioned literary vehicles found in Dickens's "autobiographical" novels, garden motifs have received the most critical attention. Even so, no critic has ever compared the use of motifs in both "autobiographical" novels; for example, Gail Finney's essay, "Garden Paradigms in 19th-Century Fiction," looks only briefly at *Great Expectations* (primarily at Wemmick's garden), and not at all at *David Copperfield.* Furthermore, her essay defines its interest in gardens in a restrictive manner, claiming to be "concerned neither with actual gardens nor with the relationship between gardens and their literary representations"; instead, it purports to be strictly interested in "the garden as a literary image and ... [in] its function within the work" (Finney 21). Her essay is thus only modestly helpful in this attempt to trace Dickens's changing attitude toward nature.

Finney's essay, though, does identify a primary use of garden motifs in 19th century fiction: as commentary on the biblical interpretation of the "garden as sanctuary" motif. Her essay then analyzes Wemmick's home ("the Castle") and its garden as being "the domain of Wemmick's private self," adding that "his home environment accommodates the charitable emotions stifled by the city" (32). Although he cannot be "himself" while working in the sterility of Little Britain for the mechanical Jaggars [Wemmick says of him: "Always seems to me ... as if he had set a mantrap and was watching it. Suddenly -- click -- you're caught!" (221)], Wemmick returns to his fertile garden where he finds, by growing his own food, a measure of freedom from the complicity of his economic life as Jaggars's clerk. Wemmick's garden is the result of his conscious decision to replace the fallen Eden by methodically creating his own sanctuary ["I am my own engineer, and my own carpenter, and my own plumber, and my own gardener, and my own Jack of all Trades, ... it's a good thing, you know. It brushes the Newgate cobwebs away" (230)]. It is clear that Dickens regards Wemmick's garden to be more than a mere "literary image," for the novelist -- even as he symbolically suggests the psychological fulfillment that the garden brings to Wemmick -- describes in some detail an actual garden. This particular plot of earth, rendered into physical reality by Wemmick himself, restores his pride [he quietly brags to Pip, "you'll judge at supper what sort of a salad I can raise" (229)]; thus, because of this specific place, Wemmick is one of the few characters in the novel who is content with his lot in life, whose expectations are at least partly realized.

Although Wemmick is hardly wealthy or powerful in Victorian terms, he is essentially content, a middle-aged man whose hard work earned for

him a sense of place and perspective in a society blemished by its restlessness and pretense. Perhaps Dickens -- his own expectations shattered by his personal crisis -- was beginning to understand the importance, as portrayed in the character of Wemmick, of knowing one's place in the world. If this is so, it is interesting to note that, after years of depicting in various earlier novels the lives of the victims of Victorian England, both rich and poor, Dickens suggests in *Great Expectations* that human happiness is more feasible in a life independent from man-made constraints, where success is not achieved socially or economically but individually, through personal connection to the earth and through harmony with other people.

Yet, if all this is so, can one, by comparing the garden motifs in the two novels, trace Dickens's changing attitude toward the natural world? The answer is, only partially, for some of the key clues in *David Copperfield* to Dickens's attitude before his crisis are not couched in specific garden motifs but in vague imagery, one example of which suggests that David Copperfield still believes in a prelapsarian world. Even when a child-laborer, David survives on the hope -- on the expectation -- that, despite the snares set before him by Victorian society, he will, by retaining faith in God and in his own goodness, somehow be rescued from his fallen existence and be able to return to the Garden (and perhaps David's belief in his own virtuous invincibility was really Dickens's attitude before his personal crisis): "I know that I worked, from morning until night . . . a shabby child. I know that I lounged about the streets, insufficiently and unsatisfactorily fed. I know that, but for the mercy of God, I might easily have been . . . a little robber or a little vagabond" (139).

In *Great Expectations*, however, Dickens shuns such simplistic interpretations of the Garden of Eden myth. In this novel, gardens possess both physical presence (they are carefully described like actual plots of earth) and profound metaphysical significance (they are physical manifestations of the inner lives of those who create them and live among them). Thus, Wemmick's garden is orderly and fertile, reflecting his acknowledgement that human happiness depends on some kind of connection to non-urban, non-human entities; while Miss Havisham's garden is "ruined" by neglect -- it is as barren of life as she is herself. Miss Havisham's garden grows only weeds, and these weeds affect all those who enter her grounds, psychologically and spiritually crippling them, as if they too had tasted the tainted fruit of the fallen Eden. When Pip arrives at Satis house on Estella's birthday, he describes what he witnesses there in post-Fall imagery: he "looked into a most miserable corner of the neglected garden, upon a rank ruin of cabbage-stalks, and one box tree that had been clipped long ago . . . and had a new growth at the top of it, out of shape and of a different colour" (108-09). Later, while wandering aimlessly through the "ruined garden," Pip agonizes over his unrequited love for Estella: "I strolled into the garden

and strolled all over it. It was quite a wilderness" (118). The word "wilderness" here should not be interpreted to mean "an uncultivated and uninhabited place," but rather to mean "a badly cultivated and a poorly inhabited place." Miss Havisham's garden is not of the natural world -- it belongs to a fallen human being who has not chosen to nurture it, and herself, back to health; and it is emblematic of the artificial world of a human society disconnected from the natural world (an example of this in the novel is Little Britain in London). Because Dickens suggests, by utilizing the "ruined garden" motif, that Miss Havisham projects her own self-hatred outward toward all living things, it might be surmised that he himself was grappling with his former tendency, as in *David Copperfield,* to project onto the world a false, sentimentalized Eden.

In addition to revealing his attitude toward the Garden of Eden myth, Dickens's natural imagery is vital because it symbolically forecasts the predicaments of his characters (who in the case of these two novels might well represent the predicaments of their creator). The sophisticated natural imagery in *Great Expectations* is a dramatic contrast to the more conventional imagery in *David Copperfield,* more evidence of Dickens's darkening mind. In Chapter 1 of the later novel, Pip spies a fantastic image out in the marshes that informs him of the escaped convict's plight as dramatically as Magwitch's insistent verbal commands for food: "As I [Pip] saw him [Magwitch] go, picking his way among the nettles, and among the brambles that bound the green mounds, he looked in my young eyes as if he were eluding the hands of dead people, stretching up cautiously out of their graves, to get a twist upon his ankle and pull him in" (38). Because this natural imagery is related from the point of view of young Pip, who in Chapter 1 is a victim of another victim's displaced aggression, the novel seems to be suggesting that he like Magwitch will eventually be haunted and even silenced by his past. Since both characters are bereft of close human relationships, Pip being an orphan and Magwitch an exile, the marshes seem to reveal to them their mutual isolation and, strangely, foster in both a confused sympathy, which binds their fates together. Pip frequently calls the marshes by the colloquial word "meshes," as when he reminds Magwitch in Chapter 3 of the danger of remaining out in the marshes: "'It's bad about here,' I told him. 'You've been lying out on the meshes, and they're dreadful aguish. Rheumatic too'" (50). His choice of words is both sympathetic and quite ironic, for this is arguably the first instance in which a human being has ever expressed concern for Magwitch and concurred with him that indeed life was beset with snares and hooks ("meshes"); yet, having accepted him this once, at Magwitch's weakest moment, Pip ironically motivates the convict to work himself back from his fallen condition. Magwitch now knows of human goodness and compassion, and thus their lives and fates become "enmeshed."

Like natural imagery, animal metaphors reflect the predicaments of individual characters in the two novels; and by analyzing the author's employment of such metaphors in each novel, one may gain further insight into Dickens's striking stylistic maturation after his personal crisis. Animal metaphors occur frequently in *David Copperfield*, usually gratuitously and inconsistently. In *Great Expectations* they appear less often but with greater precision in their symbolism and with a keener psychological understanding of a characters's essential personality; for example, in the former novel, Uriah is compared metaphorically to three animals, all of which are unrelated zoologically: he is likened to a fish ("He . . . gave himself a jerk, like a compulsive fish" [325]), to a snake ("A snaky undulation pervading his frame from his chin to his boots" [323]), and to a vulture ("He hovered about us . . . like a great vulture: gorging himself on every syllable that I said to Agnes, or Agnes said to me" [329]). Here, Dickens borrows metaphors popular to the Victorian imagination; yet, using them without irony, Dickens is pandering to his audience's preconceptions, rather than imaginatively creating new points of comparison. The vulture metaphor is particularly indicative of Dickens's reliance on stock metaphor in *David Copperfield*. If we are to believe that Uriah Heep "preyed" on others for his livelihood, as he was to do later by taking advantage of Mr. Wickfield, then to compare him to a vulture is neither original nor accurate, since vultures prey on carrion -- the dead -- while Uriah very definitely preys on the living. A more carefully chosen metaphor would have been to compare Uriah to, say, a hawk. Of course, one might argue that the vulture had the worst popular reputation among the birds of prey, and that Dickens used this metaphor in order to reconfirm what his audience already believed they knew; nevertheless, this metaphor serves as a small clue to the general imprecision of *David Copperfield* as a novel.

It would be unfair to claim that the earlier novel is necessarily a weaker novel than the much more unified *Great Expectations* -- after all, the picaresque form in which *David Copperfield* was written had traditionally allowed for a loose, even rambling structure, whose many episodic sketches did not necessarily require unification with other parts of the novel. Yet it is probable that the very crisis that darkened Dickens's mind also sharpened his sense of language, for Dickens in *Great Expectations* uses animal metaphors with much more ingenuity and purpose and with greater psychological acuity. In this novel, each metaphor used is traceable back to one of the novel's major themes; in Chapter 1 for example, the escaped convict Magwitch, facing the prospect of hiding out in the marshes, expresses his frustration to Pip by means of an animal metaphor: "I wish I was a frog. Or a eel! [sic]" (38). This is precisely what a desperate person in such a circumstance would fantasize: to leave behind his cursed human condition and merge with the natural world in order to escape the injustice, the judgement, and the retribution of Victorian England. Thus,

Dickens uses animal metaphors in *Great Expectations* more responsibly than in *David Copperfield*, apparently realizing through his personal crisis that exhibiting social responsibility was not enough for him -- even though his novels became famous partly for that very stance. Dickens in *Great Expectations* also displays concern for that interrelated mesh of non-human entities, the natural world.

In addition to its other artistic goals, *Great Expectations* attempts to reinterpret man's relationship with the natural world. The new awareness displayed in the book reflects a changed attitude toward the predicament of man, who Dickens now sees as struggling for identity in a merciless universe. And yet, though the novel was written shortly after the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, Dickens in *Great Expectations* does not flinch at man's fallen role in the cosmos, nor does he wallow in the Victorian sentimentality of *David Copperfield*. He is in *Great Expectations* a more engaged and creative, albeit less popular, author, one less inclined to subconsciously edit dark truths and harsh experiences from his stories. With Darwin, Dickens now senses that humans are an integral, though relatively minor, part of the larger natural world.

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The Game of the Name: Language Conventions in Jean Auel's *The Clan of the Cave Bear*

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Few contemporary writers can boast so large and loyal a following as Jean Auel, whose engaging prehistoric heroine has remained popular through four novels and one movie. *The Clan of the Cave Bear*, the first novel in Auel's Earth's Children series, surely displays all of the ingredients which distinguish popular fiction: an action-packed plot; entertaining characters, featuring assorted heroes, heroines, and villains; an abundance of emotional highs and lows; and enough prehistoric sex to keep even phlegmatic readers turning pages. But so many attractive features have, not surprisingly, obscured certain subtleties, less obvious but equally interesting and certainly worthy of critical admiration. Even more sophisticated readers have usually been so preoccupied with the dominant themes of aboriginal feminism and applied Jungianism that they have paid little attention to the less apparent facets which give the work much of its merit.

Auel's dedicated realism is not merely a product of library research, however; she notes in her acknowledgement accompanying her text her "many field trips to learn firsthand various aspects of living close to nature," including spending a January night in a snow cave on the slopes of Mt. Hood (xi-xii) and learning to tan animal hides and to chip flint spear points. It is not difficult for readers of *Clan of the Cave Bear* to see the results of such experiences woven skillfully in the events of the plot. But Auel does not mention specifically any investigations into linguistic anthropology. However, she is clearly familiar (perhaps as a result of her "library research") with theories of language acquisitions and production -- information which she integrates into the story with great success.

The tension in the novel focuses consistently on the distinctions between men and women as these define Clan structures, traditions, and behaviors -- all designed to perpetuate the division into superordinate males and subordinate females. The rigidity of the gender-specific roles in the Clan is reflected in the equally rigid (but perhaps less obvious) naming conventions which differentiate male names from female ones, even among spirits. A competent (if amateur) linguist, Auel is clearly aware of the extent to which language played a role in the lives of primitive people, who believed it to be magically connected to the world it both represented and shaped. An understanding of the details of this linguistic dimension

illuminates the novel and enlarges one's appreciation of Jean Auel's accomplishment in recreating so believably the ancestral world of the Clan.

For most of its readers, one of the novel's most captivating features is the elaborate sign language which allows the Clan to communicate in a manner relatively unhampered by the nearly complete absence of a spoken language. That they have so deficient a spoken vocabulary is not, Auel makes clear, evidence of an inferior mentality but rather a function of a limited physiology. So to compensate for their underdeveloped vocal apparatus, they have evolved a highly developed sign system of "hand signals, gestures, [and] positions" (38) to supplement the few "rudimentary words" (98) of which they are capable. Superfluous sounds, in fact, are discouraged (38); and spoken words are limited to basic emotions such as approval ("good," 34), to nouns ("cave," 45); "oak," "water," "feet," 99-100), and -- significantly -- to names. Until she becomes aware of the role of the subtle gestures which complement the few sounds they make, Ayla regards her adopted tribe as basically inarticulate although she senses that they communicate with each other in some mysterious way (99). Only when she realizes that their language, unlike that of her original family, is primarily visual rather than auditory, does she gain access to their world. And this discovery comes to her "suddenly, like an explosion in her brain" (101).

But even after this linguistic "Big Bang," this newly discovered complexity is characteristic of the visual language only: the oral portion can never evolve beyond its present laconic simplicity. Dr. Johnson would never have had occasion to remark on sesquipadality among the Clan. Vocally, they seem capable of words of two syllables but no more. Those whom they refer to as the "Others," Ayla's race, have more developed speech organs and are not similarly restricted, for example, "Jondalar," the trisyllabic name of the man who, in Auel's subsequent novel *The Valley of Horses*, assumes an important role in Ayla's life.

Furthermore, within the general structure of language, *names* have a special importance. It is hardly surprising that, since they are so serious a matter to these primitive people, names are not chosen arbitrarily or casually but bestowed with great solemnity. After all, *Nomen* ("name") is linked etymologically to *Numen* ("soul" or "self"). Since they magically embody the bearer's identity, it is appropriate that they be assigned not by the child's mother but by the magician, the Mog-ur, whose decision is not so much a personal choice as a directive from the spirits. Through meditation, Creb senses the suitability of a particular name for a specific child in much the same way that he intuits the compatibility of a certain totem to a child's unique personality. Mog-ur's decision invariably meets with the approval of the mother, who recognizes its correctness. Iza, for example, instantly acknowledges "Uba" the name of the grandmother she never knew, to be "a perfect name" (131) for her own daughter. Much later, the

reader may be prompted to wonder whether Creb selected the uncommon name "Durc" for Ayla's son because the legend of Durc has "always been [Ayla's] favorite" or because "the name dredged from the depths of antiquity and fraught with dubious connotations, was appropriate for a boy whose life had hung in the balance of such uncertain beginnings" (367). Whatever the case, Ayla is delighted with the choice.

Ayla's own name is a matter of considerable interest since it is the complex product of the conflation of three sources: her original name, the vocal limitations of the Clan, and the intercession of the Mog-ur.

Creb and Iza struggle with the pronunciation of the child's strange name after they rescue her. Since her true name (which the reader never really learns) is beyond their language capability to reproduce, they settle on the approximation "Ayla" -- but only after a linguistic tussle. Trying with difficulty to mimic the child's pronunciation of her own name, Iza at first produces "Eye-ghha" but is corrected by Creb, who, like a prehistoric Henry Higgins, says "Aay, not Eye" (40). This long /a/ sound is evidently unfamiliar to the Clan and so requires a great effort from Iza.

Neither does the medial sound come easily for her. It appears from Auel's spelling of Iza's experimental pronunciation ("Eye-ghha") that this sound may be a guttural one (perhaps like that common in German) and therefore not readily available in the phonemics of the Clan. All medial sounds in their female names consist of stops or near-stops made when the air flow is restricted in the mouth, either by the lips or by the tongue on the teeth or alveolar ridge or against the palate. These sounds have in common the fact that all are formed in the mouth cavity, not in the back of the throat. Since not even Creb can reproduce the sounds in the child's genuine name, he invents his own version, a compromise no doubt since "Ayla" is the only name in the book to begin with a long /a/ and to incorporate an /l/. But it pleases Ayla, this "name that Creb had give her" and "she accept[s] it as her own" (41). She is pleased, of course, because, by virtue of having a name, she now has a identity for her rescuers and thus a basis for a relationship.

The Appendix provides lists of the female and male names in the novel. Visually, the spelling commonalities which the names on each list share with one another are clear enough (and so are the differences between the two lists).

Briefly, the conventions governing male and female names operate as follows.

Female names are invariably bisyllabic, beginning and ending with a vowel and having a consonant (or consonant combination) separating the two syllables. Although the initial letter may be any vowel (a, e, i, o, u)--and each vowel is represented by at least one name -- the terminal vowel is necessarily an /a/.

By contrast, male names are always monosyllables and both begin and end with consonants (or combinations of consonants). The medial vowel may be a single vowel (as in "Brun") or an apparent diphthong (as in "Broud"). A variety of both consonants and vowels are used (though no male name is ever spelled with an /i/).

No female name contains more than four letters, no male name more than five.

Spelling is, of course, one thing and pronunciation another; after all, having hardly any spoken language and no written language, the Clan can have no concept of graphemes. Spelling is, so to speak, a communication exclusively from the author to the reader. But Jean Auel is a thoughtful writer as well as a credible linguist and, since she is writing for a popular rather than a scholarly audience, seems to provide appropriate clues to the pronunciation of names for lay readers. For example, she doubles or even triples vowels apparently to prolong the sound (such as the spirit names "Oooha" and "Eeesha"). Such elongation may also connote strength or respect or awe since none of the human names involves such a sequence; Auel uses only single vowels to render the names of female characters in the novel, even when this vowel is the long sound as in "Iza" (which during the original exchange of names Ayla at first pronounces "Eeez-sa," stretching this initial vowel sound, but then quickly corrects to the briefer "Iza."

Since spirit names follow the same basic constraints as human ones, at least one of the ceremonies which stabilize Clan life offers a clarification of the naming phenomenon. In an extraordinary ceremony, Creb, the great Mog-ur, calls on a unique pantheon of "incredible venerable spirits" to "awake from [their] deep sleep." Addressing them respectfully as "Most Honored Ones of Old," Creb appeals to the embodiments of elemental forces; "Spirit of Wind. Oooha! . . . Spirit of Rain. Zheena! Spirit of Mists. Eeesha!" (301).

On hearing the names, Ayla knows immediately that these spirits evoked for the ceremony which transforms her into the "Women Who Hunts" are female because "the names are female names." This realization comes as a surprise since she has always "thought all protective spirits were male" (301). Nothing in the ceremony contradicts this assumption except the structure of the names themselves. So Ayla's enlightenment (that protective spirits can be female) provides for readers, who to this point have probably been obliviousto any pattern in the characters' names, a revelation as well: that names are readily identifiable by gender.

At the great clan Gathering, Ayla reveals another facet of name sensitivity when she carefully avoids using its identifying name Ursus Spelaeus, in the presence of the ceremonial bear, relying instead on descriptive labels in direct address: "you old honey-lover" and "winter sleeper."

> She had been warned never to mention bear or cave bear or Ursus in his presence. If he was called by his real names, he would remember who he was and. . . . It would make him a wild bear again. (383)

This passage makes clear the power of names, which embody identity and are therefore so potent that they must on occasion be restricted. Well-documented instances of such word-taboos are plentiful in the history of language, for example, the Hebrew prohibition on use of the proper name of God "Yahweh," too sacred ever to be spoken or written, or the ancient dread of mentioning the name of the devil since doing so might have the disagreeable result of summoning him. (This latter taboo, by the way, would eventually be relegated to superstition and is preserved today in the playful cliche we use when someone arrives unexpectedly, "Well, speak of the devil!") Ayla is fully aware of the danger residing in names: even a single careless use of the name Ursus would magically restore the bear's identity and transform it from a docile pet to a wild beast.

Language is not merely a universal phenomenon among humans, primeval or modern; it is also a compelling force. But whereas for moderns it is social force, for primitives it was a potent spiritual one as well. Jean Auel's thoughtful construction of Clan language patterns -- including naming conventions -- reminds her readers of this dimension of early mankind, and by doing so invigorates her characters and enhances the verisimilitude of the entire novel, setting it apart from (and above) its many imitations.

Appendix

Names in *The Clan of the Cave Bear*

FemaleMale

AbaBorg
AgaBrac
AylaBroud
EbraBrun
IgraCreb
IkaCrug
IzaDorv
OdaDroog
OgaDurc
OnaGoov
OvraGorn
UbaGrev

UkaGrod
UraGroob
Norg
Nouz
Voord
Vorn
Zoug

Ayla's initial pronunciation of "Iza": "Eeez-sa"
Iza's original attempt to pronounce Ayla's name: "Eye-ghha"
Oda's original attempt to say "Ayla": "Aayghha"

Samuel Alfred Beadle: Black Mississippi Poet of the Early Twentieth Century

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In the *Jackson Daily News* of November 13, 1937, a three-paragraph obituary piece announced that "The news of the death of S.A. Beadle, aged colored lawyer, who formerly practiced here, has been received here with deep regret." It is noted that Beadle died in Chicago, having "practiced in Jackson for forty years," that he "was the author of several poetical books," and that he "was highly respected by both white and colored residents of Jackson" (9).

During the last twenty years, a period, to say the least, of re-evaluation of the literary canon, the work of Samuel Alfred Beadle has received only two brief mentions -- in *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow*, by Neil McMillen, and in the essay "Literature, 1890-1970" in Volume 2 of *A History of Mississippi*. In the latter source, one paragraph is devoted to Samuel Alfred Beadle, but he is incorrectly called "S.S. Beadle," and the year of his death is given as 1932 instead of 1937 (Rouse 451). While Beadle is not a neglected Richard Wright of a prior generation, his voice does deserve study from a number of perspectives.

Born into slavery in Georgia in 1858, Beadle was brought as a child to Rankin County, Mississippi, by his mother (Jordan 9). Little is presently known about his early life, but Beadle's own recollections of his training in the law and of his admission to the bar were recorded in an interview and reported in 1930 (Mollison 44-45). Beadle read for the bar in the law offices in Brandon of two of the most prominent white attorneys in Mississippi, Patrick Henry and Anselm J. McLaurin, the latter of whom would serve as governor from 1896 to 1900 and twice as United States Senator.

In 1884, McLaurin made a motion to admit Beadle to the bar examination at Brandon before the Chancery Judge, who objected, saying that he "did not examine 'niggers' in his court" (Mollison 44). Beadle was, however, allowed to take the examination, which was open to licensed lawyers who could participate with questions if they wished to do so. Twenty-six attorneys, among them two black lawyers, appeared in Brandon to pass on Beadle's qualifications. The two black attorneys "not only offered him no help or support, but helped to make fun of him." Beadle, though, was well-prepared, having memorized Blackstone, and he passed the examination (Mollison 45).

Later, the prominent Jewish cotton merchants J.B. Hart and Company, of Jackson became one of Beadle's clients. Details of the Beadle-Hart financial arrangements included Beadle's receiving "[a]s a retainer . . . five hundred dollars a year and all his office expenses," in return for which "[h]e attended to [Hart and Company's] landed interests, handled their foreclosures, collected their accounts, drew their deeds, their contracts, and generally did all their commercial work." Beadle wrote J.B. Hart's will, which involved "a Million Dollars" (Mollison 64). According to Beadle, however, the arrangement did not continue, because "white lawyers informed J.B. Hart and Company that 'their practice was too lucrative' for a Black to handle, and that a Black lawyer could not 'represent white clients'" (Jordan 20, Mollison 64). Marjorie Jordan, in an unpublished study of the life of Samuel A. Beadle, concluded, that "[a]pparently such political pressure convinced J.B. Hart and Company that their best interest would be served in dismissing Beadle as the company attorney" (20, Mollison 64). Afterwards, Beadle opened a law office in Jackson in partnership with black attorney Perry Howard, who served for several years as the Republican National Committeeman for Mississippi (Hanna 6).

During a thirteen year span, Beadle published three books: *Sketches from Life in Dixie* (1899), consisting of seven stories in prose and 53 poems; *Adam Shuffler* (1901), a collection of thirteen stories, some of which use black dialect; and *Lyrics of the Underworld* (1912), a collection of poems, interspersed with some of the early photographs of Beadle's son Richard H. Beadle, who was for fifty years the only black photographer in Mississippi and whose life and works are the subject of a permanent exhibit in Smith Robertson Museum in Jackson. In 1930, Samuel A. Beadle went to Chicago, opened a law office, and practiced law there until his death seven years later (Jordan 14).

In 1992, three of Samuel A. Beadle's granddaughters--Mrs. Barbara Beadle Barber, Mrs. Anita Beadle Scott, and Mrs. Johnnie Beadle Middleton--live in Jackson, and two of his grandchildren are Jackson educators--Dr. Richard Middleton III, Professor of Education at Jackson State University, and Dr. Jeanne Middleton Forsythe, Professor of Education at Millsaps College.

In Beadle's first book, *Sketches from Life in Dixie*, two poems and a prose allegory are interesting pieces of protest literature and are the focus of the rest of this essay.

Almost exactly halfway through *Sketches* a poem occurs that is titled simply "Lines," with the subtitle "Suggested by the Assaults made on the Negro Soldiers as they passed through the south on their way to and from our war with Spain" (63-64). The poem is an apostrophe of four eight-line stanzas to "my country," and the first-person speaker begins, "How I love my country." While the first words establish the speaker as a true patriot, we quickly learn in the second line that the speaker is less than completely

happy with the state of affairs in the nation, for the speaker "would [the country] were noble and free / In spirit and deed, as in word" (lines 2-3). The good-citizen speaker quickly reassures us, though--"I love you, my country, I do"--and adds, "Here's a heart, a soul that is thine, / Pregnant with devotion for you, / And blind to your faults as to mine" (5-8).

In the second stanza the speaker insists that the "standard of morals is high" for him in the country and reports that the standard has been "fixed by my brother for me." The speaker's "brother" acts as "a judge austere and stern" in fixing the standard, and Beadle, using an image from his professional life, has the judge presiding from the bench, but the bench, ominously, is "a skull" (9-14), with the image foreshadowing the speaker's imminent death.

The third stanza is a litany of ways in which during the war the speaker-citizen-soldier lived up to the high moral standard:

> I've carried your flag to the front
> Through pestilence, battles and storms;
> Of the carnage of war took the blunt [brunt?],
> Obeyed your command, "Carry arms!"
> And gone with you down to the death,
> With the thorns of caste on my head;
> Defended your home and your hearth,
> And wept o'er the bier of your dead. (17-24)

In spite of all these heroic deeds of the speaker, in the fourth stanza, after the heat of the battle when "the bugle calls to repose," the speaker is killed by friendly fire -- "By my countryman's hands I die, / As well as by the hands of its foes" (27-28). It is clear that even though the speaker has a well-defined sense of the larger national community--it is "our [emphasis added] war with Spain," the subtitle told us -- and is a good citizen so much so that he is blind to his country's faults, his loyalty is not appreciated by his fellow citizens and he, consequently, is marginalized if not annihilated.

Following "Lines" by ten or so pages in *Sketches from Life in Dixie* is Beadle's prose allegory "The Abduction and Rape of Themis." The geographical setting of the narrative is Popular Swells, a small town in the South, and the time of the abduction is June 27, 1890 (75). The first-person narrator of the story, unlike the speaker in "Lines," is more of a reporter and is not a main character himself; he immediately explains that on the Monday following June 27, court was to have been convened in Popular Swells with one Roderic Vulcan and others to have been tried for the murder of Thomas Ebon. The allegorical nature of the narrative can be seen immediately in the name of the town, Popular Swells; the name of the murder victim, Ebon; and the chief defendant in the trial, Vulcan. Ebon's

name suggests to the reader early on that the real problem in Popular Swells is race.

The good-citizen figure in this story, the counterpart in that respect of the speaker-soldier in "Lines," is Ebon himself, "an industrious and well-to-do fellow, who had . . . incurred the "displeasure of some of his neighbors" but was ignorant of his specific offense. Ebon is thereby marginalized: "Men passed him with contracted brows and averted eyes. Women evaded him, and the children hooted at him as he passed them; they even pelted him with stones" (75). Ebon is advised to leave the community immediately, and a few days later "several of those famous 'Unknown persons' came to his home, and began the depredations common to "Law and Order Leagues, and White Cappers." They set his house afire, "and, as he was running from the flames," they killed him, "but not until he had mortally wounded two of his assailants," among them Vulcan, the mayor of Popular Swells (76).

In an even-handed way, Beadle does not have Ebon to be the only good citizen of the town. There are others, and they do not sit idly by; rather, "[i]ncensed, and feeling themselves outraged by an act so dire, the best citizens of the community resolved to have the guilty parties tried in the courts of justice" (76). Vulcan and his cohorts, however, "determined that they would not be so ceremoniously dealt with. So they conspired and brought forth this atrocious scheme: The abduction and rape of Themis," who is called in the allegory "the mistress of the law" (76, 77). Vulcan gathers his friends, with allegorical names, about him -- Bob Prejudice, Jacob Avarice, Tom Calumny, Joe Hate, Leon Caste, Frank Deceit, Gabriel Pride, and Ed. Malice -- and hatches his plot.

With Vulcan's plans laid, the scene shifts to Themis' imperial chamber at one hour past high noon on June 27, 1890, where arrive Vulcan and his cohorts, who "have come seeking an interview with [Themis], and an understanding about a matter which may come before you for adjustment" (81). Themis responds indignantly:

> It is not the business of judges to hear causes in secret; nor to acquaint themselves with facts in any case before it comes on for regular hearing. . . . When once the courts of the land recognize favorites and yield clandestinely to the arguments of criminals, the security of life, person and property is swept away, and no man is safe. It is the business of judges to adjudicate the laws, not to make, warp nor twist them to suit the exigencies of the classes. (81)

Themis refuses to go with Vulcan's company but is attacked and dragged away to the palace of Bob Prejudice, where she is "at the mercy of Prejudice, and, lying still bound, he outraged her; whereupon, in due time, she conceived and brought forth that hydra, Judge Lynch" (82).

The third protest piece in *Sketches from Life in Dixie* is the poem "Strike for Equal Rights" (100-01), consisting of eight quatrains, the most stirring piece of the three, in which Beadle is "unashamedly angry" (Jordan 99). The first line begins calmly enough: "Think of the price of liberty." But the next three lines contain some of the strongest language in the pieces as they use the images of the lash, the massacre, and, in an echo of the end of "The Abduction and Rape of Themis," "lynch rule." The speaker is, however, still a good American citizen--he alleges that a person who will not "strike for equal rights" for himself is a "renegade to liberty" and no true American (13-14).

The emphasis, though, has shifted. The soldier-speaker in "Lines" was a good citizen fighting for his country who was killed by friendly fire. Thomas Ebon is a good citizen of Popular Swells, and the other good citizens of Popular Swells seek to avenge his murder, but to no avail, and a horrible perversion results. Action, however, is the emphasis in "Strike for Equal Rights"; the last stanza is a clarion call:

> Come all the law abiding, come,
> Where'er throughout the earth you roam,
> And strike for native land and home,
> For God and sacred life. (29-32)

So Beadle sounds some important notes: Fighters for freedom must dramatize in their own lives the values for which they fight. The good citizen-fighter may have to pay the high price; he may have to become a martyr -- for his own personal cause but ultimately and ideally for the cause of his "native land." Such circumstances may come to pass when the good citizen has acted, has struck for equal rights. Those notes will sound and resound long after Samuel Alfred Beadle's day and help to produce the American Civil Rights Movement sixty years later.

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Eve on the Boards: Nan Coleman, the Actress in Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes*

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Conceived in a time of great difficulty for its creator, the opera *The Siege of Rhodes* is the possessor of more distinctions than any other English theatre production. This claim seems extravagant when we examine the gamut of English drama or, for that matter, Shakespeare's works. For all their excellence, Shakespeare's plays do not represent concrete formal advances in theatre production. On the other hand, *The Siege of Rhodes* is revolutionary. Most students of literature have never heard of the work, and its acknowledged mediocrities have condemned it to the obscurity of content footnotes in theatre histories.

However, *The Siege of Rhodes* was born in the highly pressured atmosphere of the late Commonwealth when it was dangerous for artists to put on stage productions of any kind, and its librettist and producer Sir William Davenant had to carefully avoid the appearance of staging a traditional play -- all of which had been banned in the Theatre Act of 1642 by the pressure of Puritan zealots upon Parliament. At the same time, he sought to introduce a continental form of entertainment into what could have been an extremely hostile setting. After all, opera was dramatic, Italian, Catholic, and dealt with strong passions. These descriptions alone might have killed its inception on the English Puritan stage.

What Davenant did not realize at the time was that he was forging the basic appearance of the modern theater, that he was enfranchising half of humankind into the public theatre for the first time in England, that he was introducing the first real opera into England, and that he was -- according to Dryden years later -- creating an altogether new form of drama, the heroic drama ("Of Heroic Plays" 166). These are distinctions little short of amazing, yet for all their importance to the history of the English stage, thorns of irony lie about *The Siege of Rhodes*. It is quite forgotten to modern scholarship. Although we still have Davenant's text, the music is lost (Lowenberg 5), and the opera has passed from study in all but the most esoteric canons of literature or musicology.

Davenant's work used the talents of three vocal-music composers and two younger instrumental composers, George Hudson and Edward Coleman, whose wife Nan was the first woman to appear on the English public stage (White, History 7). Although no confirming record exists, one wonders if Nan's participation in the opera was not planned but merely

happened because of her proximity to and interest in the production. Indeed, in later years she denied any great importance in the groundbreaking role that she played. She thought she was the first woman onstage because she happened to be the nearest one at the time. It is interesting to note that in a tactful endeavor to avoid any scandalous implications, the parts of husband and wife -- Alphonso and Ianthe -- were entrusted to the married Colemans. As we now couch it in cliche: the show had to go on. Nan was there (73).

How did this change take place in England? Artistically, exile in France during the Interregnum was extremely beneficial to Davenant because he was exposed to the forms and concerns of French classical theatre, as well as to Italian opera, both of which used real actresses instead of the boy heroines (Dent 47). Davenant had been captured while on a mission for the exiled Stuarts in 1650. After his pardon and release from a Puritan prison in 1654, he found himself in a London itching for amusements and chafing at the ban on theatre productions, and toward the end of the Commonwealth period, private theatricals subtly transformed themselves into public theatricals (Harbage 208). It had always been difficult for the Puritans to prohibit public entertainments in a populace used to such freedoms. Cromwell knew this, and although surrounded by zealots, he was quite aware that suppressions in one direction would only "lead to effervescences in a dozen others," (Nethercot 208) and he tended toward accepting innocent diversions among the people, particularly those dealing with vocal and instrumental music, both of which Cromwell enjoyed (299).

A brief look at the work itself is warranted. Davenant's war-theme sources for *The Siege of Rhodes* were Richard Knolles's *The General Historie of the Turks* (1603). The romantic interest -- and the excuse to bring onstage a real woman -- is from Madeline de Scudery's *Ibrahimj, ou I'llustre Bassa* (Summers 40). Soliman, whose name is known in history as Suleiman the Magnificent, assaulted and besieged Christian Rhodes from June to December 1522 with 200,000 men. There were 5,000 Christian defenders including an international contingent of the Knights of St. John, an order based in England. The Christian defenders fought bravely but were finally defeated by native intrigue and starvation (Bordinat and Blaydes 115). To this plot, Davenant added the nonhistorical Alphonso and Ianthe to add love interest to the opera and to bring into sharp focus the presence of a woman onstage, as well as to provide Alphonso with a love-honor dilemma to resolve. The opera's ideal is "the perfect conjunction of the Platonic standards of honor and love, and the conflicts that sustain its action arise directly from the failure of this harmonious conjunction" (Brown 5). The conflict is resolved and the action ended when love and honor are joined -- when Ianthe has conquered Soliman with her honor and virtue and consequently has saved Rhodes and her love. Thus Davenant

changes the grim outcome of history's siege, replacing it with that reflect impossible levels of womanly and manly virtue.

With these two sources -- one love, the other the battlefield of honor -- Davenant is virtually the first to take us into the realm of the heroic play and creates the necessity of having a truly passionate female character, Ianthe, the new bride of the warrior Alphonso who seeks to escape with him from the besieged island of Rhodes. Torn between his love for Ianthe and his military duty, Alphonso battles the armies of Soliman as well as his jealous passions.

This tension of passions brings about another great theatrical change of the late Commonwealth, that women began to appear onstage. Of course, it was not the first time a woman had appeared on any English stage. Aristocratic women had often performed in Caroline masques, as did Queen Henrietta herself. But the masques were private productions, meant solely for their aristocratic audiences. In his tract on the Carolines stage, William Prynne entitled one chapter of his *Histriomastix* "Women-Actors, notorious whores," an attack on certain women who had danced privately in masques. Not knowing that he was inadvertently calling Queen Henrietta herself a whore, he was promptly punished (Harbage 15-6).

In any case, there was no admission charged to the masques. *The Siege of Rhodes*, however, came to the stage in a more democratic era, and although critics agree more or less with the main assertion about Nan Coleman, it must be said that the only fair way to call her the first woman on the English stage is to make the distinction that an admission fee was charged and that the theater, Rutland House, was only semi-public.

Stranger still is the way Davenant exploited Mrs. Coleman's presence on the stage. Ianthe appears briefly proclaiming her love for her husband in the first "entry" -- Davenant's way of avoiding any suggestion of the theatre by using the term "act" -- and then disappears until the second entry, where she has been captured and brought, veiled, before Soliman. It is the scene of Soliman's encampment where Davenant places his emphasis: Davenant chooses this moment to introduce the first actress to the English professional stage. His sense of the dramatic is astute, for Ianthe is escorted onstage veiled. She remains in silence while

Mustapha [one of the characters] praises her to Soliman whose growing excitement must have been shared by the audience. She remains veiled throughout the entry and is at Soliman's mercy, although he treats her honorably. In the fifth and last entry, however, we learn that she has been fighting the Turks like an Amazon, and like a Penthesilea she has been wounded in battle. In this way Davenant has exploited her love for Alphonso, her mystery as a veiled potential creature of the seraglio, and her valor as an Amazon -- all new aspects of womanhood to be displayed on stage (Dent 63-4).

As can be imagined, *The Siege of Rhodes* was extremely popular, including as it did so many innovations in drama. It was such a success that Davenant was allowed to reopen the Cockpit, his old theater in 1657, three years before the Restoration (Bordinat and Blaydes 118). Opportunistic as he was, he also convinced Commonwealth Secretary John Thurloe that public entertainments would offset, as he put it, "melancholy that breeds sedition to entertain a new generation of youth who should be withdrawn from licentiousness, gaming, and discontent" (118). What wonderful smoke and mirrors.

Amazingly, despite the obviousness of this red-herring ploy, permission to open the Cockpit was granted, and Davenant produced *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* in 1658. By turning Puritan prejudices to his own ends -- that is, convincing them that sedition, gaming, and discontent were worse that watching Davenant's so-called "moral representations" -- he in effect got what he most wanted: nothing less than the reopening of his old theater and performing public plays for a profit, all under the aegis of the watchful authorities (119).

One wonders if the Puritans were either growing tired of their own social restraints, as well as fearing that those same restraints introduced involuntarily among the people was becoming loathsome and onerous to a more fun-loving majority, but in any case, it would appear that the Commonwealth government was losing its grip on the populace by becoming inconsistent in its own laws. Davenant learned how to manipulate the Puritans by using a red-herring approach -- that is, he consistently drew the attention of the Puritan censors away from his productions by reminding them of his opera's didactic agenda and the dangers of refusing innocent pastimes to restless people. In any case, the irrepressible Cavalier spirit was revived, though changed, when Charles II returned in 1660. By that time, William Davenant had not only proved his loyalty to the new monarch, but he had also preserved theatre culture from near-abandonment during the Commonwealth and paved the way for the heroic drama that would follow.

Davenant was no great artist; if the opposite were true, his *Siege of Rhodes* would have grown into the huge potential which all of its "firsts" might have endowed upon it -- the first woman onstage, the first picture stage, the first true English opera, the first heroic drama, the first moving scenery. For certainly this opera lay at the crossroads of many influences like the Caroline masque and continental opera, as well as being a harbinger and disseminator of things to come.

The showman's showman, Davenant gave the world his greatest gifts not in his poetry, as perhaps would have liked, but in the seemingly random influences and forces which shaped *The Siege of Rhodes* into a fount of innovation and a child of Necessity: his poetry forced him to Rutland House, the Commonwealth forced him to Opera, Rutland House led him

to a new kind of stagecraft, and opera led him to actresses. Davenant himself could not have known but dimly that he would profoundly change the English-speaking stage for all time.

For women in the audiences, the change must have had more than symbolic meanings. What must the city wives of London have thought when they saw the Elizabethan and Jacobean boy heroines acting the parts of women, that by custom women were to be in the home and not onstage in unseemly appearance?

Perhaps even more shocking to the Puritans would have been the alternative to letting women sing in operas -- the use of castrati, that is, adult male sopranos and altos to act and sing in the women's parts. This decadence from Europe could not be suffered, and therefore the Puritans decided to allow the least of three evils, opening the door for women to get on the stage. This permission finally created the conditions for the depiction of real romantic passions onstage and also had the ancillary effect of attracting more women to see dramas. The way to the great "She" tragedies of the eighteenth century was open, and everything was changed. Women were still chattel to be won by male characters, but at least their veils were figuratively ripped away -- literally, in Nan Coleman's case as Ianthe. Women were foregrounded and seen as human beings, even Amazons like Ianthe, competent and capable of defending themselves in battle; like Ianthe, they also were shown as having moral dilemmas to resolve, just like men, implying that they had brains and souls and will, just as men did. *The Siege of Rhodes* must have been a remarkable production to attend. It changed the English world.

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Native Remedies Against Natural Defects: William Byrd, Swamp Doctor

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In general, eighteenth-century philosophers believed in a "bountiful Creator," a "Ruler of Natue," who had created the best of all possible worlds. Botanist-physician Dr. Benjamin Smith Barton, for example, believed that cures were available because "nature, ever attentive to our welfare, has enriched her series of animals, of vegetables, and of minerals, with beings, with objects, and with means, which man, in very stage of his improvement, is instructed to employ for preventing, for alleviating, or for curing at least some of those infirmities." Philadelphia's Dr. Benjamin Rush agreed that "Heaven has surrendered every part of the globe to man, in a state capable of being inhabited, and enjoyed; [therefore,] to every natural evil, the Author of Nature has kindly prepared an antidote," but it was up to science to discover it. Others even taught that "every herb that grows in our woods is possessed of some medicinal virtue," and that surely America had "remedies for all the different diseases of its inhabitants."[1] Dr. Barton believed "that among the vegetable treasures which nature has bestowed upon us, many important remedies will be discovered." and that scientists were foolish not to study Indian cures "merely because [the Indians] were incapable of teaching us the whole nature of their remedies, and could offer no satisfactory theory to explain the mode of their action upon the system."[2]

The Colonial South produced a significant literature of "natural history," as it was called, well before Linnaeus's system of classifying the botanical world was complete. By 1705 when William Byrd II (1674-1744) returned to his Virginia homeland as a young adult, several cures for ailments native to Virginia and Carolina were well known. Byrd's scientific interests were stimulated by the new country, and his letters back to England after each return show renewed fascination with the medical resources of the colonies.

William Byrd is known to the twentieth century as a planter, gentleman, legislator, diarist, lecher and wit. He is perhaps less well known as a scientist. Byrd joined the Royal Society in 1696, and throughout the first decade of the eighteenth century his letters frequently included samples of Virginia herbal cures such as ipecac (a purge), stickweed root (a staunch), snakeroot (an antidote), pokeberries (which he felt were good for something but he didn't quite know what), musk oil (an aromatic), and various

poison weeds (used as poultices). He also wrote papers and provided a live Virginia rattlesnake to the Society. Byrd's library at Westover in Virginia contained about 150 medical treatises, from Hippocrates to his contemporaries Radcliffe and Cheney.

Byrd's interest in health -- both in the prevention and in the cure of maladies -- continued throughout his life. In 1741 he complained to Sir Hans Sloane, President of the Royal Society:

> It take it a little unkindly Sir that my name is left out of the yearly list of the Royal Society, of which I have the honour to be one of its ancientest members. I suppose my long absence has made your secretarys rank me in the number of the dead, but pray let them know I am alive, and by the help of ginseng hope to survive some years longer.[3]

American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) was discovered in 1716 and was heavily used in North America, England, and China to treat a variety of diseases. It became scarce or even extinct in some areas because of the demand for its roots. Byrd expressed great faith in its efficacy, for "it is highly cordial, it recrutes the wasted spirits, and repairs a decay's constitution." Disappointed that it would not be cultivated, Byrd consoled himself that "Providence I sopose has ordered it thus, least so great a blessing should be too common."

Byrd's intimate acquaintance with both Virginia and England sharpened his curiosity and the detail in his descriptions of natural surroundings. For example, a letter to Sir Hans Sloane in 1708 shows Byrd's factual and theoretical interests: "There is a paper of a dangerous seed of a plant which we call here Jamestown weed, both the seed and the root are rank poison and so are the leaves." Jamestown, or Jimson weed, (*Datura stramonium*) bears leaves pungent enough to warn most mammals of its dangerously poison alkaloids. Jimson weed is used medicinally for treating certain respiratory ailments, for relieving pain, and in the form of belladonna for dilating the pupils of the eye. Byrd also sent "a seed of the Jerusalem oak as we call it, which kills worms better than any wormseed I ever heard of." He prepared *Ambroscoides mexiocana* by mixing a "spoonfull of the seed with honey, which must be eat 3 mornings together, and if the patient have worms in his stomack or guts it will infallibly kill them" (*Correspondence* I, 266).

Two decades later on his third return from England, his letters demonstrate his fascination with the heathful environment of Virginia, his knowledge of eighteenth-century folk cures, and his understanding, typical of his century, of the relationship between nutrition, health, and morality. Byrd loved his homeland Virginia even though he spent nearly a third of his adult life abroad. In a letter to England after his return to Virginia in 1726,

he refers to the temperate Virginia climate in his characteristically humorous way:

> . . . there are not above ten days in a whole summer that your Lordship would complain of, and they happen when the breazes fail us, and it is a dead calm. But then the other nine months are most charmingly delightfull, with a fine air, and a serene sky, that keeps us in good health, and good-humour. Spleen, and vapours are as absolute rarities here as a winters-sun, or a publick spirit in England. A man may eat beef, be as lazy as Captain Hardy, or even marry in this clymate without having the least inclination to hang himself. (*Correspondence* I, 354)

Full of the ecstacy of returning with his young bride to a clean atmosphere, Byrd's letters declare, "I shall wish your Lordship a little of our sun-shine, to disperse all that fogg and smoak with which your [winter] atmosphere is loaded. Tis miraculus that any lungs can breath in an air compounded of so many different vapours and exhalations, like that of dirty London" (*Correspondence* I, 355). In a later letter he affirms the superiority of Virginia: [O]ur air receives a springiness and purity very friendly to our lungs, and beneficiall to the circulation both of our blood, and spirits. Nobody coughs himself into a consumption here, as your Lordship may remember I almost did every winter in England." Not only is Virginia's air pure, but her "waters too have a spirit and a sweetness, far beyond those of your island: which," Byrd said, "is the reason our Indians never thought it worth their while to provide any stronger drink." In spite of this, the cosmopolitan Byrd "must own London has its charms . . . notwithstanding all the smoak, and noise, and dirt that discrace it" (*Correspondence* I, 356, 357).

On his fifty-third birthday, March 28, 1728, Byrd was appointed by King George I as one of three Virginia commissioners to survey the long-disputed boundary between North Carolina and Virginia through the Dismal Swamp. By late November the party of fifty-two had spent some sixteen weeks in the swampy pocosin, striking a line 241 miles long from Currituck Inlet to the Appalachian foothills. They took with them a small first-aid kit and learned native remedies from the Indians and white swamp-dwellers. The two documents resulting from this expedition, Byrd's well known *History* and *Secret History of the Dividing Line*, are amusing accounts of this experience, providing records of the topography and geography of the area, descriptions of the natural habitat of specific herbs, short histories of their uses, and commentary on their efficacy. His knowledge of eighteenth-century folk cures and the relationship between ecology, medicine

and diet coalesce during the expedition to settle the boundary through the Dismal Swamp.

If Virginia's air and water were like crystal, that of the Swamp was another story. Not only did the atmosphere emit "noisome exhalations" that made the bordering inhabitants "liable to agues, pleurisies, and many other distempers that kill abundance of people and make the rest look no better than ghosts,"[4] but also the water was unfit for human consumption. The swamp was "very quaggy, and the impressions of the men's feet were immediately filled with water. So, if there was any hole made, it was soon full of that element, and by that method it was that our people supplied themselves with drink." "But it was far from being either clear or well tasted," and "their moist lodging for so many nights and drinking of standing water, tinged with the roots of juniper, had given them little fevers and slight fluxes in their passage." Byrd had numerous herb remedies for fluxes and fevers, but one that had several positive side effects was "rum, that cordial of life . . . It did not only recruit the people's spirits, now almost jaded with fatigue, but served to correct the badness of the water and at the same time to resist the malignity of the air" (*Prose*, pp. 191, 69).

Byrd was also an active collector of folk medicine and the roots and leaves required to make it. Among the herbs used during the dividing line expedition was *Rheum rhaponticum*, or common rhubarb, which contains vitamin C and has laxative qualities. With rhubarb in his "first aid" kit, Byrd several times prescribed chewing this well-known plant as a purge; he often indicated rhubarb for fevers, agues, and fluxes "occasioned by bad water and moist lodging." He most often recommended a second drug, Indian physic, for "intermittent fevers" and the bloody flux. Ipecacuanha, or *Euphorbia ipecacuanhae*, grew abundantly in the area, and the extract *ipecac* was considered an "excellent vomit" for a variety of ailments. It is used today as a poison antidote because it produces vomiting, and in cough syrups because it acts as an expectorant. It was prolific, Byrd said, "in the upper part of the country, where it delights most in a stony soil intermixed with black mold." Although not as strong as Brazilian ipecac, it "has the same happy effects if taken in somewhat a larger dose" (*Prose*, p. 229).

Byrd gave several first-hand testimonies to ipecac's effect but the nearly miraculous cure of William Pool was the most astounding. The poor man "complained that though his stomach was good and he eat a great deal yet he hardly ever went to stool. . . . This made him very full and uneasy, giving him pains both in his stomach and bowels. First I gave him a dose of Anderson's pills, which afforded him very little ease" (*Prose*, p. 139-40). Pool was "a very strong, lively fellow and used abundance of violent exercise," and Byrd was amazed that he remained so constipated. Finally, the medic "prescribed a moderate dose of ipecacuanha in broth made very salty, which turned all its operation downwards" (*Prose*, p. 273). "This not

only employed him and gave him ease but brought him to be very regular in his evacuations, by being now and then repeated" (*Prose*, 140).

This miracle drug, ipacac, was sometimes used along with a third rather common medicine, Peruvian bark, or quinine, a remedy for malaria. The bark of *chicona* was often used to halt "agues," and in combination with a vomit of ipecac, it cured fevers and fluxes. Occasionally the native dogwood bark was used instead of Peruvian which was imported from South America. In fact, Byrd himself sometimes took the bark (Also called Jesuit bark) with brandy and water "which is the least nauseous way of taking this popish medicine."

A flare-up of gout in Commissioner William Dandridge (called Meanwell in the *Secret History*) gave Byrd an opportunity to hypothesize on several cures for this "cruel distemper." Meanwell "bruised his foot in a tender place, by which he got a gentle fit of the gout . . . [He] bathed his foot frequently in cold water to repel the humor if possible, for as the case was, he could neither put on shoe nor boot" (*Prose*, p. 129). Although it is "very difficult to find a certain cure for the gout," Byrd believed that specific medicines which "supple the parts and clear the passage through the narrow vessels that are the seat of this cruel disease" may "ease the pain and shorten the fits of it." "Nothing will do this more suddenly," he said, "than rattlesnake's oil, which will even penetrate the pores of glass when warmed in the sun" (*Prose*, p. 272). It was not necessary to have rattlesnake oil, however, to ease the pain; for "lately the Seneca rattlesnake root has been discovered in this country, which, being infused in wine and drank morning and evening, has in several instances had a very happy effect upon the gout, and enabled cripples to throw away their crutches and walk several miles, and, what is stranger still, it takes away the pain in half an hour" (*Prose*, p. 272).

Collectively referred to as "snakeroot," a group of snakebite remedies are the most fascinating medicines that Byrd described. Although modern reference works indicate that these native plants derive their name from their snake-like roots, the earliest descriptions clearly refer to their supposed efficacy in snakebite cases. In 1706, Byrd had described to Sir Hans Sloane a root "which the Indians us'd to cure the bite of a rattle-snake."

> Travellers find it constantly to cure their horses, when they happen to be bit . . . [T]hey pound about the quantity 2 roots at most, and give it in water. It soon begins to operate violently by sweat, while the patient lys panting with the tongue out for 2 or 3 hours together, & then is perfectly well. What is wonderfull in this medicine is, that it has no sensible operation upon any creature that has not been poisond. Certainly a plant that has virtue enough to cure so venomous a bite, as that of the rattle-snake, must be of infinite use in other disasters. (Correspondence I, 260-61)

A year later Byrd had discovered other disasters that the root would cure, for he wrote,

> if the power of it be put into canary it restores the vigour of the stomack effectually, if a man take 2 or 3 swallows of it sometimes. At my first arrival here I was troubled with a violent diarraea, which no medicine would cure but I took this, and then I was cur'd presently, & have continu'd well ever since. (*Correspondence* I, 267)

He was referring to *Polygala senega* or Seneca rattlesnake root which became a famous cure-all in eighteenth-century America. It was named for the Seneca Indians of New York State who promoted it as a cure for snakebite. Explorer Mark Catesby said that the cure "which most of the *Virginian* and *Carolina Indians* carry dry in their pockets, is a small tuberous root, which they procure from the remote parts of the country; this they chew, and swallow the juice, applying some to the wound." However, Catesby felt "that the good effects usually attributed to these and their remedies, is owing more to the force of nature, or the slightness of the bite of a small Snake in a muscular part"; for "where a Rattle-Snake with full force penetrates with his deadly fangs, and pricks a vein or artery, inevitable death ensues."[5]

John Bartram, founder of America's first botanical garden, advised in 1751 that six concurrent elements were needed to cure ailments: "the Season, Age and Constitution of the Patient; [and] the nature, Time and Progress of the Disease"; otherwise "it is not likely that the [medication] should succeed generally." Bartram noted that "when a Root or Herb has been given with good Success several Times in a particular Disease, and the Patient recovered soon after the taking of the Medicine, [people] applaud that Medicine exceedingly." But, he warned, "then many that are sick of the same disease, or any other, that hath near the like Symptoms, apply directly to this famed Specifick, expecting immediate Relief." When a remedy failed, Bartram pointed out, "but reason of its improper Application, as to Time, Constitution, or nature of the Disease, many choice Medicines grow out of Repute again."[6] Catesby's Indians did not make this mistake in snakebite cases, for they "know their destiny the minute they are bit; and, when they perceive it mortal, apply no remedy, concluding all efforts in vain."[7]

Seneca rattlesnake root remained a popular panacea throughout the century. In 1712 when a "Pleursey" seized Charleston and "carryed off abundance of our inhabitants," a local doctor prescribed "large doses of snake root . . . with good success."8 And by 1728, when Byrd was in the swamp, he had learned that the versatile Seneca root would cure not only snakebites in man and beast, common diarrhea, and the gout, but also

"pleurisies, fevers, rheumatisms, and dropsies." In fact in 1731 these knobby roots were thought such an "infallible Cure for Pleurisy" that apothecaries in South Carolina apparently sold them over the counter. In 1738 Virginia's John Tennent indicated *Senega* for the cure of pleurisy, gout, rheumatism, dropsy, "and many nervous Disorders." Tennent's further recommendations against peripneumonies and inflammations (published by no less a scientist than Benjamin Franklin), were validated by Charleston's Dr. Alexander Garden, who also included "Leucophlegmatic" ailments.

The swamp doctor also recommended star grass (*Aletris farinosa*) as acting "infallibly" against rattlesnake bites. Its root, "not unlike the rattle of that serpent," had a bitter taste, and extracted the poison by "violent sweats." However, if one had not been stung, its only result was "putting the spirits into a great hurry and so of promoting perspiraton." Star grass was also such a powerful snake repellent that "if you smear your hands with the juice of it, you may handle the viper safely." In fact, "once in July, when these snakes are in their greatest vigor" (*Prose*, p. 226). Byrd had "besmeared a dog's nose with the powder of this root and made him trample on a large snake several times, which, however, was so far from biting him that it perfectly sickened at the dog's approach and turned its head from him with the utmost aversion" (*Prose*, pp. 226-27).

The earliest significant record of Southern snakeroot was made around 1680 by Thomas Ashe, who noted three plants with heart-shaped leaves. Members of the *Aristolochiaceae* family, these three became well known not only for sweating out snake venom, but as "a Noble Specifick" in all "Pestilential Distempers, as Plague, Small Pox, and Malignant Fevers."[9] Other witnesses to the potency of this group include John Banister (d. 1692), John Lawson (1709, Mark Catesby (1720s), John Brickell, MD. (1731), John Bartram (1751), and Thomas Jefferson (1791).

Among several other snakeroots, Byrd also recommended St-Andrew's-cross to be used for bites on horses, again by sweating out the poison. Although some members of this highly variable genus bear pink or mauve petals, Byrd said it "bears a yellow flower on the top that has an eye of black." The leaves of *Ascyrum hypericoides* are narrow, and it blooms from July to September, "when the snakes have vigor enough to do mischief." Byrd anticipated the belief of later eighteenth-century scientific men when he opined that this "antidote grows providentially all over the woods and upon all sorts of soil, that it may be everywhere at hand in case a disaster should happen" (*Prose*, p. 228). When Byrd interpreted its ubiquity as "providential," he was in tune with his age -- an age in which Benjamin Rush would later declare that "From the affinity established by the Creator between evil and its antidotes . . . I am disposed to believe no remedy will ever be effectual in any general disease that is not cheap, and that cannot easily be made universal." St-Andrew's-cross certainly fit those two re-

quirements. In 1732 Byrd wrote that his plant decocted "in new milk instead of water," especially "after a dose or two of Indian physic" would cure the bloody flux (*Prose*, p. 345).

To the end of preventing, alleviating, and curing infirmities, Byrd learned not only how to recognize plants with medicinal value (including peas), but also how to prepare them. Some were "decocted" in alcohol, water, or honey; some were chewed; others were used externally. Still the plants were there for the picking. William Byrd's early records -- unknown to his own century because they remained in manuscript until 1841 --anticipated Dr. Rush's conviction that "every country possesses remedies that are suited to the cure of its peculiar diseases." Moreover, the bad taste of medicinal roots was necessary or "they would probably have yielded long ago to the unbounded appetite of man, and by becoming articles of diet, or condiments, have lost their efficacy in diseases."[10] Byrd's observation on an unknown plant -- "by the taste I judge it to have a great deal of virtue" -- affirmed the world view that "the bountiful Creator discovers his marvels in proportion to our wants . . . every country has native remedies against its natural defects."[11]

Endnotes

[1] Daniel Boorstin, *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson.* Boston: Beacon Press, (1960) pp. 263-264.

[2] Benjamin Smith Barton, *A Discourse on . . . Natural History.* (1807) Rpt. New York: Arno Press (1974) pp. 44-45.

[3] *The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds.* Ed. Marion R. Tinling. Charlottesville: Published by the Historical Society of Virginia, 1977) II, 585). Further references to Byrd's *Correspondence* will be cited in the text.

[4] History of Dividing Line in *Prose Works of William Byrd.* Ed. Louis B. Wright. Cambridge, Belknap Press (1966) p. 202. Further references to Byrd's Prose will be cited in the text.

[5] Mark Catesby, *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands.* (1771) Rpt. Savannah: Beehive Press (1974) II, plate 41.

[6] Ann Leighton, *American Gardens in the Eighteenth Century: For use or delight.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts (1976) p. 165; her chapter, "Every Man His Own Doctor," covers a wide range of herbal cures. See also Joseph Ewan, *A Short History of Botany* in the U. S. New York: Hafner Publishing (1969)p. 147.

[7] Catesby, II, plate 41.

[8] Joseph Waring, *A History of Medicine in S.C.* Charleston: South Carolina Medical Association (1964) pp. 24, 31, 50, 81.

[9] Thomas Ashe, *Travels in America, performed in 1806 for the purpose of exploring the rivers Alleghany, Monongahila and conditions of their banks.* New York: Printed for the publisher (1811) pp. 144-45.

[10] Boorstin, pp. 51-52.

[11] Boorstin, p. 263.

A Society of Women: Utopia or Dystopia?

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The narrator of Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* apostrophizes to her exiled feminist mother: "You wanted a women's culture. Well, now there is one. It isn't what you meant, but it exists" (164). Indeed for feminists, Gilead is not the women's culture they "want" -- it is a dystopia, in sharp contrast to the utopian world Charlotte Perkins Gilman envisioned in her 1915 novel *Herland*.

Atwood's Gilead is controlled by a group of fundamentalists men who have suspended the former constitution, taken away the females' rights to own property or hold certain jobs, defined acceptable interpersonal relationships -- and enforce their rules with armed guards. Because of environmental disasters, many of the citizens have been rendered sterile and the future of the society is pinned on those women who have proven that they can have children. If these women are not in a "valid" marriage (the first marriage for both the male and female), their children are given to those who are in "valid marriages," and the mothers are forced to become "handmaids" -- bear children -- for the politically powerful couples. If she attempts to avoid having a baby she will be sent to a penal colony or executed.

Motherhood, therefore, contains little choice. Although motherhood is revered -- the handmaids are well-taken care of physically and those wives without children are looked down on --its status is the result of the decline in reproduction -- its rarity -- rather than from its inherent qualities: "A thing is valued," one of the aunts proclaims, "only if it is rare and hard to get" (145). Although these aunts are used to control the handmaids, all of the women know that men hold the real power, or as the narrator asks about the commander, "if he were to falter, fail, or die, what would become of us?" (113).

In contrast, Herland is controlled by the women themselves. Several generations earlier the country was isolated from the rest of the world when an earthquake changed its geography. When the few men who were not away at war tried to enslave the women, the women killed their would-be captors. The survivors set out to live as best they could: cooperation became the way of life, women were given jobs according to their ability, and crime was obliterated. Furthermore, unlike Gilead, reproduction in Herland became the female's choice. When their reproduction through parthenogenesis first occurred, it seemed uncontrollable, but

gradually the women discovered how to control their reproduction. As one of them explains

> Often our young women, those to whom motherhood had not yet come, would voluntarily defer it. When that deep inner demand for a child began to be felt she would deliberately engage in the most active work, physical and mental; and even more important, would solace her longing by the direct care and service of the babies we already had. (70)

Reproduction and the rest of society are directly opposite from Gilead. Women are in control. And yet in both Gilead and Herland females are defined and governed by the feminine space of the womb.

The handmaids, the wives, the aunts and Marthas (those who "educate" and take care of the handmaids), even the men -- everyone in Gilead is centered on the space in the handmaid's body. The handmaid-narrator declares "We are containers, it's only the insides of our bodies that are important" (124). Although the novel documents the narrator's struggle against her loss of self, she often identifies herself as the space inside her: "I'm a cloud congealed around a central object, the shape of a pear, which is hard and more real than I am. . . . Inside it is space" (95). Traditionally the space of the womb also defines the female's place in time with the menstrual blood flowing out of this space in fairly predictable cycles. For the narrator, the blood which places her in cyclical time has become less important than the space from which it should (not) come: "Each month I watch for blood, fearfully, for when it comes it means failure. I have failed once again to fulfill the expectations of others, which have become my own" (95).

In the birth scenes the politics of the womb are the most obvious. Everyone in the district is centered on the space of the one womb which has become a filled space. When the handmaid Ofwarren is about to give birth, for example, a red "Birthmobile" picks up the other handmaids, an unrelenting siren blaring the news of an impending birth as it makes its rounds. Furthermore, it is not merely the handmaids who attend the birthing: the wives are picked up in a similarly loud blue "birthmobile" to attend the wife-in-waiting, the midwife-"aunts" are present, and all the doctors are assembled in case there are any insurmountable problems with the birth. Even the commander-husband seems to gather with other men "wherever men go on such occasions" (150). Birth is a communal ritual with each group of the society in its prescribed place participating in the ritual. Furthermore, through sympathetic pains, the women assembled become one with the handmaid actually having the baby. The wife "lies on the floor, in a white cotton nightgown, her graying hair spreading like mildew over the rug; they massage her tiny belly, just as if she's really about

to give birth herself" (149-50). As in the intercourse ritual, she then sits behind the handmaid, framing her. After the birth the wife is helped "down from the Birthing Stool and over to the bed, where they lay her down and tuck her in" before placing the baby "ceremoniously in her arms" (162). The other handmaids, who "are no longer single" but at one with each other (161), sweat, feel "false pains," and produce "fake milk" from their identification with the birthing process, and for a day, like the actual birth handmaid, are "excused from all duties" (165).

Moreover, the futures of the people in the Warren household are directly tied to the space of the womb. After the birth, the handmaid is allowed to nurse the baby for a few months, but after that she will be separated from the child and sent to "someone else who needs a turn" (163). The handmaid's status does not improve with the successful filling and emptying of her womb; it is only guaranteed not to deteriorate: although she will not be sent to the colonies as a "reward" for reproducing a healthy baby, the space of her womb will merely move from household to household seeking to be a useful space again. The politics of the womb benefit most the men in power. Ostensibly the politics of society were established because an extremely low birth rate was placing the society in danger of becoming extinct. However, as even the phrase "some*one* else who needs a turn" suggests, the individual is primary -- the "someone" is another commander who knows that with a successful birth he will certainly be promoted (163, emphasis added).

Women in Herland are also (but perhaps more subtly) reductively defined by the space of their wombs. When the parthenogenesis first began occurring, a temple was built in honor of the First Mother who then lived as "Queen-Priestess-Mother (57), a political and religious leader because of her productive womb. The first children were "surrounded" with the "loving service" of "the whole little nation of women" (56). As Herland advanced and the land became over-populated, a politics of limiting rather than encouraging reproduction developed. Although by the "present" of the novel, voluntarily not having a child has become (almost) as honorable a position as having a child, the centrality of the womb has not changed: the fecundant mother is still the deity of the society and motherhood a "sacrament," "the highest social service" (69). In fact, the "highest reward and honor in the power of the state" is to ask a female to conceive more than one child, and "the nearest approach to an aristocracy" they have is "to come of a line of 'Over Mothers' -- those who [have] been so honored (69). In contrast, if the state feels a woman is not worthy to have children, they appeal to her "social duty" not to have a child or forcibly take the child from her. As in Gilead, the space of their wombs defines the females of Herland.

Near the end of her serially written book Gilman attempts to turn the focus to the children by describing the education they receive and by

insisting that the motive for everything is that it be "clarified, simplified, made easy and beautiful, for the sake of the children" (102). But this focus on the children only reinforces the defining power of the womb and its "product."

In addition to defining the women themselves, the womb is the central metaphor for the country. The "president or king" of the country is the "Land Mother" (75) and the land is a large fecundant womb: "Here was Mother Earth, bearing fruit. All that they ate was fruit of motherhood, from seed or egg or their product. By motherhood they were born and by motherhood they lived -- life was, to them, just the long cycle of motherhood" (59).

Gilman's vision reflects the optimism of feminists in the early part of the twentieth century. As we all know, the early part of the twentieth century was one of the great strides in rights for women: passage of suffrage bills were imminent and Margaret Sanger was beginning her campaign for birth control. It is not surprising, therefore, that Gilman presents an optimistic vision of women in positions of power.

However, Gilman's women only find power in their wombs and in reproduction by excluding men. When men are reintroduced to the society of Herland and the women are faced with the choice of rejoining the "bisexual" world, one of the first things they must consider is relinquishing control over the space of their wombs. It is, in fact this struggle which in general constitutes the satire of the novel and in specific eventually results in the expulsion of one of the male interlopers from Herland.

Ultimately, the metaphor fails the book's aim of challenging all of the traditional roles of females in the early 1900s. The book is told by a male narrator who defines women -- particularly these women -- as the "other," this country which he calls by a gender -- "her" -- and by a space -- "land." Gilman never reveals the name by which the women call their country. The male nomenclature and the pervasiveness of the metaphor unites female and space, and thereby reinforces the traditional biological destiny of women.

The narrator of *The Handmaid's Tale* further critiques the basis of this kind of optimism: "if Moira [her friend] thought she could create Utopia by shutting herself up in a women-only enclave she was sadly mistaken. Men were not just going to go away, I said. You couldn't just ignore them" (223). This, in fact, captures Atwood's pessimistic vision of feminism in the 1980s. *The Handmaid's Tale*, like *Herland*, satirizes the contemporaneous world, particularly through the epilogue (which makes me wonder why anyone would write a paper on the handmaids's tale) which forces us as readers to revise what we have been perceiving as the present of the narrative (and our future) and place it in the past. Although the novel explicitly identifies a backlash against feminism in the time prior to the takeover by the fundamentalist government and obviously during the present of the novel,

Harriet Bergman points out that prejudices against women still prevail in the "enlightened" world of the epilogue, as seen in their jokes about women and sexuality. Through exploring the politics of the womb in Gilead, Atwood questions the status of women and suggests what Susan Faludi has made more explicit with her recent book *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* -- that the 1980s (and 1990s) are not an optimistic time for feminists, but in fact a time when the status of women is crumbling [xviii].

Ultimately, however, the metaphor of the womb undermines *The Handmaid's Tale* just as it does *Herland*. In attempting to satirize the backlash against women's freedom to control reproduction, Atwood returns women to the destiny and dichotomy of biology. Her place in society determined by being a space, the handmaid-narrator can only envision its opposite -- to occupy space, to become the phallus which fills the space. Neither the handmaid's tale nor the epilogue offers another politics.

Atwood's vision moves beyond Gilman's in questioning the politics of reproduction. Feminist in the 1990s, however, are demanding a totally different political system, a system which questions the very structure of gender opposition and domination, which finds new ways of envisioning a society of women.

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Quarreling with the World: Samuel Beckett's Deconstruction of Society

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Beckett's worlds have been considered hopeless, and indeed they are, but this is desirable for him because hope clouds man's quiddity. Beckett believes that social custom has provided man with a smokescreen that distorts a common humanity in favour of individualism. He challenges man's potential to alter an unsatisfactory existence in order to search for the essence of all men -- a common humanity -- and the importance of human relationships when all that is used to cushion life has been removed. He also strived throughout his career to move beyond the social construct of language, by trying to decode it and achieve an approximation of silence. Beckett devalues or removes from his work those socially conditioned tenets that usually give meaning and purpose to a person's life, and so the reader is required to reassess his / her expectations in order to avoid placing value on such things as memory, hope, habit, religion, social rituals, and love. By presenting us with impoverished characters, who generally accept the absence of social norms, Beckett demands that the reader re-evaluate those assets that we expect fictional characters to depend upon for security; things that would usually indicate a fruitful life are presented in Beckett's work as hindrances or delusions, because they cloud man's quiddity.

Since his characters cannot depend on such mediators between self and environment, social custom should not be imposed on the texts by the reader. If such customs do surface in Beckett's work, they should be recognized as delusions, rather than frowned upon, applauded or clung to with relief. Social conditionings are distasteful to Beckett because they enable man to concentrate exclusively on the self, to the detriment of others. For instance, Jack MacGowran sees Estragon as the more enlightened of the two main characters in *Waiting for Godot:*

> I think Estragon is the one who has read and known everything and thrown it away and become completely cynical. Vladimir, who appears to be the brighter of the two, is in fact the half-schooled one, madly trying to find out answers and pestering Estragon the whole time (Toscan 216).

Vladimir's endless questioning of his existence provides no answers for the character, and gravely upsets Estragon because it highlights the misery of his existence and his powerlessness over his environment:

> Vladimir: Do you not recognize the place?
> Estragon: Recognize! What is there to recognize? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery! Look at this muckheap! I've never stirred from it . . . (61).

Estragon does not appreciate Vladimir's attempts to analyze their surroundings because such pursuits have no value to him, and Beckett will not allow his characters to define themselves in terms of anything extraneous; Estragon is attempting to live by this code.

Pozzo learns this lesson too; by the second act, he has been cured of his eagerness to quest for some other means of living, and has accepted his dependency on his companion, Lucky. Pozzo too becomes upset with Vladimir's constant harping:

> One day, is that not enough for you, one day like any other day, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (89).

Pozzo accepts whatever will happen to him without question because he is unable to prevent it. The only important aspect of his life is that it is shared with Lucky.

Funeral rites are exposed by Beckett to be selfish rather than reverent. For example, in the short story, "What a Misfortune," Lucy's death teaches Belacqua to respect the pain of those who have survived, and that of his own bereavement. It is humorous to see that he takes the advent of death so seriously, by deliberately wearing a hat so that he can raise in respect every time he encounters a funeral procession, but Belacqua is not sorry to see Lucy die. Death comes for her as a "timely release" from misery and decay. However, others around him are disgusted that Belacqua shows no signs of grief; he in turn finds their reactions repulsive:

> All the hags and faggots, male and female, that he had ever seen or heard of, inarticulate with the delicious mucus of sympathy, disposed in due course of that secretion . . . He felt as though he had been sprayed from head to foot in human civet and would never again be clean (115).

Those around him interpret his lack of grief as an affront against God and society to the point that they are almost accusing him of being responsible

for Lucy's death. Belacqua, on the other hand, is indignant that they invade his personal space with their behaviour. These mourners only turn their sympathy towards the surviving husband when they have drained pointless emotion on the loss of Lucy, to the point that they need another object of sympathy to recharge their batteries.

This attitude of mourning the living rather than the dead seems rather eccentric, but Beckett is fully aware of the masking effect of a funeral ritual. Society has provided a routine that tries to divert the natural feelings associated with a loss, perhaps because man is ashamed to admit his selfish nature. Beckett understands that grief is felt because of the personal loss and the feeling of loneliness. To be able to say "goodbye" properly to a loved one before he / she dies provides closure, and makes the survivor feel comfortable and free of guilt. Mourning the living is an action that has more pertinence than feeling, or pretending to feel misery for the dead. The dead no longer feel pain and suffering; they are free from the misery incurred in life. Death is both inevitable and final. Life, on the other hand, continues indefinitely, and is punctuated by fleeting moments of pain and contentment. Sympathy is recognition of a common plight that those left behind on earth share. It is not self-deluding like hope; it is an acceptance of the way things are, because ultimately, it cannot be acted upon; a person's actions can never permanently alleviate the suffering of another:

> We're of one mind, all of one mind, always were, deep down, we're fond of one another, we're sorry for one another, but there it is, there's nothing we can do for one another (*Texts for Nothing* 1:77).

Not only does Beckett reveal the masking effect of funeral rites, he also brings to the forefront the selfish concerns concealed behind charitable acts. The reader of "The End" is probably disturbed that the charity shelter would send the unwilling narrator back out onto the streets. This is a haven for the narrator, where he does not have to act to define his position in the world. Here he can safely slide into non-existence. It is like the womb. He does not want to leave because his departure will reify the anguish of having to make choices and decisions again. When he becomes a beggar, the narrator describes people who give money to such as him. They avoid physical contact at all costs, and do not want their act of giving to interfere with actions that are more important to their existence, yet he still finds sensitivity in them:

What they like above all is to sight the wretch from afar, get ready their penny, drop it in their stride and hear the God bless you dying away in the distance. (*Stories* 64)

Beckett knows that this is the way that people dispense charity, thinking that somehow beggars are nonhuman and to get near one is both frightening and disgusting. Yet the act of giving purges any guilt the donator may feel. Again, it is a selfish act rather than a charitable one. The narrator knows this too, but accepts it as normal; the reader may feel outraged at these philanthropists, and distance him/herself from their attitude, before realizing, with guilt, that this is how it is. The Communist demonstrator answers the narrator's remarks about people giving money to beggars. His statements are more sensationalized, emotionally charged, and damning to those they attack:

> It never enters your head, resumed the orator, that your charity is a crime, an incentive to slavery, stultification and organized murder. (*Stories* 66)

Beckett is by no means accusing his readers of such acts. He is merely presenting two perspectives on charity. If the reader was insulted by the first, the second probably aroused anger. The distinction between the two viewpoints is that the orator wants things to change, whereas the narrator accepts things are they are, without accusations of injustice of the complaints of a victim. The demonstrator uses the narrator as an example of social injustice:

> Take a good look at this living corpse. You may say it's his own fault. Ask him if it's his own fault... Do you hear me, you crucified bastard! cried the orator. (67)

It is humorous because by trying to help a beggar by recognizing his injustice, the demonstrator has totally denigrated the narrator. No one wants their faults and misery pointed out to themselves and to others; this is exactly what the demonstrator has done. But the narrator has no idea what is going on, and does not understand what the demonstrator is talking about:

> He must have been a religious fanatic, I could find no other explanation. Perhaps he was an escaped lunatic. He had a nice face, a little on the red side (67).

This reply to the demonstrator's insults serves in turn to insult the do-gooder, who is not taken seriously by the narrator. Yet the narrator still finds something positive to say about the man himself. This is the most important factor to the narrator, who avoids judging the man according to his appearance or beliefs.

Giving money to a beggar is not for the benefit of he who receives it; rather it atones the giver with a higher notion of goodness because it seems like a selfless act. The two characters in *Rough For Theatre I* do not pity each other for having no home and no way of obtaining money other than the demeaning act of begging. Although they do not pity each other, A solicits pity from those who pass him by, "a penny for an old man" (67), he says, not so much that people will pity him, but in order to make them feel guilty in their health and prosperity. In this way, they will leave him money because they feel it is their duty to their fellow human, and they can wallow in their good deeds. The general public who pass these beggars by consider them fallen people. Perhaps once they were respectable human beings, with a home and job, maybe even a family; however, circumstances have provided for their ruin, and so should be helped by those who have yet to fall and are trying to behave nobly so that they can retain a suitable standard of living. B asks A how he got into this situation:

B: You were not always are you are. What befell you? Women? Gambling? God?
A: I was always as I am.
B: Come!
A: I was always as I am, crouched in the dark, scratching an old jangle to the four winds! (68).

B has not fallen from any position, he has always been a beggar, which is more reason why he should not be pitied. The two beggars become companions because they complement each other --one has eyes, while the other has mobility. They also suffer the same pains and so can empathize with each other. Each is proof of the other's existence, although they hardly communicate with one another; they speak at crossed purposes. When their conversations are finally synchronized, B asks A why he chooses to continue living:

B: . . . but why don't you let yourself die?
A: I have thought of it.
B: But you don't do it!
A: I'm not unhappy enough. That was always my unhap, unhappy, but not unhappy enough.
B: But you must be every day a little more so.
A: I am not unhappy enough! (69).

Because he is a beggar, people would consider his life worthless, and therefore justifying some drastic and desperate action, such as suicide. However, this is not the case because A will not give in to suffering. He is surely suffering because he lets his pain slip into his dialogue on occasions,

"have you not heard it enough? The same old moans and groans from the cradle to the grave" (70). His life is monotonous with the pain and suffering of himself as well as others. All that really concerns him is listening to the cries of pain of others and being powerless to make them stop. This may seem ironic coming from a beggar who has plenty to feel hopeless about, but instead he concerns himself with others and considers himself not dismal enough to end his own life. He only needs charity for his physical needs, and he begs without shame because people will give and in that way, he will be doing them a service by ennobling them. Charity is one of the fictions that man creates to elevate his own life and find motivation for his existence, as is the notion of bravery.

Beckett does not give credence to the abstract ideas of bravery and courage, which is illustrated in Mercier and Camier. "Will you look at that clatter of decorations, said Mercier. Do you realize the gallons of diarrhoea that represents?" (16). It is a more astute observation than assuming that the medals are for bravery. The ranger who wears the medals was probably scared beyond words, and was concerned with managing to stay alive. The couple do not see him as a hero, rather as a human being who responds to fear the way most people would in his situation. Bravery is an empty concept in Beckett because it hides the true acts of survival. Just as the funeral rites and charitable acts hide selfishness, so do acts of heroism. Society merely wants to elevate man to a position he would not otherwise deserve. Mercier and Camier are not conditioned to think this way, and would consider war efforts and random acts of brutality in the same category.

Beckett deconstructs accepted notions that society provides us in order to present humanity in an elemental state. To quarrel with the world is to challenge accepted beliefs and to search for common human bonds beneath the thickly woven layers that couch our lives in comfortable meanings. Beckett proves in his work that stripped of social conditioning, humanity has ample resources with which to survive a difficult existence; society tries to convince us that existing is not painful. Beckett exposes this idea as fiction.

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Craft of Humor: James Thurber

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Robert E. Morsberger points out in his study of James Thurber, one of the foremost American humorists, that "humor inevitably loses in critical translation." Much of the discussion of Thurber focuses on his attitude toward women or on his nostalgic references to Columbus, Ohio. However, Thurber's collected prose works reveal a wide range of artistic aim and ambition; his techniques can produce simple comic effects, humorously comment on social situations, or sharply satirize human nature. Several comic devices that he commonly used are personification of animals, mock-heroic language, and verbal gymnastics. These devices in many cases served not only to heighten the humor, but acted as the main vehicles of his comedy. Although Thurber railed against people who sentimentally attributed human virtues to animals, he illustrated man's faults and irrationalities by causing his animal characters to act in a human manner. Sometimes this device was used only for comic effect, as it was in the essay, "Courtship of Animals." Thurber illustrates (using animal examples) what a comic ceremony man makes of his court ship trials. For example, the male bowerbird builds his lady-love a special nest that she visits, but upon arrival:

> she is in a coy and silly mood and has to be chased in and out of the bower and up and down the playground before she will quit giggling and stand still long enough even to shake hands (*My World* 12).

Each of Thurber's animals in this piece exhibits behavior that he describes as resembling a human reaction. St. George Tucker Arnold, Jr. writes:

> Thurber's deft touch for representing this curious behavior are quite representative of the attitude that is at the heart of Thurber's comic genius. . . Thurber's skillful deliniation of animal conduct, and his always giving the creatures the full scope of characterization that his humans receive, places him in the tradition of American comic writers who see animals as some of their finest actors (Arnold 46).

Further Fables of Our Time continues the fable tradition of using stories of the animal kingdom to illustrate norms of human behavior, and Thurber

added his own special touch to show the irrationality of human social interaction. In "The Lover and His Lass", nosy neighbors are the butt of the joke as the gray parrots gossip about the love lives of the hippos and vice versa. To Mrs. Gray, the hippos "have the appeal of a coastwise fruit steamer with a cargo of water-logged basketballs"; while the male hippo grumbles that he "would as soon live with pair of unoiled garden shears" as the parrots. The moral: "Laugh and the world laughs with you, love and you love alone." (*Further Fables* 39)

Dr. Konrad Lorenz, famed Austrian naturalist, comments on laughter at animals, saying that he always found himself laughing at episodes that were humorous "more in the caricature of the human, rather than the actual drollness of the animal" (Lorenz 58). Thurber causes his reader to laugh not at the animal or its actions, but at the portrayal of "normal" human behavior in the "savage" animal kingdom; man receives the worst of the comparison every time.

Other of Thurber's work, using animal characters, made serious statements concerning man's glorification of himself. In many essays, Thurber discusses one of his favorite topics, man's supposed superiority to the animals. In "Interview with a Lemming," Thurber causes the title character to make several harsh statements about human failings:

> "You kill, you mangle, you torture, you imprison, you starve each other. You cover the nurturing earth with cement, you cut down elm trees to put up institutions for people driven insane by the cutting down of elm trees, you--"
> "You could go on all night like that," said the scientist, "listing our sins and our shames."
> "I could go on all night and up un to four o'clock tomorrow afternoon," said the lemming. (*My World* 83)

A creature so governed by mob hysteria expressing such a lofty attitude towards man reflects Thurber's disgust for humanity's claim to divinely endowed reason and intellect and the perversion of that same intellect by both the elite educated and the mob- pyschology-driven uneducated (Morsberger 32, 34).

Thurber's comic picture of humanity was not limited to his identification of man with the animals. He often used mock-heroic language to discuss humdrum details of life, thereby heightening the humor in helplessness.

"There's No Place Like Home" published in 1942 as part of *My World and Welcome to it* details an operatic struggle between a traveler and his French guidebook, giving a comic dimension to the culture shock experienced. This listing of handy English phrases and their French counterparts in columns causes Thurber to call the book a "melancholy narrative poem"

since "disaster follows fast and follows faster until in the end, as we shall see, all hell breaks loose" as the book becomes "what amounts to a dramatic tragedy of an overwhelming and original kind" (*My World* 301).

Thurber visualizes these mundane words and phrases as the participants in high tragic battle song that leaves the travelers beaten by nothing more than words printed on a page. The ludicrousness of these images is conveyed through the use of the elevated and heroic description. The incongruity of this juxtaposition is what causes the reader to feel mirth in the face of such trials.

Thurber's social-critic pen sharply illustrated the power of bureaucracy over the general public and the hopelessness in the face of it by giving the characters mock-heroic status in many of his short essays. "The Vengeance of 3902090" shows a bureaucrat at the height of his petty power and makes a fairly strong case for the hopelessness of bucking the forces in action. Thurber's tale of woe begins with a metaphysical discussion of the futility of life and its trials. The narrator says, however, that some cannot see the larger picture of how man is trapped in his own intellect; these lost souls can only worry about their own problems. The narrator then states:

> This frailty, this preoccupation with, and affinity for, the smaller enormities of life, permits him to be overwhelmed by minor tyrannies and persecutions to the extent that, for days on end, he forgets hispart in the struggle for that larger Freedom which now engages the attention of all right-minded prisoners of the world. I happen to be intensely dedicated to opposing the perilous wrongs and injustices of this bad earth, but right at the moment all I can worry about is my troubles as No. 3902090 (*My World* 155).

Thus, Thurber uses this grand parade of ominous words and phrases to set up his conflict with the state of Connecticut over the date of payment of his driver's license fee.

Thurber's persona gives the bureaucrat responsible for his troubles a name, face, and rationale for his actions. He describes him as "a fat gentleman with thinning hair and octoganal glasses whom no motorist has ever heard of or ever seen, a Goebbles of red tape, a Goring for discipline" (156). The extended use of descriptive modifiers, as does the listing of past villains, adds to the mock seriousness of Thurber's tone.

"Thurber men" and "Thurber women" have become standard objects of discussion by critics as examples of the pessimism of the modern age. A retreat to heroic fantasies is the only escape for the "Thurber man" trapped in a world more complicated than that in the heroic tall tales of the frontier. Thurber, in documenting the gradual disentigration the American male, used mock-heroic conventions, in the classic story,"The Secret Life of Walter Mitty."

Mitty, driving his wife to Waterbury, retreats into a fantasy life lifted almost straight out of the popular fiction of the time (Lindner 284). Thurber himself had been a devoted fan of nickel novels such as *The Liberty Boys of '76, Frank Merriwell,* and *The Rover Boys* (Morsberger 47). Mitty, the man unable to take snow chains off the tires in reality, nonetheless commands a hydroplane, performs emergency surgery, holds his own in a Perry Masonesque courtroom, and pilots a World War II bomber behind enemy lines. His final scene shows Mitty at his best:

> Then, with that faint, fleeting smile . . . he faced the firing squad; erect and motionless, proud and disdainful, Walter Mitty the Undefeated, inscrutable to the last (*My World* 81).

However, Mitty the man is actually as ineffectual in creating his dreams as he is in living his life. Carl Lindner points out that hydroplanes do not leave the water, "coreopsis" is not a state of infection but a type of plant, the "Webley-Vickers" company seems more akin to Smith & Wesson, and the Germans were not the "Archies," they were the "Jerries" (Lindner 284). The knowledgeable use of such mistakes on Thurber's part heightens the mock-heroism of Mitty's dream world, emphasizing the pathos of Mitty's predicament.

Like the humorous works of Lewis Carroll, many of Thurber's stories contain plays on words, used mostly to illustrate the confusion of modern life. As Thurber's blindness progressed, sounds became much more interesting to him than images (Eckler 243). In several pieces that build on the confusion endemic in language, Thurber lets his imagination run freely about what was said, rather than what was meant, and lets it all add up to bedlam.

The essay opening *My World and Welcome To It* is titled "What Do You Mean it Was Brillig?", and the allusions to Carroll's famous nonsense poem are a signal for the confusion to come. Della, a maid that worked for the Thurbers, is prone to mispronunciation; the narrator's usual method to understand her is to look up the word in the dictionary and try out the definitions he finds. For example, Della informs Thurber, "They are here with the reeves." His reaction:

> I found out that there are four kinds of reeves. "Are they here with strings of onions?" I asked. Della said they were not. "Are they here with enclosures or pens for cattle, poultry, or pigs; sheepfolds?" Della said no sir. "Are they here with administrative officers?" From a little near the door Della said no again (3).

Della finally announces the reeves are for the "windas," and Thurber realizes she means Christmas **wreaths** (4). Although these episodes made

life difficult, Thurber states, "I share with Della a form of escapism that is the most mystic and satisfying flight from actuality I have ever known" (6). Stretching the limits of absurdity-taken-seriously has a comic role all its own in Thurber's writing.

Confusion in language was given a serious satirical assignment in discussing such issues as modern humor and the spreading of the Red Scare. In an interview with Henry Brandon given in 1958, shortly before Thurber's death, Thurber talked about the current humorlessness of American society and traced it to McCarthy's Communist hunting era. He says:

> The six or eight years that went by -- those terrible years -- when all the American Congress seemed to do was to investigate writers, artists, and painters -- were to me the dreadful years. All this time Russia wasgetting ahead of us; all this time we were fighting a new cold civil war -- suspecting neighbors, suspecting the very nature of writing, of academic intellectualism, anything -- (Fensch 103).

Since, according to Thurber, true humor and comedy are such verbal phenomenons, the device he uses most often in writing about them is word play. "The Future of Comedy, or Where Do We Non-Go From Here?" begins with a new rendering of Lewis Carroll in the tradition of modern humor:

> "The time has come," the Walrus said,
> "To speak of manic things,
> Of shots and shouts, and sealing dooms
> Of commoners and kings." (*Credos* 79)

The narrator goes on to point out that enough objects for satire exist as his friend comments that an organization named The United Notions "would get us nowhere even faster than we are now going, which is seventeen hundred miles a minute, I believe" (*Credos* 88). Demented allusions to Shelley, Shakespeare, and Don Marquis add to the twisted satire of the piece.

Thurber's most pointed comic shots were aimed at the McCarthyism that he lived through as a writer and as an American citizen. His play *The Male Animal* contained his definitive statement on political repression in academic circles, but other works referred to it as well. A. Ross Eckler points out *The Wonderful O*, written in 1957, as an example of Thurber's use of word play in satire. *The Wonderful O* is a fable of political repression and linguistic censorship in which two men, Black and Little Jack, invade an island for treasure. Frustrated at the lack of gold on the island, they demand that all words with O have it taken out.

"Anon is ann, and moan is man." Andrea smiled as she said it. "And shoe," Andreus said, "is she."
"Ah, woe," the old man said, "is we." (Qtd. in Morsberger 183)

Andreus, a poet (pet) is the one to overthrow Black and Little Jack. Eckler says, "Civilisation is depicted in the guise of a hero struggling with his enemies, whom he eventually overcomes by use of a creative imagination" (Eckler 243). Thurber once commented that "a nation in which a Congressman can seriously ask 'Do you think the artist is a special person?' is a nation living in cultural jeopardy" (Morsberger 144).

Thurber's wide-ranging and voluminous output ranks him among the foremost writers of his day. A study of his craft shows his careful use of the comic devices of anthromorphosing animals, parodying of elevated heroic language, and verbal wit in the tradition of Twain and Wilde. His humor ranges from gentle spoof to biting satire, dealing in many ways with the lesser qualities of humanity of the twentieth century.

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