Publications of the Mississippi Philological Association 2005

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PUBLICATIONS OF THE MISSISSIPPI PHILOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

ISSN 0740-9478

Annual dues include a subscription to *POMPA*. Subscription rate for libraries is $10.00. Manuscripts are not solicited. Correspondence should be addressed to *POMPA*, Division of Languages & Literature, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS 38733.

POMPA is indexed by the *MLA International Bibliography, The American Humanities Index,* and by the *Index of American Periodical Verse* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press).

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The editors gratefully acknowledge the editorial assistance of Lacey Veazey. We also are grateful to Theodore Haddin for his generous contribution and to the Delta State University Division of Languages and Literature for its support of this publication.

We wish to express especial gratitude to MPA President Jianqing Zheng and to co-presidents Bettye Farmer and Mamie Osborne of Mississippi Valley State University for their most gracious hospitality and efficient organization of the 2005 meeting of the Mississippi Philological Association.

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LITERARVM rectè & cõmodè instituẽdo, ad inuictissimũ & potẽtissimũ Principe FRANCISCVM, Regẽ Frãciæ: Guielmo Budæo Parisiensi, Cõsiliario regio, Libellorũq; supplicũ in Regia Magistro, auctore.

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PARISIIS, M. D. XXXVI.

ESSAYS

"Mine Owne Woman": Constructed Selves in the Correspondence of Princess Elizabeth and Lady Arbella Stuart

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Both Princess Elizabeth (later Elizabeth I) and Lady Arbella Stuart, niece of Mary Queen of Scots, were potential claimants to the throne of England *and* focal points for rebellions during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As a political result, each was held under close scrutiny and even arrested and placed in the Tower of London. The Protestant Princess Elizabeth's infraction was to be suspected of involvement in political-religious plots against her Catholic sister, Queen Mary. Arbella's claim to the throne was never as strong as Elizabeth's, and even though she became the figurehead for disgruntled Catholics, her marriageability was the primary concern, making her a diplomatic pawn. Each of these young women wished to "be mine owne woman," as Stuart wrote. Each wished to have some sort of autonomy but found herself wrapped up within the constrictions of court politics, a position that could bring political power to negotiations but also could arouse suspicion of subversion. In letters from the period of time that each was a claimant, each woman attempts to negotiate the political waters safely as any mistake in a court letter could spell execution.

These letters show women desiring to prove their innocence and wield political power, while at the same time professing their submission to the crown and not to their supposed crimes. Each woman uses the letters as an attempt to create a safe space for herself within the machinations of court politics. In his book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, Stephen Greenblatt discusses the maneuverings one had to undertake in order to survive in uncertain court politics where favor and disfavor counted on knowing "the essential values of domination and submission, the values of a system of power that has an absolute monarch as head of both church and state" (120). For instance, how does each woman keep her personality and ambitions intact, while concurrently couching all her correspondence to the monarch in safe terms? Both Elizabeth and Arbella utilize aspects of self-fashioning and self-cancellation. According to Greenblatt, self-fashioning and self-cancellation are "the crafting of a public role and the profound desire to escape from the identity so crafted" (13). Elizabeth and Arbella wish to make one acceptable mask visible to the monarch while carefully *cancelling*, or hiding, their true thoughts under the mask. This neat construction and simultaneous deconstruction within the strictures of court politics give the writer the power of deniability. As Greenblatt writes, subjects needed "a mask to protect [themselves] against

the king's wrath" (121). Through the use of masking language mixing flattery, self-promotion, and humility, each woman manipulates the reader of her letter, hoping to achieve a desired result, and built into this manipulation is the inherent existence of exploitive court politics.

In 1553, King Edward VI died and Queen Mary ascended to the throne amid an atmosphere of speculation and fear over issues including legitimacy, religion, and female rule. Alison Plowden in her book *The Young Elizabeth* notes that religion "was a particularly delicate [issue] for Elizabeth. The Protestant party was already turning to her as their figurehead and white hope for the future, and so far as it is possible to tell, her own inclinations lay with the Protestant right wing" (142). With Princess Elizabeth available for use by Protestant rebels and also available for marriage to ambitious world monarchs and Englishmen, Queen Mary and Renard, her Spanish adviser, saw the Princess as a definite problem to be solved. Elizabeth, on the other hand, recognized her perilous position, and, as Plowden notes, made a petition to the Queen, "asking her not to believe anyone who spread evil reports of her without doing her the honor to let her know and give her a chance of proving the false and malicious nature of such slanders" (147). Elizabeth was attempting to prepare direct access to the Queen in case of false accusations or suspicions of her loyalty.

This question of direct access to plead her case would come into play much sooner than Elizabeth might have expected as a result of the Wyatt Rebellion of 1554. Although Mary had no direct and conclusive proof of Elizabeth's involvement in the Wyatt Rebellion, save rumors and a possible implication by Wyatt himself which was recanted at his execution, Mary knew she needed to have Elizabeth contained during the investigation for Mary's own safety. The extremely ill Elizabeth was brought to London, and she demanded an audience with the Queen orally and through a letter, asking her to remember her previous petition. All requests were denied. In her letter to the Queen on March 16, 1554, Elizabeth is careful to remain always a "most faithful subject" while simultaneously hinting that this predicament is not her fault but Mary's. She writes, "If any ever did try this old saying—that a king's word was more than another man's oath—I most humbly beseech your majesty to verify it in me, and to remember your last promise and my last demand: that I be not condemned without answer and due proof" (Marcus 41). With this one sentence, Elizabeth holds Queen Mary responsible for her alleged guilt and imprisonment. The Princess also notes the impressive power of the mere words of royalty, which hints slightly at her own confidence in her skill with wording requests. In Elizabeth's letter, Mary *should* remember her promise of due process and let Elizabeth defend herself in person. Additionally, Elizabeth couches her *demand* for due process as a *promise* the Queen must deliver on. In another passage, Elizabeth again protests her innocence and humbleness while acknowledging

that in writing the letter she is asserting herself into the royal prerogative. She writes, "Also I most humbly beseech your highness to pardon this my boldness, which innocency procures me to do, together with hope of your natural kindness, which I trust will not see me cast away without desert" (41). Throughout the epistle, Elizabeth is trying to project the appearance of a humble and obedient servant to the Queen; at the same time, she is subtly canceling and playing down her true feelings of outrage and the boldness it takes for her to write a letter to the Queen reminding her of what her sister deserves. Mary's complicity in this unjust treatment of her sister is evident between the lines. Elizabeth even asserts at one point that Mary would not imprison her sister if she "let conscience move" her (41). Finally, she points out that her innocence demands her boldness in addressing the Queen—"Which I would not be so bold as to desire if I knew not myself most clear, as I know myself most true" (42). Even though Elizabeth had worded the letter carefully, Mary had some suspicion of Elizabeth's talent with words, describing her letters as "disguised and colourable" (Plowden 177).

Suspicion of Elizabeth's involvement in the Wyatt Rebellion resulted in time in the Tower and a subsequent ten-month house arrest at Woodstock. Mary's reign and her marriage to a foreign king made her widely unpopular, and the political situation was rife with subversion and suspicion. Rebellion and religion were becoming intermixed. The burnings of heretics began in 1555, and during the next three years three hundred people would die for heresy. In the midst of this tumultuous period, in 1556, Mary faced another rebellion, the Dudley Plot. Adherents to the Dudley Plot wished to dispose of Mary either through exile or death and then put Elizabeth on the throne after she had married the Earl of Devonshire. Elizabeth was still a drawing flame for hopeful Protestant rebels, and she needed to address the Queen's suspicions yet again.

In another letter to the Queen on August 2, 1556, Elizabeth asserts her innocence of all plots and gives the monarch divine importance as an anointed leader. She writes, "Which, methinks, if they had but feared God though they could not have loved the state, they should for dread of their own plague have refrained that wickedness which their bounden duty to your majesty hath not restrained" (Marcus 43). Here, Elizabeth is continuing her emphasis on the monarch as an anointed and divinely ordained leader. By her logic, the people who are attacking the Queen are wicked people. She notes that even if one disagrees with the state, if one fears the Almighty, that individual will be afraid to attack the monarch. She continues by thanking God for protecting the Queen and for causing loyal subjects to come to her aid. She ends the letter by making a transition from Queen Mary's exalted place of honor to her own obedience and faithfulness. She writes,

But since wishes are vain and desires oft fails, I must crave

> that my deeds may supply that my thoughts cannot declare, and they be not misdeemed there as the facts have been so well tried. And like as I have been your faithful subject from the beginning of your reign, so shall no wicked persons cause me to change to the end of my life. And thus I commit your majesty to God's tuition, whom I beseech long time to preserve, ending with the new remembrance of my old suit, more for that it should not be forgotten than for that I think it not remembered. (Marcus 44)

Yet again, Elizabeth requests that the Queen believe her humbleness and goodness: she is not wicked. Moreover, she repeats her admonitions that the Queen must remember their agreement that Elizabeth be allowed to defend herself from all charges in the royal presence. Her reminder of the "old suit" is couched in humble terms. Although Elizabeth is boldly acting in her own defense, she only shows glimpses of herself while carefully placing everything in terms of the monarch's own protection.

Like the young Princess Elizabeth, Lady Arbella Stuart, a niece of Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth's much younger cousin, also found the need to use deniability in her correspondence with a monarch. Sara Jayne Steen notes, "[S]erious matters rested on her ability to use words to obtain the good offices of those who had more power than she did" (8). Barbara Kiefer Lewalski adds that Arbella's letters show "resistance to patriarchal and monarchical power in a bid for some personal freedom" (67). Certainly, Arbella wished she had more self-determination. As a "marriageable female claimant to the throne" (Steen 4), her life was strictly circumscribed and constricted.

The daughter of Charles Stuart and Elizabeth Cavendish, a union displeasing to Queen Elizabeth because it contained royal blood, Arbella was in the line of succession and became a toy in English politics. As a diplomatically marriageable young princess, she was valuable to the Queen and later to King James. Arbella also was the object of Catholic plans to recoup the throne, even though she was Protestant. David N. Durant writes, "To the queen Arbella was an embarrassing reminder of her own mortality, a card in the diplomatic pack to be played in the game of European politics; to be offered in marriage to foreign princes but never allowed to marry" (2). Although Arbella, like Elizabeth, had a claim to the throne and was a female card to be played in diplomatic marriage strategies, Arbella's claim to the throne was not as strong as Elizabeth's, and James VI of Scotland was the favored successor. An additional difference between the two young women involved strength of position. Compared to Elizabeth's strong claims, relations, and popular support, Arbella's lack of capital, both financial and political, left her relying on her wits and rhetoric. Queen Elizabeth claimed Arbella's paternal grandmother's English lands, and King James held onto

her paternal Scottish inheritance, leaving Arbella and her maternal grandmother struggling to build financial independence for the young woman.

Whereas Princess Elizabeth's conflicts with the state arose from loose connections with rebellions, Arbella's conflicts with the monarchs arose predominantly from her willfulness in attempting to marry without royal permission in order to gain her independence from her maternal grandmother and diplomatic games. Arbella's life ended in the Tower as a result of defying the King not only by marrying William Seymour, which joined two claims to the throne, but also by attempting to escape arrest and leave the country with her illegal husband. After inheriting Arbella from Elizabeth, King James kept her single as a bargaining chip. When Arbella was thirty-five and William Seymour was twenty-two years old, they began secret marriage negotiations. Arbella and William believed she had been given permission to marry whomever she wished (Durant 175), and the two secretly married on June 22, 1610. Since William was a Seymour, however, James was quite displeased by their secret marriage when it came to light. Arbella was ordered to move to Durham in order to separate her from William, who was in the Tower, so that there would be no chance of children. Much as the ill Princess Elizabeth was forced to remove to London, Arbella claimed she was ill, and doctors recommended a rest. While she was at Durham in 1611, Arbella attempted an escape to France with William, but the two were separated. William arrived safely on the continent while Arbella was retaken. Arbella was condemned to the Tower from 1611 to 1615 when she died from illness and self-starvation.

In an undated letter to James, which Steen speculates was written in 1610, Arbella greatly exalts the King, while simultaneously masking her own agency with feminine "weaknesse," holding him responsible for her need to marry. She notes that the loss of James's favor is the "most grievous affliccion to her that can be ymagined" (Steen 247). She then hints at explaining her situation when she writes,

> [T]hat thought never yet entered into my harte, to doe any thinge that might justlie deserve any parte of your indignacion, but if the necessitie of my state and fortune, together with my Weaknesse, have caused me to doe somewhat not pleasinge to your Majestie (Most Gracious Soveraigne) lett it be covered with the Shadow of your gracious benignitie, and pardoned in that heroicall mynd of yours which is never closed to those who carrie a most Loyall hart to your Soveraintie. . . . (Steen 247)

Arbella admits only that she has done something which displeases James, not that she has done something wrong. Additionally, she is insinuating that she was forced to seek this marriage as a result of her "state and fortune" and

her feminine "Weaknesse." The only person who could affect her state and fortune would be James; therefore, his neglect of her personal situation caused her to seek this final avenue of survival. Arbella makes sure to highlight the power of James while concurrently hinting at his responsibility for her plight. Arbella cancels her own self out of the letter, focusing on James's agency, power, and exaltedness. She enters only as a weak and loyal suppliant.

Arbella uses the same tactic in another letter to James, probably from 1610 as well. In it, she writes,

> I most humbly beseech your Majesty (in your most Princely wisdomme and judgement) to consider in what a miserable state I had binne, if I had taken any other course then I did; for my own conscience witnessing before God that I was then the wife of him that now I am, I could never have matched with any other man; but to have lived all the dayes of my life as an harlot, which your Majesty would have abhorred in any, espetially in one who hath the honour . . . to have any droppe of your Majesties bloud in them. (Steen 249)

In this passage she does discuss the marriage; however, there is still some blame of James involved. Even if James had offered another marriage prospect, she already had chosen and married William; thus, another "correct" marriage would be a sham, and Arbella would be a "harlot." Now she seems to be telling the King that she had to marry because he would not offer a prospect, and she cannot renounce and follow orders now because she is married and does not want to commit adultery. Throughout this circular logic, the blame always ends up with King James. This blame is again couched in praise for the monarch, however, and she ends the epistle, writing, "I will never forget to pray for your Majesties most happie prosperitie for ever in all things" (249). Arbella fashions herself as a "most humble and faithfull subject and servant," but in this letter she also brings in her royal blood, reminding James that she is a royal relative besides being a loyal subject. Arbella carefully attempts to play court politics in just the right way to achieve freedom *and* her husband.

Although the situations of Princess Elizabeth and Lady Arbella Stuart were very different in aspect, the two women both found themselves under suspicion of subversion against their respective sovereigns. While the Princess became a figurehead for Protestant rebels wishing to retake the throne, Arbella became a weak pawn in diplomatic power plays. Both women wished to gain some autonomy and speak for themselves; however, the court politics of the time period made self-defense perilous. As a result, the two used their court correspondence as a mask to hide their true selves and intentions under the guise of abject humility and obedience, while

concurrently hinting at the responsibility of the monarch for their respective torments.

As female claimants to the throne, it was particularly imperative that Elizabeth and Arbella mask their true intentions while, at the same time, holding onto what power was available to them. Typically, female claimants required connection to a properly qualified male of either English or foreign royalty; therefore, Elizabeth and Arbella could be used as political pawns, or they could control their marital status as their one power ploy. For Elizabeth, remaining single and avoiding the proposed diplomatic power plays of her sister and also the rebellious grabs for power of the Protestant rebels allowed her to keep what political maneuverability she had. Elizabeth's marriageability was the focus of both her sister's and the rebels' plots. Similarly, Arbella's position as a claimant, though not as strong as Elizabeth's, resulted in her plight as a marriageable pawn as well. Her handling of the situation was not as successful as Elizabeth's not only because of her lower political position and capital, but because she did not completely mask her agency in her communications with King James. The two women attempted to transcend the popularly perceived feminine "weaknesse," as Arbella wrote, and manipulate the political language of the time to their own ends. Both hoped that the manipulation would result in personal control. Through the construction of a loyal and harmless subject and the simultaneous deconstruction of the individual's own ambitions and desires, both Elizabeth and Arbella attempted to create a safe space in the roiling storms of court power.

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Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and Martin Luther

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"It belongs to love to bear everything and to yield to everyone. On the other hand, it belongs to faith to bear nothing whatever and to yield to no one."
(Luther, *Galatians* 27.38)

The critical response to the title character of William Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* has been diverse and divided. While some readers see Coriolanus as an admirable figure, others find him overly proud and frighteningly uncivil.[1] In our contradictory responses to Coriolanus, we readers of the play do not differ much from the readers of Coriolanus within the play. The Third Citizen may as well be speaking of us when he claims, "[I]f all our wits were to issue out of one skull, they would fly east, west, north, south, and their consent of one direct way should be at once to all the points o'th'compass" (2.3.21-24).

This essay contends that though our responses to Coriolanus may not be uniform, Coriolanus himself remains remarkably constant, and that this constancy is revealed when we approach the play through Reformation theology. Shakespeare's Coriolanus consistently defends a position once manned by another seemingly self-righteous yet notably humble master of invective sent into exile by Rome, Martin Luther, who, like Shakespeare's stubborn figure, once claimed, "the beast / With many heads butts me away" (4.1.1-2).

Shakespeare's play, I offer, employs the historical figure of Coriolanus to advance a particularly Lutheran theology. As Coriolanus sets himself against a Rome that has abandoned its fundamental articles of faith, those "precepts that would make invincible / The heart that conn'd them" (4.1.10-11), so too, the play reminds us, has Luther broken with the Babylon that preaches a works-righteousness. The Coriolanus who responds to his banishment from Rome with "I banish you! / And here remain with your uncertainty! / Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts" (3.3.123-25), recalls the theologian who says of the papacy that will later excommunicate him,

> I for one will disengage myself and keep my conscience free by bringing this charge against the pope and all his papists: Unless they will abolish their laws and ordinances, and restore to Christ's churches their liberty and have it taught among them, they are guilty of all souls that perish

> under this miserable captivity, and the papacy is truly the kingdom of Babylon and of the very Antichrist.
> (*Babylonian Captivity* 36.72)

There is precedent for reading Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* as a work with theological concerns. Both Stanley Cavell and Roy W. Battenhouse have called attention to the anachronistic allusions to Christianity in *Coriolanus*. Cautiously pointing to the "Christian stirrings and murmurings" in Shakespeare's play, Cavell recognizes a curious symmetry between the career of Coriolanus and that of Christ (144). Coriolanus's desire to sustain Rome through his valiant behavior and with his blood, Cavell contends, offers an odd variation or "inflection" of the Christ who offers his body to redeem the world (158). There are indeed a few passages in the play that encourage us to associate Coriolanus with Christ, such as Menenius's claim that the execution of Coriolanus would demonstrate an unforgettable ingratitude on the part of Rome. Coriolanus, argues the Roman patrician, has been remarkably generous with his blood, and his supply of it has proven unnaturally endless. "Killing our enemies, the blood he hath lost," says Menenius,

> (Which I dare vouch, is more than that he hath
> By many an ounce) he dropp'd it for his country;
> And what is left, to lose it by his country
> Were to us all that do't and suffer it
> A brand to th'end o'th'world. (3.1.296-301)[2]

Cavell concludes, though, that Coriolanus is "not so much . . . imitating Christ as competing with him" (157). The Roman warrior, says Cavell, as he "cannot imagine being fed without being deserving," finally inverts a religion which teaches that "we cannot in ourselves deserve sustenance, and that it is for that reason, and in that spirit, that we have to ask for it" (167).

One might counter, however, that what Coriolanus finds so disturbing is that the Roman citizens and their tribunes believe themselves to be deserving, that they do not ask "in that spirit" of humility. In this, Coriolanus's position parallels Luther's teaching that all human deeds are, in the eyes of God, wholly without merit. Though the First Citizen charges that Coriolanus is dangerously proud in the opening scene of the play (1.1.33), and though Coriolanus's rough exchange with the rioters does little to dispel that claim (1.1.166-221), Shakespeare points repeatedly to Coriolanus's radical humility. Though he enters the gates of Corioles alone and miraculously fights off the Volsces single-handedly, Coriolanus deflects all attempts to praise him.[3] Given Coriolanus's behavior in 1.9 and 2.2—his insistence that all who fought equaled his performance (1.9.18-19), his refusal to take more than an equal share of the spoils of war (1.9.38-40), his unwillingness to sit still and "hear [his] nothings monster'd" (2.2.77)—the tribunes' claim that Coriolanus is guilty of "pride" and "boasting" (2.1.18,

19) sounds slanderous, and we are in agreement with Menenius's proposition that the tribunes make "an interior survey" of themselves, where they will "discover a brace of unmeriting, proud, violent, testy magistrates . . . as any in Rome" (2.1.39, 42-44).

In *Shakespearean Tragedy: Its Art and Its Christian Premises*, Battenhouse reaches a conclusion not far from that of Cavell. Attending to Coriolanus's allusions to Revelation, Battenhouse notes that Shakespeare's soldier figures Rome as a beast with many heads and that when asked by his mother, Volumnia, to feign humility in order to win the love of Rome's populace, he unwillingly acquiesces, saying, "Away my disposition, and possess me / Some harlot's spirit" (3.2.111-12). Shakespeare, says Battenhouse, wishes his audience to associate Volumnia with "Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth's abominations" who "rides on a beast with many heads" and "makes war on a lamb." "May we not regard this mother's final triumph," writes Battenhouse,

> as the triumph of the great harlot. It is at least possible . . . that Shakespeare understood it as such. His Elizabethan audience . . . was made up of people who almost daily were bombarded by polemical references to the whore of Babylon. To Protestants she signified the Roman Catholic church; to more accurate students of Scripture, she signified a cultish paganism in ancient Rome. How many Elizabethans would have been able to recognize her, if her "genius" appeared in a Roman play in the Globe theatre? It is a tantalizing question. (335)

Reminding his readers that the lamb of Revelation 17 traditionally signifies Christ and that Menenius figures Coriolanus as a lamb in Act 2 (335), Battenhouse allows that Shakespeare's Coriolanus bears a peculiar resemblance to Christ. Battenhouse concludes, however, that Coriolanus is neither the enemy of the harlot nor the apocalyptic beast but rather "one of its would-be heads and finally its most threatening head" (336), for Coriolanus does not truly oppose the Babylon that Battenhouse identifies with the pursuit of worldly glory. Coriolanus, though far nobler than his fellow countrymen, is, Battenhouse argues, no ideal figure but rather one driven by a "self-destructive" and "grandly misguided idealism" (314), an Aristotelian notion of magnanimity finally at odds with Christianity. In exposing the ethical limitations of Coriolanus's pursuit of earthly fame, Battenhouse contends, Shakespeare's play closely parallels Augustine's position in *The City of God* (307-10).

Shakespeare's allusions to Revelation, however, also encourage the reader to see a resemblance between the Coriolanus who turns against Rome and the Luther who identifies the papacy as Babylon, and Battenhouse is aware of this. Though he places the play's allusions to Revelation within the

context of Reformation theology, Battenhouse wishes to keep the Protestant interpretation of Revelation popularized by Luther at bay, as the phrase "to more accurate students of Scripture" in the passage quoted above makes evident.[4] According to Battenhouse, neither the Roman soldier nor the German theologian has correctly identified Babylon. The idea that Shakespeare's soldier resembles Luther, though not explicitly voiced, is couched within Battenhouse's chapter on *Coriolanus*. In an endnote Battenhouse remarks that Luther, whom he calls "a less traditional writer" than Augustine, differs with the Bishop of Hippo when it comes to evaluating Roman virtues. "We know," writes Battenhouse,

> that Luther held what has been called a "two kingdom" doctrine, which posited a disjunction between the realm of politics (in which he accepted "heathen virtue" as the norm) and the realm of saving faith (for which gospel grace was requisite). Applying to the realm of politics a heathen ethic, Luther during the Peasants War could exhort rulers to "smite, slay, stab, and kill" as their duty. (444-45)[5]

Battenhouse opens his chapter noting that Shakespeare's play is written not long after the Midlands peasant uprisings of 1607. Coriolanus's impatience with the hungry plebians—his characteristic reply upon hearing their demands is "hang 'em" (1.1.189)[6]—has a precedent, Battenhouse implies, in Luther's well-known response to the peasant uprisings in Thuringia in 1525.

Both Battenhouse and Cavell contrast Coriolanus's refusal to show his scars to the Roman citizens with John 20, where Christ reveals his wounds to Thomas. "To Christian imagination," says Battenhouse, "that story provided an ultimate model of victorious candidacy—an honorable valiantness, which in charity seeks to draw into fellowship even the lowly straggler. By the light of this paradigm, it becomes appropriate for Shakespeare to dramatize the Roman world's central defect in terms of ignorance of this norm." This scene, Battenhouse continues, which should "awaken in a Christian audience some memory of the gospel paradigm it inverts, signalizes to that audience the basic flaw in Coriolanus" (361-62).[7] If we set this moment within the context of the Reformation, however, Coriolanus's reluctance to show his wounds appears to be a virtue rather than a vice. Coriolanus appears to have two problems with the custom. First, he regards the gown as a "wolvish toge" (2.3.114), a sign of false humility that one dons in order to take in unsuspecting sheep. The pastoral metaphor, mobilized early in the play as Menenius and the tribunes debate whether Coriolanus is a wolf or a lamb (2.1.6-11) and picked up again when Cominius identifies Rome as a wolf and Coriolanus as a shepherd (4.6.110-12), alludes to Matthew 7:15.[8] Coriolanus's suspicion of "[t]he napless vesture of humility" (2.1.232) recalls Reformation attitudes toward the

vestments of monks; Luther, a former monk himself, saw a vainglorious pride, an attempt to impress others with one's virtues, lurking beneath the humble attire of the orders. Second, as Coriolanus's humility requires him to denigrate his works, he must not display his wounds to the public in search of praise. Coriolanus's attitude toward his works closely corresponds with that recommended by Luther, who taught that good works, though they should be done tirelessly and selflessly, are not to be celebrated, but rather regarded as "nothings." Luther would see Coriolanus's reluctance to wear the gown of humility and to display his scars as signs of genuine humility and a healthy attitude toward one's own works.

Coriolanus's humility instead drives him to seek out the animosity of the crowd, of whose affections he is highly suspicious. "Who deserves greatness," Coriolanus tells the plebians, "Deserves your hate; and your affections are / A sick man's appetite, who desires most that / Which would increase his evil" (1.1.175-78). Coriolanus's peculiar attitude toward the crowd and toward praise again closely corresponds to that encouraged by Luther in his *Lectures on Galatians*. One must not glory "in the lies and in the opinion, praise, and applause of the crowd," writes Luther. "This is not a solid foundation for glory; it is a false one. Whoever praises a man as a man is lying, for there is nothing praiseworthy in him, but everything is damnable" (27.104). As falling victim to vainglory is among the gravest dangers, it is safer, Luther contends, to be despised than praised; "the slanders and persecutions of our opponents," writes Luther, " . . . are joyful sights which delight us so much that we easily forget vainglory" (27.102-03).[9]

Coriolanus's "pride" and his struggle with the Roman tribunes are further clarified by Luther's distinction between the sin of vainglory (or conceit) and the virtue of "holy pride." The former, says Luther, is an attribute of those who gain favor by flattering the crowd with false doctrine, while the latter describes those who fall into disrepute for upholding the faith. "I know that the pious should be humble," writes Luther,

> but in opposition to the pope I am willing and obliged to be proud with a holy pride and to say: "I refuse to be subject to you, pope. I refuse to accept you as my master, for I am certain that my doctrine is true and godly. And I can prove it with sound arguments!" But the pope is not willing to hear this. In fact, he tries to force me to listen to him. If I refuse, he excommunicates me and condemns me as a heretic. . . . In short, we can stand the loss of our possessions, our name, our life, and everything else; but we will not let ourselves be deprived of the Gospel. . . . Accursed be any humility that yields or submits at this point! Rather let everyone be proud and unremitting here, unless he wants to deny Christ. With the help of God, therefore, I will be more hardhearted than anyone else. I want to be stubborn and to be known as someone who is stubborn. Here I bear the inscription "I yield to no one." And I am overjoyed if here I am called rebellious and unyielding. (*Galatians* 26.99)

Luther's holy pride, which, as it gets him excommunicated, makes him abject in the eyes of the world, takes aim at the wolves, the false prophets, who, "infected" with conceit, "do not care at all whether their 'work,' that is, their ministry, is pure or not; all they are interested in is acquiring the applause of the crowd." "These men," Luther warns,

> combine these three faults: first, they are exceedingly vainglorious; secondly, they are amazingly skillful at slandering the good things that others have said and done and thus at gaining the applause of the people for themselves; thirdly, when they have become celebrated among the people, albeit by the labor and risk of someone else, they become so brave and courageous that there is nothing they will not dare. (*Galatians* 27.116)

This holy pride, which refuses to flatter, and which openly assaults the vainglorious tribunes even while in disrepute, Shakespeare calls "directitude." Though "directitude" is often glossed as the Third Servingman's botch of either "discreditude" or "dejectitude," the newly coined word, which sounds like a portmanteau, is notably appropriate, for while it may mean to describe Coriolanus's outcast state, it also points to two of his central qualities, his *direct*ness and his *rectitude*, both of which are on display whenever the uncompromising soldier speaks.[10]

As Harold Goddard has noted, Coriolanus's rhetoric recalls that of Kent and Cordelia from *King Lear* (210). Like Lear's faithful servant, Coriolanus speaks as if he were the lone true man trapped in a world of Oswalds. The Roman soldier is also oddly reminiscent of Cordelia, who likewise suffers banishment for combating the falsity of her sisters' rhetoric by employing the unpleasant antidote—plainness. The soft-spoken Cordelia may seem more agreeable than the bloody warrior, but they both eventually find themselves engaged in an assault on their respective countries.

In the opening scene of Act Two, as Menenius describes the Roman soldier as a lamb about to be devoured by the wolvish plebians (2.1.6-9), Brutus and Sicinius immediately challenge his metaphor, scoffing, "He's a lamb indeed, that baes like a bear." Menenius then retorts, "He's a bear indeed, that lives like a lamb" (2.1.10-11). Later in the play, as the banished Coriolanus prepares to lead the Volscian army in an attack on Rome, the Roman General Cominius shifts Menenius's figure, identifying Coriolanus as an attentive shepherd about to dutifully destroy the wolf-like Roman

populace and their tribunes (4.6.110-12).

Coriolanus's personality and career, as well as the significance of his career, are debated and anticipated in these pastoral metaphors. Coriolanus certainly has a bear-like demeanor and deportment; his rhetoric is confrontational and derisive; his strength, nearly supernatural; and his concern for the Roman citizens seemingly non-existent. Yet in his marked humility, and in his decision to sacrifice himself and spare an ungrateful and wolf-like Rome, he closely resembles the lamb. Cominius's identification of Coriolanus as a shepherd is likewise apt, for though Coriolanus displays little love for the people of Rome, he vigilantly protects the fundamental articles of faith, outside of which, as Rome soon learns, there is only uncertainty and despair.

Luther's theology provides a framework for understanding both Coriolanus's desire to "fan" the Romans "into despair" (3.3.127) and his subsequent sudden yielding. This yielding, the play suggests, is not a sign of weakness, but rather an act of mercy. Anticipating Rome's destruction, Menenius says that Coriolanus "wants nothing of a god but eternity, and a heaven to throne it in" (5.4.24-25). Sicinius objects that Coriolanus lacks the mercy of a god, but as Coriolanus has already agreed to spare an undeserving Rome and "frame convenient peace," a peace which he fears will prove "most mortal to him" (5.3.191, 189), we know that Coriolanus is not without mercy.[11]

In Coriolanus's treatment of Rome we find reflected Luther's idea that the road to salvation passes through despair. As mankind is infected with self-righteousness, God uses the Law (which, though holy, is impossible to keep or live under) to drive man into despair. Since man "becomes haughty with this presumption of human righteousness," writes Luther,

> and imagines that on account of this it is pleasing to God, therefore God has to send some Hercules, namely, the Law, to attack, subdue, and destroy this monster with full force. Therefore the Law is intent only on this beast, not on any other. (*Galatians* 26.309-10)

Shakespeare's Coriolanus is such a Hercules or manifestation of Law;[12] intent on this beast, he drives the presumptuous Romans to despair and brings them to their knees. "Desperation," Cominius tells the tribunes, "Is all the policy, strength, and defence, / That Rome can make" (4.6.127-29) against the forces led by Coriolanus. Once Rome falls into despair, it is clear that the "good work" of the tribunes is worthless, as Cominius and Menenius repeatedly inform them in 4.6 and 5.1. Volumnia, too, as she has advocated that her son abandon her precepts and practice "policy" (3.2.42), must be brought to her knees; she who suggested that Coriolanus kneel before the plebians and flatter them with a feigned humility is compelled to kneel in

earnest.

In *Coriolanus*, then, Shakespeare develops an extended analogy, one which argues that the career of the banished Roman soldier anticipates and parallels that of the German theologian excommunicated by Rome. The multiple allusions to Scripture in the play, far from revealing the gap between the Roman world of Coriolanus and the Christian world of the playwright, as Cavell and Battenhouse suggest, instead situate the story of Coriolanus within the polemical theological debates of the sixteenth century. In doing so, Shakespeare's play participates in these debates and advances Luther's cause.

Notes

[1] Among Coriolanus's defenders are Hardin Craig, Harold C. Goddard, H. J. Oliver, Eugene M. Waith, and E. A. M. Colman. Among his detractors one may list I. R. Browning, Annabel Patterson, and Sharon O'Dair. Other critics, such as Norman Rabkin, Roy W. Battenhouse, J. L. Simmons, Janet Adelman, and Stanley Cavell, have a mixed reaction to Coriolanus, reading the Roman soldier as one uncompromisingly committed to an ideal that, though impressive, is impossibly rigorous, wrong-headed, or untimely.

[2] Later in the play Menenius will allude to Psalm 118:22 ("The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone")—a verse Christians have often read typologically—when he compares Coriolanus to the "cornerstone" of the Capitol (5.4.1-2).

[3] See 1.5.16, 1.6.46, 1.9.13-19, 1.9.41-52, 2.1.167, 2.2.75-77.

[4] Battenhouse further explains that the harlot from Revelation actually points to first century Rome and not to the Catholic Church of the sixteenth or seventeenth century. See 447, n. 37.

[5] Luther wrote six pieces on the turmoil of 1525, the first of which was a plea for conciliation. It is the second, however, "Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants," which is most often cited. Luther, unlike Coriolanus, did express concern for the plight of the peasants, and in his first response to the peasants' demands, sounding a bit like the First Citizen from the opening scene of *Coriolanus*, he writes: "We have no one on earth to thank for this disastrous rebellion, except you princes and lords, and especially you blind bishops and mad priests and monks, whose hearts are hardened . . . . [A]s temporal rulers you do nothing but cheat and rob the people so that you may lead a life of luxury and extravagance. The poor people cannot bear it any longer." See "Admonition" 46.19.

[6] See also 2.3.58 and 3.2.23.

[7] See also Cavell 158.

[8] "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravening wolves." See *Tyndale's New Testament.*

[9] "Everyone should be faithful in his ministry, not looking out for his own glory or trusting in the fickle applause of the multitude but being concerned only that he do his job properly, that is, that he preach the Gospel purely" (*LW* 27.116). "He who carries out his office correctly and faithfully," instructs Luther, "does not care what the world says about him; he does not care whether it praise him or blames him. He has his boast within himself, which is the testimony of his conscience and a boasting in God" (*LW* 27.117).

[10] The Third Servingman, who claims that Coriolanus will go to Rome and "mow down all before him," adds: "for look you, sir, he has as many friends as enemies; which friends, sir, as it were, durst not, look you sir, show themselves, as we term it, his friends, whilst he's in directitude" (4.5.207, 211-14). For a brief account of the responses of editors to the word in question see the *Arden* edition of *Coriolanus*, ed. Philip Brockbank, n. 214.

[11] Aufidius uses the word "mercy" to describe Coriolanus's sudden decision to relent as well. See 5.3.199.

[12] Menenius, as he mocks the "work" of the tribunes, compares Coriolanus to Hercules. See 4.6.100. We might note as well that Coriolanus appears to be a staunch defender of the Law, as he chides the plebians for cursing justice. See 1.1.173-75.

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"Ernestlie Lookinge for a Better Countre": The Racial Discourse in Royall Tyler's *Algerine Captive*

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While Royall Tyler's 1797 novel *The Algerine Captive or, The Life and Adventures of Doctor Updike Underhill: Six Years a Prisoner Among the Algerines* is often cited as an example of early American picaresque, it is also noteworthy that it contains, for its time, a remarkably progressive representation of "race." In fact, Tyler often writes of west Africans and Algerians in a way that even anticipates post-colonial writings in that he fails to construct a racial Other.[1] Furthermore, the text's discourse on "race" is also important when considered in its historical moment. Tyler's novel was published at a time between the humanism of the Enlightenment and the nineteenth-century construct of white supremacy that was to justify both slavery and colonialism. Using Edward Said's "very roughly-defined starting point" of the late eighteenth century for the discourse he calls Orientalism (3), then, *The Algerine Captive* can be studied as both a late humanist and an early "Orientalist" text.

Certainly Tyler's abolitionist sentiments were nothing new: Abolition was a topic of great debate at the time of *The Algerine Captive*'s publication. In England, although the House of Commons rejected a move for abolition in the same year, anti-slavery sentiment continued to grow. At home, African Americans such as Jupiter Hammon, Phillis Wheatley, and Olaudah Equiano had already begun to publish their works. Yet at the same time, as Dana Nelson points out in her study of race in early American literature, *The Word in Black and White*, Western representations of African and Native Americans were moving from cultural to essentialist theories of difference (7). "It is not coincidental," writes Nelson, that as the need arose for more land and a labor force to work it, "in the frontier and colonial literature of this period, the Indian becomes instinctively hostile, and the African begins to seem metaphysically black" (7). It is this kind of racial essentialism that *The Algerine Captive* is usually able to avoid.

Except for Cathy Davidson and Arnold Davidson, most critics, even when discussing *The Algerine Captive*'s critique of slavery, have tended to ignore the more radical aspects of this critique.[2] Davidson and Davidson claim that the novel's bipartite structure is calculated to emphasize certain contrasts; in a reading that finds more coherence between the two volumes than most other readings, they argue that the protagonist, "enslaved *because* he is white, American, and Christian, is forced to confront, in obverse form, the same rationalizations white Christian Americans, his former countrymen, employ to justify the enslavement of others" (53-54). In other words, Tyler

has turned the gaze back on the subject: Merely being "white, American, and Christian" is sufficient cause, from the Algerian point of view, for the protagonist's enslavement. Cathy Davidson goes further, arguing that Tyler's plot is actually subversive:

> There are more similarities between Tyler's Algiers and America than most Americans in the 1790s would have cared to admit. The class, religious, political, and racial hierarchies in Algiers simply extend and exaggerate the same hierarchies dividing the American political and social scene. . . . But with one proviso: The "barbarians" of the Barbary Coast are more civilized in their practice. (*Revolution and the Word* 209)

And Tyler in fact reserves the word *barbarian* to describe behavior instead of people.

The Algerine Captive's discourse on race begins with New Englander Updike Underhill's narrative of his brief foray into the American South. Underhill associates Southerners with "dissipation" (96), claiming that in order to succeed in the South it would have been necessary for him "to sport, bet, drink, swear, &c." with his prospective clientele (97). Although Tyler lampoons the North in the first volume's "portrait of New England manners" (28-29), his dismissal of the South is not so good-natured. The placement of this passage is also important, since almost immediately Underhill finds himself, along with a cargo of tobacco, aboard the ironically named slave ship *Freedom* en route to London. Soon after, he is aboard the *Sympathy*—which is what this experience will teach him—for the next leg of the triangular trade route that bound Africa, the Americas, and Europe. Just what an educated American of the time would have imagined the ship was trading tobacco for, and just why it was sailing to Africa, may be obvious to the reader. However, Tyler's comically naive narrator is shocked when he realizes that he is involved in the slave trade. More seriously, the juxtaposition of sporting, betting, drinking, and swearing—what Underhill calls the South's "dissipation"—with the literal details of the slave trade, suggests a more sinister dissipation in Tyler's satire of Southern manners.

Once Underhill arrives in Africa, Tyler uses the word *barbarity* to refer not to the Africans, but to the acts of the Europeans, to the scene of Africans being brought in chains to the ship, and again to characterize the examinations Underhill learns he must perform (109, 110). The theme and diction of this passage reflect the Humanist belief in the equality of all humanity: The god he asks for mercy for his part in the slave trade is "the common parent of the great family of the universe, who hath made of one flesh and one blood all nations of the earth" (110). Tyler, unlike even the liberal thinkers of his day such as Thomas Jefferson, calls the Africans "MY BRETHREN OF THE HUMAN RACE" (110).

In his description of the conditions on the ship during its middle passage, the author chooses, rather than to sentimentalize, to shock the reader with graphic details; even the descriptions of his own captivity are not as affecting. From this passage emerges what are now well-known bits of history, such as the fact that it "was usual to estimate the loss in the passage to the seashore at twenty-five per cent" (111), and that it was "usual to throw one or two Negro corpses over every day" during the middle passage (113). What is significant in these chapters is Tyler's focus on the Africans themselves as he describes the unthinkable conditions of the ship in a way that manipulates the reader's point of view to that of the Africans. Recounting his complaint to the ship's captain that the suffocating and filthy hold is harmful to the slaves, Underhill says, "In vain I represented that these miserable people had been used to the vegetable diet and pure air of a country life, that at home they were remarkable for cleanliness of person, the very rites of their religion consisting almost entirely in frequent ablutions" (113). This description is a far cry from the usual stereotypes of dirty pagan savages. To assert that Africans value personal hygiene and religious devotion calls into question every assumption about blacks and whites that European enslavement of Africans entailed. Tyler's refusal to sentimentalize the facts gives these passages their emotional power.

Tyler continually refers to the slaves as "these wretched Africans" (111), "these wretched people," "these injured Africans," "these brave Africans" (112), "these miserable people" (113). The language the author uses is sympathetic but not patronizing, and above all what is repeatedly being stressed is simply their humanity. Moreover, he portrays Africans as noble, proud, familial, and brave. When the ship's crew tries to feed the slaves, they refuse to eat: "These injured Africans, prefering death to slavery . . . resolved to starve themselves" (112). Invoking "the Christian thirst for gold," the narrative describes the crew's vain attempt to whip the men until they relent. It is only when the whites whip the women and children in sight of the men that they surrender:

> What the torments exercised on the bodies of these brave Africans failed to produce, the feelings of nature effected. The Negro who could undauntedly expire under the anguish of the lash could not view the agonies of his wife, child, or his mother. Though repeatedly encouraged by these female sufferers, unmoved by their own torments, to persevere unto death, yet, though the *man* dared to die, the *father* relented. (112-13)

Similarly, Tyler makes some interesting choices in the sections of his text for which he relies heavily on the narrative of Olaudah Equiano (1789): Tyler's description of families being torn apart resembles Equiano's account of how his sister was torn from him, and that of the crew forcing the slaves to eat also parallels an incident in Equiano's narrative. Perhaps Doctor Underhill's previously quoted insistence on the Africans' "cleanliness of person" and "frequent ablutions" is derived from Equiano's description of whites as "people who did not circumcise, and ate without washing their hands" (683). Two sets of passages in particular are strikingly similar. Tyler writes, "The dumb sorrow of some, the frenzy of others, the sobbings and tears of the children, and shrieks of the women . . . so affected me that I hastened from this scene of barbarity" (109). Equiano had earlier written, "The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable" (685-86). Here the phrase "the shrieks of the women" appears in both passages, and Equiano's "scene of horror" becomes a "scene of barbarity." The two authors' descriptions of conditions in the ship's hold are even more alike. In Tyler's words,

> The stagnant confined air of this infernal hole, rendered more deleterious by the stench of the feces and the violent perspiration of such a crowd, occasioned putrid diseases[;] . . . it was usual to throw one or two Negro corpses over every day. (113)

In Equiano's words,

> The stench of the hold . . . became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship . . . almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died. (685)

The point is that Tyler, in borrowing liberally from Equiano, also seems to identify with him; there is little difference, for example, between Equiano's point of view and the point of view Tyler assumes. He does not need to add his own fictionalized histrionics to what is already horrendous enough, but more important, he chooses not to. It is as if, for Tyler, Equiano's account, Equiano's feelings, are good enough. Perhaps Tyler concluded that, as a chronicler, a fellow writer, and a fellow human, Equiano was to be trusted. And in an era in which the very humanity of Africans and African Americans was being questioned, this is no small point.

But perhaps the best example of *The Algerine Captive*'s racial progressivism is found in Chapter 31, when the narrator reports that the ship's linguist has overheard the Africans praying for him "and asking [their god] with earnestness, why he put my good *black* soul into a *white* body" (114). By deliberately inverting the trope which for at least two hundred years had associated "whiteness" with good and "blackness" with evil, Tyler effectively forces the reader to recognize another point of view, as well as the reader's own assumptions. He implies here that the Africans naturally

associate "blackness" with goodness and "whiteness" with evil—at least in this context, since after all they have been enslaved by barbaric men with "white" skin—just as Europeans "naturally" associate the opposite. What is more, he both exposes the trope as a construct and deconstructs it for the reader. This is a revolutionary rhetorical inversion, not only for Tyler's time; even as late as the early twentieth century and even by African American writers, the conventional black/white imagery was still being used.

A similar inversion occurs in the previous paragraph, in which many Africans are dying from an epidemic. Underhill claims, "It was affecting to observe the ghastly smile on the countenance of the dying African, as if rejoicing to escape the cruelty of his oppressors" (114). The interpreter tells him that one man, with his dying breath, has "invited his wife and a boy and girl to follow him quickly and slaken [*sic*] their thirst with him at the cool streams of the fountain of their Great Father, beyond the reach of the wild white beasts" (114). Tyler implies a commonality between "races" here, pointing out the man's love of liberty, the importance of family, and his strong religious faith—even to the similarity of worshiping a "great father." The implication is that this man has the same concerns and feelings as any Westerner. What any Westerner would not identify with, however, is the epithet "wild white beasts," which again inverts received ideas about black and white, savage and civilized.

Tyler's depiction of the Algerians, too, avoids the pitfalls of many European writers, who as Edward Said contends, describe the "Orient" in "declarative and self-evident" figures of speech. Said continues, "[T]he tense [these writers] employ is the timeless eternal[;] . . . they are always symmetrical to, and yet diametrically inferior to, a European equivalent" (72). This is generally not the case in *The Algerine Captive*. Tyler's description of Islam is pointedly open-minded and even calls into question the hypocrisy of many Christians. Underhill's observation that "real gentlemen are the same in all countries" (156) certainly avoids falling into an essentialist view of difference. When Tyler's assertions about Algerians are symmetrical to an American equivalent, the symmetry usually, as Cathy Davidson points out, highlights his critique of America (207, 209). Tyler's rhetoric in the Algerian passages does not stress what Said calls the culture's "strangeness, its difference, its exotic sensuousness" (72). The sudden popularity of Algerian abduction literature in this time period would be all the more reason for Tyler to sensationalize his work, which he most definitely avoids doing. For instance, European men's writings about the Near East commonly eroticize veiled women, while *The Algerine Captive* describes the dress of Arab women almost dryly. Perhaps some of the complaints about Volume 2 arise from readers' expectations of "exotic sensuousness."

G. Thomas Tanselle argues that, even within *The Algerine Captive*'s

picaresque tradition, too many differences exist between the first and second volumes, concluding that "the two volumes must be considered separately, for they constitute essentially two books" (153). However, many scenes in the second book echo scenes in the first. In a passage that calls to mind the "dissipated" Southerners of America, the Algerians "drink cooling not inebriating liquors" and never play "at games of chance or for money; those being expressly forbidden by the Alcoran [Koran]" (176). The Southerners, as we have learned, like "to sport, bet, drink, swear, &c." (97). Another episode that calls to mind Volume 1 is Underhill's abduction. Seized and bound by men of "strange habits, who spoke in a language [he] could not comprehend" (116), Underhill is soon handcuffed and "thrust into a dirty hole in the forecastle" of the Algerian ship (117). He lies "twenty-four hours in this loathsome place, covered with vermin, parched with thirst, and fainting with hunger" (117). This treatment reminds him—as well as the reader—of the "treatment we gave the unhappy Africans on board the *Sympathy*" (117). At the Algerian slave market, the reader is faced with a description of a white man being physically examined, unable to understand the language being spoken, forced to run, walk, lie down, and lift a weight, and finally, being purchased. Because he cannot understand the language, he cannot tell the price he is worth. Again the narrative implies a comparison with the situation faced by the African slaves, and again Tyler has shifted the point of view, forcing readers of his day to reconsider their own assumptions about slavery. Furthermore, the narrator's invitation that anyone who would accuse him of "tameness of spirit, in submitting to such gross disgrace" (125) exchange places with him, "that he may avail himself of a noble opportunity of suffering gloriously for his country" (125), can be read as a refutation of the African slaves' purportedly natural docility that uniquely suited them to serve whites.

Finally, Underhill's account of his ancestor's banishment in Puritan Massachusetts in Volume 1 parallels his representation of late-eighteenth century Algeria in Volume 2. In 1636, according to Underhill, Captain John Underhill was accused of breaking "the spirit of an existing law which forbade women to appear in public with uncovered arms and neck" (36). The Captain had reportedly "looked lustfully" at a woman who had appeared at a public lecture wearing "a pair of wanton open-worked gloves, slit at the thumbs and fingers for the conveniency of taking snuff" (36). The absurdity of this charge is Tyler's send-up of Puritan excesses: "The rigid discipline of our fathers of that era," Underhill gravely informs us, "often construed actions, expressions, and sometimes thoughts into crimes" (35). In the second volume, the narrator describes the dress of Algerian women who, like Puritan women, were forbidden "to appear in public with uncovered arms and necks" (36, 175). The absurdity of trying to perform a medical examination on a woman through curtains and veils, when it is recounted in

Volume 2, is thus contextualized: it calls to mind not strangeness, difference, or exotic sensuousness, but America's own not-so-distant past.

Tanselle claims that while "the first volume is made up of groups of chapters relating to certain objects of satire, the second must be thought of in terms of topical headings, such as history, religion, law, public ceremonies, language, finance, and so on" (163), yet the volumes are roughly analogous. History, in the form of his ancestor's story, details the Puritans' religion, law, public ceremonies, language, finance, and education in Volume 1. Perhaps Tanselle does not see his own religion, law, or public ceremonies as "topical headings." One critic even claims that in the text's Algerian chapters, "images of repression abound[;] . . . hospitality and social intercourse are restricted by elaborate and complex social rules" (Dennis 77), although obviously this can be said of any culture. As Chinua Achebe might remind him, he is "obviously unaware that the life of his own tribesmen . . . is full of odd customs and superstitions and, like everybody else in his culture, imagines that he needs a trip to Africa to encounter those things" (251). Compared to the insularity of some late-twentieth century critics, Underhill's admission of prejudice is all the more noteworthy: "I have such a laudable attachment to the customs of my own country that I doubt whether I can judge candidly of [the Algerians'] cookery or mode of eating" (175).

To some degree *The Algerine Captive* is a product of a time in which colonialism, imperialism, and industrial capitalism had not yet perfected the creation of "difference" that we still know today. Even so, this creation was assuredly already underway at the time of the novel's publication. Yet Tyler avoids, in his descriptions of Africa and Africans, constructing a racial Other; instead, he repeatedly emphasizes our common humanity. His avoidance of racial essentialism extends even to the rhetorical inversion of the common tropes of *black* and *white*. In a novel in which its protagonist prays to a god he calls "the common parent of the great family of the universe, who hath made of one flesh and one blood all nations of the earth" (110), Tyler avoids the nationalism of his self-consciously new republic, the religious chauvinism of his Christianity, and the putative superiority of his white skin. In *The Algerine Captive*'s insistence that a nation founded on the principle of equality for its people be held to that promise, Royall Tyler has written a truly American novel.

Notes

[1] Tyler's treatment of Jews in the novel compromises this argument and certainly needs more study.

[2] See, for example, Engell, Dennis, and Cook.

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A Call from the Wild: Woman's Inner Self in *Records of Woman*

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The renewal of interest in Felicia Hemans, one of the nineteenth century's most popular and critically acclaimed poets, has provided new opportunities for thinking about how social constraints associated with gender influence or shape women's lives and poetry. Nineteenth-century ideologies supported perceptions of masculine power and authority, which were embedded in patriarchal inheritance of land and wealth, and assumed woman's position was one of inferiority. However, I will argue that while Hemans's *Records of Woman: With Other Poems* conforms to the social confines of a male-dominated society, it also challenges these prejudicial notions of masculinized superiority. Hemans complicates conventional views by constructing a female subjectivity that encompasses the globe, producing a variety of characters, times, places, and a complexity of women's experiences. Telling the stories of women who range from an American Indian maiden to a Prussian empress, Hemans's poetry deconstructs preconceived notions of nature and gender by connecting woman's inner spirit with wild nature while associating her physical body with cultivated landscape. In this way, Hemans valorizes heroines who embody the physical characteristics of socially defined femininity, and she elevates them to a position of authority and honor as opposed to a state of subservience. While appearing to subscribe to the social construction of gender, Hemans destabilizes these categories and challenges the traditional construction of masculinity and femininity by representing women as naturally powerful and by depicting men as dependents upon this feminized power.

In an attempt to understand the complexity of what it means to be woman in a male-dominated society, Hemans's *Records of Woman* suggests that "woman" is a social construction which embodies male expectations and prescribed values for acceptable social behavior and conduct. Because of masculine desire to control the natural world, not only does man attempt to cultivate wild nature, but also this idealized woman is cultivated and produced by conforming her physical body for outward appearances as well as training her mind to secure complete compliance to social standards and domesticity. However, by juxtaposing cultivated nature with the untouched natural world, Hemans postulates that while women are cultivated into a domestic product, they inherently possess an empowering inner being that remains unaltered and unchanged. Woman's connection to nature and uncultivated landscape, as Hemans represents it, is her inner self or spirit conjoined with the will to survive and the power of resilience. As a result,

when woman's domestic sphere is threatened, this unresolved tension between the cultivated woman and the natural woman culminates in awakening her unconquered spirit, which has been suppressed but remains constant. This aroused spirit produces a sense of self, an awareness of her inner strength and power. Operating within social constraints, this empowered woman not only generates and instigates warfare but also emerges as the leader, defender, rescuer, and protector of man.

"The Switzer's Wife" addresses the perpetuity and the tension of the cultivation process by posing this masculinized process against the backdrop of a natural Alpine setting. In the depiction of the peaceful valley of the Swiss Alps, Hemans places an "Alpine home" (7), the domain of a woman, amidst a natural setting. In contrast men are returning home from "the field or hill" (2) after a long, hard day of physical labor. On a day-to-day basis, the men cultivate the wild land by the sweat of their brows. Claiming ownership of the land, man uses man-made instruments to disrupt and uproot the natural environment for his own benefit. In *Landscape, Liberty, and Authority,* Tim Fulford demonstrates how "through the descriptions of prose writers and poets, views of the landscape owned by gentlemen became representations of the legitimacy of their power and the benefits it brought the nation" (3). According to Fulford, "Nature, in such representations, . . . was a ground on which the legitimacy of gentlemanly power and taste could be tested and confirmed . . . " (3). However, Hemans's landscape imagery appears to challenge the ideology that connects masculine power to nature and to the land and suggests that while man may possess the land, his efforts to control and dominate the natural world are futile. Hemans's description of cultivation intimates that within the natural world there is an inherent spirit to survive and thrive; otherwise, this daily task of cultivating in order to suppress and overcome the natural world would not be necessary. By virtue of her landscape imagery, Hemans deconstructs and undermines traditional theories of male authority by suggesting that masculine cultivation restrains but never completely destroys or controls the natural tendency of wild nature to survive.

In other depictions of landscape, Hemans complicates the prevailing ideologies of masculine power associated with the possession of land. In Fulford's discussion of connections between nature and politics, he asserts, "Power remained predominantly in the hands of the landed nobility and gentry, many of whom increased their wealth and influence by investment in commercial activities in the City and on their estates (iron, stone, coal, timber)" (2). In addition, "[f]or such gentlemen the proper source of power and stability in the nation was the possession of land, and the organization of the prospect view was an expression of their authority over the national landscape which they owned" (Fulford 2-3). However, while men may own the land and possess all resources and financial byproducts, Hemans's

landscape descriptions suggest that absolute power does not reside in such ownership. In "Joan of Arc, in Rheims" by juxtaposing man-made products and structures with the natural environment, Hemans associates men with the cultivated structures and women with the natural and domestic. In a modification of power, Hemans presents a domesticated young woman from a homestead in the woods who is elevated to a position of power and authority.

This feminine heroine from the wild countryside is poised against a masculinized backdrop: "the knighthood of the land" (38), the "chivalry of France" (10) in the Rheims "cathedral" (3) amidst "pictured windows" (8) and "ancestral tombs" (12) of kings. In a surprising disruption of masculine authority, this woman stands "beside the altar-stone" (18) while the king of France is crowned. As Ann Bermingham asserts in her explanation of the intersection between nature, landscape, and eighteenth-century ideology, "Nature becomes a key concept linking the cultural representations of social institutions and apparatuses with landscape" (1). By way of this intersection, Hemans's masculinized configurations and products represent socialized institutions of masculine authority. Men occupied positions of knights and the military while male authority dominated the church. Artisans, glassmakers, and professional labor responsible for the construction of the cathedral were male; the stone was derived from the land owned by male descendants. The "ancestral tombs," usually constructed of stone or marble, contain the bodies of kings who held supreme power. In stark contrast and positioned against this cultured backdrop, Joanne, the "Daughter of Victory" (47) is the picture of idealized femininity disguised in masculine conventions.

Underneath her masculine "helm" (21), her physical features are described as "a still, clear face, / Youthful, but brightly solemn!—Woman's cheek / And brow were there, in deep devotion meek" (23-25). She possesses a feminine "slight form" (29) but is "the leader" (30) of victorious battles because of the "soft light in that adoring eye" (31) that "[g]uided the warrior" (32). Joanne embodies feminine characteristics, yet Hemans endows her heroine with authority as she emerges a powerful leader of warfare "mantled with victorious power" (36) standing forth as the defender of man amidst representations of masculine authority. She alone dares to "stand" (37) in the presence of the newly crowned king while the army of France remains kneeling. This heroine leads "[i]n one kind household voice" (54) because she possesses the "power to bid the quick heart bound" (50). She speaks with a kind, feminine voice, a voice that has submitted to masculine constraints and resonates a household or domesticated voice, yet her voice produces the leading tone of "warlike melodies" (48).

The way in which Hemans constructs this heroine stresses that women are not powerless or inferior, and yet a woman's spirit identifies with

the domestic. One point of stress for Hemans, as Susan Wolfson points out in her discussion of Romantic women writers' constructing a gender for the soul, is that "[h]ome is the realm of the female soul; under its sway, the domestic affections restore world-weary men's souls and, beyond this service, remind us all of the soul's true home" (58). As woman for Hemans is a social construction, home appears as a social construct that embodies a spiritual realm. In stark contrast to masculine architectural descriptions, Hemans's poetry seldom describes a home as a physical entity. Instead, Hemans depicts home as a place that rekindles and empowers woman's spirit. In this way, she endorses women's association with the home while rejecting the masculine insistence on female subservience. In Joanne's array of masculinized fame—the glory and success—the threat of being separated from and her longing to return to her domestic domain is the beckoning call that arouses her inner spirit. Joanne's heart responds to the call from her childhood home, and her return to the natural environment rekindles her spirit. This episode suggests that the tension between the cultivated woman of masculine conventions and the natural woman results in the revival and empowering of her inner being.

Ironically, Joanne, the "lowly dreamer of the wild!" (34) acquires a position of superiority in the presence of her father and brothers, yet she longs to return to her domestic domain, "to her cabin-door" (72). Back in her native natural environment, she no longer embodies masculine constraints of the helm, "the pomp" (71), "[t]he plumes, the banners" (72). Her inner spirit is now connected to the natural and uncultivated:

> —The very wood-note, sung
> In early spring-time by the bird, which dwelt
> Where o'er her father's roof the beech-leaves hung,
> Was in her heart; a music heard and felt,
> Winning her back to nature. (77-81)

It is the call from the wild, the song of the bird that rekindles her spirit, which has been suppressed by masculine politics. Her "paradise / Of home with all its loves" (92-93) is "[t]he crown of glory unto woman's brow" (94). Even though she has been arrayed in a "high career" (52)—the vainglories of man—, it is her connection with the natural environment and her home, the "still cabin and the beechen-tree" (86), that procures her glory.

In yet another poem which celebrates the naturally empowered spirit of woman, Hemans starkly contrasts Joan of Arc's "ancestral tombs" in the Rheims Cathedral with "The Queen of Prussia's Tomb." A woman's shrine, her final domain, reconnects her to her inner being; therefore, the Queen of Prussia rests among the trees "where northern willows weep" (1) and the "cypress-branches" (4) cast "soft shadows" (3). Willow trees, known for their bowing position, convey the subservient position of woman; their weeping also connotes the emotional aspects of a woman's socially defined

position. As well, the "soft shadows" implicate woman's physical characteristics. Even in her repose, her physical body displays the masculine constraints of femininity and submission:

> The solemn sweetness on those eyes.
> The folded hands, the calm pure face,
> The mantle's quiet flow,
> The gentle, yet majestic grace,
> Throned on the matron brow. (12-16)

Ironically, housed inside of the social physical conformity of her sweet eyes, her compliant hands, her pure face of quietness and gentleness resides a woman of superior rank and authority.

In a seeming reversal of power and authority, at her feet "stands an eagle" (19), "[a] kingly emblem" (21), which suggests male subservience to woman. The masculine symbol "stands," which in this instance intimates a reverence, and is positioned at her feet, which implies submission. This woman witnessed the atrocities of war, fathers struck down in death as their shields were "spoil'd" (32) by blood, but yet she remained steadfast as "[s]he met the tempest meekly brave" (35). In keeping with the masculinized definition of woman, she appears as physically meek; however, she is spiritually a warrior. Her physical body "slumber'd" (37), but "[f]ast thro' the realm a spirit moved— / 'Twas hers, the lofty and the loved" (41-42). Her inner spirit that could not be conquered instituted a resurrection that resulted in "*Her* land's redeeming hour" (38, emphasis mine). It was her name, the name of a woman, that resounded like a call from the wild, and "Her memory" (45) that acted like "a banner" (45) that gave the impetus in rousing "bold hearts from sleep" (44). In essence, Hemans suggests that the unconquerable spirit of woman is the source of redemption through which "the strong land shook off its chain" (51). Furthermore, Hemans subverts the prevailing ideologies that land is emblematic of male authority by asserting not only that it is the matron's land (16) but also that she is the redeemer of her own property.

Prevailing nineteenth-century ideologies endorsed men as powerful and authoritative in connection with their property. Men were repeatedly depicted in a position of protecting their socially defined status and masculinity by maintaining control of property. Hemans's poetry disrupts this ideology not only by posing women as the owners of land but also by presenting men in a state of vulnerability because of their obsession with maintaining that control. In Anthony John Harding's discussion of Hemans's resistance to traditional patriarchal notions of identity, he suggests that in her poetry

> women's lack of a rigid sense of self . . . constitutes a strength; that it is only *misrepresented* as a weakness in a patriarchal culture, that women's ability to put her nurturing and caregiving role ahead of the requirements of a rigid self-definition is an entirely positive trait, and that it is in fact the *male* who is weak, since he is perpetually vulnerable to fear of whatever seems to threaten his sense of himself, whether it be emotion, death, or merely a more successful male rival. (144)

As Hemans disrupts societal constructions that define and identify men as powerful and authoritative in connection with their property, she presents men in a state of vulnerability when that identity is threatened. As Harding suggests, Hemans's women are not in positions that constantly require validation of authority; instead, she places them in flexible and fluctuating positions, allowing them to maneuver between submission and authority. But when man's rigidly defined authority, which is connected with his control over property and resources, is threatened, his sense of authority collapses, exposing his weaknesses.

Harding's remarks seem borne out in the cultivation scene in "The Switzer's Wife." There Hemans projects the image of a field laborer returning home from his daily quest of trying to subdue the natural world, where he is physically and spiritually overwhelmed with the fear of being conquered. The cultivator witnesses the "envy of th' oppressor's eye" (55) upon his "heritage" (56); he envisions that "tyranny lies, couch'd by the forest-rills" (51). When his home, his family, and his possessions are in danger of being subjected to someone else's control, he is in danger of losing his authoritative identity. Unlike the natural world, constantly fighting for survival against man's processes of cultivation, this man succumbs to the idea of defeat and "sits" (15) immobilized by his fear, waiting for his impending doom. Nature beckons him, trying to motivate him to action, but neither the comforting, "lulling whispers" (14) of serenity from the "linden-tree" (13), nor the tranquillity of "evening" (17) at his "Alpine home" (7) can reverse his emotions of defeat. His wife, standing over him, in an inversion of authority, "thro' tears half quivering" (34) and a "sweet earnest face" (43), entreats him to retreat from his burdened heart. Neither this appeal nor "the silvery laughter of his bright-hair'd child" (21) breaks the chains of fear that have captured him. Conceding his family's defeat, he instructs his wife to "Go, pour the wine of our own grapes in fear, / Keep silence by the hearth! its foes are near" (53-54). Like the socially constructed woman, the wine is a product of his cultivation, subjugation, and harvest, where the grapes have been tilled, plucked from their vines, and trampled underneath man's feet for the benefit of man. This imagery also supports the idea of the thriving spirit of nature; while the grapes, the fruit of the vine, have been ravished, the vine remains intact and ready to produce more fruit. These aspects of the poem suggest that destabilizing man's constructed authority leaves him helpless.

In sharp contrast to her husband, the Switzer's wife now seems awakened to the power or spirit that has been suppressed and dormant within her. She embodies the ideal woman who has cultivated a "meek thoughtfulness and quiet smile" (68) and is "calmly loving and belov'd / And timid in her happiness" (69-70). This "fair mother" (32) and dutiful wife chooses to frame her face with "braided" (100), confined, and managed hair. Responding to her husband's distress, she is described as "a frail-harp string, shaken by the storm" (64); however, her "free Alpine spirit" (66) awakens—the free, natural inner spirit that could not be mastered. This imagery suggests that "woman," even though fragile like a harp string that has been stretched and is in a state of tension, does not break; instead, when disturbed or shaken, she reverberates and creates a melodic sound. Her inner spirit, touched by her husband's sense of defeat, responds to her threatened domain by heeding "the last note of that wild horn . . . / Which haunts the exile's heart with melody" (5-6). Like an exile, she has been forced to separate from and to suppress her inner being; however, her inner spirit, the natural fire that burns within her and that could not be conquered or extinguished, rekindles within her confined physical body. The reference to the musical term "melody" implies that by hearing this call her spirit revives, empowering her to take a melodic or leading role. Sharply contrasted to her husband she stands, renewed, "brightly forth, and stedfastly, that hour, / Her clear glance kindling into sudden power" (71-72). Looking on her husband in a state of despair and defeat while sensing her own threat of loss, her inner spirit revives: "And yet around her is a light / Of inward majesty and might" (epigraph). With her own spirit revived, she stands in a position of authority empowered to take action.

Roused and intrinsically empowered, however, she must still operate within the social confines of accepted femininity. Endowed with wisdom, "an eye of light" (73), not to overstep her domesticated boundary, she draws her child to her "holy breast" (74). With lips trembling, she lifts her "soft voice" (75), like the whispers in nature, and contends that by remaining complacent they are already defeated. With soft but commanding words, she instructs her husband to cast off his spirit of defeat and to "rise" (78) in order to fight for their survival. Remaining in her submissive position, she rallies her husband to take up arms while she stays home to pray. Keeping within social constraints, she does not raise her voice in anger or accuse him of being a failure; instead, she skillfully blames herself for his inability to act by assuring him that fear has paralyzed him because of his concern for her safety. She compels him to rise from his subjugated position and to lift his head proudly, reassuring him that she can endure everything but to see him "subdued" (89).

Appealing to his social responsibility to perpetuate male heredity, she says, "The babe whom I have bore thee, must be free!" (82). Since wild

nature contains the will to survive, she directs him to the wild, where he must resume his role as the "hunter of the hills" (88) and repossess his eye like an eagle to swiftly spot and consume his enemies. She softly commands him to "Go forth beside the waters, and along / The chamois paths, and thro' the forests go" (91-92). These are the unaltered natural paths among nature's free creatures that will aid in his protection since they have not been altered by the hand of man. She incites him to sound the horn, the battle cry, throughout the land to awaken and call the other villagers to action.

Her words resound in his ears like the call of the "wild horn" (5) to the exile, reviving her suppressed husband. He arises "like a warrior-youth awaking / To clarion-sounds upon the ringing air" (97-98). By drawing on her cultivated feminine traits and by yielding to her inner spirit that has remained unchanged, she instigates this wake-up call. As a result, he elevates her to a position of honor and authority by praising her as "Worthy" (101) and confessing that she is now his instructor. He credits her with this spiritual renewal and declares her "name" will be "armour to [his] heart" (104). In another surprising reversal of roles, the name of woman now becomes protector for man. As he ventures on the quest to rouse his fellowmen, he acknowledges her and gives her total recognition for this spiritual revival. He asserts, "I go—*thy* spirit on my words shall dwell, / *Thy* gentle voice shall stir the Alps" (107-08, emphasis mine). Even though she remains within her place of domesticity, "woman" (78) emerges as the leading and the driving force that instigates this fight for survival. It is *her* rekindled spirit and *her* soft voice that have incited him to arise and take action.

Not only does Hemans's poetry suggest that woman is the leader and protector of man, but also it implies that natural woman is the rescuer of a cultured man. In "The American Forest Girl" Hemans portrays her heroine as a native Indian, "[a] girl—a young, slight girl—a fawn-like child / Of green Savannas and the leafy wild" (53-54). This young girl resembles a petite, graceful, high-spirited, untamed animal that dwells freely among the uncultivated fertile landscape. She roams freely and lives happily amidst the "cedars" (11) and the "thick cypress boughs / Full of strange sound" (31-32). In stark contrast to the "dark hunters in their vengeful mood" (52) with "savage brows" (33), she possesses a gentle, compassionate spirit, one that has experienced the pain of loss. As this young "unmark'd" (55) girl witnesses the savage attacks on a "fair-hair'd youth of England" (6) her inner spirit reveals her position of naturally empowered authority.

Hemans parallels this "fair-hair'd youth of England" (6) to "a king's son" (7) who possesses "island-blood" (8) running through his veins. This description alludes to the power and authority held by the aristocratic bloodline through the possession of land and property and the grooming that occurs for the son to take over the kingdom or estate. But as he faces his

execution, he tries unsuccessfully to awaken "[h]is father's spirit in his breast" (43), suggesting that masculinity reposes and withdraws in weakness when threatened. The young native heroine watches his impending doom and "the pity of her soul grew strong" (60) so that she commands the male captors in a "clear-toned voice that said, 'He shall not die!'" (66). The fact that she does not plead or request nor is she questioned about her command suggests that she is not in an inferior position. The disruption in her domestic environment causes her inner spirit to react. She draws from wild nature, where she embodies authoritative power. Nature responds to her voice in that "the gloomy forest thrill'd / To that sweet sound" (67-68), and "A sudden wonder fell / On the fierce throng; and heart and hand were still'd, / Struck down, as by the whisper of a spell" (68-70). She appears to conform to the image of femininity with her frail physical description and her soft voice, but she speaks with the voice of authority. In a reversal of male authority, the male savage warriors "bow'd before the maid"(71) as "[s]omething o'ermaster'd them from that young mien" (75). As a result, "[t]hey loos'd the bonds that held their captive breath" (79); this native maiden becomes not only the leader of man but also the rescuer of man.

Records of Woman: With Other Poems proposes that woman is a complex being, consisting of a social identity that is cultivated and restrained by masculinized expectations and an inner self that is naturally powerful and unconquerable. By connecting woman's inner being with natural landscapes, Hemans intimates that within the natural world as well as in natural woman, no matter how much cultivation, uprooting, and disruption occurs, are a resilient spirit and an inherent will to survive. By associating men with the cultivated structures that are easily overtaken and destroyed by wild nature, Hemans disrupts ideologies that perpetuate masculine power through control over land and possession of property. This collection of poems suggests that even though women are subject to social constraints, they are not powerless or immobile. On the contrary, when woman's domestic sphere is threatened, woman's inner being, naturally powerful but suppressed by social constraints, awakens and possesses the capacity to arouse and resurrect great armies. While maintaining socially accepted behavior and characteristics of femininity, Hemans's woman rises to a position of authority and honor in her domestic domain.

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Sounding the Depths of Ishmael's Bardic Voice

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In "Psychology and Literature," Carl Jung likens a great work of art to a dream because "for all its apparent obviousness it does not explain itself and is always ambiguous. A dream never says 'you ought' or 'this is the truth'" (104). Jung encourages us to "let a work of art act upon us as it acted upon the artist. To grasp its meaning, we must allow it to shape us as it shaped him." Then "we also understand the nature of his primordial experience," that "[h]e has plunged into the healing and redeeming depths of the collective psyche, where man is not lost in the isolation of consciousness and its errors and sufferings, but where all men are caught in a common rhythm which allows the individual to communicate his feelings and strivings to mankind as a whole." Jung believes such "re-immersion in the state of *participation mystique* is the secret of artistic creation and of the effect which great art has upon us, for at that level of experience it is no longer the weal or woe of the individual that counts, but the life of the collective. That is why every great work of art is objective and impersonal, and yet profoundly moving" (105).

Louise Cowan notes that in "its function as *cosmopoesis*," epic allows for the territory wherein "other genres find their place and within which human life may be envisioned in its varied dimensions." As she says, "[a] cosmos is a self-enclosed state of order which must be intuited; and certainly the epic cosmos—a poetic image—cannot be logically encompassed or defined, nor can all its components be listed" (L. Cowan 10-11). Because it is "capable of accommodating the layered dimensions of time and space," epic is itself "a poetic cosmos that, true to a specific epoch and a particular people, nevertheless allows sufficient room for the poet to trace the ineluctable movement toward universal order implied in human events" (L. Cowan 5). In her effort to liberate the epic genre from pedantic formulae that suck away its soul in the name of definition, Cowan calls upon Henry Corbin's Sufi-inspired concept of the *mundus imaginalis*. Cowan believes that epic "establishes the *mundus imaginalis*, wherein reside, as in Plato's ideal realm, the universal qualities that make up the human condition" (L. Cowan 5).

Most certainly, as poetic genre, epic is a creative world containing the potential for all other poetic (literary) form. Strictly speaking, however, epic does not itself *establish* the *mundus imaginalis* but comes forth from it like the gods from Chaos, like great art from the unconscious. That is, Corbin's *mundus imaginalis* and Jung's unconscious seem to exist as parallel realms of actuality. Epic form is fictive in the literary sense, but

mundus imaginalis is the imaginal world itself, not a product of the human imagination but the very real world of creative space that Corbin explains in terms of how one perceives images on a mirror: "The material substance of the mirror, whether metal or mineral, is not the substance of the Image; the Image could only accidentally be of the same substance as the mirror. The substance is simply the 'place of its appearance'" (Corbin 9). In other words, the Image on the mirror is neither the mirror nor the thing reflected on it. The image exists in its own world of actuality, in the *mundus imaginalis*. In this sense, epic is the paradoxical *And* suggested by Corbin's imaginal world, neither actual nor imaginary but both.

Given the parallel relationship of the *mundus imaginalis* to the unconscious, one may entertain the notion of its containing auricular as well as visual images, not literal voices speaking audibly inside us as in psychotic episodes, but archetypes of voice, one may say, that resonate as powerfully as all other archetypes that one may, with Jung's help, identify. The possibility of such auricular archetypes may account for why a given epic speaks differently to different people at different times—why, the greatness of his art notwithstanding, Homer's voice in *The Odyssey* may sound less resonantly to a particular audience than Ishmael's voice in *Moby-Dick*.

According to Charles Segal, the Greeks regard the Homeric poet "as the vocal embodiment of the communal values exemplified in his songs" and poetry itself "as the living voice of song" (370). Segal says, "The Homeric bard is a singer rather than a maker (*aoides* rather than *poietes*) because he is the voice and the vehicle of ancient wisdom." The divine origin of his song notwithstanding, Segal reminds us, the Homeric bard "sings 'for men' as well as for gods . . ." (372). One might say, then, that Homer must begin his epic with "Tell me, Muse, about the man of many turns" (*Od.* 1.1) so that he may sing forward a cultural experience resonant with its archetypes. The Homeric convention reflects the poet's vehicular relationship not only to the divine source of poetry but also to his audience. Ishmael, however, must address his poem directly to an American audience as though to each individual. He cannot do otherwise and hope for American ears to hear, souls to stir. With a mere three words, Melville cuts through centuries of Western evocative convention and connects his audience with its more immediate Judeo-Christian mythic heritage while appealing directly to its mythic self-image as rugged individual, isolated and self-serving. In American literature, Melville's "Call me Ishmael" resonates with an archetypal power equal to that of, say, Christopher Marlowe's "Faustus, thou art damned!" during England's Reformation.

In this sense, then, Ishmael's voice, not Ishmael himself, emerges as the first major image in *Moby-Dick*. His is the embodied voice, at once spontaneous and timeless, of one who, finding "nothing particular to interest me on shore," decides to see "the watery part of the world," moved to do so,

in fact, "whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul," that is, "whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off" (18). His is the voice deep within that longs to be free of the land, to shed its vain heritage, status, and achievement, and go to sea "as a simple sailor" (20). Ultimately, Ishmael's is the embodied voice of the timeless tale, "never mind how long precisely" (18), that evolves as its destiny even if subject "to the delusion that it was a choice resulting from my own unbiased freewill and discriminating judgment" (22).

Ishmael's voice transcends that of the "proper" fictive narrator, discards the land-locked mentality of literary criticism, and sounds the fathoms of the oceanic soul. As epic singer, Ishmael confidently details the culture of the whaling industry—its history, its economics, its ships and crew responsibilities, its harvesting techniques, for example—as well as the backgrounds and experiences of his fellow travelers aboard the *Pequod*. Yet his voice echoes another realm, speaking as from some ubiquitous embodiment, privy to the carpenter's running soliloquies as he fashions Ahab's leg (360-61), to Ahab's solitary musing on the conversion of Queequeg's coffin into a life-buoy (396), even to Starbuck's Quaker-Shadow temptation to shoot Ahab in his sleep (386-87). Descending below decks, seeing the loaded muskets "upright against the forward bulkhead," and standing before "the isolated subterraneousness of the cabin," Ishmael says, "Starbuck was an honest, upright man; but out of Starbuck's heart, at that instant when he saw the muskets, there strangely evolved an evil thought; but so blent with its neutral or good accompaniments that for the instant he hardly knew it for itself" (386).

Ishmael's voice resonates with the prescience and omniscience of one telling the tale not only as an eye-witness to events in which he himself participates but also as one privy to the inmost thoughts and feelings of others, impossible for anyone but themselves to know or, for that matter, to know themselves. Always his voice is that of the one "*whom the Fates ordained*" (427) to be the survivor of the wreck, at once in its midst and on its margin, the one "*drawn towards the closing vortex*" of the sunken *Pequod*, "*towards the black button-like bubble at the axis,*" revolving until Queequeg's "*coffin life-buoy shot lengthwise from the sea, fell over, and floated by my side.*" Then "*buoyed up by that coffin*" among the sharks and sea hawks, he holds the tension between death and life, so to speak, until the *Rachel*, "*in her retracing search after her missing children, only [finds] another orphan*" (427).

As voice embodied, Ishmael is namesake of the biblical Hagar's son, sent into exile with his mother by Sarah after she bore Isaac, and protected in the wilderness by an angel, to become the ancestor of Arab peoples, as

Isaac of the Hebrews (18 n.2). Thus does the "chosen" but never anointed one become the disinherited one, the dispossessed, outcast progenitor of a related but different nomadic people. By implication, Melville's Ishmael is such a disinherited and dispossessed one, a familial outcast and world wanderer, "orphaned" by choice or by chance, who sings his song forward from the margins of society to lure us like Odysseus to the Sirens or, perhaps more aptly, like synaptic impulses among primeval souls.

Similarly, Ishmael shares in the fates of the biblical Rachel and her children, their story closely paralleling his. As a note to the text explains, "The ship's name recalls Jeremiah 31.15, where 'Rachel' is not used to mean the beautiful wife of Jacob but to mean (symbolically) the mother of the Hebrews: 'A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not'" (396 n.1). The writer of the Gospel of Matthew carries forward Rachel's voice, linking it to the lamentation of Hebrew mothers following Herod's massacre of the innocents after being rebuffed by the magi after the birth of Jesus (399 n.3). Robert Graves and Raphael Patai note, "A midrashic passage shrewdly points out that the Mosaic Law governing the inheritance of sons borne to a man by two co-wives, one beloved and one hated (*Deuteronomy* xxi.15-17) is based on" the myth of Jacob's passing over Reuben, his first-born son by Leah, whom he hated, in favor of Joseph, first-born son of his second but beloved wife Rachel after her long years of barrenness. As Graves and Patai explain, "The traditional order of the patriarchs' birth is that of seniority in the Leah-Rachel federation," which is now called Israel, "although at first 'Israel' properly included only the Rachel tribes" (218 n.3,4). Rachel's voice image lingers on the distant breeze throughout Melville's epic just as it does in both Christian and Hebraic tradition. Melville's Ishmael takes his place in a rich tradition, indeed styling himself as one severed of ties associated with the land, whether of his own desire or that of someone else, he never says.

The biblical context from which depths it stirs lends Ishmael's voice its characteristic "orphan" quality, its auricular archetype ascending and descending the unconscious depths at any given moment, for archetypes do not reign equally within us at all times, nor do they in Ishmael. Nevertheless, juxtapositions of auricular and visual images may work simultaneously on Ishmael's creative imagination. This point may be illustrated by the particular moment that the *Pequod* sails into the feeding grounds of the Right Whale, that is, into the "vast meadows of brit, the minute, yellow substance, upon which [it] feeds" (223). Watching and listening to the sound of the Right Whales as they sift the tiny crustaceans through their teeth, Ishmael notes that the brit "undulated round us, so that we seemed to be sailing through boundless fields of ripe and golden wheat" (223) amid the sound of huge scythes "making a strange, grassy, cutting sound; and leaving

behind them endless swaths of blue upon the yellow sea" (223). So Ishmael conjures from his unconscious images of land and sea, man's and Nature's harvest, and after ruminating on the perils of both land and sea, again sounds the depths of the sea, where glide "its most dreaded creatures," "unapparent for the most part, and treacherously hidden beneath the loveliest tints of azure," that have carried on its "universal cannibalism" and "eternal war since the world began" (225).

In effect, Ishmael makes us privy to his cresting awareness that as the history of the creatures of the sea and those of the land are one, so also man and those creatures are one. Ishmael calls us to "consider them both, the sea and the land; and do you not find a strange analogy to something in yourself? For as this appalling ocean surrounds the verdant land, so in the soul of man there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompassed by all the horrors of the half-known life. God keep thee! Push not off from that isle, thou canst never return!" (225). In a Jungian sense, Ishmael's song holds the tension of land and sea, of the conscious and the unconscious, of Rachel's child lost on land and Ishmael lost at sea.

Homer also works emergent images of land and sea in the *Odyssey,* primarily visual, but nonetheless psychologically relevant. From the time Odysseus leaves Troy until he finally arrives in Ithaca, he seems lost always in territory at once familiar and alien. Isolated, fragmented landscapes appear as islands upon the "wine-faced sea" through which he must journey before he finds "home" again, not the home he left but the one that awaits him, the one for which his war-wounded psyche must be prepared in advance of reaching it. Throughout his narrative, Odysseus is flung from one to another of psychological landscapes rising, as it were, from his unconscious, gradually eroding his acquired brutishness and moving toward the land of the Phaecians and Nausicaa, who discovers him like so much flotsam cast upon the Scherian shore (*Od.* 6), psychologically as well as physically naked. In the self-conscious song he sings for the first time among the Phaecians, Odysseus sounds the psychological depths of the adventures that have prepared him for his homecoming.

Like Segal, Louise Cowan notes the role of the "epic poet as conscious artist" who "lets society know its identity and its mission" (10). So now it is well to attend briefly to Ishmael's song, to the lyrics by which he, like Odysseus, may regain home. Bainard Cowan sees *Moby-Dick* as moving between two myths, or, put another way, as paying tribute to the end of the prevailing myth of America through Ahab's monomaniacal self-destruction and heralding the dawn of the whole world myth through the Ishmael-Queequeg fraternity. Cowan calls Ahab "the greatest epic poetic realization of the American national myth of the hunter, essentially a collective myth narrative of 'regeneration through violence,'" that cloaks its aggressive greed in moral rectitude and accomplishes "the devastation of the

land, the glorification of war, and the decimation and victimization of the nonwhite peoples who share American space" (B. Cowan 242). Ahab "sees himself as both the captive and the hunter-rescuer-avenger," in Cowan's view, finally "painting himself as a victim and captive to a sinister and imprisoning universe, and of using that scenario as a justification for a lifelong campaign of violence and domination" (B. Cowan 243). Cowan suggests further that Melville pointedly has nature triumph over Ahab, yet leaves it "unresolved whether Nature, epitomized in Moby Dick, will survive or bleed to death," while Ishmael "preside[s] in his humble way over the birthing of new gods and a new myth, the myth of the whole world, of 'Pacific man' in which America is a member nation, a fellow cultivator and sufferer, not a hunter hero among savages" (B. Cowan 243).

Queequeg's unwitting nurture of Ishmael's nascent comprehension of a myth larger than his own begins at Peter Coffin's Spouter Inn when Ishmael first encounters Queequeg, reacting to him initially not as a man but as a stereotype. For a moment, Ishmael seems constellated as the archetypal xenophobe who is squared off, as far as he can determine in the darkness, with the no-less archetypal, diabolical heathen ready to slay him, dine on his carcass, and peddle his shrunken head among the New Bedford Christians. Peter Coffin's amused intercession prompts Ishmael to rue his overreaction and to recognize Queequeg as "a human being just as I am: he has just as much reason to fear me, as I have to be afraid of him. Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian" (36).

Ironically in light of his previous fears, Ishmael awakens at daybreak to find Queequeg's tattooed arm "thrown over [him] in the most loving and affectionate manner" (36) and indistinguishable in the early morning light from the patchwork design of their quilt. The pressure of Queequeg's arm reminds Ishmael of a childhood experience when, banished to bed by his stepmother on the longest day of the year, he had awakened to the fearful sensation of some "nameless, unimaginable, silent form or phantom" (37) holding his hand in the darkness. Irony piles on irony as, lying in Queequeg's somnolent embrace, Ishmael reflects, "Now, take away the awful fear, and my sensations at feeling the supernatural hand in mine were very similar, in their strangeness, to those which I experienced on waking up and seeing Queequeg's pagan arm thrown round me." Ishmael muses that "at length all the past night's events soberly recurred, one by one, in fixed reality, and then I lay only alive to the comical predicament. For though I tried to move his arm—unlock his bridegroom clasp—yet, sleeping as he was, he still hugged me tightly, as though naught but death should part us twain" (38).

Ishmael's sense of the comic, even about himself, contributes to his flexibility. As he notes, the next morning at breakfast, he "accosted the grinning landlord very pleasantly," for "I cherished no malice towards him,

though he had been skylarking with me not a little in the matter of my bedfellow" (39). Ishmael understands that "a good laugh is a mighty good thing, and rather too scarce a good thing; the more's the pity. So," he continues, "if any one man, in his own proper person, afford stuff for a good joke to anybody, let him not be backward, but let him cheerfully allow himself to spend and be spent in that way. And the man that has anything bountifully laughable about him, be sure there is more in that man than you perhaps think for" (39). That the ability to laugh at one's own foibles looms starkly absent in Ahab may be illustrated in a brief scene at the end of the first day's disastrous encounter with Moby Dick. As Ahab ponders the splintered halves of his whale boat, Stubb proffers a mild proverbial jest—"The thistle the ass refused; it pricked his mouth too keenly, sir; ha! ha!"—to which Ahab replies, "What soulless thing is this that laughs before a wreck? Man, man! did I not know thee brave as fearless fire (and as mechanical) I could swear thou wert a poltroon. Groan nor laugh should be heard before a wreck" (412-13). In Ahab Melville exposes another American national character flaw: we seem always at our worst, even our most dangerous to others and ourselves, when we take ourselves too seriously. Ishmael seems always to apprehend this truth; Ahab never does.

Guided by Melville's epic vision, Ishmael successfully navigates the distance between the old myth of American "manifest destiny" and the new myth of the whole world, regardless of the gods it honors or disavows. Witnessing the hollow archetypes of the old myth sinking like Ahab into the fathomless deep, Ishmael escapes the inexorable pull of its swirling vortex, ably grasping the freshly constellated auricular and visual archetypes freed as though by Ahab's demise and shooting into Ishmael's consciousness like Queequeg's coffin life-buoy. Placing *Moby-Dick* "in the mystical tradition," both "free of didacticism" and aware "that life and death are part of an indivisible process," Julian Rice cryptically observes, "Redemption occurs, not because it should, but because it does" (52). Enabled by Melville's epic vision, striking so resonantly the auricular and visual images necessary to Ishmael's transformation—the fictive and actual materials, the *mundus imaginalis* and the Jungian unconscious—redemption occurs also because it can.

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The Power of Religious "Law" in Faulkner's *Light in August*

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In the twelfth chapter of William Faulkner's *Light in August*, following Joanna Burden's suggestion that she and her lover have a child together, Joe Christmas speculates, "If I give in now, I will deny all the thirty years that I have lived to make me what I chose to be" (594). The question of what exactly Joe has become in the last thirty years has drawn an array of answers over the last half a century, from Donald Kartiganer's declaring him an unsolvable racial perplexity who cannot integrate into society (303) to James Leo Spenko's depiction of him as a sexual deviant who associates intimacy with sickness and violence (257). The way one answers this question of Joe's identity proves significant in interpreting the dramatic yet puzzling events that lead to his castration and death. Over forty years ago, Cleanth Brooks, in an essay on Faulkner's concepts of "good" and "evil," described Joe as "the sternest and most doctrinaire Calvinist" in *Light in August* (38). Though the issue of Joe's religious identity, which Brooks investigates, is often avoided in current scholarship, Faulkner's portrayal of Joe's demise overwhelmingly reveals that what Joe has become as a religious entity indeed plays a crucial role in the reason why he meets the destiny that he meets.

To better understand the identity of Joe Christmas, it becomes necessary to investigate what sort of society he inhabits. The South that Faulkner re-creates in his works bears powerful resemblance to the real South as he knew it, and readers recognize many of its unwritten laws: stringent racial boundaries between blacks and whites are maintained, family ties play important roles as symbols of status (especially if one's ancestor fought in the Civil War), and all social conventions are to some extent embedded in the Baptist and Methodist Christianity that permeates the region. These laws are significant for Faulkner's works, as are the laws of any society, because they compose a network of standards that an individual must meet in order to play a functional role within his or her community. French theorist Jacques Lacan explains that a subject cannot come fully into being until it has confronted the restrictive laws of its father and recognized the father as a separate, authoritative entity that it must obey (Skura 354). If an individual succumbs to the father's demands, he or she can be successfully absorbed into the society and play an effective role; if not, the individual will be looked upon as a deviant from society and must be somehow removed. This set of rules, or system of ideals, which governs Joe's society, may be referred to as the "Law."

One of Joe's primary misfortunes is that he is marginalized by the

Law of his community, even before his birth. Conceived illegitimately through Milly's affair with a circus worker who is suspected of having "black blood" (676), Joe is viewed by his grandfather, Doc Hines, as "the Lord God's abomination" on earth and unfit for existence within a white society (680). Like Hines, Joe's foster-father, McEachern, represents a strict, puritanical consciousness and demands of Joe high standards of religious conduct, requiring him to memorize Presbyterian catechisms. Unduly harsh and abusively violent, McEachern places oppressive regulations on every aspect of Joe's life, including his social outings. When Joe bashes in McEachern's head with a chair at a local dance, he is doing more than defying the rules of his foster father; he is defying the Law of his society, and readers find that he will never again be able to integrate into his community. In considering the religious fanaticism of the two fathers Joe opposes, readers will see that this act represents a transgression of society's Law, particularly in its religious manifestation. Doreen Fowler, in *The Return of the Repressed*, also maintains that this act of violence is pivotal in Joe's life because, from this point forward, Joe exists in a state of perpetual conflict between the symbolic and imaginary orders: "the typical Lacanian subject" (75). He consistently defies the Law of the Father to satisfy his most carnal, sexual desires, yet he often lashes out violently in sexual encounters because he simultaneously desires a state of exclusion and individuality.

This conflict of interests prompts Joe to become an obscure vagrant, riding different wagons from town to town yet never stepping into a functional societal role in any of them. Intrinsic to Joe's appearance is an ambiguity that Byron Bunch cannot define:

> He looked like a tramp, yet not like a tramp either. His shoes were dusty and his trousers were soiled too. But they were of decent serge, sharply creased, and his shirt was soiled but it was a white shirt, and he wore a tie and a stiffbrim straw hat that was quite new, cocked at an angle arrogant and baleful above his still face. He did not look like a professional hobo in his professional rags, but there was something definitely rootless about him, as though no town nor city was his, no street, no walls, no square of earth his home. (421)

Since the day of his arrival in Jefferson, the people of the town find it impossible to define Joe Christmas, aside from their observations that he makes them feel uncomfortable.

For most of the people of Jefferson, Joe's defining moment comes with the murder of Joanna Burden. Even though Joanna is herself something of an outcast because of her family's agenda in empowering black voters, the townspeople virtually become a lynch mob when they hear that

she has been murdered by a man with "nigger blood in him" (470). Donald Kartiganer explains that for the townspeople, the simple speculation of Joe's black heritage is all that is needed to bring order back to their social structure. In Kartiganer's words, "The community seizes the opportunity of Joanna Burden's violent death to force Christmas into the slot in the system they require him to occupy: the black rapist murderer . . ." (309). It is significant that in this passage Kartiganer also invokes the sexual term "rapist." In addition to Joe's unknowable racial identity, his murder of Joanna illustrates a perversion of the Law closely associated with his sexuality. James Leo Spenko traces Joe's sexuality back to an incident in the orphanage between the dietitian and a medical intern who engage in a sexual act. Ever since this initial observation of an erotic act, Joe's sexual experiences are combined with pain and sickness. The case with Joanna is no exception, as it ends in her attempt to murder Joe with a shot from an old pistol.

While these observations support Fowler's assessment that Joe is torn between opposing psychological interests, what become lost in these racial and sexual commentaries are the religious undertones that drive this murder scene and the following events in Joe's life to their conclusion. Joe is intent on murdering Joanna before he ever enters her unlit bedroom, which is why he carries his razor. Upon his entry, however, he is interrupted by Joanna's request that he turn on the light. Seemingly stalled by this request, Joe finds himself reluctantly moving toward the table where he puts down his weapon and lights a lamp. Having light in the room, Joanna proceeds with her next appeal: "Will you kneel with me? I don't ask it" (607). As Joe declines, Joanna repeats her appeal, always with the qualification that it is not she who is asking, and only after several negative responses does she reveal the pistol and attempt the murder. In this exchange, Joanna has become the representative of the religious Law. Just as light is a metaphor for the community of Christian believers, the lamp in Joanna's bedroom allows her to call Joe to prayer, establishing her as the representative of her society's religious culture and governing Law. Joe's defiance of Joanna's request is therefore a confrontation with and defiance of society's Law in its specifically religious sense.

This defiance of the Law in relation to Jefferson's religious culture continues in Joe's life in the episodes following Joanna's murder, most evidently in the event at the rural Negro church. Joe's disruption of the Negro revival service and his ousting of the congregation seem particularly ambiguous if looked at for their racial implications. According to the Negro messenger who informs the sheriff of the disruption, when Joe entered the church, the people "saw that his face was not black" (637). The congregation has inferred that this attack must have been racially motivated, an act of hatred toward blacks on the part of a white man. From the sheriff's

perspective, however, and from the reader's, such a motive does not make sense because they are aware that Joe possesses a possibly mixed racial heritage and is now being pursued as a black murderer. Does Joe perform this deed as a crime of hate, posing as a white man? Or is he retaliating against the entire black race for contaminating his otherwise white blood? Questions of race do not bring any clarity to this episode, yet the acknowledgement of Joe's defiance of his community's religious Law can help readers understand this event more fully. Joe's opposition to the religious Law is apparent in this scene in that he attacks a church, the stronghold of the community's religious culture; that he specifies a Negro church is a puzzling factor that further proves that Joe is acting outside society's ideals. If the townspeople could solve this puzzle, their solution would prove that Joe was acting, to some extent, within their system of thought. The very fact that it is an unsolvable perplexity solidifies Joe's complete opposition to society's Law. If Joanna's murder has defined Joe as a deviant within Jefferson's social structure, this attack on the church defines him as a deviant who challenges the structure itself, as someone who is completely unwilling to play an understandable role in the design and who deserves to be identified as one who must be removed from his community.

Readers find the culmination of Joe's continual deviance in the chase scene, which leads to his castration and murder at the hands of Percy Grimm; not surprisingly, this scene is depicted by Faulkner with strikingly religious connotation as the Law becomes almost manifest in eliminating Joe as an aggressor against the design. Before Joe is transported back to Jefferson from Mottstown following his arrest, Faulkner cues the reader that Percy Grimm will be the instrument of the Law that brings order back to the social structure of the community. As a participant in the town's civilian military organization, Grimm informs the commander of the American Legion Post, "We got to preserve order. We must let the law take its course. The law, the nation" (733). Grimm appeals to the "law" as the ultimate authority that must determine the fate of men; though Grimm is referring to the specific regulations and governing bodies of Jefferson in this case, his repeated invoking of the power of "law" and his use of the word "order" carry connotations of a design greater than the municipal rules and regulations of a legal entity. Because Grimm has been identified as the manifestation of the power of Law, it comes as no surprise that when Joe escapes from the deputy while crossing the square, Grimm quickly emerges as his primary pursuer.

In the course of the chase scene, Faulkner continues to use language that establishes Grimm as the carrier of the Law's authority. The first instances of this language occur as Grimm pushes his way through the crowds in the square: "He ran among running people, overtaking and passing them, since he had an objective and they did not; they were just

running, the black, blunt, huge automatic opening a way for him like a plow" (738). These sentences depict the mass of people acknowledging the authority of Grimm, made evident in his carrying of an automatic weapon, deliberately forging a path and pointing him toward the murderer so he may fulfill his duty as the Law's instrument in bringing order back to the community. In the next paragraph, this depiction is furthered and made more powerful as Grimm steals a bicycle from a Western Union employee as an aid in the pursuit: "The bicycle possessed neither horn nor bell. Yet they sensed him somehow and made way; in this too he seemed to be served by certitude, the blind and untroubled faith in the rightness and infallibility of his actions" (738-39). Here again, the community collectively permits Grimm's role as the authoritative power of society who must bring Joe to justice as they clear a path for his pursuit, and in response, Grimm conducts himself in a manner of confidence, knowing that society itself supports him in his actions. Not only does Grimm act with the support of his society and in the interest of society's Law; his actions begin to be directly guided by the Law as if it is not he who acts but the Law itself that is now acting through him. He runs with confidence and with "the implacable undeviation of Juggernaut or Fate" (739). He reacts courageously "as though under the protection of a magic or a providence" (740). He moves "with that lean, swift, blind obedience to whatever Player move[s] him on the Board." He never tires in his pursuit "as if the Player who move[s] him for pawn likewise [finds] him breath" (741). Through these descriptions, the reader realizes that Joe Christmas is no longer being pursued by Percy Grimm but by the Law itself. The specifically religious aspect of the Law is illustrated in a description of Grimm's physical appearance: "Above the blunt, cold rake of the automatic his face had that serene, unearthly luminousness of angels in church windows" (741). So when the Law becomes personified in Percy Grimm, something about his physical appearance even conforms to the religious facets of that Law.

This religious aspect of the Law becomes even more evident in the pursuit when Joe flees into the house of Rev. Gail Hightower. Though he came to Jefferson as the minister of the Presbyterian church, Hightower's habit of blurring his spiritual sermons with obscure stories of an ancestor's heroic deeds during the Civil War has alienated him from his congregation. This nonconventional method of pastoring accompanied by his inability to maintain a proper marital relationship has caused his congregation to disown him. Now, in the pursuit scene, the Law has driven Joe directly to the home of the "disgraced minister," and the religious imagery surrounding Hightower's name brings further significance to the action. "Hightower" evokes powerful associations for readers familiar with the Old Testament, a text that historically exerted a major influence on Faulkner's writing (Kazin 11). The King James version of Proverbs 18:10-11 reads, "The name

of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit" (*New Scofield Bible*). This scripture, which would have acted in Faulkner's world as a physical manifestation of the religious Law, incorporates a dichotomy whereby the "righteous," or those abiding by the Law, will be protected by the "tower" of God, while the "rich man," or those who live by faith in worldly things, will be fooled by an imagined "high wall" of protection. Gail Hightower's name is a clever compound word constructed by both sides of the dichotomy so that readers do not know whether to expect his home to be the safe haven of the "strong tower" or the deadly illusion of the "high wall." In the end, however, readers who acknowledge Joe's repeated defiance of the Law should find the conclusion all too fitting. When Joe seeks refuge within this "high tower" of the minister's home, he finds it to be the very sort of imagined wall of protection described in Proverbs 18:11. Because he has chosen to defy the Law of society throughout his life in numerous capacities, the "high tower" of the minister's home can offer no protection for him. In identifying Joe as a deviant from society's Law, readers cannot expect that same Law, manifested in this instance by biblical authority, to provide a haven of protection for him; if it did, he would not really be in defiance of the system.

Faulkner's portrayal of the final scenes of Joe Christmas's life illustrates the Law, in the person of Percy Grimm, eliminating a transgressor of the unwritten standards of order in the community. What Joe Christmas has chosen to become in the last thirty years is a challenger to his society's structure of ideals in terms of his sexuality, his racial alignment, and particularly his religious identity. This identity is a crucial aspect in understanding the events leading to his downfall. After weaving undertones of religious connotation throughout the scenes of Joanna's murder and Joe's clearing the Negro church, Faulkner depicts the final chase scene in powerfully religious terms, which should leave readers to consider that perhaps the religious aspect of the Law could well be the most powerful component in Jefferson's system of ideals. Additionally, readers discover that Joe's statement of identity in chapter twelve not only points back to the last thirty years but points to the near future, foreshadowing the grim inevitability that Joe must be eliminated as a deviant from society's Law.

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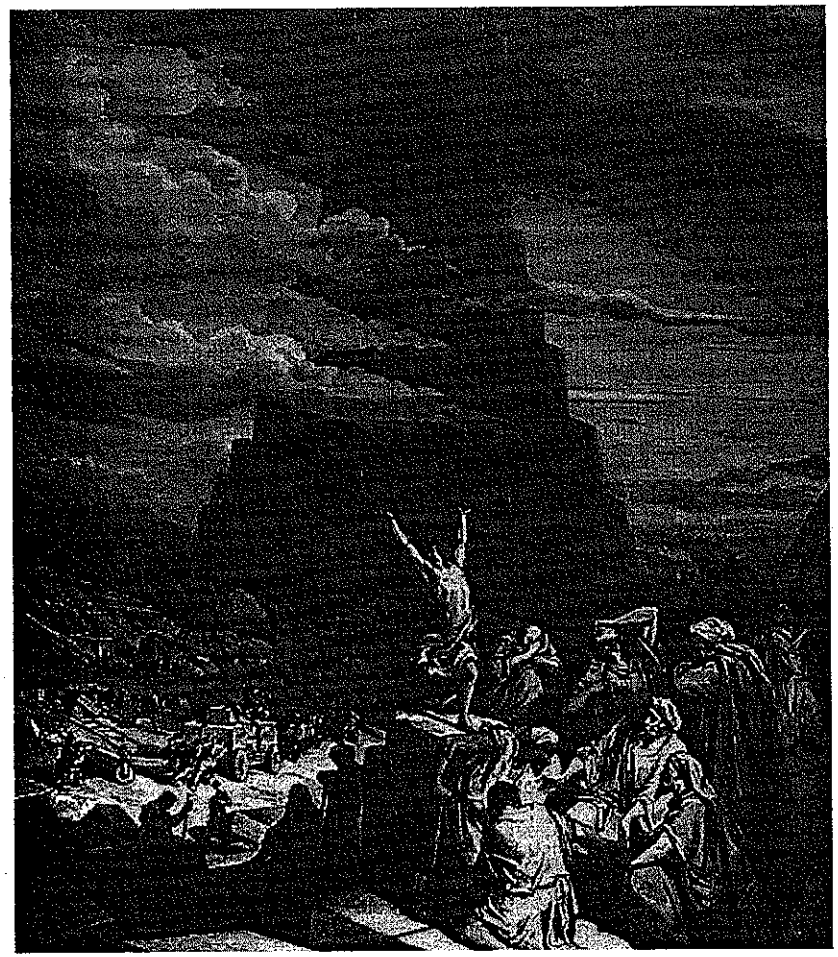

Gustave Doré, *Confusion of Tongues*

Constructing Texts and Reality: On the Writings in and of A. S. Byatt's *Babel Tower*

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A. S. Byatt, one of the leading contemporary British authors, is known for creating characters who are passionate about reading, writing, thinking, learning, examining life and people, art and science. By employing the metafictional tools of thematizing the act of writing, pointing to structural incoherence, and crossing generic boundaries, Byatt's *Babel Tower* offers revealing insights into the writing process and the creating of texts and meaning. The characters' writings within the novel as well as the ways in which *Babel Tower* itself is put together emphasize the constructed nature of texts and of people's textual identities. By extension, the novel explores the similarly constructed, written nature of reality and examines the complex relationship and blurred borderline between fiction and reality.

Babel Tower, set in the 1960s, portrays the protagonist Frederica Potter, Leo's mother, as she leaves her husband, Nigel Reiver, and starts to work as a book reviewer and a teacher of literature in London. *Babel Tower* includes within it other books such as *Babbletower*, a fantasy by one of the characters, Jude Mason, about a group of people who tries to establish its own ideal community. *Babel Tower* also incorporates *Laminations*, Frederica's work of "cut-and-paste." A subplot of *Babel Tower* is formed by following the work of a government committee that examines how English should and could be taught and learned at schools. *Babel Tower* tackles various aspects from the field of sciences, focusing some researchers who work on snails and ants and discuss their findings about genes. The novel culminates with two court cases: Frederica's divorce and custody case and the trial of the supposedly pornographic *Babbletower*.

Byatt explores the constructed nature of texts most notably by focusing on Frederica's writing process on one level and on manifesting the constructed nature of *Babel Tower*, a world which Frederica inhabits, on the other level. Frederica tries to create a book of different voices, different vocabularies: she tries to create a "coherently incoherent work" (462) out of language that "rustles around her with many voices, none of them hers, all of them hers" (380). Frederica's *Laminations* seems to function as a microcosm for *Babel Tower*, as both are formed of different strata: different "languages," different registers, different textual types, different genres, and different voices of Byatt herself and of other novelists, poets, playwrights, philosophers, scholars, and scientists. The texts of both Frederica and Byatt herself examine how texts and the outside reality are put together.

A number of studies have indicated that the metafictional devices of

choosing writing and writers as a subject matter and of mirroring characters interpreting written words and written worlds are ways to examine how fictional systems are created (Waugh 1990, Ommundsen 1993, Hutcheon 1983, McCaffery 1982). Amidst a number of characters who write novels, poems, book reviews, plays, and cultural and literary studies, Frederica's experiences with writing are the means for *Babel Tower* to thematize and comment on the writing process. Frederica's book reviews, official documents, and diary notes later become part of her *Lamination*s.

Byatt not only observes how Frederica's writing of book reviews is mingled with thoughts about which techniques, words, or analogies to choose and use, but she also recounts Frederica's feelings after she has written the reviews and her pleasure and energy acquired from thinking and writing: "She has enjoyed the act of writing, of watching language run black out of the end of her pen: this has in turn made her feel that she is herself again, and has made her body real to her, because her mind is alive" (155). Indeed, to her, writing resembles the drawing of thoughts since avid thinking, reading, writing are an essential part of her mind. Reflecting upon the books she has to review, Frederica seems to be glad also for the authors of the reviewed books; even when she does not quite agree with the authors, she is thankful for them, since they "have felt writing to be important enough to sit down day after day or night after night and invent imagined worlds as though it mattered" (155).

Babel Tower examines the difficulties met while writing, showing Frederica, a person surrounded by writing and writers, trying to write a report on her marriage and finding out that she cannot do it. The novel presents Frederica's attempts in different fonts: the text she is writing appears in one font type, and it is interwoven with her comments in another. The reader can see how Frederica compiles the text, rereads it, crosses out words and lines (e.g., "She writes: Shit. Fuck. She crosses them out" [308]), replaces words (e.g., "She has changed the word 'struck' to the word 'hit.' . . . 'Struck' carries a stronger emotional charge" [306]), constantly thinking about the associations the words evoke and the images and values they seem to carry. Frederica's attempts to write an account of her experience in the marriage end with her having to admit, "I can't write this *stuff*. Every ink-blob destroys a bit more of the truthful balanced memory I am trying to hang on to. . . . I could write if it was a parody of this sort of document, a work of art or fiction *pretending to be* one of these" (308). Frederica's comment shows how providing a truthful account of one's thoughts and experience can make them seem less real on paper, whereas a fictionalized or parodied rendering—turning facts into fiction—may appear more accurate.

Another example of depicting a writer in the act of writing occurs in connection with Frederica's writing diary notes. As with the legal documents, Frederica experiences difficulties in writing. *Babel Tower* shows the steps Frederica goes through in her attempts. Her first sentence in the diary, "Much of the problem appears to be one of vocabulary," is followed by a note, a week later: "There is no vocabulary to provide the next sentence" (380). Returning to her diary a month later, Frederica advises herself to try being simple and start with describing a day; however, when writing about her day, she remarks that she does not enjoy writing in this style, as it makes everything in her life slightly worse. This recognition makes her conclude, "Writing is compulsive. And useless. Stop writing" (381).

The notion of constructedness of texts is prominently manifested in the ways in which Frederica compiles her *Laminations*, a book of cut-ups, extracts, and full versions from different texts. Using different texts foregrounds the importance of narrative form and is one of the defining characteristics of metafictional texts. For example, Susana Onega and Jose Angel Landa have pointed to the significance of a text's preoccupation with form, noting that "by metafiction we mean fiction which experiments with its own form as a way of creating meaning" (30). *Babel Tower* includes various types of texts authored by real-life personages as well as by Byatt's fictional characters. Most of these texts are presented as part of *Laminations,* the basis of which is Frederica's fascination with the idea of keeping things separate—separate objects of knowledge, systems of work, or discovery. Indeed, Frederica sees her book as "an art-form of fragments, juxtaposed not interwoven, not 'organically' spiraling up like a tree or a shell, but constructed brick by brick, layer by layer, like the Post Office Tower" (359). It is interesting to note that the Post Office Tower is an institutional structure that redefines in the 1960s the London landscape, which might lead to the suggestion that perhaps Byatt, through Frederica's experimental *Laminations*, points to a similar redefining structure in literary forms.

Frederica's idea of using cut-ups or collage in her book is influenced by William Burroughs and his technique of cut-ups. She ponders Burroughs's words: "All writing is in fact cut-ups. A collage of words read overheard. . . . Clear classical prose can be composed entirely of re-arranged cut-ups. Cutting and re-arranging a page of written words introduces a new dimension into writing enabling the writer to turn images in cinematic variation" (379). The idea of fragmentation and different layers of knowledge is crucial to how Frederica sees herself. She thinks of herself as "a woman whose life appears to be flying apart into unrelated fragments" (379), as "a woman who sits at her desk and rearranges unrelated scraps of languages, from apparently wholly discrete vocabularies: legal letters, letters about the Initial Teaching Alphabet from [her son] Leo's school; . . . the literary texts and the quite other texts that dissect these texts; her reviews,

her reader's reports" (380). She describes *Laminations* as "a form that is made partly by cutting up, breaking up, rearranging things that already exist" (384). She discovers that in order to create new texts, one has to rearrange and reuse words that have made previous texts: "*the point of words is that they have to have already been used, they have not to be new, they have to be only re-arrangements, in order to have meaning*" (384).

Using quotations allows for intertextuality and can be seen to suggest that texts can hardly be viewed as totally self-sufficient wholes. Elizabeth Dipple has highlighted the idea of "texts infinitely talking to and illuminating each other" (234), and indeed, Frederica's use of quotations points to the idea that texts are potentially plural and interwoven with bits and pieces of already existing art. Frederica comments on her reusing of somebody else's language and thought patterns; quoting is another form of cut-up: "it gives a kind of papery vitality and independence to, precisely, cultural clichés cut free from the web of language that gives them precise meaning" (385). She realizes that there are many texts she might quote and that several authors have used this technique before; she discovers she could quote newspapers or her own life or present legal letters amongst lectures on Mann and Kafka, thereby creating a text where, in her words, "raw materials, worked motifs" (385) stand side by side. This recognition also accounts for the number of different textual types and genres, both by real-life authors as well as by Frederica and other fictional characters inhabiting Frederica's world.

In addition to foregrounding scenes of Frederica in the act of writing, compiling the texts, and musing upon which words, phrases, and thoughts to include and which ones to leave out or replace, the examination of a text as "a made thing, a linguistic and narrative construct" (Ommundsen 3) is apparent also in the ways in which *Babel Tower* itself calls attention to its constructed nature, its inhabiting worlds within worlds and texts within texts. Indeed, what Frederica has been doing while constructing a text of various voices and fragments mirrors Byatt's construction of *Babel Tower*.

Brian McHale has made a helpful distinction between different ontological worlds of texts, distinguishing between the primary world of the work of fiction—the diegesis—and the world within this primary world—the hypodiegetic world (88). In *Babel Tower*, the reader can observe various hypodiegetic worlds within the diegesis. This phenomenon displays formal preoccupations of metafictional texts, as the novel offers a varied picture of structural incoherence and the transgression of generic boundaries. The main diegesis—the events concerning Frederica and her circle of friends, acquaintances, and loved ones—is constantly interrupted by several different textual types and genres.

Byatt has used both original material by real-life novelists, poets, and playwrights and texts produced by herself. The texts by real-life authors

other than Byatt include quotations from poems (by Blake, Rilke, Wordsworth, Auden, Donne, and others), extracts from novels (by Forster, Lawrence, Tolkien, and Mann), from plays (by Shakespeare and Beckett), from philosophical or psychological texts (by Nietzsche and Laing), and from the Bible. The number of different invented texts that Byatt has used to present her own material is even greater. The author introduces various invented textual types, such as letters, reports, book-reviews, and cut-ups from novels, personal and legal letters, lists, poems, lecture notes, court cases, diaries, fairy tales, articles, interviews, notices, epigrams, logs, and lyrics. She also incorporates instructions for the use of the Pill; here, the reader cannot be sure whether the text comes from Byatt or from real-life instructions.

Including a variety of different textual types, both by Byatt herself and by other authors, real or fictional, appears to be a way to explore multiple topics and concerns. Byatt has often been called a brainy writer with "an astonishing mass of erudition and encyclopedic knowledge" (Schwartz 110) who displays her great erudition on the topics she explores, be it the life of insects, perception of colors, linguistic theories, neuroscience, education, biology, law, art, or the history of Great Britain, to name a few. Brooke Allen has noted that one probably feels that "one is reading less a novel than a fictionalized disquisition on various topics, rendered always with immense erudition" (64).

In addition to providing means to examine a wide range of topics, the sheer amount of different textual types and the ways in which the work transgresses generic boundaries also test the limits of literary works, showing how a novel can contain a myriad of genres and styles. Byatt has commented on her tendency to include a variety of topics and a multitude of genres in her works and her admiration for the novel as a form into which "you can get the whole world" (*Passions* 23). For example, in one of her interviews, she mentioned, "The nice thing about a novel is that everything can go into it, because if you've got the skill between sentence and sentence, you can change genre, you can change focus, you can change the way the reader reads. And yet you can keep up this sort of quiet momentum of narration. It is a wonderful form" ("Ant Heaps").

Besides generic plurality and structural incoherence, the constructed nature of texts also seems to be manifested in the plot organization of *Babel Tower*, illustrating how next to the levels of words, characters, and tropes, the text can be aware of itself also on the level of plot. Robert Alter has observed that "fictional materials, . . . however lifelike, however absorbing, have been assembled in the imagination of the writer . . . " (17). The idea of an author behind the novel who constructs the book by arranging "pieces of texts" in a certain order is apparent in the ways in which Byatt has chosen to begin *Babel Tower*. Byatt offers several possible beginnings:

> It might begin:
> The thrush has his anvil or altar on one fallen stone in a heap, gold and grey, roughly squared and shaped, hot in the sun and mossy in the shade. (1)
>
> Or it might begin with Hugh Pink, walking in Laidley Woods in Herefordshire in the autumn of 1964. (2)
>
> Or it might begin in the crypt of St Simeon's Church, not far from King's Cross, at the same time on the same day. (4)
>
> Or it might begin with the beginning of the book that was to cause so much trouble, but was then only scribbled heaps of notes, and a swarm of scenes, imagined and re-imagined. (10)

By offering multiple beginnings, the author points to the main story lines that she is about to develop and draws attention to what Patricia Waugh has called "the arbitrary nature of beginnings" (29). The notion of a deliberate framing of a textual work, highlighting its constructed nature, is also apparent in the ending of the novel. *Babel Tower* ends with Jude's *Babbletower,* which ends with the motif similar to "they lived happily ever after": "And they went on walking, and if the Krebs did not catch up with them, they are walking still" (617). Both the beginning and the ending of *Babel Tower* especially clearly signify that there is an author behind the text that the reader is facing.

The characters' writings and the constructed nature of their texts lead the characters to ponder the fiction-reality relationship; Byatt seems to invite the reader to think about the ways in which reality is filtered through narrative conventions. Waugh has argued, "In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings [self-conscious texts] not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction; they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text" (20). *Babel Tower* examines the implications of the fiction-reality relationship in Frederica's thoughts about her narrative voice as well as in the intertwining of fiction and reality in multiple texts, real and imaginary. Indeed, Byatt seems to indicate that the world outside the world of fiction is writable and written.

The exploration of the relationship between fiction and reality is manifested, for example, in the way Frederica faces questions about the fictionality or reality of her voice as a writer, a process which offers an interesting insight into people's textual identities. Waugh foregrounds the metafictional "shift from the context of 'reality' to that of 'fiction' and the complicated interpenetration between the two" (36). While reflecting on the possible implications of the "I" in the sentences "Do I love him?" and "I hate

I" (382), Frederica tackles the question of whether she and her voice become imaginary and fictional or remain essentially "real." She ponders the complexities of "I":

> I hate "I" because when I write, "I love him," or "I am afraid of being confined by him," the "I" is a character I am inventing who/which in some sense drains life from ME into artifice and enclosedness. The "I" of "I love him" written down is nauseating. The *real* "I" is the first I of "I hate I"—the *watcher*—though only until I write that, once I have noticed that, that I who hates "I" is a real I, it becomes in its turn an artificial I, and the one who notices that that "I" was artificial too becomes "real" (what is real) and so *ad infinitum*. . . . Is the lesson, don't write? It is certainly, don't write "I." (382)

The passage presents a thought-provoking analysis of different aspects of reality or artificiality connected with the first person singular, pointing to the metafictional feature of the exploration of the nature of writing and of characters who examine their own reality or fictionality. Frederica's notes examine an interesting paradox: writing something down can make it less tangible. It seems that writing about her life makes Frederica feel that her life is less real to her, suggesting that it is hard, if not almost impossible, to write without artificiality and without fictionalizing oneself and one's life.

Incorporating texts by both real-life authors and Byatt's fictional characters, in addition to exploring the ways in which the novel as a genre can further its limits and become multilayered in form, gives Byatt a chance to examine what *is* real. Placing quotations and texts by real-life authors side by side with those created by fictional characters created by Byatt makes the reader examine the idea of what truth in fiction is and where the borderline lies between fact and fiction. Indeed, real-life authors and fictional authors appear side by side: Frederica, looking at a pile of poetry books at home, mentions, "There is Yeats, there is Mallarmé, there is Raphael Faber [fictional author], there is a Shakespeare" (90). Byatt further mingles the boundaries between fact and fiction by making real-life authors step into her fiction as characters; for example, Byatt presents a review of Jude Mason's *Babbletower* "by" Anthony Burgess, and Burgess later appears as a witness in the trial prosecuting *Babbletower* for obscenity.

The borderline between fact and fiction becomes even more blurred when real-life fictional characters—literary characters who exist outside the world of *Babel Tower*—step into the thoughts of Byatt's fictional characters, causing a mix of diegetic levels. Frederica frequently compares the people surrounding her to various fictional characters; for example, she compares her husband to Byron's Don Juan (98), Jude Mason to the Ancient Mariner (440), and herself to Lady Chatterley and Shakespeare's Proserpina (125).

Frederica, a fictional character, spends a lot of time reflecting on the fictional character Birkin from *Women in Love* and on the nature of writing and reading the world as a book. In lecturing about experiencing the world as art and D. H. Lawrence's depicting forms of vision and thought, Frederica claims that "there is an emptiness, a lack of solidity, *because Birkin is not writing a book* when in fact we experience him as though he is. As there would have been an emptiness—a disappointment—if *all he was doing was writing a book . . .* " (215). Frederica remains obsessed by the question of the unreality of Birkin, a character "who sees the world as a book he isn't writing" (215).

Frederica is fascinated by the fact that "real" people can speak of fictional figures with such passion as if the latter truly existed. Frederica notes that her extra-mural students "speak wisely and foolishly of other human beings: Margaret and Ursula, Forster and Lawrence, Birkin and Mr. Wilcox as though they were (as they are) people they know (and don't know). They know perfectly well, if reminded, that four of these six beings are actually made of words, are capering word-puppets, not flesh and blood" (329). By making her fictional characters talk about other fictional characters who are real in the world outside the novel but in essence are still fictional, Byatt introduces an interesting metafictional level, blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction. Frederica's students make a relevant point that, for them, authors like Forster and Lawrence are similarly made of words, just like the literary characters they have been reading and writing about. Like those fictional characters, the novelists "cannot be touched or tasted; the evidence for their thoughts is considerably more suspect and partial than the evidence for those of Margaret and Ursula" (329). Indeed, Byatt convincingly shows how the border between reality and fiction blurs, being mediated through words, abstract concepts, and texts. As Frederica and other characters as well as the reader of *Babel Tower* realize, fiction can become reality and reality can become fiction. Like Lawrence, who "wants to talk about everything, all life, not books" (216), Frederica and Byatt show how reality can be perceived through fiction, and both wish to talk about all life, all reality, with the help of books.

Babel Tower powerfully re-imagines the nature of writing by depicting Frederica constructing texts as well as by drawing attention to the ways in which *Babel Tower* itself is constructed. The unusual juxtaposition of different textual types—ranging from diary notes, poems, philosophical writings to cut-ups and letters—by the fictional characters as well as by real-life authors jars the reader into a non-linear, hypertextual reading experience. Byatt suggests that both fictional and "real" worlds are textual, written, and constructed. Both Frederica and Byatt not only are writing a book but also are creating in their texts a world that encompasses and represents the world outside the literary world: they are writing what Lawrence has called "one

bright book of life" (226), an idea that keeps haunting Frederica, keeps haunting Byatt.

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"A marvail's convenient place": Trading Spaces in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

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First, a prologue. This is a short essay about teaching. But what follows is not so much an account of teaching strategies that have wondrously worked in my teaching of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I want to explore some ideas about teaching with film that *might* work or in some cases might *have* worked. Such cautious apology need not imply that all for your delight I am not here. But there is something experimental, unfinished, about these thoughts, something that welcomes the collaborative energies of a workshop, if not a working-house, of thought.

The eye and the ear do not enjoy mutually exclusive properties though we tend to think of theater-going, rightly, as an essentially aural experience and movies—*moving pictures*—more in visual terms. Such fusion of the eye and ear, a quality the mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* instinctively grasp, is especially apt in Shakespeare's plays, where oral and poetic language finds its local habitation amid bodies in motion and in space, a kind of excellent dumb discourse. The chorus in *Henry V* gestures toward this kind of synesthetic semiotics when he implores us to "*Think*, when we *talk* of horses, that you *see* them" (Pro. 26, emphasis added). Here is a mode of consciousness where thought, speech, and vision must collaborate, perhaps accounting for that strange double consciousness we experience in a theater, when we, like the actors, are simultaneously within and without the theatrical event.

Still, sound prevails in the theater. We hear a play. We are, after all, an audience. Anyone who has had the experience of attending a play at the Globe in London or at the Blackfriars in Virginia has heard those sounds of performance resonate. And like many others, I've tried in my teaching to find ways to allow the voices of these plays to be heard in the ears of profiting. I want my students, and myself, to become close listeners.

Watching a Shakespeare film involves the same kind of synesthesia as hearing a play, though the mix is somewhat differently proportioned. More important, there is among many directors of films based on Shakespeare's plays a self-consciousness that does not necessarily attend their treatment of other sources. This is not so much the passive onus of needing to be "faithful" to Shakespeare's play or of preserving the language or even the scenic structure. Rather, these directors, while freely changing or constricting the text of Shakespeare's play, nonetheless need to find some way to use their own cinematic conventions to re-invent the power, beauty, and tone that Shakespeare's plays, as plays, had achieved through their

theatrical conventions. John Wilders, assessing his own involvement as literary consultant for the BBC Shakespeare series, deeply regretted the failure of that enterprise to re-invent, using resources available to television, the unique contributions of an audience to the experience of taking in a play (57).

Thus, when looking at specific scenes from a variety of film adaptations, students can isolate these various strategies of filmic recuperation, or re-invention, that these directors employ. We might call these interpretive skills habits of close watching. By focusing on these visual cues, students—and their teacher—are more likely not only to examine these works in their own terms but also to appreciate the variety of life forms Shakespeare's plays can assume, what Kenneth Rothwell describes as a "transtextual" experience. At the same time, by exploring the operation and effects of some of these *cinematic* practices, students might, by indirections, arrive at a clearer, more visceral, understanding of how Shakespeare's *theatrical* practices actually *work*. I want to look here very briefly at how two films of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, one by Peter Hall and one by Michael Hoffman, both employ, though quite differently, three of these cinematic strategies of recuperation or re-fashioning, sometimes to re-invent the rich psychological and tonal world created by the play's verbal energy, sometimes to re-invent theatrical space, and sometimes to rediscover the rhythmic energies, the pulse, of Shakespeare's prosody.

Film versions of Shakespeare's plays often "suffer" massive cuts, a source of some exasperation for many. Particularly vulnerable to the "snip and nip and cut and slish and slash" of film editing are those passages rich in imagery or scenic description. Such cuts are inevitable and in fact welcome if a film is to be allowed to speak in its own language. But what can be lost is not just the beauty of such passages but their multiple functions. Such imagery not only creates *Dream*'s rich and sensual world but also a sense of interiority as these verbal images modulate fluid moments of engagement and "cold fruitless" estrangement among both speakers and listeners toward those fertile reminders of comic assurance and continuity. In Hoffman's movie, many of these fertile images are gone, including several that create the wood's sensual and metamorphic confusion and others that suggest Hermia's "primrose" loyalties to Helena, fragile yet rooted in the same springtime promise as is her love for Lysander, a love as yet untested by "all the vows that ever men have broke" (1.1.175).

Hoffman's visual tropes help recover a metamorphic space for the woods near Athens, or, rather, Mount Athena, while at the same time establishing that world as a variant, not so much of Shakespeare's play as of other movie versions, especially Dieterle-Reinhardt's (see also Crowl, *Cineplex* 172, 181, 183). The opening moments of Hoffman's film present a colorized allusion to the Dieterle-Reinhardt opening sequence of night

metamorphosis, set against the music of Mendelssohn. Two animated fireflies dance against a blue night sky. Then the cluster of lights, now resembling stars, flies into the vanishing point in mid-screen only to metamorphose into yellow butterflies now swirling toward the camera in the sudden daylight. We are in a world of quick changes here, even if none of them has anything like the speed of lightning in the collied night. Moreover, in Hoffman's film, such *visual* imagery of dancing lights and metamorphosis both anticipates and replaces some of Titania's most memorable poetry, cut in this production, as when she instructs her spirits to "pluck the wings from painted butterflies, / To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes" (3.1.172-73). These visual transformations are indeed "scored" by the film's much discussed use of music. The orderly Germanic strains of Mendelssohn that preside over Theseus's great house give way, as we meet the dreamer Bottom, to the soaring voices of Italian opera. At the end of the play we hear both styles of music, German classical and Italian operatic. As the credits continue to roll, both styles of music dissolve into a third style, the pipes associated with Oberon's Bacchus-like community. There may even be a hint of the tongs and the bones.

Hoffman's film is filled with visual images—particularly of sumptuous food and sensual bodies—that soften the differences between court and woods. The camera takes particular interest in the colors and tactile fullness of all that food being prepared as well as the energetic fleshiness of all those working fingers, arms, and faces. Hoffman's Athens, for all its repressions, is charged with a surprising sensuality, a kind of latent tactile eroticism that suggests that even in Athens there exists the promise of ripeness and release. Hoffman is also using the camera to suggest cinematically the same dreamy mirroring of Theseus's world with Oberon's that theatrical directors sometimes accomplish through *stage* tactics such as doubling the roles.

In fact, the space Hoffman creates for Oberon's kingdom is marked by a curious sense of time, scanned less by the dangerous speed of imagination and erotic desire than by the drowsy rhythms of indolence and appetite. It's not that difficult to keep pace with these desires. Oberon spends much time lounging on natural beds canopied with flowers, as does Puck, who enjoys imitating his master's sloth. While Puck cannot resist trying out a wobbly bicycle, his more comfortable mode of locomotion is a giant turtle. He couldn't put a girdle round the earth in forty *years*.

Hoffman is less successful at re-conceiving Hermia and Helena in cinematic terms. Hermia loses so many lines in the play's first scene that the character itself changes from one who is Lysander's linguistic better to the silent recipient of his comfort. Her part in the "course of true love" poem is gone; consequently, a lyrical passage interwoven by the two lovers in Shakespeare's text, each using language to resist and mock fortune, becomes

here an opportunity for Lysander's manly reassurance. More significantly, Hermia's swearing of allegiance to Lysander, a passage that balances her uncompromising love with an ironic knowledge of false Trojans, is also gone. As a result, this Hermia becomes unambiguously teary and dependent, without much hint of either intelligence or resistant wit. Hoffman's cutting also flattens Helena's character. She loses much of her playful—well, tearfully playful—exchange with Hermia about the likelihood of "translat[ing]" herself into Hermia's "fair." Helena also loses most of her soliloquy at the end of the scene. All but five of the twenty-three lines have disappeared. What is left is merely a petulant complaint against the unfairness of Cupid, not a word of the transformative mystery of his seeing "mind."

Asking these same questions of Peter Hall's 1969 film of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* yields an entirely different kind of translation, at once more theatrically informed than Hoffman's and, perhaps as a result, a more radical film experiment. In fact, it is more of an alchemical union of the two modes, theater and film, than a translation from one to the other. Hall had twice produced *Dream* with the Royal Shakespeare Company and had, in fact, retained much of the same cast. Although now roundly praised, the film, as Michael Mullin observes, was poorly received by a number of critics for its experimental, "mixed media" approach. And yet for Mullin it is precisely that mixed quality that made Hall's movie such a perfect match for Shakespeare's play. "For the play itself," Mullin argues, "as its stage history attests, is of a strange, mixed genre, constantly calling attention to its actors as actors, playing with our suspended disbelief at every turn" (534).

For my students, this is a film to play with. Its jump cuts and ever-changing filters compel us from the opening moments of the film, as Jorgens, Crowl, Mullin, and Hall himself have observed, to enter into the physiological processes of the play's dislocations, its—and our—"distemperature," as Titania puts it, amid altered seasons, both within us and without. "This is why," Hall tells us, "I shot so much of the film in the rain, during a bad-weather period lasting about six weeks" (qtd. in Jorgens 51). But these same disorienting features also invite us into the play of analysis, as we think of ourselves thinking about how this play works and how this film works. Mullin astutely notes the mischief of Hall's style. The film's sharp juxtaposition of the jump cuts and the frequent use of close-ups are both firmly rooted in the "realistic" conventions of documentary. But what, exactly, is being documented?

As Hall, a true weaver, threads together the conventions of film and theater, all done in a self-conscious style that "fractur[es] naturalistic surfaces" and "assaults . . . our viewing habits" with unrelenting playfulness (Jorgens 58, 59), are we not invited into another working house of thought, one where play-films are made? Here we might explore, ironically through

the detailed realism of an actual great house, the resources of an open stage. Or from the changing filmic rhythms created by editorial jump cuts and hand-held cameras, we might re-discover something about the changing heartbeats of Shakespeare's metrical "distemperatures." The abrupt appearances and disappearances of characters, especially Puck, surprise and excite our breathing like a sudden turn into tetrameter.

Hall's method is to throw convention against convention, text against text, and let them grapple. Things, however, do not fall out preposterously but somehow find their own musical discord. Like other Shakespeare films, Hall's *Dream* is characterized by severe cuts, not of Shakespeare's text, but of Hall's own film, cut into a succession of isolated images, moving at blinking, almost subliminal speed. Jorgens notes that "in one series of nineteen shots each image lasts for between one-sixth and five-sixths of a second" (57). The effect of taking in the two texts at once—the uninterrupted Shakespearean language and the jarring movement from place to place—is severely dislocating yet perfectly in tune with the untuned consciousness this film explores, "disrupting," Jorgens suggests, "our sense of realistic space" (55) as would a dream.

Indeed, Hall's *Dream* begins by re-discovering filmic and theatrical space through the means of what might be called a dis-establishing shot. Through the opening titles we see a succession of spaces, each melting into the next. A black and white image of a countryside is viewed through a succession of colored filters—green, gray, green again. We hear birds, then the sound of rain, then birds again as the sky suddenly clears, then rain. Suddenly a great house emerges to define, at last, the landscape. We see a figure walking briskly and formally through rigidly geometric pathways towards some destination. As the camera pulls back to take a commanding view of that country house, we recognize Compton Verney (Crowl 74). We now know exactly where we are. Then, imposed over the landscape and the house appears a single word: ATHENS. Hall's continually dissolving and re-forming images are multi-valenced. Jorgens calls the sequence "the director's overture" (52). Crowl sees this sequence of images and a second, reverse- order sequence at the end of the scene, a kind of visual chiasmus, as acting out a microcosm of the play's journey "from house to grounds to pond to woods, each landscape becoming more fluid and less ordered" (74).

At the same time, though, these sudden jumps from place to place replicate the transformative energies of an open stage, a marvelous convenient place that can become Athens one moment, a wood the next, even Compton Verney. Hall's self-conscious tactic might have its theatrical echo in Peter Quince's wonderfully *un*self-conscious series of declarations as he walks about a bare stage re-christening one invisible spot into another: "This green plot *shall be* our stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring house" (3.1.3-4, emphasis added). Who dare answer nay?

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Far from Heaven: Three Lessons in Lacanian Desire

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For anyone who loves melodrama, especially Douglas Sirk's films from the 1950s, *Far from Heaven* is a cinematic feast. Released in 2002 and directed by Todd Haynes, the film pays homage to Douglas Sirk, mixing themes from *Imitation of Life* with themes from *All that Heaven Can Allow*. In the film, Cathy Whitaker, played by Julianne Moore, is a liberal-minded 1950s housewife. With two kids, a successful businessman for a husband, and a house in Connecticut, what more could she want? Gradually, over the course of the film, she learns that her husband, Frank, played by Dennis Quaid, is gay, and after a couple of affairs he leaves her for a man. Meanwhile, Cathy causes quite a stir in small-town Connecticut when she befriends Raymond Deagan (played by Dennis Haysbert), her African American gardener, and later hopes to run off with him. Unfortunately, the film's race-torn society will not permit such bold action, and, in the end, Cathy presumably returns to her life of parties, children, and other social obligations.

The plot of the film centers around Cathy's relationship with Raymond and her reaction to Frank's relationships with men. Both relationships, interracial and homosexual, as Sharon Willis contends, run nearly parallel courses in the film. According to Willis, the film makes consistent comparisons between Cathy's and Frank's transgressive desires while placing the plot's racial politics explicitly in the context of the late 1950s civil rights movement. Yet the film eventually disappoints the viewer, Willis goes on to argue, because it indulges in historical implausibility and in false comparisons between the two relationships and between the two races (136-37, 158, 165-69). Willis may be correct that the film makes historical allusions but fails to deliver an historically accurate picture. However, the film is ultimately less concerned about history than about desire, less about the social order at a particular historical juncture than about the failure of that social order to capture something other. For example, Cathy's desire constitutes a radical lack that forever escapes full inclusion in her social universe. We can best approach Cathy's desire from the perspective of Jacques Lacan. In fact, the film offers three lessons in Lacanian desire. Desire targets, for all intents and purposes, something Real. The Lacanian Real appears in this film as something inaccessible outside the social order, abides as a unique material object within the social order, and undergoes loss within the social order. By exploring Cathy's desire in these terms, we can appreciate the affinities between melodrama and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

The first lesson in Lacanian desire examines the Real as an inaccessible beyond. To grasp this lesson, we must first define two Lacanian terms, the Symbolic and the Real. Put simply, the Symbolic Order is the world of language and social relations, while the Real is that which precedes and lies outside language and social relations. Let me illustrate this distinction by rehearsing the classic Lacanian scenario. Psychoanalysis posits an original unity between mother and child as a mythical before-picture to the Symbolic Order, as an assumption made by the subject that a moment of wholeness and satisfaction must have existed prior to the subject's current state of lack. This before-picture is the Real. At some later point, the father presumably intervenes between the mother and the child and ushers the child into language, law, and social reality. These elements constitute the Symbolic Order. The result of this process of separation is the split subject, who is forever torn between the Real and the Symbolic. Faced with this predicament, the subject desires some object that would complete it—not a person per se, but the desirousness that a person exudes perhaps in the gaze or in the voice. Only that object, if it could ever be found, would provide satisfaction. This desire motivates the melodramatic character (Fink, Chapters 5 and 7).

The most striking illustration of the rift between the Symbolic Order and the object of desire occurs towards the beginning of the film, when a reporter from the local society paper interviews Cathy. Overly modest, Cathy protests that she is nothing special. After all, she is just like any other housewife with house, kids, and husband to tend. In other words, she is potentially substitutable for any other housewife and thereby occupies a position firmly within the Symbolic Order. Unexpectedly, she interrupts her protest, and her eyes land on some unknown person in her yard. At once menacing and attractive, the person is none other than Raymond. Reduced to its starkest terms, this scene stages the rift between the Symbolic (the world of petty interviews, society pages, and daily chores) and something other. This something other is not precisely the Real, for to represent the Real would be tantamount to eradicating it. Nonetheless, the second half of this scene invokes the Real by interrupting the flow of the interview and thus symbolic exchange, by diverting Cathy from duty to desire, and by taking her to another space not yet captured by the film's narrative.[1]

The second lesson in Lacanian desire forces me to revise my definition of the Real. Up to now, I have described the Real as that which precedes and lies outside the Symbolic. Yet the Real is more than some inaccessible outside. The Real is also that which the Symbolic Order fails to represent but which nevertheless abides despite all attempts to shun it. When, mythically speaking, the father separates the child from the mother, not all the Real is foreclosed. Some iota of it remains, in the words of Bruce Fink, as both "a remainder" and "a reminder" of the original mother-child

dyad. This remainder, which is also a reminder, appears as a pure absence in the Symbolic Order. Known as the object *a* in Lacanian parlance, this remainder/reminder can take the form of the voice or the gaze, by definition non-specular entities that can trigger desire (Fink 59-61, 90-94). However, there are other remainders and reminders of the Real, Slavoj Žižek contends. One such remainder/reminder is an actual object within the symbolic order. Yet this is no ordinary object. This object embodies the impossibility of the symbolic order and, as such, defies absorption in the social fabric, though it may facilitate social exchange. This object is also utterly singular: nothing else is quite like it. As Žižek explains, "it is a leftover, remnants which cannot be reduced to a network of formal relations proper to the symbolic structure" (182).

The object in *Far from Heaven* that serves this purpose is Cathy's favorite scarf. This scarf appears in the luncheon scene, in which Cathy and her three friends dress virtually alike except for Cathy's scarf. The scarf, the only lavender item in the scene, is unique in a world in which everything looks like everything else. Unlike Cathy, who by her own testimony can substitute for any other 1950s housewife, the scarf apparently cannot be replaced. That is why Cathy is so distraught when the wind blows the scarf off her neck. Indeed, she is entranced as she searches for the lost scarf. This scene points to Cathy's divided sensibilities, to the division between her daily routine and the Real that beckons her. In this context, the scarf is a remainder and a reminder of the Real. Fittingly, it is Raymond who finds the scarf and returns it to Cathy. That Raymond recovers the scarf for Cathy reinforces the fact that he somehow embodies her desire.

So far, I have described the Real as that which lies outside the social order and as that which abides in the social order despite foreclosure. The final lesson in Lacanian desire illustrates how the subject of desire recognizes and handles the loss of the Real. This lesson takes its cue from a famous story in Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In this text, Freud explains that a little boy with a close attachment to his mother has invented a puzzling game. The boy throws a wooden reel with a piece of string on it and says "*fort*" ("gone" in English). Then he pulls the reel back and says "*da*" ("there" in English). According to Freud, the child has overcome the loss of his mother by mastering the disappearance and the return of objects in his universe (Freud 13-16). Or, as Joan Copjec puts it, "[W]hen the child throws the cotton reel, he throws that part of himself that is lost with his entry into language. The child . . . situates himself in the field of language. . . . He thus becomes a subject of desire . . . " (*Read My Desire* 182). What puzzles Freud is that the boy stages the disappearance of the reel more often than he stages its return. Cathy solves this enigma in the film's final departure scene. Looking briefly at two earlier departure scenes will put that final scene into relief.

In the first departure scene, Cathy asks Raymond to meet her at an all-white diner. When they are unwelcome there, Cathy and Raymond find a private space on the sidewalk nearby but are soon forced to leave. Before they depart, they do exchange a few private words. Cathy tells Raymond that it is no longer "plausible" to see Raymond. As a result, she shuts the door on desire. Yet desire, as Lacan insists, "keeps coming back" and keeps us on "the track of something that is specifically our business" (319).

Desire comes back for Cathy when she learns that some white boys have stoned Raymond's daughter. When Cathy visits Raymond, she learns that he intends to move to Baltimore because he can no longer secure a business and protect his daughter amid the scandal of his and Cathy's relationship. Cathy proposes that she come later; now that she plans to divorce Frank, she is free to leave Hartford. Her proposition is an heroic though doomed attempt to fulfill her desire. If she were to fulfill her desire, the film would probably end like its Sirkian predecessor, *All That Heaven Can Allow*. In that earlier film, high society rejects the relationship between socialite Cary and gardener Ron. After a period of separation, Ron's sickness brings the two back together, and the viewer assumes that Cary and Ron will finally live happily ever after. Yet the film is a fantasy, a fantasy in which the Symbolic Order supposedly allows part of the forbidden Real to take a comfortable position. That is why the film is entitled *All That Heaven Can Allow*. In contrast, Haynes's film is entitled *Far from Heaven* because this film maintains the disjuncture between Symbolic and Real.

That disjuncture is felt when Raymond rejects Cathy's proposal to come with him to Baltimore and Cathy responds in silence. Her silence characterizes many melodramatic characters. One way to acknowledge the failure of verbal representation to capture the Real is to say nothing at all. In *The Melodramatic Imagination*, Peter Brooks explains, "In the silence created by the 'gapping' of the traditional language code, mute gesture appears as a new sign making visible the absent and ineffable" (79). In other words, when Cathy says nothing, when she allows her facial expressions to speak for her, she acknowledges that something lies outside verbal representation.

The final scene constitutes Cathy's most complex gesture in the film. Let me set up this scene by returning to the film's opening credits. In that segment of the film, we see Cathy's car pass by the train station towards the grocery store, from which she soon returns home, where the action of the film begins. In the final scene, we see Cathy apparently do the same: she leaves home with her grocery list the day after the divorce papers are signed, passes by the train station, and proceeds to the grocery store. Thus, the final scene gives the film satisfying closure by repeating the opening credits—but with one exception. In the final scene, Cathy does not simply pass by the train station and proceed to the grocery store. Instead, she pulls over at the

train station to tell Raymond goodbye. In so doing, she impedes rather than facilitates the narrative. Not only does Cathy's decision to stop at the train station momentarily prevent the film from coming to a tidy conclusion, but it also has no rhyme or reason in the film's narrative universe. Raymond has already said goodbye to Cathy. Why does Cathy repeat the gesture? Even her protesting children see no reason for this delay in their errands. Cathy's disruption of narrative flow is the film's way of acknowledging that something lies beyond the day-in and day-out monotony of Cathy's existence. In other words, this scene comes the closest in the film to what Copjec discovers in another melodrama: "It is as if space itself had not been exhausted by the narrative which has just played itself out to some conclusion, but some surplus remained ready to support another, as if [the melodramatic heroine] could no longer be reduced to her role as mother, but were 'something else besides'" (*Imagine There's No Woman* 127).

When she enters the train station, Cathy wears her favorite lavender scarf—a symbolic object that had earlier served, as Fink would put it, as a remainder and a reminder of the Real—and, despite all the comings and goings of the train passengers, Cathy and Raymond say nothing but merely gesture and mouth a few words. In other words, when Cathy and Raymond say nothing, when they allow their gestures and facial expressions to speak for them, they suggest that something lies outside discourse—namely, the object of their desire. Moreover, like the little boy who plays the *fort-da* game, Cathy assumes the position of the subject of desire. Just as the little boy rehearses the disappearance of the reel more than its return, the loss of the object of desire more than its recovery, Cathy once again lets go of the object of desire, embodied in Raymond, by waving goodbye to him for no reason, rational or utilitarian, other than for the sake of desire. In so doing, she neither fulfills her desire nor shuns it. Instead, she acknowledges the object of desire and preserves it as lost but precious.

In conclusion, Cathy's final gesture gives fresh testimony to the words of Peter Brooks. In *The Melodramatic Imagination*, Brooks writes, "For psychoanalysis, like melodrama, is the drama of a recognition" (202). For Cathy, "the drama of a recognition" takes place in a farewell scene, in which she recognizes the re-lost object of desire—not Raymond per se, but a certain something that Raymond exudes. In making this gesture, Cathy seems to realize that something remains beyond social relationships, discourse, and duty. Immanuel Kant, whose philosophy underwrites Lacanian psychoanalysis, recognized as much when he pointed to "a 'something' that is left over when I have excluded from the determining grounds of my will everything belonging to the world of sense, . . . showing that it does not include everything within itself but that there is still more beyond it" (65). It is this "leftover" that motivates the desires of both the melodramatic heroine and the psychoanalytic subject.

Notes

[1] In my interpretation of this scene, I follow Joan Copjec, who argues that melodrama, such as the film *Stella Dallas*, often opens up "other narrative avenues" or surplus spaces as a way to acknowledge that something exists beyond the highly imitative, inauthentic world of the film (*Imagine There's No Woman* 117, 127). Although Copjec's analysis is limited mostly to *Stella Dallas*, her reading has generally influenced my own Lacanian approach to *Far from Heaven*. In particular, I am indebted to her use of Peter Brooks's *The Melodramatic Imagination*, which I quote towards the end of this essay.

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POETRY

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Constant

Fire pulls us in,
makes us forget everything
except that night is cold
and fire is warm.

Huddled around this promise,
we sit cross-legged
atop the mound above the forest
aching to be mothered warm,
white smoke frisking our eyes
for light.

Shining beneath us the ground,
scooped up like an infant,
carried here in child-size bundles,
lain down easy not to wake
the layers, earth heaped damp,
mounded smooth over
cypress bark over bones,

mud patted down by hand,
rubbed glossy, packed hard
with barefoot dancing,
burnished with the oil
of a thousand years of feet.

The ground pulls us in,
makes us forget.

Everything.

Except that night is cold.
And the ground is warm.

Creeks Laugh Loudest After Hard Rain

Our mothers danced to the sun atop the fire mound
rising above the green expanse of forest.

Down among the pines at dusk,
tiny lights pulse like sparks of earth stamped loose,
our mothers dancing still.

They sang to the rain from Dancing Rabbit Creek
rising high and black with crying.
To mark the signing place they smoked the sky.

Some of us took the treaty scrip,
the warm death blankets,
and rode off on gift mules,
our mothers' bones in baskets.
Sometimes in the night a scream,
peacock, pig, or panther, carries from over the hill.

There is dancing tonight to the creek's low laughing.
We laugh right back because
we are still here! *Chautah siah hoke!*

Some kept the treaty.
Some kept close to the ground like smoke
sliding further back into these woods,
bones ourselves, lost in shadow, too skinny to be seen.

We live close to the earth,
catch the fire in doe eyes with our pine knot torches,
secrets blown sharp through hollow, fire-hardened cane.

We eat our secrets, keep our dancing,
keep *Nanih Waiya* Mother Mound.
Yukpa siah hoke. We are laughter. We are hard rain.

The last Mississippi *Chautah* (Choctaw) land cession was bargained away at Dancing Rabbit Creek.

Old Woman Who Looks Like Me

She got so old she
forgot her turquoise greens
and tawny oranges,

forgot our names
and that she loved us,
woodland, basin, range.

Her poles had wandered.
Hilltops worn flat,
fast rivers slowed to silt.

Roots once tied red earth
to cypress bark and bone.
She forgot the story.

Her clay dried out,
the seams gave way,
layers sliding, colors failing.

She slept all day.
All night she fed the fire
her name.

We did not circle
like wolves. To howl.
Sit silent. Howl.

The day she left
we danced for her. We
shook the whitest shells.

And sang.

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An Uneasy Joy

After all those lives, the Tibetans still feel
they need to hold down the great she-demon
whose body makes the world's bumps and hollows.
The temples they use to pin her extremities
are synapses to sky power, to the great cloud nerve,
provider of celestial insurance.
When the she-demon blows her nose, it's called music.
The world vibrates with the sour honk of catarrh. Rivers begin.
Frogs and insects quaver below the country's treeline,
telegraphing their calls up, teaching, from afar,
the sounds that counteract she-demon moans.
Tibetan children gather, hold hands and breaths
together in the thin air, and become a frog-sonic atmosphere,
forcing, with their small-handed magic,
a dance of high and low. Humming becomes bliss.
Uncle Trang is an upended broom in the corner.
One river is a snake with back trouble.
The Milky Way is a street in Lhasa.
But what will happen if the great she-demon
shrugs off these thousand years of temples?
No one wants to think of it.
If creatures quit calling and the trembling earth stops
and the river runs water and not star-stuff,
someone will have to think of it.
Someone will have to think of it.

For Aunt Louise, Who Never Liked Me

Some days when she was working in the garden,
she liked everything. July afternoons,
with the tomatoes weeded and the light just right,
she could convince herself she *loved* everything
and maybe things were the way they were supposed to be,
looking through the apple orchard
for red and yellow shapes soon in the leaves, round and glossy
with the sun behind them. For a second, even
the sweaty little nieces and nephews
napping on the screened-in porch were dear,
the box fan humming next to them
making what little breeze there was on Sand Mountain
some afternoons with the tent preaching
two lots over and one back and the traveling preacher
hollering in the faint hazy distance over the PA
like he wanted the apples to grow
and Aunt Louise to stay the way she was,
schoolmarm-hard, brusque and gray in the eyes
because part of her didn't care
there was so much beauty in the world
and God had made her with a cold disposition
like she had a rock in her flats,
while zinnias spread out from the center
and the hosta flayed and sprung up
in the sandy ground by the swing
that Uncle Wayne whitewashed before he died.
So she'd had to get old alone
and indifferent about sister's grandkids staying with her
for a day or two in the summer
when she'd never been able to have any of her own
except for the ones she'd taught history forty years
at the high school. Asleep on the porch,
I was staying with my Aunt, dreaming so what
if my cousin Jimmy's chest was broader than mine,
which Aunt Louise had pointed out in front of everybody
when what was bothering her was probably Wayne
not worth flip before he died, drinking behind the store
so he could work up the patience to wait on those

mouthy town kids from Section on credit and be nice to them
    so their parents would trade with him
and then having the gall to die.

Theodore Haddin
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Is This a Living Room

I'd like to know
where I've laid out all my work in piles
so the unread overlaps the finished
and newspapers stand a while
till they're pressed into a box
and carried to the cellar where
they'll rise up some more before
I can get down to open the cellar door
and papers, manuscripts of weeks gone by
scribblings and notations to the future
that glides by every afternoon
as the sun slides down early in the South
I think I am working and rise to exercise
on the carpet old Chinese wool designed
to make a man stare and think of a woman
with labyrinths in its corners blue
and male and female design in blue
and elaborate brush marks red and green
winding toward a center within centers
I wonder if I place last year's poinsettia
still saying scarlet somewhere in this rug
will it tell how far the real light has come
here among leftovers, to-be-written, and the undone?

Typing

Six times I tried typing
the manuscript and none perfect
each time a slight mistake
a typo not known something coming
back at me long after
on the seventh a single *o*
turned into an *l* brain not aware
what fingers are doing
shock on the eighth time though
confused me made me get up
walk around the room
when to the sessions of
sweet silent thought summoning
up remembrance of things long past
to see if I could figure out
the distance between then and now
and what was making all these mistakes
I heard the voice in my poem
about death how he took away
my wife and mother and father
aunt and uncle all within a year
and so was I somewhere else and words
only hitting best they can falling
on the pages as if they would be
understood better even if typed
with the wrong letters
something words could not say
forcing its way on the page
and could I listen to myself
and quietly try to answer back
to what is wrong in the way
things come out

More To It

There's more to it than this
a car going down the road alone
even with all its lights on
and somewhere to get to maybe
I think that maybe is not a word
the car knows or even the man
and woman in it know
I think the car has always been there
in you and me a wheel a go-arounder always
like ourselves spinning into time
if we could see it and we will have to feel
the ground it goes on again before we learn
the fate of oil and grease and twisted metal

Messiaen's Quartet for the End of Time
For Craig Hultgren

I look through the window this day
and see the garden, oh garden of gardens
like our Earth that may be the last one
on the last day the cypress vine has
overtaken the tomatoes and Japanese eggplants
oh taken over all with its rosemary-like
green leaves and tiny red flowers white
at their centers hundreds and hundreds now
so deeply green and red and bright in the sun's
light I will go out there I say
I will go out among blades and blooms
and stand between tall tomato sticks and vines
and when I am there come the sulphur butterflies
one by one and five by five and thirty all alight
and find me there and flutter before my eyes
and perch on my head and shoulders as if I were
a plant to please by giving and taking from the white
dot at the center of red flowers and I am taken in
as the players are, one by one their depths sounded
in long meditations if their music can play them
and we two, the musicians and I, are taken in
and the butterflies seem to know

Susan Allen Ford
Delta State University

Metafiction

For him the tales of Oz were true
history. With Dorothy he discovered
far-flung secrets, mapped quadrants,
faced perils, till at the emerald heart
invading Nomes drank Water of Oblivion
from the Forbidden Fountain, and
Glinda's magic made her country safely
invisible.

He studied the many volumes,
cherished their wild inventions,
edited their extremities. Where in *The Road to Oz* Shaggy Man told Tiktok, *No one knows what happens next except the man writing this book*, the boy snatched a pencil,
struck the sentence out.

In 1941 his father died.
With small words, rigorous
punctuation the boy composed
his world-changing truth. *Today Daddy died. Of a heart attack.* In a diary not
two weeks begun, above January 11
he inscribed a title,
Sad, Sad Day.

Oz beckoned still. Concluding
The Emerald City Dorothy had written,
You will never hear anything more about Oz. From the book he tore
that final page, with pen and pencil
in the table of contents dug
an eradicating furrow.

After Glinda's guarding spell, in careful
imitation of his father's hand,
he printed *The End*,

the trailing capitals ornamenting loss,
marking a pause
in the chronicle of a world
without age or death or grief.

War of the Worlds

Periodically wildlife invades our house,
A block from the center of town,
Occupying a busy corner, as close
To urban as the Delta gets.

For a few days we notice telltale signs
But cling wistfully to the myth
Of our own paranoia,
Denying the evidence.

We start at the peripheral distortions
Bifocals create,
Stop before pieces of fluff on the floor,
A tangle of dark thread.

We avoid certain rooms after dark,
Signal our approach,
Hiss warnings meant for insect ears:
Stay out of sight if you know
What's good for you!

Then the attack:
Ants craze sinks and countertops,
Suddenly appearing on arm or neck;
Wasps dangle and swoop, trailing
Threats we take seriously;
Flies beat angrily against windows
As if we'd lured them into prison,
Or, in a stupor, drop from above the ceiling,
Mysterious births followed by fumbling deaths;
American roaches dash down walls,
Cross floors, stop suddenly
And foolishly. This is no time for patriotism.

We kill some, necessarily.
But these relentless incursions reduce
A man of six feet four, a woman known for ferocity
To incoherent epithets,
Ineffectual flailing,
Anger, shame, and grim determination
To be rescued.

We call for backup, professional deliverance.
The man from Terminix, Eddie, comes
Armed with official poisons,
Mysterious fogs and sprays
Which we breathe deeply,
Hoping they can distinguish between
Insect nervous systems and ours.

Our courage reinforced, we become militant.
We want a body count.
On forays to Wal-mart and Kroger
We study the array of spray cans,
Choose poisons general and specific
And then, armed, begin our search
For stragglers.
We patrol the yard, penetrate undergrowth.

We are relentless. We will reclaim our territory,
Our self respect.

Buster

For fifteen years it sat, forgotten,
pent in chill metallic darkness, ready
to be scattered or spread across a leaf
of lettuce, a triangle of toast,
Lump Crab, *Fancy*.

Along with muscle, memories preserved of
expanding flesh, pushing against
chitinous quarters, breaking through
carapace, scuttling to safety to await
each new hardening,

And then to be confined in crabpot,
culling box, small steel can, fifteen years,
no chance to move or breathe—at last
it must break out,
penetrating the still, cold air
in rank, malodorous molt.

Patricia Waters
Athens, Tennessee

The *Eidolon*

The room at the back
of my mind
where nobody lives
but lots of stuff
stored for whatever
rainy day, bits about
Lewis & Clark,
Bonnard's self-portraits,
restaurants in New Orleans,
movies by the reel, that
free-standing room of vases
in the British Museum,
the little ones with the narrow neck
holding perfumed oil for the dead,
newly so. Grief sharp, eyes
raw with tears, the mourning ones
not yet giving up the idea—
not really gone, just away
somewhere, sitting in an old shed
by the sea, the one window
high in the wall, open,
so you cannot see it but yes,
can hear it, can hear the sea
swallow your name.

You're Not From Around Here

November, Highway 127, Sequatchie Valley, Tennessee

They've stopped along the road
at the place marked Scenic View, three families,
out-of-state tags. Before them is the valley,
long and narrow sweep of it
up to the Cumberland plateau, a raw shelf,
rock and timber standing over a quilt
of field, wood, pasture,
the river you know by its apology of trees.
There are farmhouses,
barns, silos clean as Legos,
cattle still as statues. It's either
bad genre painting or the real thing
where people sweat, stink, and chew,
where bass boats, Dodge Rams, the home-grown
cash crop are the engines of desire.
Closest whiskey is Chattanooga,
Atlanta for abortions, but plenty of beer
at the Golden Gallon, Mr. Zip, or Stop-N-Go,
the kids all go to Hardee's, McDonald's
but for the locals, WinBob's or the Dunlap Restaurant,
Private Meeting Room, Air-Conditioned,
gospel preacher, his Bible-stained voice
caterwauling over the piped-in radio,
the sound salty as red-eye gravy
over country ham and biscuits,
grits and hash browns,
make those eggs over easy, ma'am,
the regulars are there, best coffee around
but the truckers all know where that trailer is.
Up the hollow, the little lab, dirty and efficient,
turns out the crank that jump starts your heart,
makes you go faster and faster,
your thoughts like bees in a box,
furious buzzing keeping you on the road,
inside the radio, the cab, the world as long as you're driving,
thinking you just as soon as you can think it.

Spring First Day

Under the bird song
the pulsing alarm
no one turns off,
pear blossoms stink,
embarrassment of the crotch,
heated by this first day of spring.
War somewhere, forsythia rampant,
a small carpet of violets waits
for the two-stroke engine,
free market sentiment,
trees are still tight with bud, gauzy green,
we are born to death, desire is what the world says,
the feral black cat comes to food,
roiling the dirt to relieve its urgent estrous,
and everywhere birds, throats open
in lyric purpose, not noise, never random,
cry their deep song—spring, life,
no more postponements,
the fountain of tears renewing itself,
the bicycle propped against a brick wall,
Mother, where are you buried?
Once I was my body.

James Fowler
University of Central Arkansas

The View from Here

1.

A thousand miles from what I call my own
I lean and look deeply: some couple blocks
Of midtown Denver bungalows, and then
The long mid-distance blur of trees punctured
By man-made things. Despite receding ranks
Of power lines across bluish foothills
The far Front Range still seems above it all,
Beyond our scope yet always ours to view.
For now I am at peace, at this remove.

2.

Day trips by van to high country divert
With gauntlet runs through sheer blasted rockface
Or snaking crawls up top without guardrail,
But don't let slim acquaintance turn your head.
Recall the ones who journeyed foot by foot,
For whom immensity bred trailside graves.
So long as you're aware you've just a clue
What aeons are or outlands in themselves
It's fine to form large views. Enjoy the ride.

3.

Our realm in turn extends surface appeal.
Ivy adores brick, and an overpass
To swallows simply means a perfect ledge
For building townhouse rows of dome-shaped nests.
The depths, of course, remain foreign, obscure.
A pecker and a metal post amuse;
A deer come crashing through plate glass does not.
Where face meets face appearance plants a kiss,
Sometimes misleading, but not without truth.

4.

Impressions ease us through the human scene.
How many people can we really know,
More than by name and sample anecdote?
Over coffee some friend drops a bombshell,
Then reassures with her familiar smile.
We stare in mirrors till the face is strange
But shouldn't damn the image for a fraud.
The mask of everything sheds middling light.
We say, "Look, the mountains," and are lifted.

Mike Bassett
University of Southern Mississippi

Bestiary for My Many Tongues
For Charles Simic

Job knew he could not bind Leviathan's tongue
so, he let the whirlwind cast his own tongue back
into silence. But I have a hatchery
of tongues, host of tongues, harem of tongues.

Some of my childhod tongues
have been knotted
like cherry stems, by little girls.
Some have no memory,
only longing for the lick
of something wet and electric.

Others are celibate and contemplative,
hung like drying tobacco
in dark barns. Experimental tongues
have traded in their taste buds
for abstract expressionism. They know
what a lemon really is.

A coven of tongues bristle
like instruments on the dentist's tray,
sting the roof of my mouth
with their prayers: "Poach it. Tear it.
Kiss it with poison."

A philosophical tongue, troubled
that it has no bone, yearns for the proof
of scalding coffee and persuasive
teeth. I couldn't say how many
of my tongues hum contentedly. They all need
thinking about. Need reminding.
The fop, the renegade, the uxorious drunk
who means to get the job done and come straight
home but always ends up slurring.

And there are those with mysterious
allegiances. Secretive,
they slither in mythologies,
moving only when I sleep.

Thanatos, Eros, and Slug Pie

They were vaguely beautiful
like the inside of clam shells,
sunlight in gasoline, a cobalt and ash flake sky
reflected in water. When I was nine,
neighborhood boys and I would gather slugs
from our mothers' gardens. We'd meet at the river,
with our overflowing mayonnaise jars. We'd pile up
a wriggling mound and float
it out on a plywood fragment.

It wouldn't take long for the birds to come,
while we silent henchmen of death
stared at the diving beaks
picking slugs off one by one. Some,
dislodged by the commotion, fell
in the water or, as we liked to think,
drowned themselves, desperate
with horror. But most
just squirmed around
till their time came.

Sometimes when I sit on a bench
and watch people strolling by, I think
this one will die of congestive
heart failure, that one will blacken
in a mattress fire, this young mother
will end up tripping on a toy ninja, that cop
gunned down or choking
on a peppermint stick.

Rachel Smoke was the most voluptuous
of the three Smoke sisters.
The older boys told how
after they had scraped up the $20,
she sprinkled salt in her mouth,
cupped a fat slug in her palm,
then slowly dragged it across
the edge of her bright pink tongue.
Now that would be, they moaned,
the way to go.

Alicia Aiken
Mississippi State University

God's Gonna Trouble the Water

I found Jesus Christ with my mother behind me, jabbing her nails
like syringes into my 10-year-old back, and I, for the first time,
empathized with Christ.
As we walked to the pulpit, her arm, my cross, weighed my shoulder.
I imagined that Isaac and Jesus stood with me as the preacher asked if
I knew what He had done for me, and he told me that if I were true,
He'd change me into what I needed to be. I looked over his shoulder at
the first Sunday crowd who stared eagerly back at me as if I were
performing and this were my big finale.
Signaling my cue, the organ and the piano began a come-to-Jesus song,
and stepping forward toward the pastor's microphone,
in a wavering whisper, I recited, "Yes, I believe."

In a roar that resonated in the raised sanctuary walls, the church rose
and applauded the victory of another soul snatched from Satan.
As the drums and bass kicked in, my mother clapped her hands to praise
God for directing her to save me.
The choir began singing of mountains and death and burdens, and
to the beat of the gospel, the Holy Ghost spread like a jungle virus;
folks jumped off their pews and landed dancing in the aisles, speaking
in tongues, and
convulsing on the floor to give praise.

Then they dipped me like a flea-ridden cat; the pastor's hands clasped
the nape of my neck in the name of the Father, the Son, and the
Holy Spirit.
As the holified water, promised to cleanse, shot up my nose, I wondered
why it didn't burn or taste like chlorine.
Feeling trapped in a seiche, I began waving my arms, searching for
something to steady me.
I emerged, tried to view the world with my newly washed eyes but saw
that I saw the same,
so I blinked and took a step on my new legs and felt that I walked the
same,
and I whispered *Jesus*, asking the Lord why I hadn't changed,
only to hear *that* resounding silence.

So I unzipped my skin to see my soul and saw only bones and flesh,
connected, alive, but mortal and unaltered.

Then without nails, vinegar, or thorns, I snapped His body with my
fingers and reveled in the echoes of others breaking the Lord,
and as I lifted my plastic cup, tiny but full, to my lips,
I wondered why God made his son so easy to batter, bruise, and chew.

Edmond Dechert
Mississippi State University

Madeleines and Cigarettes

Madeleines trigger Proust's memory
Cheap second-hand smoke fires my own panoramic vision
Of hospital waiting rooms. Probably not our last visits to Grandpa,
I was too young. Possibly Uncle Vassar though.
We all have defective hearts.
On my father's side we receive what we deserve,
On mother's, it's God's will and a ticket home.

The phone rings after 10:30,
My mother's mother is awake.
She is in the doorway, Dad's offshore 2 weeks now.
"What is it, what's wrong?" her sleeping-splint-encased wrist
Wrenched by the other strong hand.

Now,
Under the dark, uncommon comfort of the bar lights
In one of the last public places we are left alone smoking.
Our being here must mean we're drinking ourselves to death anyway,
So smoke if you have them.

The band begins to play, stripped down
The way things were before my time, playing well old standards like
Jesus on the Mainline, and Spike Driver Blues.
The bass thumps, filling in between the rusty slide
Swimming across strings on an old telecaster,
No single part overpowering the others,
A smooth blend poured from a cheap bottle of whisky.
Supplying the inspiration, escape, etc. that we all demand tonight.
Any two people move around in the middle of the floor, flailing arms,
Unattentive to who sees, and unashamed.
An uncle's heart popped, killing him quick,
He may lie in Hell for saying goddamn too much.
I am unashamed, half-drunk, and walking distance from home.

Jianqing Zheng
Mississippi Valley State University

Fireflies

The sunset has faded behind the oak trees,
and fireflies start to blink everywhere
above the meadow, their
greenish light on and off like hide-and-seek.

When I was a farm boy going to town
in summertime to see my aunt,
I walked ten miles to the railway station
to wait overnight for the early morning train.

I liked to climb to the top of an abandoned carriage
and lie down to watch the night sky
while fireflies glowed around me.
I flung my hand to catch one and wished to see

it blink in my fist, but I only felt its crawl.
I opened my fist and let it fly.
High above in the sky
millions of sparkling stars like fireflies.

Into Autumn

Saturday afternoon
while walking on a trail
I see a maple leaf

shining bright red
on the blades
of the long golden grass.

As I walk toward it,
a whiff of wind
blows it up into air.

Like a red butterfly,
it flutters farther and
alights back

on the blades
of the long golden grass
waving with autumn sunlight.

Kendall Dunkelberg
Mississippi University for Women

Dutch Elm

We always thought of our town
as the city of beautiful maples until
yellow elm leaves began to fall in summer.
Tree doctors came to drill all around
the trunks and pump in poison
to kill the beetles and save the trees.
It rarely worked. Our neighbors across the alley
lost two old elms, their trunks as big around
as two men. They left us the logs so thick
we had to borrow a two-man saw,
its blade rusty from lack of use.

We always sawed firewood with a hand saw.
My father told us it was good exercise
and made the fire warmer come winter.
We knew he wanted to teach us a lesson,
but no lesson sank in deeper than when he
settled down on the ground, letting his legs
in braces spread out before him, then grabbed
one handle of the saw and asked me, my brother,
and my sister to take turns on the other side.
It took hours to saw through one swath.
Then we'd roll the log away and start another.

I don't remember him ever growing tired
or impatient when the teeth would bind
or we would let the blade bend and drop
on our end. If we were tired, he'd take
a short break, tell about when he was a kid,
then he'd call a fresh hand to the other handle
and we would resume our steady back
and forth until the last wood split
and another cross section fell.

Later, after all the logs were stacked
and dried, we would learn to heft
a sledge and bring the head down
onto a wedge that split the logs
into pieces small enough to burn.

Lacey Veazey
Delta State University

Rest Home

Pale death roams the halls like home
and calls bingo on Friday afternoons.
They sit, gnarled hands like dried fruit
curved in blanketed laps.
Garish light from too-loud TV's
plays across faces slack-jawed and vacant,
no one watching.
In rooms like cells they wait
their turn as on death row,
catching phantom butterflies
and singing songs of youth.

Yvonne Tomek
Delta State University

Albert Einstein 1922

The grisoned wizened German scientist from Ulm
Who decoded the universe stands at the
Blackboard in front of a calculus algebraic
Formula that fills it across from edge to edge. Hardly
Any black seeps through like a constellation
That scans the sky.

My grandfather seated on the second row
Leans forward to be taught, his face luminous
With understanding as I am looking at them
Both in this photograph, some eighty years after it was taken. The
Men black-suited—everything in
Black and white and shades of grey.

But this is where the nuances set in.

So what is he deciphering
In front of the Master with his own mathematical
Mind? Something of space and time and relativity?
Quanta radiating energy of light that may reach me
At this point and the memories it will invoke
About long lessons in algebra and geometry

At his French dining room table and
His contingencies to me about formulas well-solved.
A grandfather's calculations where time and space and
Random numbers have been pre-set and fall in place
In the dark night of the soul

And equal light
And equal love.

Baby

He's a little froggy

Turning slightly yellow in front of my eyes while
I am thinking the afternoon light has latched on
To his yeasty skin. In the incubator, the sun-lamp
Shines on his tiny frame, stomach down—
The mask over his eyes envelops half of his face.

I am dressed in a green hospital robe
In order to enter the room full of babies who, they too,
Are panting for their lives and feel so jaded hovering over
This little bit of heaven as I already see him as he will be one day,

Old and hairless, toothless, jaundiced and wrinkled,

Clinging to the coils of his bed as he did to the ribs of my daughter
Until a little while ago, herself a mere child—she the tree of life, who,
Pushing him down the coils of herself has given birth again to me,
Just in time, in a most beautiful
Tree-leaved corner of
Summer afternoon light.

Joe Amoako
Delaware State University

A Little Here A Bit There

A little here a bit there
Shall thou be saved
And hear the whole world wail
What then is the use of knowing
About everything if you do not
Know who you are

Avoid this inquiry into the
True self my dear fellow
For men of immense
Integrity and statesmen
Try to rule others when
In their heart of hearts
Cannot rule themselves

Ask them if they have
Solved the mystery of man
And they shall bow
Their heads in shame
In fact
The fact therefore is present
And not a past fact

July 1981
To greedy people (at Lagos)

FICTION

Bow Wow

Rusty Rogers
University of Central Arkansas

I didn't go to any of my high school reunions until the 20th. This was partly circumstantial, since the reunions were held in the summer and I was twice teaching a class in England when they were scheduled. But I also wasn't really keen on going. My best high school friend Hartsell Jones went to the 5 year reunion and didn't find it a very pleasant experience. There were some unexpected tensions and resentments under the surface, especially between those of our small class who had attended college—who were few—and those who had not. These seemed to expect the collegians to assume some sort of superior air toward the ones "left behind" and so acted and spoke defensively, even when the condescension wasn't there. I certainly didn't wish to go home, see again people I had known years before as friends, and feel uncomfortable with them. Maybe I didn't want to risk spoiling years of mostly good memories.

Be that as it may, I did decide to attend the 20 year reunion. Any real or imagined tensions were absent, perhaps ameliorated by the passage of time, and so the reunion turned out to be a good experience. I imagine it was like most such gatherings. Of the Mena, Arkansas, High School class of 1962, all 95 of them, about 40 showed up. There were many to say hello to and make brief small talk with, some with whom I enjoyed remembering and reliving shared, usually funny and/or embarrassing moments, and a few it seemed I'd never really been away from; those, I discovered with pleasure, even with joy, remained on some level as close as they had been 20 years before. There was Jerry, whose wife had divorced him and headed for California to find herself, although, he said, "Why she headed for California to 'find herself' I can't figure, since she'd never been there in her life!" And Bill, who had made himself sick as a dog in the tenth grade learning to smoke—"Gotta be cool," he'd told me—proud that he'd quit cold turkey a year before. Ann, elegant as ever and truly kind, whose mother had been my second grade teacher. And of course "Chopper," a truck driver for 20 years, who had once, during a typically intellectual ninth grade basketball team discussion, defined a nerd as someone who farts in the shower.

Overall, the reunion was a good thing. What has proven most lasting about it for me, however, has been my strange relationship with someone who wasn't there. Waiting to be seated at our banquet, I asked a couple of former classmates who had remained in Mena about Glen Wharton. "Didn't your mom tell you?" Grif asked. "About two years ago,

he drove over to the Oklahoma line, bought a couple of six-packs, parked on a country road to drink, left his car running with the windows up, and asphyxiated himself."

It wouldn't be honest to say I was grief-stricken at hearing this. Surprised and sorry, yes, but, while Glen and I had been friends, we hadn't been really close. Even though I came home often to visit my parents, I hadn't seen him since high school, even at football games where almost everybody turned up in a small town like Mena. But over the years since that reunion I find I keep thinking about him, even more than about others who were much closer to me. I'm not completely sure why this is so, but I think it's somehow because he always comes back to me in three startlingly distinct memories. Only one of them seemed even slightly significant at the time, but they all have stayed with me, almost as if they're motion picture snippets that replay whenever he comes to mind. Now it seems there may be a pattern they have all assumed, although here I may be guilty of doing what I warn my poetry students against, which is imposing a meaning upon something when there are insufficient grounds for doing so. I haven't quite decided.

From first grade to twelfth, nobody ever called Glen Glen except his teachers. To all of us he was "Bow Wow" or its variants—Bowser and Bowser-Boo—because he was built like a bulldog—short and fat. His physique was deceptive, however, because Bow Wow was actually a good athlete. Mena had an excellent junior high basketball team when we were in the ninth grade, and our second team—Bow Wow and I were on it—could have beaten most of the teams we played. The district tournament that year was in Mount Ida. They had a new gym, new enough that it still smelled as much of concrete and shellac as of sweat and concession-stand popcorn. We were so far ahead during our semifinal game that Coach Rackley sent the entire second team in to play the fourth quarter. No one paid any attention to Bow Wow during warmups, since most fans were out of their seats going to the restroom or getting snacks, but when we trotted out to start the last period, everybody noticed him. He was so fat that even the largest senior-high jersey Coach could find was too small—it stretched so much that his skin showed through the threads. Our uniforms were bright red, but since Bowser's skin was swarthy, almost brown, his jersey looked maroon. The rest of us were not much taller than he was, but we were much skinnier and our shirts were much redder. The snickering began as soon as we took the court, and by the time we had run the length of the floor—Bow-Wow almost waddling along behind—it had become outright laughter. Adults and kids alike, almost everyone there who wasn't from Mena was laughing, and everyone there knew they were laughing at him. Even those of us on the court, insecure kids nervous and

excited about being in the game, soon realized what was going on. There was nothing we could do about it, but it turned out that we didn't need to do anything. The first time we came down the court with the ball, Bow Wow went to the far corner and planted himself there. The other team, probably having the same attitude as the fans, paid no attention to him. Big mistake. We got him the ball as soon as we could, he gave a little hop—his vertical jump was about 4 inches—and let it fly. As they say today, "Nothing but net!" From the stands, more laughter, the "lucky shot" kind. Next time down, ball to Bow Wow, little bounce, same result. Murmurs now, not much laughter except from our bench. After the third shot without a miss, our opponents thought it might be a good idea to guard him. It made no difference. Bow Wow couldn't jump, but his shot went almost straight up when he released it. You would have needed to be a foot taller to block it. So we just kept getting him the ball, and he kept shooting and making. He never missed that night—he never even hit the rim. He made 17 points in that fourth quarter—one free throw after a kid ran into him trying to block his last shot. The kid bounced off, of course. I don't know if the laughers were embarrassed and ashamed by the end of the game, but they certainly weren't laughing at the fat boy anymore.

Bow Wow gave up basketball after that year—too much running. But he played football all through high school. Mena always had good basketball teams, but we had to work hard to achieve even mediocrity in football. After one especially humiliating loss, Coach Baker decided we needed more than a little toughening up. He ordered a one-on-one tackling drill—one boy with the ball, one to tackle him—no faking, no dodging, just head on contact. And I drew Bow Wow. It didn't take a genius to know what was going to happen. I was almost certainly going to die. If I were lucky, I'd only be maimed for life. I was all of 5'7", 138 pounds. Bowser wasn't any taller, but he outweighed me by at least a linebacker and a half. I wasn't scared—scared isn't an adequate word to describe how I felt. I knew I had to run. The question was whether I would run at and into Bow Wow or run frantically the other way. Since the entire team, and by extension the entire school, was watching, I foolishly decided death was marginally better than dishonor. So, when Coach Baker blew the whistle, I tucked the ball under my arm and charged desperately at Bow Wow. I knew hitting him as he was hitting me would be like running into the proverbial brick wall, but mental anticipation wasn't enough to prepare me for the impact. I bounced back a few inches and, impelled by fear-driven instinct, spun violently away before Bow Wow could get his stubby arms around me. To my great surprise, I ended up on my feet, relatively intact and behind him. Coach Baker yelled "Way to run!" mistakenly thinking I'd made the move on purpose. The rest of the team laughed and hooted at

Bowser for letting me get away. He just grinned—he knew he'd get plenty of shots at me during scrimmages. I didn't care. I was alive. But whenever we ran that drill the rest of the season, he was never able to tackle me.

I rarely missed a day of fishing during the summers of my high school years, but Bow Wow and I only went together once. I don't know why we didn't do it more often—things just sort of worked out that way. One brutally hot afternoon we tossed our fly rods into my dad's old green Ford pickup and drove out to the bridge on Irons Fork creek. Blissfully ignorant of potential dermatological problems, we took off our shirts and waded in, one on each side of the creek. If you discount the impurities of our youthful souls, Bowser and I probably resembled a rather imperfect Norman Rockwell painting—me, skinny, blonde, burned to a reddish-brown, and Bow Wow, spherical, black-haired, tanned as smooth leather, waist deep in dark green water. We worked our way downstream, fly lines swishing through the air, popping bugs gurgling. After a few minutes, he said, "Rus, how come you never cuss?"

"I don't know, Bowser. My folks drilled it into me not to curse, you know, use God's name like that. So I wouldn't feel right cursing, I guess."

"Didn't you ever cuss, tho'?" he asked.

"Well, I tried once, when I was about eleven. Me and my little brother were out in that field behind our house catching grasshoppers one afternoon. A big ol' hopper spit tobacco juice all over my hand when I grabbed him. It didn't really bother me much—hoppers always spit on you when you catch 'em—but I figured it'd be a good excuse to try cussin'. I came out with a 'hell,' and then a 'dammit.' Joe looked at me real strange, and then I got tickled and started laughing. It made me feel kinda funny, so I figured I just wasn't cut out to be a cusser. 'Sides, I can say 'Dang it' as hard as somebody else can say 'hell.'"

Bow Wow thought about it for several casts and a couple of fish. "I been planning on giving up cussin' myself. It doesn't do any good, really, and it's one thing to do it in front of a bunch of guys, like on the team, you know, but I'm liable to come out with something nasty in front of some girls. Definitely not cool. I'd just be better if I quit."

"Sounds like a good idea to me," I said, "although I don't know that it'd really make anybody that much better."

We fished further down the creek. Bow Wow flipped his bug under a limb hanging nearly down to the water and a big goggle-eye smashed it into the air. "Shit!" said Bowser. "Missed him." After a few seconds, "Oh, I forgot. I didn't mean to cuss anymore."

"Doesn't bother me, Bowser-Boo," I said.

A few minutes later a bream sucked his popper under. "Got that

son of a bitch!" Bow Wow yelled. Then, "I forgot again, goddamit."

And so it went the rest of the day. We caught a lot of fish, but Bow Wow couldn't quit cussing. He never did.

Bow Wow drove up to Fort Smith near the end of our senior year to talk to an Army recruiter. When he got back, we asked him how it went. He just shrugged, and said, "No luck. Too big." He'd been turned down for being obese. He didn't have the money or the grades for college, so he stayed in Mena doing various kinds of manual labor. One night Bow Wow and a man named Bobby Wilson got drunk together and then had an argument. He was so smashed that Bobby, who was crippled in one arm, knocked him out and left him by the side of a dirt road.

I guess hearing bits of gossip like that, sketchy as they were, is why I was, as I said, surprised but not shocked when I learned about Glen's death and the manner of it. And this is where I may be finding more meaning than actually exists in these memories of him. Seeing a pattern in them, or imposing one, is easier when you don't have enough genuine knowledge to screw up your idea. But it seems to me now—when in memory I face Bow Wow again in that tackling drill, or we wade Irons Fork once more, Bowser still catching fish and still cussing—that his death was somehow, not inevitable, but sadly appropriate. That it was perhaps pathetically, even tragically fitting that the powerful football player who could never quite get his arms around the skinny kid, the high school kid who tried to quit cussing "to be better" and failed, would become a man who died alone and drunk on a dark country road. This is probably loading such trivial incidents with far more significance than they will bear, but the realization doesn't lessen their poignancy for me. But if I in some sense choose to shape my memories of Bow Wow, I have no choice about which of those memories is most often and vividly present in my imagination—the happiest and so the most poignant of all. It is the first, the oldest, when Bow Wow and I were youngest. When I remember, we are in my mind and heart ninth graders once more. We play that fourth quarter again, Bow Wow bounces always and forever in that corner, and the ball flows silken from his hand, arcing an orange-brown rainbow through the net that ripples like gossamer time after time—and the mocking laughter grows silent. I am always there the night he shuts the bastards up.

Brandy

Mike Mills
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I was a paperboy in 1971. A long time ago. Yet a scrap of song or some mellow scent or maybe even a rattling cough recalls mornings cold, dark, and damp when all the world slept. It was the time of the possum and gray misty shadows slinking into sweet-gum thickets just beyond my headlight gleams.

The early 1970's may reappear anywhere anytime. The scent of leaded gasoline in Mexico takes me back. Put me in a hot dusty Baja village, filling a rental car's tank, and suddenly I find myself once more at a Mississippi truck stop pumping two dollars of gas and shivering and rubbing my numb hands as the pump grumbles and tin numbers rattle round the meter and I smell the thick, cold, leaded fuel burping slowly into the tank of my little red '65 Mustang. The car was worn-out and already rusting when I bought it. But it was a sporty fastback, painted candy-apple red, and still speedy.

And the sounds of the seventies. My little hot-rod AM radio was punched in to WLS in Shee-cahhhhh-go! The top-twenty melodies pouring out of America's heartland sang of places and people and feelings I could hardly imagine. I don't recall every band name nor the words to all the tunes. But snatches of melody summon sure memories. Of course I remember the paperboy's anthem, *Bye, Bye, Miss American Pie.* I empathized with Don McLean as cold wind whipped through the open windows of my little Ford and I slung the news into the morning with my bare left hand and dreamt of driving my Chevy to the levee and wished I knew good old boys who drank whisky and rye. (The cold wind chapped my hands. Paperboys don't wear gloves. Caint afford 'em. After a couple of hours of slinging papers, even the best gloves wear holes in the palm.) On those cold mornings, Rod Stewart was telling Maggie to wake up while Al Green begged his girl to stay. And Melanie bragged of her brand new pair of roller skates. I had no idea what she meant by "you got a brand new key." Being country Baptist, I had little grasp of metaphor or simile. All things were literal. Especially music, which was my main link to popular culture and a wider world out there somewhere. The songs were real.

I had some developing notions about love at the time. I suppose I thought love was some sort of magic event which could wash away the loneliness I felt deep within. Looking back, I realize that I was in love with the idea of love. I delighted in the sweet songs of the early 1970's which celebrated love in all its colorful varieties, especially the music of Three

Dog Night. You may laugh and dismiss such music as pop. But pop culture is still culture, and I wanted all the culture I could grab. Most of it came from the radio.

Yes, over 30 years later, the seventies still grab me like a warm sloppy kiss when I least expect it. Recently I was walking through the Grove at Ole Miss on a warm pre-game Saturday morning, taking in the smells of barbecued pork and cigar smoke and the sights of running make-up and silver table settings when I heard amongst the babble a smooth mellow tenor whispering from a small radio perched on a card table under a festive white tent:

Just an old-fashioned love song,
Playing on the radio . . .
And wrapped
Inside the music
Is the sound
Of someone
Promising
She'll never go . . .
Just . . . Just . . . an old song . . . .

And memory took me back to a cold dark morning in front of the old Dixie Theater where I found my stack of papers and sat rolling them into paper missiles and listened with astonishment at the smooth melodies given to me alone in the pre-dawn blackness. By Three Dog Night. And standing there in the Grove, I realized that we are all, too often, nothing more than lonely paper boys. And then I remembered someone I had lost long, long ago. I realized, standing among strangers in the Grove, that she had never really gone.

My newspaper route covered most of the town of Van Buren. I began my route around four in the morning, was usually finished by "good daylight" and had no trouble rolling into the school parking lot in time for the first bell. The town dump festered North of town like a cold sore that won't go away. The stench of rotting food and burning tires, and blistered patent leather scraps from the shoe plant never quite dissipated. The dirt was dull grey and slick, like wet smeared newsprint. On most mornings, lazy smoke from the smoldering refuse licked around my eyes and burnt my throat. An old Willys Jeep with a crusty blade welded to its bumper crouched rusting and leaking oil in the center of the dump. Once or twice a month someone would fire up the old Jeep and the blade would cut into the slick, grey dirt and push and drag the scattered detritus into piles of rubbish for burning, scarring the soil with deep red gashes and stirring the smells of death and decay. Part of a rotting, half-white fetus was found there once. But nothing came of it.

Dry rattling bracken and bone-brown vetch sprouted here and there among old, rusting refrigerators and bent car hoods and broken Motorola television cabinets and shards and splinters of glass. Among these shelters hunkered a handful of scabrous, mangy hounds. They were vicious and always hungry, survivors of a long tradition of puppies "dropped off at the dump." Self-evident proof of Darwin's thesis in a land of spotty truth. They fed on slaughterhouse flesh and bones and cafe garbage and kittens and their own kind. Only the meanest and the fittest survived.

Certain tribal similarities evolved over time among these pariah dogs. Survivors of the little mixed-breed pups sired by collies and bluetick hounds and assorted squirrel dogs and various common curs had evolved into a peculiar breed known to us as "dump dogs." These curs were covered with mottled and grey brindled hair, their skin streaked with tooth scars and mange. They had broad, powerful shoulders and chests but drooping, narrow haunches split by unfeathered, ratty tails. Their short muzzles and wide jaws were oddly attached to long whippet necks. They neither barked nor howled but voiced threatening high-pitched growls when on attack and yelped with joy at the smell of death. The hounds had a king and queen, siblings related in varying degrees to the pied mixture of younger hounds who darted in and about them in constant quisling fear and anger. The king was the largest of the brutes and his queen the meanest. They feasted first and longest on the garbage and jealously guarded the borders of their kingdom by Schumpert Creek.

Not all dump dogs were vicious. One morning I was rolling down the hill, softly rumbling my Cherry Bomb mufflers, when I spied a white ball of fluff dart across the street and, to my surprise, dash into an old, rusty, 18-inch culvert. I thought it was a rabbit. I stopped and stomped on my emergency brake, leaving the car softly rumbling and peered into the culvert. I could barely make out the form of what appeared to be a fat little white pup in the shadows of the tube. I stood a moment puzzling over the creature, and just then the strains of another hit cut through the cold dark morning:

Brandy, you're a fine girl . . .
What a good wife you would be . . .
But my life, my lover, my lady . . .
Is the sea . . . .

I suddenly felt a deep, sad longing for some one or some thing. My heart went out to the pup in the culvert. I hoped it was a little girl puppy so I could name her Brandy. I felt a powerful longing to care for some being other than myself. The desire to give that other someone everything she could need.

The next morning I paid a quarter for an extra sausage biscuit and

hurried through my route, again stopping at the culvert. I knelt, holding a flashlight, and called, "Puppy? Puppy?" I heard nothing. I shined my light into the tunneled darkness. "Puppy? Puppy?" Silence. But then I spied two wet green eyes peering from a softly breathing ball of cotton curled in the tube depths. "Good puppy," I whispered and laid the sausage biscuit on the edge of the culvert lip. A modest love offering. We followed this ritual again the next morning. On the third day I reached my upturned hand inside the darkness and waited a moment. Then I heard the sound of flesh brushing against metal, her claws tinkling slightly against the culvert grooves. She came closer. I felt her warm breath on my hand. My scalp tingled as she licked my fingers, moaned softly, nudged the sausage biscuit from my palm and scurried back into her chamber. I flipped on my light and peeped as she scurried away. I was elated! She *was* a Brandy! A Brandy about to have pups!

I spent the next few days preoccupied with thoughts of "my" dog. I was sure she was very bright, lively, and kind and would be a good mother. I thought of tricks I could teach her. I picked up some scrap lumber at the sawmill and spent my few spare moments building her a doghouse. It had to be big, since undoubtedly she would have a large litter of fat beautiful puppies. I carried a bag of dry dog food and a jug of fresh water in my car and bought two shiny metal bowls, which I filled with food and water each morning, hoping our friendship would grow.

After a few more days, Brandy became less timid. She recognized the rumbling of my mufflers and began meeting me at the culvert. About two weeks into our relationship, as I approached the culvert, my headlights caught her prancing in the chilly darkness and shaking her head in coy little didoes of recognition. I cut off the radio and the motor. I knew something special had entered our world. I jumped from the car and she leapt toward me and placed her little paws on my pants just above my knees and snatched the sausage biscuit from my devoted hand. She then sprang back and cut cute little circles of joy between me and the culvert as though she were saying "Look! Look!" And I looked.

I shined my light into the culvert as she darted in and spied a half dozen or so little mouse-sized white and tan, blind, mewling pups nuzzling toward their momma, who settled around them in a half-moon of affection. She sighed and smiled in contentment as the pups nursed. I turned off my flashlight and knelt a moment, overcome by wonder. Loneliness sidled off into the darkness, replaced by enchanted silence timbered with soft, whispered mewlings echoing from the tunnel.

I was late for school that morning. I had gone to the feed mill and bought a bale of hay, some puppy formula, a score of used cotton feed sacks, a short tract written by the county extension service on raising

puppies and dogology in general, and some flea powder, just in case. I was in a high state of excitement and longed to share my experience with someone, but classes came first. I rolled into the school parking lot 30 minutes late, tired and hungry, and scurried down the hall, tiptoeing on the old, oiled-pine floors. I eased open the classroom door and blushed crimson when greeted by a cold stare from the teacher and sniggers from my classmates. Thankfully the teacher ignored my late entry and continued chirping of Hawthorne and Young Goodman Brown and Melville and Bartleby and such, and I laid my head on my desk and was soon dreaming of fat white puppies and pink ribbons and a boy's paradise spent chasing rabbits and treeing squirrels and rolling on grassy knolls in a world of puppy wonder and love.

I no longer worried that my blue jeans were unfashionably ragged or my last year's coat sleeves were a bit short at the wrist. I was free of such cares. My only thoughts were for Brandy and the puppies. That afternoon I went to the Ben Franklin Dime Store and bought a thin, pink, patent-leather collar with a blank name tag. I still have it. It has never been used. And I bought some rubber toys for the pups. Then I headed for the dump.

Brandy heard me coming and met me as I opened the Mustang door. I knelt on one knee and she licked my face and I smelled warm rich lactating mother scent. I hugged her and told her she was good. I stood back and looked at her for the first time in daylight. She was smaller than I had first thought. Really not much larger than a big cat, with thick wooly lamb-like fur. I heard the pups mewling, stronger now, and Brandy looked at me, as though concerned, for she wished to go back to the pups, but I was talking and telling her of her new house and how I would teach one of the pups to hunt squirrels and another to hunt rabbits and another to chase butterflies, maybe, and that I had her a fine, pink collar, just her size, and she seemed to understand, and then she gave me her worried dog smile and skipped away into the darkness of the culvert. I thought, "Maybe tomorrow I can get her and the pups out of the culvert and take them to their new home."

Her afternoon smile haunted my sleep that night and has haunted many nights since. The smile of experience. Knowledge. The wistful smile of Mary Magdalena and her daughters gazing across time on a young boy's innocence.

I slept light, anxious to check on Brandy and the pups, and waked around 3:30 to find a winter storm had come in. As I started out, my headlights cut through a sleeting mist. By the time I got to town the sleet was turning to freezing rain and the bridges were beginning to ice. What if Brandy and her pups were freezing? Or worse, what if Schumpert Creek

was rising, as it often did, and they were drowned in the culvert? I wanted to rush to the dump first, but that was out of the question. I had to work.

I clicked on the radio:

Ride . . .
I used to get on my horse and
Ride . . .
I was so handsome women
Cried . . .
And I got shot but I never
Died . . .
A cowboy's work is never done . . . .

I got to the theater, but the papers weren't there! The courier was late. After about 15 anxious minutes I was about to abandon my paper route and go check on Brandy and the pups. Then I heard the big panel truck shifting into low gear as it pulled up the hill coming into town. It rolled up to the Dixie Theater and the driver jumped out and mumbled something about the bridge over the Tombigbee being "pure ice" as he lazily pulled the paneled tailgate up and climbed into the bed and swung my bundled papers like hay bales onto the sidewalk. Thump! Thump! I jumped into my work. Cut the strings! Roll and rubber-band a couple hundred papers. Slip 'em into plastic bags. Jump in the Mustang. Dadgum these wipers! I can't see! Reach out and rub thin ice off the windshield with my bare palm. Come on defroster! Work! Kick the heater. That's better! Roar up the street to the Grammar School and roll into Pin Oak Subdivision. Thunk! Thunk! Thunk, thunk, splat! Whoops. Hit a mud puddle. Too late to stop. Then up Second Street. Thunk. Thunk. Ker-thunk. Now behind the church and headed across the highway; deliver the Fire Station papers, thunk, thunk, thunk; Lord I'm low on gas! Then I headed North, chunking papers like missiles at mail boxes, no time to put 'em in. Finally I came to the Truck Stop where I roared up to the pump and rubbed first this hand and then the other between my legs as I took turns holding the freezing handle, finally coaxing two dollars of slow moving gas into the tank, ran inside, traded a paper for a sausage biscuit and bought another and raced back out into the freezing rain, and now soaking wet and cold, popped the car into first and roared off.

My little Mustang shivered as I hit a patch of ice. Whoops! Too fast! Nearly cleaned out a ditch! Missed that big oak! Foot is shaking! Can hardly hit the clutch! Calm down. Everything is fine. Everything will be just fine. My defroster competed with the cold air pouring through the open window. My loose windshield wipers were now caked in ice, and I could barely see through the small oval above the dash.

I geared down and kept pulling up the hill toward the dump when

my lights captured two spots of green fire in the thicket. I slowed and felt a jealous lump in my throat. The father must have returned for his kin. But no. I now saw other dancing eyes darting in and among the thin sweetgum saplings. I slowed and shined my flashlight into the thicket. I could now see the dump dogs clearly. My God! They were darting in and out of the brush, tearing and tugging at white balls of cotton and dancing and yelping and sneering at my light. My heart broke. I ran toward the culvert, slipping on the slushy ice. Then I stopped. The saddest sound I have ever heard mourned over the demonic yelping. I raced toward the culvert. The queen of hounds was straddling Brandy who lay mangled on her back. The queen snarled at me with her upper lip raised, her mouth dripping blood. She backed away growling. The king of hounds now jumped from the culvert, holding between his teeth the last white puppy, squealing and squirming. I reached to the ground, feeling for a stick or stone. I aimed a large piece of sandstone and hit the queen, who squealed and raced into the brush. I heard pattering hound paws plopping rapidly away as I ran to Brandy, just in time to hear her death rattle coughing in the cold February sleet. I began to cry. Bitter tears against all evil ever known in this world.

I shrouded Brandy's mangled body in a meal sack and placed her in my trunk. I finished my route, knowing I had been seduced into the world of feeling by a little orphan dog. In a single cold moment I had followed her cry into the river of all suffering. A long flowing stream of dashed dreams and unbearable pain. Her last mournful surrender will haunt me forever. I heard in her sad tone a frustrated disappointment and a final unwilling acceptance of the great darkness. And I knew in that moment that my own little indomitable will was likewise mortal and fallible. I was once again alone. And I would be alone for a long long time. As the sun finally shed some dull light on the slushy day, I buried Brandy in a small patch of sage grass under a spreading willow near a gentle bend in Schumpert Creek. A place known only to us.

My sympathy for the little dog grew into an empathy, a love, for all God's creatures, and I grasped the knowledge, a cool recognition, of all suffering. And sometimes when a gentle breeze passes, I fancy she whispers only to me. Ah Brandy. You made me believe in underdogs. I will never forget you.