PUBLICATIONS

OF THE

MISSISSIPPI PHILOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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POMPA

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First, a concession: Robert Hayden was not, of course, a Mississippi poet. His name is not found, at least as an entry, in *Lives of Mississippi Authors, 1817-1967*. Indeed, since confession is supposed to be good for the soul, let me admit that Hayden is not even a Southern poet. He is not mentioned in the recently published *A History of Southern Literature*, nor is there an entry for his name in either *A Bibliographical Guide to the Study of Southern Literature* or, *Southern Writers: A Biographical Dictionary*. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the South can make a good case for including Hayden among the ranks of its writers. There are two strong points for such an inclusion. The first is Hayden's long residence in the South; for over twenty years he lived in Nashville where he taught in the English department of Fisk University. Although he spent the last decade of his life as a teacher in his native Michigan, the bulk of his mature years, from his mid-thirties to his mid-fifties, was spent in a Southern setting. The second point in support of my argument for his inclusion is based on the subject matter of his poems. A glance through the table of contents of Hayden's *Collected Poems* yields titles such as "A Road in Kentucky," "On Lookout Mountain," "The Ballad of Nat Turner," and "Frederick Douglass." A look into the poems themselves reveals that "Middle Passage" deals with the importation of slaves to America, that "Rungate Rungate" depicts the operation of the Underground Railroad, that "The Dream" is set in 1863 and discusses the morning when "laughing crying singing the folks went off / with Marse Lincum's soldier boys."[1] Clearly, the people and history of the

South held an attraction for Robert Hayden, and the South provided the impetus for the creation of some of his strongest work.

Given Hayden's proclivity to turn to the Southern experience for use in his poetry, given that much of his poetry concerns the black experience in America in both the past and the present--the opening lines of his poem "Monet's 'Waterlilies'" are "Today as the news from Selma and Saigon / poisons the air like fallout"[2]--it is not at all surprising that Hayden turned to Mississippi as a setting for some of his work. Many of Hayden's poems may draw indirectly upon Mississippi, but the two poems I wish to discuss, "Night, Death, Mississippi" and "Tour 5," depend so heavily upon their setting in Mississippi that I have labelled them "Mississippi poems." In these two poems Hayden uses a specific geographical setting, the state of Mississippi, and a specific psychological setting, the state of mind of white Mississippians, to explore racial inequality, injustice, and antipathy as they existed in the past, as they exist in the poems' present, the 1950s and '60s, and as they might exist, barring change, in the future.

"Night, Death, Mississippi" is the more sensational if not necessarily the stronger of Hayden's two Mississippi poems. In this poem Hayden presents an atrocity, the beating to death of blacks by members of the Ku Klux Klan. The poem uses one of Hayden's favorite forms, the ballad, and his choice of this form, which permits the use of a narrator, allows several characters to speak, and employs a refrain which adds to the horror of the story Hayden chronicles. The horror is especially deepened by the narrator's ability to distance himself from the characters and events of the ballad; that is, the narrator stands back and makes comments that are, at the same time, both calm and emotional. Moreover, the ballad form allows Hayden to approach his material in more than one way, and this multiple approach permits the poem to address issues beyond the immediate murderous activities of the Klansmen. "Night, Death, Mississippi" is divided into two sections.

In the first section Hayden employs two speakers, a narrator, who serves as Hayden's persona, and a retired Klansman, who presents the off-stage activity of the Klan attack. The first lines of the poem are ambiguous, but readers are not aware of the ambiguity until they reach the second stanza. The first stanza introduces the scene and the narrator: "A quavering cry. Screech-owl? / Or one of them? / The old man in his reek / and gauntness laughs. . . ."[3] So far the scene is clear enough, but when the second stanza is reached, readers must readjust their perspective. The first line of the second stanza, "One of them, I bet--," introduces the speaker, presumably the "old man" of line three, but his voice is immediately replaced by that of the narrator, who fills out the remainder of the verse and whose words are a continuation of the sentence begun in the first stanza: "and turns out the kitchen lamp, / limping to the porch to listen / in the windowless night." At this point readers are aware of the ambiguity of the first two lines; are they spoken by the narrator or the old man, or are they perhaps divided between the two? The beginning of the third stanza, "Be there with Boy and the rest / if I was well again," increases the readers' indecision while also introducing a third character into the unfolding drama. In the end, readers must decide the identity of the speaker of the first two lines of the poem on the basis of the word "quavering," a word not found perhaps in the old man's vocabulary. This ambiguity, however, is soon thrust aside as Hayden involves his readers in the immediate activity being described by the old man.

The remainder of the first section of the poem describes the old man's remembrance of his past as an active member of the Klan--"Time was. Time was." he says--and his assumption that "Boy," who appears to be the old man's adult son, is carrying on his father's past activities in the present. The narrator's voice reappears at least once, in lines nineteen and twenty: "He [the old man] hawks and spits, / fevered as by groinfire." Other passages, however, may also be spoken by the

narrator, so readers are once again confronted with ambiguity. For example, lines seventeen and eighteen, "Time was. A cry? / A cry all right," cannot be as easily assigned as the line that follows them. Because the old man has uttered "Time was" twice in line eleven, it seems reasonable to assume that he speaks the phrase once more. It also seems reasonable that he says "A cry," turning it into a question as he strains to hear the movements of the Klansmen in the woods. But the following line--"A cry all right"--functions ambiguously. On the one hand, it could be the voice of the old man answering his own question; on the other hand, it could just as easily be the anguished voice of the narrator confirming the suffering of the Klan's present victim while alluding to more widespread suffering, that is, the suffering endured on the victim's behalf by people of compassion everywhere. In the same way, lines twelve and thirteen are also ambiguous because it seems impossible to determine who says, "White robes like moonlight / In the sweetgum dark." But these lines do serve to confirm that it is indeed the activities of the Ku Klux Klan that are under discussion.

Lines fourteen through sixteen and the entire final stanza of section one are clearly the words of the old man, and in these lines Hayden reveals the full horror of the first part of his ballad. As the old man listens to the noises in the night, he regrets his physical inability to be part of the Klan attack, but he also recalls his former days as a terrorist and murderer. Hayden's words here are anything but ambiguous as he details the old man's savagery: "Unbucked that one then," says the old Klansman, "and him squealing bloody Jesus / as we cut it off." The old man's final words in stanza six, "Have us a bottle, / Boy and me-- / he's earned him a bottle-- / when he get home," make us aware of exactly what is going on under cover of night and the innocent sounding, at least to innocent ears, screech-owl cries.

In part one of "Night, Death, Mississippi" Hayden provides a scene of horror out of the past while he hints that such a scene is being reenacted in the present. By using the old man as speaker, Hayden is able to make his poem cover at least two generations of atrocities. By making the old man recall his Klan activities, Hayden makes his readers aware of the inhuman part the Klan played in the South's past. At the same time, the old man is used by Hayden in the role of the Greek chorus; that is, the old man lessens the sensationalism of his crimes, because they occurred off-stage and long ago, while he still manages to make readers aware of exactly what the Klan did and, by implication, still does. By doing all these things, Robert Hayden creates a balance between sensationalism on the one hand and repugnance on the other. It is a masterful use of voice and tone.

Part two of "Night, Death, Mississippi" increases the horror that began in part one. Here Hayden varies somewhat the form of his poem; it is still a ballad, but now the narrator's voice is used only to pronounce the refrain that comes after each of the three stanzas. Although each refrain is different, all three convey a sense of despair. The three stanzas are spoken by two new speakers; the old man's voice is no longer heard. In stanza one Boy, now returned from his night in the woods, tells of his actions in frightfully realistic detail. "Then we beat them, he said, / beat them till our arms was tired / and the big old chains / messy and red." Now we realize that the old man's assumption that his son has earned him a bottle is correct, as far as the old man is concerned. The son has replayed with variations in detail but with the same murderous result the actions that once meant so much to the father. The narrator's refrain, printed in italics, recalls the old man's description of his victim of the past, "him squealing bloody Jesus," while it also reminds us of the innocent, sacrificial death of the victim of the present. In a voice that is calm and anguished at the same time, the narrator comments, "*O Jesus burning on the lily*

cross." The incongruity of the lily-white Klan's use of the burning cross and the pain of the crucified Jesus, who is wounded once again by man's fresh inhumanity to man, is clearly part of the narrator's cry, a cry that reminds us also of the answer conveyed, we now realize, by the narrator in line eighteen of part one, "A cry all right."

The first stanza of part two is horrific enough, but stanzas two and three only increase the horror. In stanza two Boy continues his account of the Klan murder that has been perpetrated earlier in the evening. Now, however, he moves from describing the physical side of the murder to depicting the psychological aspects of the crime. With a chilling irony, unknown to him, of course--he cannot hear the narrator, just as he cannot really hear his victim's cries--Boy begins stanza two with the interjection "Christ." As he continues we realize that the Klan's terrorism is just another form of sport for him, but because the victim of the Klan can know why "you want him dead" (because of his race) the "sport" is better "than hunting bear," bears being unable to comprehend why men hunt them down and slay them. To this stunning confession, the narrator can only respond, "*O night, rawhead and bloodybones night.*." Indeed, any other response seems totally inadequate.

Finally, in stanza three the full horror of "Night, Death, Mississippi" emerges. A new voice enters the poem at this point, but Hayden cleverly conceals the new speaker's identity until the final line of the stanza. "You kids fetch Paw / some water now," makes us realize that Boy is not only a son to the old man of part one but is also a father in his own right. However, the remainder of the stanza brings home to us the full implications of this realization. The new voice has called for water so that "he [Boy *and* Paw, who are, of course, one and the same] / can wash that blood off him. . . ." The final words of the stanza, "she said," reveal the entire scene to us. The assumption that Boy was speaking to his father remains, no doubt,

a correct one, but it is now clear that the old man's eager ears have been augmented by those of Boy's wife and, even worse, those of his children. The command for water to be brought, clearly reminiscent of Pontius Pilate's call for the same element to cleanse him from his part in Christ's murder, reveals that at least three generations are implicated in the continuing atrocities of the Klan. Now the narrator's final words take on a deeper meaning. The horror of the night cannot be overlooked, but the magnanimity of the narrator toward the perpetrators of violence pinpoints the reason for the repetitious murders and acts of mayhem described in the poem. At the same time, a note of despair, a warning that such a state of affairs cannot be brought to an end without a profound change is sounded. "*O night betrayed by darkness not its own*," serves Hayden as both final comment and final admonition.

The only reference to Mississippi in "Night, Death, Mississippi" is found in the title. I maintain, however, that Hayden's choice of state resonates throughout the ballad. Hayden's sense of the state of Mississippi in both its physical and psychological manifestations is a correct one in the context of the poem's present. Screech-owls and sweetgums, castration and murder--all are indigenous to the Mississippi known to Hayden and, unfortunately, to the world. Furthermore, the legacy of violence handed down in this poem from the old man to Boy/Paw and from him (along with, it must be noted, "Maw") to the "kids" is a true description of the inculcation of mindless, destructive (to both blacks *and* whites) racial hatred. The end of this poem contains despair, but it also contains, I believe, a slight glimmer of hope. Perhaps one day, Hayden seems to imply, the darkness of mentality that perpetrates and supports the Klan's terrorism may be enlightened and the cycle of brutality may be broken. Hayden's use of Mississippi in this poem, then, parallels Martin Luther King's use of the state in his legendary 1963 speech. Here is Dr. King's invocation of Mississippi: "I have a dream that

one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the people's injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice."[4] Obviously, Dr. King's vision was far more optimistic than Robert Hayden's. Other similar invocations of Mississippi are found in Phil Ochs's bitter ballad "Here's to the State of Mississippi" and in Nina Simone's stinging indictment of the South in general and of Mississippi in particular. Her classic song is succinctly titled "Mississippi Goddam." By choosing Mississippi as the locale for his ballad of atrocities, Hayden gains the maximum amount of impact as well as the maximum amount of connotative value.

Although Hayden's second "Mississippi poem," "Tour 5," does not mention the state by name, it is clearly set in the Magnolia State. The title apparently refers to a guide book that outlines excursions for motorists. In this case, Tour 5 is a trip down the Natchez Trace from north Mississippi into the state's interior. Indeed, it seems reasonable to assume that the travellers in the poem are travelling from the vicinity of Nashville, territory familiar to Hayden, toward the Trace's terminus in either Jackson or Natchez itself. The opening lines of the poem are pleasant, describing "autumn hills / in blazonry of farewell scarlet / and recessional gold," but there is an ominous note in the final lines of the stanza. Hayden says the route of Tour 5 passes through villages "whose names are all that's left / of Choctaw, Chickasaw," and he characterizes these villages as "static."[5] Readers of "Tour 5" sense that these "static villages" are tradition-bound, unyielding, intransigent, resistant to change. This notion is confirmed in the second stanza when the travellers stop in a town "watched over by Confederate sentinels," stone emblems of the state's refusal to recognize a new era.

In the particular town chosen by the travellers for their stop they must "buy gas and ask directions of a rawboned man" who is obviously white. Hayden says

this gas station attendant treats these black customers who have patronised his establishment with "taut civility." Behind that demeanor, however, a "Shrill gorgon silence breathes." Moreover, the eyes of the "rawboned man . . . revile [the travellers] as the enemy." This adversarial relationship springs from nothing more than the rawboned man's status as a white man and the travellers' status as blacks in the white man's Mississippi. Lines ten and eleven of "Tour 5"--"Shrill gorgon silence breathes behind / his taut civility"--are found at the exact center of the poem. From this point until the end of the poem Hayden discusses the "ever-tautening air" that envelopes the travellers as they leave the man behind and "drive on." Now the bright, comforting colors of the first stanza are forgotten, and the discordant note introduced by the word static is developed fully. Hayden says that "despite its Indian summer glow" the air turns "dark" and the travellers are reminded of the sordid past of the roadway they are following, a "route / of highwaymen and phantoms, / Of slaves and armies." To be sure, there are still some humans discernible in the landscape, but they are only children; "wordless and remote / [they] wave at [the travellers] from kindling porches" remind us of the "taunt civility" of the rawboned man: both are extremely combustible and may explode at any moment, set off by some random spark of anger or hatred or violence.

The final lines of "Tour 5" depict both geographical and psychological reality. "And now," writes Hayden, "the land is flat for miles. . . ." This flatness represents the deflation of spirits the travellers feel after their encounter with the barely civil, hate-filled white man; in addition, the flatness contrasts with the hills (or heights) of the earlier part of the journey. Hayden acknowledges that the flat land at the end of the journey presents a "lush" landscape. Underneath the lushness, however, is a reality that is neither organic nor natural. In fact, Hayden characterizes the landscape as "metallic, flayed,: and although it is

bright, it is a "brightness harsh as bloodstained swords." Now the hopeful landscape of the first two lines of the poem is counterbalanced by the threatening landscape of the last two lines, and the fulcrum that Hayden uses to achieve this equilibrium, which is, of course, static, is the encounter with the rawboned man, found, as we might well expect, at the exact center of the poem. Hayden thus provides his poem with symmetry and shape.

As noted above, the rawboned man's scarcely disguised malice signals the turning point of the poem. Moreover, this man provides a link between "Tour 5" and "Night, Death, Mississippi." The characters of the first poem are, to be sure, more openly evil. At least two of them are murderers, and the other members of their family are tainted, at least vicariously, by their deeds. The rawboned man of "Tour 5" causes no physical harm to the travellers who stop at his place for gas and directions. But his clear hostility, a hostility unwarranted by the travellers' appearance at his business, is certainly psychologically harmful. After all, the travellers' only "offense," an "offense" discernible to the rawboned man and his ilk only, is their blackness. Nevertheless, the malice of this man, who desires, like the gorgon, to turn his "enemies," that is, black people, into stone is immense. Furthermore, by placing him on the path of the Natchez Trace, Hayden expands the man's malice.

For Hayden uses this ancient route through Mississippi in a symbolic way. The Natchez Trace, in a certain sense, has fostered racial inequality over time. It carried slaves down into Mississippi, and it carried armies forth from Mississippi. The slaves were unwilling victims of racial injustice; the members of the armies were willing but deluded defenders of racial injustice. In the poem's present blacks are once more carried down into Mississippi by the Trace, and once again they encounter racial inequality and injustice. Hayden's poem indicates that little has changed along the length of the Natchez Trace. Blacks are still

victims, immobilized, kept in a permanent position of disadvantage, like the slaves before them, by the white man's reviling eye. But the white man is also a slave, turned into a gorgon by his unreasoning hatred. Thus, the rawboned man in Hayden's poem is similar to "every human" in Auden's elegy for Yeats.[6] In his eyes also the "seas of pity lie / Locked and frozen. . . ." Hence, "intellectual disgrace" taints the lush Mississippi landscape, and racial antipathy builds a prison around each of its victims, both those who hate and those who are hated. Nonetheless, Hayden's hope, faint though it is, reflects Auden's aspiration: both long for the "start" of "the healing fountain" in the "deserts of the human heart." When that healing event occurs, the land will be restored at last. Hayden's task, like Auden's, like all poets', is to hasten the day of healing.

Robert Hayden once called himself a "romantic realist."[7] In his two Mississippi poems Hayden is, on the whole, a realist. He uses the realities of segregated Mississippi--the depredations perpetrated on blacks by the Klan, the degradations offered to blacks by the white populace--as subject matter. The depredations and the degradations create a climate of darkness. On the edges of the darkness, however, glimmer faint hopes. Perhaps, at the time of the poems' composition, the faint hopes were romantic, illusionary, if you will. Even so, "Night, Death, Mississippi" and "Tour 5," because of their geographical and psychological reality, make an impact on the reader. In these poems Robert Hayden begins with a legacy of hatred and fear; then he transmutes that legacy through this art. The final products remind us of what we were and sometimes, lamentedly, still are, but they also show us, if only by contrast, what we all could be. These Mississippi poems are Hayden's legacy to us; therefore, they are a gift, a gift to be cerished.

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Notes

[1]Frederick Glaysher, ed., *Robert Hayden: Collected Poems* (New York: Liveright, 1985), p. 66.

[2]Glaysher, p. 101.

[3]Glaysher, p. 15. All further references to "Night, Death, Mississippi" are to this edition.

[4]"A Dream . . . I Have A Dream," *Newsweek*, 9 September 1963, p. 21.

[5]Glaysher, p. 29. All further references to "Tour 5" are to this edition.

[6]Edward Mendelson, ed., *W. H. Auden: Collected Poems* (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 198.

[7]Robert M. Greenburg, "Robert Hayden," in *American Writers: A Collection of Literary Biographies*, ed. A. Walton Litz, Supplement II, Part 1 (New York: Scribners, 1981), p. 362.

Consider for a moment Walt Whitman's self--his monumental, insistent, energetic, parapatetic self. So much of Whitman's canvas is filled with his mercurial selves that it is probably impossible to consider him at all without considering his self. To a certain extent one can expect this of Whitman, because he is after all, a poet-seer, a *vates*. As such he is dependent upon his own subjectivity as a passport to the other world and upon his subjective experience as its acid test. As is perhaps the case with any poet-seer, most of his story, both as private person and as public poet, must inevitably be the trace of himself.

Yet, if we compare Whitman's poetry, his life and his notebooks with those of the other great Romantic seer-poets, we will note a much more extensive turning inward than with the others. In the rhetoric of more conventional seers, much more than in Whitman's, there is a persistent pointing outward, a persistent attempt to concentrate on the vision seen and to capture it and convey it. For example, the rhetoric of visionaries includes a tradition of seeing the self as a passive receptor in the presence of revealed truth, and certainly Whitman does portray himself as similarly passive at the moments of divine insight in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," but recall the famous section five of "Song of Myself," wherein the all-important revelation of his own soul to himself is figured as a very active, blatantly sexual encounter. Self is not only not stripped away or submerged at this moment, it is central as both subject and object in the experience. Further, this self-absorption, as any reader of the

entire canon knows, is typical rather than atypical of this poet. In all but a tiny group of Whitman's poems, we are constantly aware of his subjective presence.

Also unlike other visionary poets, Whitman seems to have made a point of extending his visionary self further and further into his daily existence. In the most informative record we have of his private life--his notebooks--he seems to insist on a total identity between public and private selves, more often than not coercing the private self to match the public. As Blodgett and Bradley point out (ll, n.), Whitman often entered counsels to himself in his notebooks, and these not infrequently found their way, little changed, into *Leaves of Grass*. The *Me Imperturbe* piece in "Inscriptions" is a case of just such a counsel: ". . . O to be self-balanced for contingencies, / To confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, rebuffs, as the trees and animals do" (lines 7-8).

At this stage we reach a point where we must rethink the language in which we habitually cast such observations as I have been making. Clearly the customary model of the-poet-*in*-his-verse is going to run into problems if we now must determine whether Whitman so managed his daybook as to be poetic about it or whether his daily notes came from so thoroughly poetic a mind that they might be transcribed with little alteration into publically circulated verse. As I shall show after a pause to restructure what has now become inadequate analytical vocabulary, the larger canon of Whitman's entire life as a poet is a canon as legible as *Leaves of Grass*, largely because of his extended mask, and it is a canon rife with problems like this confusion between the poetically private man and the prosaically direct poet. Backing up to the sense we have of Whitman inhabiting his poetry, let us admit the obvious at once: he is not pervasively present in his poetry; his presence there at all is an illusion. There is no sense, of course, in which we readers can say that we confront a self in Whitman's corpus. We confront only language the effect of which is the projection of self.

Looked at more closely and described more accurately, we might even say that it is not the effect of a *self* that we encounter as meaning, but a *voice*--which itself is also illusionary. From a linguistically analytical perspective, we encounter language which, when we read it as if it were transparent (which it isn't), we construe as embodying a coherent utterance. The utterance, in turn,is further construed to convey the effective meaning of a voice--the voice of a poet. This voice then, in its turn, in construed to come from a subjective source--in this case, Whitman. From this perspective it is nonsensical to talk of Whitman as if he were a person available to us through his body of poetry. We may, however, begin to speak of projected "voices" of Whitman--as projected in the poems, the actions and gestures of the life, and in other writings. Of course, we may think of such projected voices of Whitman only as long as we remember that these voices are themselves illusory.

What linguistic manifestations of the Whitman voice might we expect to find in, say, the printed poems? Both concrete and abstract manifestations, I should think--which is to say both *properly* linguistic ones and others which are themselves legible but nevertheless are only *effective* meanings: the pronouns *I, me, mine, my*; the implied *source* of the terms *you, your, yours*, and the condition of privileged knowledge that the "speaking voice of the poem" projects when describing intimate experiences of Walt Whitman. In other words, the manifestation of Whitman's self is his self-centered rhetoric--his voice--as it threads its way through the text of his life and writing.

One point which it seems to me necessary to make about Whitman's voice is that its utterance is not always in the poems, nor is it always outwardly written, not always expressed. Some of its most interesting speeches are silent ones. Consider, for example, the remarkable volumes that are silently spoken by the biographical mask of public presentation. There is more than a little implied pronouncement in

Whitman's public labor of reworking edition after edition of *Leaves of Grass.* Characteristically, the pronouncement is about the image of the author as an innovator, for never had such a publishing programme been undertaken before. Moreover, stark speeches on another Whitman theme are implied by this same labor: that Walt Whitman insists upon the same sort of organic, process-based integrity in the otherwise dry work of publishing that he insists on in his poetic texts and in the "personal text" of unifying his public image as poet with his private sensibility. Though not a speech-act as such, this public effort at innovative integration is in its own way a rich poem which we his readers have learnt to read by virtue of its consonance with his overt, verbal poems. The editing acts constitute an utterance, a poem about the necessity of constant growth and about the vitality to be got out of shifting, reshaping, adding, deleting, and modifying. It is a poem, too, prescribing ways of wresting the present out of the past. But most tellingly it is an utterance about Whitman by Whitman, "spoken" in the same unorthodox tones as the material being edited.

The public, editorial voice and the private, notebook voice I have mentioned thus far are but two among dozens in which Whitman calls out his own name. I have singled them out because they harmonize quite remarkably and because they index the unique extent to which Whitman extended his poetic programme from life to art and back again. Not content to stop at the printed page, he carried his principles outward to the printing *of* the page, as well as inward to the writing of notebooks. Such efforts are not inappropriate to a Transcendentalist; indeed, they would seem almost mandatory, notwithstanding the obvious split between the public and private masks of other Transcendentalists, such as Emerson. The enterprise of the Transcendentalists denies efficacy to separations; it insists upon the fundamental unity of all, in spite of the chaotic appearance of appearance. Quite naturally (I acknowledge the pun but beg your tolerance) one

should grow books as one grows poems as one grows one's own life, managing the whole project so as to let a maximum amount of oneness show through the surface. Whitman would seem to have done quite a nice job of letting Nature's unity show itself. But there is a serpent in this garden. Among the dozens of other voices discernable in Whitman, there are some which irreconcilably conflict with the posture of the editor's, the poet's and the notebook writer's voices. Let us look at one.

The original title of "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" was "A Child's Reminiscence." It was first published in the New York *Saturday Press*, whose editor was Henry Clapp, one of Whitman's Bohemian friends from the Pfaff Restaurant crowd (B&B 246, n). In the same issue appeared this press notice:

> Our readers may, if they choose, consider as our Christmas or New Year's present to them, the curious warble, by Walt Whitman, of "A Child's Reminiscence," on our First Page. Like the "Leaves of Grass," the purport of this wild and plaintive song, well-enveloped, and eluding definition, is positive and unquestionable, like the effect of music
>
> The piece will bear reading many times--perhaps, indeed only comes forth, as from recesses, by many repetitions. (246-7, n)

Blodgett and Bradley attribute authorship of this piece of puffery to Whitman himself, though apparently no manuscript of it exists. I haven't the space here to cite the many reasons to agree that the author is Whitman; suffice it to say that those who have read much of Whitman's prose will not need convincing. In any event, granting the authorship, we have here Whitman on Whitman, in a remarkably different voice. As an utterance from a transcendentalist whose life and poetry interpenetrate in so insistent a way as prompt his publishing self-

addressed counsel from his own notebooks, this piece wants a bit of brash sincerity. The meat of its utterance could easily have been transformed into a first-person preface to the poem itself. What would have been missing, of course, would be the promotion of the piece, as well as the promotion of *Leaves of Grass*, which, three years after its second edition, was still apparently reaching his countrymen.

Should one reject Whitman's authorship of the *Saturday Press* notice, there are plenty of other conflicting constructions in Whitman's canon of actions that will supply. Try decoding, for example, his boastful letter to Emerson which was really drafted as the 1856, second-edition Preface--not decoding the Preface itself, which is straightforward enough, but the self-stance necessary to produce the double utterance.

I would like to turn finally from the risky and uncomfortable business of reading voices that have never actually spoken, to the poems themselves. There seem to me to be three distinctly different voices in Whitman's poems, recognizable by the rhetorical structure in which they are couched. The first one might call that of the sage. Though very few of Whitman's poems are written entirely in this particular voice, these few are instantly recognized by their total lack of first-person pronouns. One in particular is quite impressive--*Beginners* in the "Inscriptions" group of *Leaves*.

Though pure sage poems are few, however, something reminiscent of them is most pervasive within another voice of Whitman, that of the performer. In "performance" poems, something like the sage makes pronouncements without reasoning them out, but these are usually much feistier than those of the *Beginners* poem and its kin. "Song of Myself" offers an example:

> There was never any more inception than there is now,
> Nor any more youth or age than there is now,

> And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
> Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.
> (lines 38-43)

You will recognize this "performer" voice as that in which are uttered all of the "conversational" and "philosophical" poems, most famously "Chanting the Square Deific," "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "One's Self I sing," and "Song of Myself." This is the voice in which Whitman pretends to ad lib, in which he becomes playful with language and hugely paradoxical. This is the voice that is discursive, colloquial and laced with second-person pronouns; the voice whose feint at unifying logic is purely associational rather than causal, inductive, or deductive; the voice which plays with echoing leitmotifs as with toys that change their shape and import at every reappearance. This is the voice, in short, in which Whitman *performs* and plays now--immediately before us, engaging us. It is the voice of seemingly fragmented spontaneity, which Whitman nevertheless steadily controls as a keyboard virtuoso, and in which he bears his most immediate, urgent, and direct witness.

This performer voice is a mirror-image complement to the mystical, story-telling voice of "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" and "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking." Unlike the mystical voice, this one lisps not of careful retrospection or coherent narrative threads, and it offers no dramatic renderings of the poet as young lad or middle-aged mourner. This performer voice is the ultimate illusion, the most immediately evoked of all Whitman selves. As such, it is the most I-centered voice of an astonishingly I-centered poet, so it represents a sort of quintessence of Whitman's entire poetic programme, public as well as private.

More to the current point, however, is this final remarkable feature: this is the voice in which Whitman comes closest to breaking the bonds of his own illusory

presence, comes closest to dropping the pretense of transparent language while nevertheless using it in its least symbolic, most directly "referential" pretenses.

The illusory pretense of the performer voice is a somewhat desperate premise--that straightforward assertion of paradox can overwhelm the contradictions inherent *in* paradox. It can't, of course, and at times the performer voice comes close to cracking and admitting this, close to giving up the ceaseless effort to stick together *ad hoc* unities from diversities on the basis of hints, coincidences, and disparate connections. "Song of Myself," which is the major performance of the performer voice, is loaded with often noted, irreconcilable paradoxes. Whitman tells the reader, for instance, not to follow Whitman's way but the reader's own. Nevertheless the poem itself is nothing but lengthy, strident instruction. He tells us not to be proud of being able to get at the meaning of poems, but to let him show us how to have experience, "the origin of all poems."

But Whitman knows the capriciousness of these structures. He knows that his instruction, though offered by example, is instruction nonetheless. And he knows that his message not to read poetry but to live would never reach our ears were we not at the very moment of communication reading poetry. At such moments the effort to weave the web of Oneness confronts failure, and the insistence that irreconcilable opposites are indeed reconcilable falls back on faith: the Ultimate Articulation of Things dissolves before the not-quite-articulable nature of words.

At such moments, indeed, one is tempted to construe Whitman's famous lines toward the end of "Song of Myself" not as bravado but as near-despair:

> Do I contradict myself?
> Very well then I contradict myself,
> (I am large, I contain multitudes.)

Is this surrender? I think so. The performing mind of "Song of Myself" has cared very much to break through to the transcendent spirit, the hoped for unity behind untidy appearance. He has cared very much to break through to it and capture it, for once, in the rational net of language. The bold admission of self-contradiction, though only one of hundreds of assertions that there is nothing contradictory about contradictions, is in one sense the ultimate admission of the inability of language to serve the unifying enterprise. Here we hear the poet in his least artificial voice give up the attempt to wrest language from the realm of artifice and make it do the seer's work. The ruse that one is labeling the unlabelable by referencing its contrasting appearances here most closely shows through as a technique of language manipulation, an effect not of rationalist language made to do visionary service, but an effect unachievable outside the limited and arbitrary, primary and determining structure of language itself.

In Whitman's less frequently used "sage" and "mystic" voices, there is a saving indirectness. The sage's voice speaks admittedly after rumination and inductive leaping; its utterance is to be taken as derived wisdom, the experiential origins of which are not available. To much the same effect, the voice of Whitman-the-mystic speaks in metaphor, its utterance thus equally insulated from original experience. But Whitman the performer, in his winning and insistent mask of honesty, speaks with a voice not so conveniently insulated from the purported transcendental referents of its signifying language. In its striking confession of self-contradiction, its premise is "I contradict myself, in that some of the minor truths I utter seem misleadingly, as the night the day, to cancel each other; but this is of no damaging consequence and in fact reflects the corresponding diversity among my many selves, all of whom are varied faces of the divine Self you now hear me singing." But in the rhetoric that Whitman has devised, as we have noted, that

transcendental self is not present, though it is sung about. The singing, performing voice is the purported, immediate manifestation of that Self, and what it may be heard to say, from this perspective, is not "I contradict myself," but "my Self contradicts my Self," and this, in the performer's song of his self, has obviously fatal consequences. Thus, within the canon of printed poems, it is in these lines and others like them that we most clearly hear the sound of the performer's voice . . . cracking.

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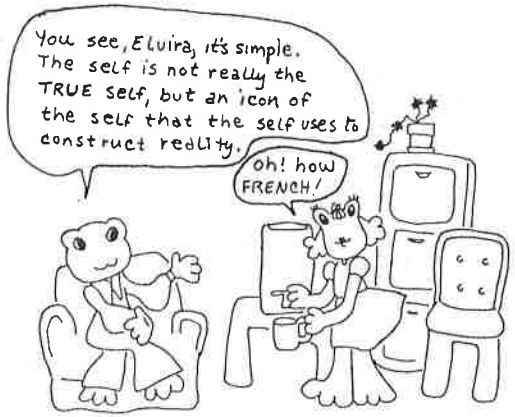
Reference

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader's Edition*, ed. Harold W. Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (New York, 1965).



Although he has published six volumes of poetry and six novels, Jim Harrison has yet to receive the critical attention he deserves. Besides the usual book reviews and biographical-critical essays, there are few scholarly articles and even fewer which examine Harrison's individual works as each contributes to his literary world vision. An analysis of *A Good Day to Die*, his second novel, provides, therefore, interesting insights into his fictional world, its characters and themes, and his changing world vision.

Typically, Harrison alludes to his novels' plots and themes with prefatory quotations, and prefacing *A Good Day to Die* is this Rilke quotation: "Each torpid turn of this world bears such disinherited children to whom neither what's been, nor what is coming, belongs." While this quotation applies to the novel's protagonists--the unnamed narrator, Tim, and Sylvia--it also suggests the tragedy of the Nez Perce Indians who are alluded to in the plot and from whose war cry the novel's title derives--when battle was imminent the Nez Perces would say, "Take courage, this is a good day to die." Because of the onslaught of the twentieth century with its rapid and vast changes, both the novel's protagonists and the Nez Perce were "disinherited." Moreover, in alluding to the Nez Perces' heroically tragic flight and battles, Harrison underscores his protagonists' folly and their less-than-heroic lives.

Historically, after settling on the Clearwater River in the Kamiah Valley, the Nez Perce tribes spread west toward the Columbia River and south along the Bitter Root Mountains. Generally, the Nez Perces were "friends of Lewis and Clark, seekers after the 'Book of

Heaven,' breeders of spotted horses [Appaloosas], renowned fighters, yet eager for peace; kind, intelligent, gentle, proud of their blood and culture."[1] Moreover, because of its abundant game, natural resources, and sheer beauty, the Nez Perces innately loved their land. As more and more settlers pushed westward, however, the Nez Perces were doomed by an inevitable scenario:

> A council was held and a treaty made; Indians ceded lands in return for presents and promised annuities; boundary lines were marked and declared inviolable. Peace lasted a few years but was destroyed by the encroachment of settlers who crossed the line to hunt, prospect, graze stock, and farm. These invasions brought protests, massacres, battles, and ultimately victory to the troops.[2]

Although the Upper Nez Perces sold their land and moved onto the Lapwai Reservation (Treaty of 1863) where they were Christianized and, predictably, shabbily treated and humiliated, Chief Tuekakis, Chief Joseph's father, counselled his son, "No man owns any part of the earth. No man can sell what he does not own,"[3] and on his death bed, Tuekakis told Joseph: "My son, never forget my dying words. The country holds your father's body. Never sell the bones of your father and mother."[4] After his father's death, Joseph adamantly but diplomatically refused every request that he move his people onto the reservation. When General Oliver O. Howard threatened to "drive" Joseph and his people onto the Lapwai Reservation, however, Joseph finally agreed but only because he thought of his people's lives first, particularly the aged and the children. When some cowboys deliberately provoked some of Joseph's younger, more volatile warriors, killings followed and war became inevitable.

Although Chief Joseph endured insults and abuse from the United States Government and white settlers for his people's sake, he was also proud, courageous, and would lead his people brilliantly. Despite his and his warriors's courage, Joseph realized that they were no match for the United States Army with its rifles, cannons, and gatling guns. Again thinking of his people, he decided to lead his entire tribe peacefully to Canada where they could live in peace and pursue their way of life, but the United States Government wanted the Nez Perces on the reservation and sent General Howard's command in pursuit. Thus began the greatest epic in Nez Perce history, their eleven week, 1600 mile journey during which they engaged "ten separate U. S. commands in thirteen battles and skirmishes and in nearly every instance either defeated or fought them to a standstill."[5] Because they were finally trapped and many of the old and young had succumbed to the rigors of their winter journey, Chief Joseph surrendered to General Howard at Bear Paws and with his characteristic quiet pride and dignity promised, "From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more, forever." Even though Joseph had been promised that if the Nez Perce surrendered they would be returned to their former lands, the government reneged and the Nez Perces suffered more abuse and deprivation before a scant 268 survivors from the originally captured 500 were allowed to return to the Lapwai and Colville reservations. Ironically, Chief Joseph never returned and died on the Nespelem Reservation "of a broken heart while sitting before his teepee."[6]

The Nez Perces were indeed doomed to become disinherited people by both the Christian Nez Perces who conformed and moved onto the Lapwai Reservation and by the encroachment of the twentieth century. Yet, though they inevitably lost their lands and eventually surrendered, they never lost their unity, courage, and dignity, and, if anything, in defeat they achieved their greatest victory. Theirs had been a

tragic and heroic journey and struggle which will, of course, contrast with the protagonists' folly and less-than-heroic lives in Harrison's *A Good Day to Die.*

Generally, all of Harrison's protagonists are disinherited, or, to borrow from William Roberson, "out of sync with the twentieth century,[7] because of the vast changes it entails. While Harrison's earlier protagonists--Carol Severin Swanson in *Wolf* and the three in *A Good Day to Die*--generally fail to reestablish meaning and purpose to their lives, his later protagonists--Joseph Lundgren (*Farmer*), John Milton Lundgren (*Warlock*), Nordstron ("The Man Who Gave Up His Name"), and Robert Corvus Strang (*Sundog*)--succeed in restoring balance and purpose to their lives, a fact emphasizing Harrison's changing world vision.

In *A Good Day to Die*, the narrator is disinherited and out of sync with the twentieth century in that he is unemployed--he never found "anything suitable"--and, more significantly, he has been separated from his wife and daughter for six months; moreover, unless he has nothing better to do, he will probably never return to them. In fact, he attempted to return once but could only park three blocks from his house and watch through binoculars as his wife and daughter went to and then returned from the grocery store. He also feels that each year he becomes less adept at fishing, a sport that, along with hunting, becomes therapeutically stabilizing for many of Harrison's heroes. Even his romantic illusions about himself--most of Harrison's heroes are dreamers--become ludicrous, and in one of his romantic reveries he climbs a mountain, mistakes a lightning bolt for a "power vision," and his body is blasted into a charcoaled "crescent smile" which prompts the locals to name the mountain Big Smiley and to create an unromantic anti-legend: "at fourteen his heifer took last place at the fair; at twenty-two he had difficulty staying awake; at twenty-six his wife asked him to leave but to please not take the car; at twenty-eight he climbed a mountain and made a smile."[8] His idiotically foppish, Big-Smiley-grin--

perhaps an allusion to the vacuous Alfred E. Neumann grin of *Mad Magazine* fame--is symptomatic of his inability to put meaning and purpose into his life, and, in fact, he often admits that his interest in life is very tentative and that:

> I did not qualify even as an observer let alone a pilgrim. Or to make it tiresome, I was not in the stands watching or on the field playing, I was down in some sub-basement regarding the whole base structure indifferently. My friends no longer existed, neither did my wife; I had no state or country, no governor or president. We used to call such people nihilists but that is much too strong a word for a vacuum. (pp. 55-56).

Tim is also disinherited and out of sync with the twentieth century. Bored with Georgia Tech, he withdrew, served a tour in Vietnam, and reenlisted to avoid marrying Sylvia who was then pregnant but miscarried. According to the narrator, Tim's Vietnam experiences changed him drastically and threw him even farther out of sync: "He had been through too much shit, too many drugs and Saigon whores for it ever to be quite the same again" (p 42). Unlike the narrator's vacuous complacency, Tim's alienation is more fatalistic and desperate--life is to be lived "only in terms of the act"(p. 45). After being severely wounded and discharged, he knows it is too late to return to Georgia Tech, and he neither wants to be a garage mechanic like his older brother nor a gas station attendant like his younger brother. Tragically, too, he does not love Sylvia any longer and the more she talks of marriage, the more abusive he becomes toward her, and in attempts to be free of her, he even suggests that she and the narrator have an affair. Symbolizing Tim's total alienation from Sylvia and the world are his refusal to pay his car payments, his romantic dreams of working on the Alaskan pipeline or

becoming a mercenary in Africa, his reckless driving, his constant consumption of various drugs, and even his favorite song--Janis Joplin's "Get It While You Can," a song "unequaled in modern music for sheer relentless desperation" (p. 111).[9]

Sylvia is likewise disinherited and out of sync with the twentieth century. She only tolerates her job filing insurance claims and willingly leaves it to travel west with Tim who, of course, is a major factor in her alienation: "She merely waited. And was punished . . . She had gradually by the act of waiting for Tim cut herself off from all but a few like Rosie and Frank and her mother" (p. 131). Ironically, as do most of Harrison's heroines, Sylvia possesses innate virtues and values which could provide stabilizing influences in a world of flux. [10] In fact, the narrator describes her as an "antique," and as reminding him of the "comparatively simple country girls" with whom he had attended school a "decade before" (p. 76)--ideas which emphasize a stable past as well as the changes that have occurred in the modern world. Inevitably and sadly, Sylvia's greatest virtue--she wants only "to wholly love someone and to be loved as totally and wholly in return" (p. 131)--would doom her to "return home and marry finally someone she didn't love but have children she did love" (pp. 69-70). Much later, the narrator admits that while he and Tim are "goats" who represent "alcohol, dope, dynamite, errant promiscuity," Sylvia is a "hearth goddess" who is "sweet, virtuous, gentle, kind, and faithful" (pp. 130-31). Spurned by Tim and lusted after by the narrator, Sylvia is adrift in an impersonal, modern world where her altruistic values and her very being are battered, or, to quote the narrator, she does not "seem to belong to the twentieth century" although she bears "so many of its characteristic scars" (p. 69).

Epitomizing the characters' being out of sync with the twentieth century is, of course, their journey from Florida to Arizona to blow up a purported dam in the Grand Canyon, a scheme the narrator and Tim concoct

when both have been drinking too much alcohol and taking too many drugs. No dam exists, however, so they decide to dynamite a rancher's earthen dam on a small fork of the Clearwater River near Orofino, Idaho. Somewhat reminiscent of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, harrison's protagonists speed across the country whoring and consuming prodigious quantities of beer, whiskey, marijuana, and drugs--all of which are symptomatic of their alienation. The sheer folly of their adventure becomes apparent as the narrator realizes ominously that theirs is a "mindless, disorganized plot" that is "ten degrees off in the direction of the wacky" (p. 55) and that there is "no sense of balance left in anything we are doing" (p. 77).

The "lack of balance" and disorganized, "wacky" plot are underscored when, on the day before they blow up the dam, the narrator fishes the Big Hole River, the sight of the first battle between the United States Army and the Nez Perces. He imagines the army's sneak attack that killed fifty women and children before the Nez Perces courageously repulsed the army, wounding forty and killing thirty soldiers. Because the narrator's courage waxes but mostly wanes, he marvels that the Nez Perces could say, "Take courage, this is a good day to die," and "mean it" (p. 139). He wishes that he could receive some instructions from Chief Joseph himself, but when he recalls Joseph's deep love for his two squaws and nine children, the narrator candidly admits that Joseph "clearly wouldn't like me and I didn't very much either" (p. 143). These Nez Perce allusions, of course, appropriately emphasize the contrast between Harrison's protagonists and the Nez Perces in that Chief Joseph and his people were dedicated to a cause greater than themselves, and they courageously fought to preserve their way of life that was unjustly being taken from them. On the other hand, the narrator and Tim have not been unjustly treated, and their plan to dynamite the dam is nothing more than a plan "ten degrees in the direction of wacky." While the narrator's courage constantly

wavers, Tim's courage is often "out of control" and dangerous. Similarly, Chief Joseph's unstinting devotion to his people, wives, and children contrasts with the narrator's deserting his own wife and daughter and Tim's inability to love Sylvia. Finally, even in defeat the Nez Perces never lost their pride and nobility, but all that is left for Harrison's protagonists once they blow up the dam is emptiness.

The closing scenes of *A Good Day to Die* focus upon the final preparations to dynamite the dam. As Tim and the narrator wait for darkness--ironically disguised as Indians with pigtailed hair and lipstick-painted faces--sinister omens begin to plague the narrator: the weather turns cold and stormy; Tim must kill a Doberman watchdog; cattle suddenly move down the slopes; Sylvia mires the trailer in the soft earth; Tim is in a "Seconal-speed daze"; and the narrator feels "terminally disconnected with the way things were going wrong" (p. 168). In the explosion, Tim is killed when he rushes back, ironically, to frighten away some cattle that amble toward the dam.

Instead of some kind of epic victory as gained by the Nez Perces, Tim's absurd death underscores the sheer folly of the characters' wacky, disorganized plan. Moreover, immediate plans are jumbled as the narrator wonders what to do with Tim's car and if the trailer, hastily discarded at a roadside park, bears fingerprints. While the narrator worries if he will be arrested, and Sylvia worries about what to tell Tim's family, their less-than-heroic act becomes finally apparent when the narrator realizes:

> An act that I had conceived as heroic would probably go unnoticed except by a rancher who might wonder why his dam had never washed away before, or why his Doberman was dead, or why he was missing two cattle. Two dead and two missing. (p. 175).

Although with Tim's death, a possible stable relationship could exist between the narrator and Sylvia, but even this idea becomes negated when the narrator knows that he will probably never see her again after he puts her on a plane for Atlanta and sadly concludes: "Someone should take care of her but if I had any qualities of kindness and mercy left, any perceptions of what I was on earth however dim and stupid, I knew it couldn't be me" (p. 176), and since neither can help the other, nothing has been gained and all is still lost.

In relation to Harrison's changing world vision, both *Wolf* and *A Good Day to Die* typify his darker vision in that the protagonists fail to restore order and meaning to their lives. With *Farmer*, however, Harrison's more affirmative vision becomes apparent in that, despite the vast changes in Joseph Lundgren's life (e.g., his teaching career is ending, his mother dies, and he has an affair with Catherine, one of his students), he restores balance and meaning to his life by marrying Rosalee, another of Harrison's hearth goddesses. In "The Man Who Gave Up His Name," Nordstrom's life is thrown out of sync when his wife divorces him, his daughter graduates from college, and in self-defense he kills a small-time crook; consequently, Nordstrom begins dancing alone in his apartment and becomes a gourmet cook, both of which eventually restore balance to his life when, after resigning his executive position, he moves to Florida, becomes a cook in a small seafood restaurant, dances in public, and dreamily watches the sea and clouds. In *Warlock*, Harrison's only truly comic novel, John Lundgren (no relation to Joseph) faces a mid-life crisis when he loses his job as a foundation executive, but he transcends his own foppishness and self-pity when he realizes that his marriage to Diana--another hearth goddess-- while not Camelot, is vital and stabilizing. In *Sundog*, Robert Strang, whom Harrison himself identifies as his "first Christian hero,"[11] dedicates himself to improving conditions in third-world countries and, similar to Nordstrom, Strang

eventually gives everything away to his wives and children and to students and charitable organizations.

In the final analysis, with its tightly woven plot, its characters, and theme, *A Good Day to Die* technically looks backward to *Wolf* and forward to Harrison's later novels. Universally, *A Good Day to Die* deals with the plight of modern man in a world of rapid and vast changes, and though it may be a darker vision of what may befall man, it also foreshadows the more positive visions that will follow in Harrison's succeeding novels. More significantly, both technically and universally, *A Good Day to Die* establishes Jim Harrison as a major voice in modern American fiction.

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End Notes

[1]Francis Haines, *The Nez Perces: Tribesmen of the Columbia Plateau* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), p. xv.

[2]Merrill D. Beal, *I Will Fight No More Forever: Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce War* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975), p. 23.

[3]Harvey Chalmers, *The Last Stand of the Nez Perce: Destruction of a People* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1962), p. 20.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. 26.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 265.

[6]Ibid., p. 336.

[7]William H. Roberson, "'A Good Day To Live': The Prose Works of Jim Harrison," *The Great Lakes Review: A Journal of Midwest Culture*, 8 (Fall, 1982) and 9 (Spring, 1983): 30.

[8]Jim Harrison, *A Good Day to Die* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1981), p. 141. Future references will be noted parenthetically.

[9]Even the songs Harrison alludes to in the narration suggest the world in flux and people out of sync. In addition to Janice Joplin's "Get It While you Can" are: Tammy Wynette's "Divorce," a "mournful song" in which the husband and wife spell out words so that their child will not know about the divorce; Merle Haggard's "I Can't Hold Myself in Line," in which "the singer was going off the 'deep end' because of love and whiskey. It was painfully accurate, and I wanted to turn it off," says the narrator (p. 158).

[10]Critics argue that Harrison writes purely "macho fiction," but his later heroines are basically strong characters and do provide stability in a world of flux. In *Farmer* Joseph settles for Rosalee, another "hearth goddess," rather than for the younger, urbanized, impetuous Catherine. In *Warlock*, despite his sexual escapades with Patty, Laura Fardel, and Gloria Rabun, John Lundgren recognizes the virtues of Diana who is a skilled surgical nurse and sincerely wants him to "get his spine back and be happy" and to quit wallowing in self-pity.

[11]Having written to Harrison and mentioning that I was working on a critical paper, "Comedy and Warlock: A Leap Into Faith," Harrison replied in a letter dated September 28, 1984: "Frankly I am also curious about your notions concerning Warlock and Faith? Strang seems to be my first Christian hero."

Before World War I, both the cosmopolitan American and the expatriate American in Europe tended to be from the rich, aristocratic American society--people interested supposedly in culture, fashion, and aristocracy itself; however, with the United States' entry into the war in 1917, many middle-class or laboring-class Americans were introduced to Europe--mostly against their wills. But even before the United States actually entered the war, many adventurous or idealistic young Americans had become involved in the European struggle. Some of these young men actually joined foreign armies, but most were involved through service in the Red Cross--usually as ambulance drivers. Of this group perhaps the most famous were Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, and E. E. Cummings--all of whom wrote novels based on their experiences during the conflict.

A great many war novels eventually came out of the experiences of American soldiers and ambulance drivers, but very few of these touched on the expatriate theme. Few of the writers had been previously exposed to Europe, and most knew little or nothing of its culture and society. Also, these writers were actually involved in the carnage of war and were not concerned with the politics, culture, or society of these foreign countries, but with survival. Hence, their works tended to be anti-military and anti-war regardless of who was fighting whom and why. The writers who were involved in the politics and principles of the war were non-fighters who devoted their efforts to furthering the patriotic causes of their native land and its allies. The American expatriates writing war novels showed more concern with the

United States' entering the war to help France than with the well-being of their own country. Indeed, it was fortunate for some of our writers that France *was* an American ally during the great conflict. Many American Francophiles might have been in quite a dilemma if forced to make a choice between their native land and their beloved France.

One of the most blatant of these novels dedicated to exhorting Americans to the French cause is *The Marne* (1918), written by that famous American writer Edith Wharton, who, like Henry James, sought European culture and society, because America was lacking in both; but unlike James, who preferred England, Mrs. Wharton spent practically all of her adult life in France. *The Marne* presents a contrast between the attitudes of the usual American abroad and the real admirer of France during the difficult days of World War I. Mrs. Wharton's hero, Troy Belknap, is from a rich New York family (just as was Mrs. Wharton); and every summer since he was six years old, Troy has sailed to Europe "on the fastest steamer of one the most expensive lines" (Wharton 1). Troy, who loves France, is usually accompanied by his mother, who, in contrast with Troy, goes only to keep up with the latest fashions. Only fifteen when the war starts, Troy deeply regrets that he can do nothing to help protect the country he thinks so highly of. He laments: "France, *his* France, attacked, invaded, outraged--and he, a poor helpless American boy" (10), can do nothing to help her. Furthermore, he sees it as "the clear duty of the world" (39) to save France, but none of his American friends and relatives understand what he means when he says "France." To him "all civilization" is "bound up in her" (40), and anything concerning France is important to the whole world. As soon as he reaches the age of eighteen, Troy heads for France as an ambulance driver. When, during the second battle of the Marne, his ambulance is wrecked, he picks up a rifle, joins the fighting, and is wounded. As the novel ends, Troy is lying disabled in a French hospital--

grateful for having had the opportunity to help France in her hour of need.

In contrast with Troy are all the other Americans in the novel--the ones who do not know what "France" means to Troy. This lack of understanding is seen in the attitudes of Troy's parents and their friends soon after the war begins. They are upset when France is invaded; but what chiefly troubles them is being *personally* inconvenienced: they can get "no money, no seats in the trains" (10), and no assurance that the Swiss frontier will not be closed before they can cross into that neutral country. While these people feel no obligation to France, they contribute money to French causes, expecting to get staterooms on boats to America in exchange. Troy's mother is one of the main voices in the indignant chorus of compatriots stranded in Paris who are "convinced that France ought to have seen them safely home before turning her attention to the invader" (17) because they have "spent enough money in Europe for some consideration" (18). But when these Americans get trapped in Paris by the German advance, they become "heroes--or mostly heroines--who stayed there to reassure their beloved city in her hour of need" (22). They say they "owe so much to Paris" (22) that they can never "cease to be thankful for this chance of showing it" (22). But in spite of what they say, these people know that France is not their country and will never be, as it is Troy Belknap's and Edith Wharton's.

Another novel that treats expatriate Americans who were in Europe before the war and remained is *The Wasted Generation* (1921) by Owen Johnson, a well-known writer of novels, drama and magazine fiction, who is perhaps best known for his novel *Stover at Yale* (1911), which is considered by some to be a forerunner of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise*. Johnson's third wife was the daughter of a French count, and he was in Paris during World War I (*The National Cyclopaedia*, 34). *The Wasted Generation*, which is in the form of a journal covering the period between August,

1916, and April, 1918, is basically a running commentary "by an intelligent and sensitive American, upon his own and the world's reactions to the war" (Boynton 239). However, the use of flashbacks within the journal allows the author to reveal many facts and incidents that occurred in the protagonist's life prior to 1916.

As the novel begins, David Littledale of Littledale, Connecticut, who is serving in the *Legion Etrangere*, lies wounded in a French hospital. David is a member of a rich and privileged New England class but has been living in France for "years" (Johnson 5), the last two of which have been spent in the Foreign Legion. Earlier he had come "eagerly into the brilliant cosmopolitan society of Europe with enough money and proper credentials, . . . believing in pleasure as the goal of life" (118). Although at first recoiling at the customs and morals of European society, he became a "*flaneur* of society" (119) and "lived a life of crowded inconsequences" (119). In Paris he met and fell in love with a French socialite who exerted a quite corruptive influence, causing him to become interested only in "pleasure and dissipation" (38). David's close friend the Comte de Saint Omer warned him that he had no place in that society because he had no understanding of it; he also warned David that the woman he was in love with would betray him. He states: "When she has completely broken you, dominated you and corrupted you, you will cease to interest her" (48). This soon proves true when David finds her with another man whom she has been secretly seeing for three months. So, when the war breaks out, four days later, David immediately joins the French Foreign Legion--partially, he says because of a "spirit of adventure" but also because of a "love of the French" (69). But as the journal begins, we find that his attitude has changed. In his years in France he has discovered that he is incapable of adapting to French society and French ways. He is a puritan and will always be one, and Europe cannot satisfy his needs. He reflects, "much as

I love their country, it is theirs--not mine" (6). But when he returns to the United States on an emergency leave, he feels lonelier than ever and eagerly awaits his return to France. But when the United States declares war, David immediately get transferred to his own army--thereby declaring himself not an expatriate, but an American.

In contrast with David is his brother Alan, who appears briefly in the novel; he is a real example of the American expatriate in France. When we are introduced to Alan through David's journal, we find that has been in Paris for ten years and is now living in the Luxembourg quarter with a former habitue of cafes frequented by David in the old days, and is slowly dying from having been gassed while fighting in France. When David visits his brother after not seeing him for years, Alan reveals why he left America:

> "I was stifling. I tell you--starved! A home? A Mockery! A gallery of granite statues. I can't remember one single time having known what it was to have a father or mother. You made me believe I was a lost soul--a gallows bird--you made me believe it myself! Why? Because I had warm blood in my veins, because I was human, had imagination, ambition, wild animal force. I, who was worth the whole lot of you, you crushed out with your cold, damned superiority, your conventionality and your pride in yourselves." (60)

Alan is typical of the group of young Americans for whom Harold Stearns became the spokesman--young Americans who, after the war, expatriated themselves not so much because they loved Europe, but because they wanted to escape from what they regarded as American puritanism and hypocrisy.

The conclusion of *The Wasted Generation* leaves no doubt, however, that the author's sympathies are with David. Whereas Alan is an expatriate who cannot fit

into American society, David turns out to be merely a misguided young American who comes to his senses through his war experiences, and who is now going to return home and be a credit to his country.

These two novels offer an interesting contrast because of their attitudes toward the American expatriate and the war itself. Edith Wharton was an unrecanting expatriate and Francophile; and *The Marne* shows this as she allows Troy Belknap to speak for her. Also, Mrs. Wharton's being a woman may account for her more romantic attitude toward war. Indeed she might have paraphrased Horace and said "Sweet and fitting it is to get wounded for one's adopted country." On the other hand, Johnson sees the whole expatriate movement of the younger generation as a search for meanings and values--a temporary rebellion of youth against established mores--certainly not a recognition of the beauty and charm of France, or Europe. And indeed, Johnson has a more realistic view of war. Instead of quoting Horace, Johnson would have agreed with William Tecumseh Sherman when he said "War is Hell!"

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Poe and cities were indissolubly linked. He was born in one, Boston--a fact often overlooked in attempts to create an Edgar Allan Poe who, as some interpreters comprehend "Southern Gothic," might well have sprung from the loins, say, of his own Dirk Peters and the Lady Morella. Unfortunate, and realistic, family circumstances, however, led to Poe's growing up chiefly in Richmond, Virginia, where he developed traits of a Southern gentleman, traits that he would evince until the close of his brief life. He received early schooling in England; then he returned to Richmond, where he fell in love for the first time, where he later married (not his first love), and where the *Southern Literary Messenger*, his first great means to fame, was published. Poe's life journey led also through Baltimore, where his writing career began in earnest, to Philadelphia, and thence to the New York of his final years, during which his notorious literary battles were conducted.

As a literary man, Poe found cities valuable. In cities he worked, found publishers, and--from environs ancient and modern--drew literary inspiration. In the spring of 1984, at the annual MEMLA meeting, Donald B. Stauffer chaired a lively session on Poe and the City. John E. Reilley is currently studying Poe's fascination with urban street paving. Even the otherwise uncharitable Harold Bloom noted that, were Poe alive today, his foremost metaphor would be the New York subway. In all of these considerations a Poe who deftly mingles fantasy with reality emerges. Such a figure, significantly, stands altogether within mainstreams of Western literature during the nineteenth century and beyond. If Bryant, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman created poetry hymning great

Nature's outdoor, rural beauties, they also discerned urban materials for their muses. Bryant indeed deliberately chose to earn his daily bread for many years in New York City, consciously eschewing his poetic muse to secure that livelihood. Whitman, we also must remember, established one of his finest poems in so mundane an event as the water transportation of that same city. Hawthorne and Melville, too, did not overlook urban themes and settings, and so American literature continues.

Perry Miller observed an important Gothic force at work in the encounter of the principals in Cornelius Mathews's *Big Able and Little Manhattan*, a work contemporaneous with Poe, but he gave no analysis to Poe's own horrifics amidst city trappings in his chronicle of the raven and the whale. Here I wish to throw what additional light I can upon Poe's literary uses of the urban scene. First I center upon his verse, for there, and in keeping with his theories of poetry versus prose, the element of fantasy generally looms larger than in the tales--where "truth" may be said to reside in larger measure. *Tamerlane* (1827), his first poem of any account, includes a vision of the ancient city of Samarkand--to Poe, as his note indicates, a haven for learning and the arts. This spot was briefly a home and region of delight and admiration for Tamerlane, but that Byronic misanthrope grew restless and departed it quickly. Nonetheless, Samarkand in this poem stands first in a line of fabled cities that drew Poe's attention and from which he created fascinating metaphors that customarily involved the Gothic.

The spectacles of decayed Balbec, Tadmor, and Persepolis--which Poe knew from Voltaire and others--plus the biblical Gomorrah, were first named in *Al Aaraaf* (1829), although they reappear, individually or collectively. Through Poe's casting, these locales are attractive but doomed, as is so much else in his work. In the hands of many writers, such as Josephus, or Chateaubriand (whose *Travels* came to Poe in Shoberl's

translation), or Gibbon, not to mention numerous periodical pieces, these great ruins were much a part of Poe's reading public's consciousness. Consequently, his presentations of such areas touched the pulses of antiquarian interests as well as that expanding awareness of cities growing rapidly in the Western world of his day. The Bible and the literary marketplace during his era Poe repeatedly used to further his literary career. Like *Moby Dick*, for example (which to many readers *sounds like* the Bible--King James version, to be sure), Poe's productions appealed to what he foresaw would touch responsive chords in this audience. Cities in this context were frequently paradigms of dashed hopes, of clouded, aberrant minds, or pioneers to twentieth-century "jungle" conceptions of heavily populated urban centers. Thus that weird short tale, "Silence--A Fable," originally had as its frame setting an "Old tomb at Balbec," which in revision became simply "tomb." Given the everyman nature of the finished version of "Silence," such deliberate managing of indefiniteness is artistic. The glooms and shadowiness of the tale warrant removal of specific reference to Balbec, which was a center of sun worship and thus converse to Poe's intention.

Ancient cities of reality and story also furnished good background in "The City in the Sea" (1831), Poe's rendition of the legend of the sinking metropolis. This one, Death's own capital, is properly bathed with eerie lights and shadows, accompanied by sound effects calculated to arouse anxieties, much like the mysterious music in tales like "The Assignation," "Ligeia," "Usher," "Masque," and "Tarr and Fether." The frightening "redder glow" upon the waves just before the city submerges resembles the haunting red moonlight at the close of "Usher" or the dazzling phosphors in "The Assignation," the blinding visual assaults in *Pym* or the terrifying visual terrors in "The Pit and the Pendulum." Elements of the apocalypse, proper linkages with stories about Sodom and Gomorrah (which may supply

backgrounds for this poem) abound throughout Poe's imaginative writings.[1]

A like aura of terror pervades "Shadow--A Parable" (1835, 1850), set in the old city of Ptolemais, where the Sun's shadow does not appear during noon during mid-summer.[2] Amidst so foreboding a backdrop, and within a heavily draped funeral chamber, no less, is it any wonder that hysteria intensifies a plot of despair and melodrama? In biblical cadences, this tight little tale "speaks" in rhetoric that would have found ready listeners among devotees of pulpit oratory within early nineteenth-century evangelical movements. Now *here* is Poe the Southern Gothicist in a set of true colors and sounds. Biblical substance also blends with contemporary material (in this case Horace Smith's best-selling novel, generally called *A Tale of Jerusalem* because of its running title heads) in that neglected fiction, "A Tale of Jerusalem." A misty city furnishes locale for situations appropriately turned inside out to provide comedy of scatological nature. A companion piece wherein an ancient city contributes to grotesque highjinks is "Four Beasts in One: The Homo-Cameleopard": reversals of visual images and responses in old Antioch adumbrates scenes featuring those wily showmen in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*..

Two additional works from the period of Poe's seeking his medium (the late 1820s-early 1830s), "The Coliseum" and *Politian*, demonstrate his altering of sights from more or less legendary to actual cities. Previously, in the famous "To Helen," he had but tersely mentioned the "grandeur that was Rome." In "The Coliseum," he elaborates upon antiquity inextricable from Roman geography, centering upon a historic shrine. Poe uses this great ruin to remind readers that Rome's origins lie far back in the past. That past, however, possesses considerable staying power, even as it here transforms into an ever more decaying state, attested by the compellingness of the Coliseum. That edifice in its turn reminds us of the "grandeur that was Rome" and thus suggests how strong

are bonds linking present with past--a theme of no insignificance throughout Poe's imaginative writings.

Within two years Poe incorporated "The Coliseum" into a larger, dramatic composition, his sole attempt at drama, the not-quite-completed *Politian*. To sixteenth-century Rome he transferred a Kentucky tragedy, the Beauchamp-Sharp love triangle that concluded in murder, suicide, and execution. Old Rome's actual historical events of cruelty, sensationalism, and death furnished a fitting framework for this episode in American history. Like Hawthorne, not to mention the earliest Gothic romancers, Poe distanced from current happenings a conflict of sensational import. Rome contributes unity of place to this play, just as it had offered settings for many earlier, more artistic productions. An aspirant writer at this period, Poe followed advice from one established (John Pendleton Kennedy) in trying his hand as a playwright. Like many other dramas of this time, *Politian* apes the heritage of Shakespeare and his contemporaries at their most melodramatic, and often stilted, distilled through the alembic of a later Gothic stagecraft, which nevertheless appealed to contemporaneous audiences.

As if he were still wavering in his direction, Poe, in twining elusive threads of the bedevilling Folio-Club project, another that in original conception attained no fruition, cast his eyes from city to city. "The Duc De L'Omelette" shifts perspectives from Paris momentarily to Boston to Hell itself. "Loss of Breath" (second version, 1835, 1856) riots in listing cities from the past. When revised into "Bon-Bon," between 1832 and 1835, "The Bargain Lost" changed setting from Venice to Rouen, perhaps to prevent duplication with the visionary Venice in "The Assignation." Effecting changes in "Bon-Bon," Poe accomplished a splendid bit of word play devolving from urban material. Staging a debate between St. Peter (Pierre in the tale) and Satan over a soul, Peter's own, gains ironic perspective within Rouen, which may with little wrenching sound like "ruin" (Poe elsewhere punned thus, e. g. in his detective

Dupin, or "dupin" ["duping," "deceiving"]). "Lionizing," with its tell-tale city of "Fum-Fudge" (derivative from Thomas Moore's imagined Paris, perhaps), appropriately crackles with witty, sophisticated dialogue reminiscent of that in Restoration comedies.

In employing city settings, Poe gradually moved away from ancient or fabled environs toward more contemporary, at times more realistic, localities. "MS. Found in a Bottle," a transition piece in this respect, has for protagonist a nineteenth-century man, whose fantastic adventures, nevertheless, make him think that his soul has grown ruinous, and that because he deals in antiquities he has "imbibed the shadows of fallen columns at Balbec, and Tadmor, and Persepolis." In like manner, a second transitional tale, which gives us a real city reworked into fantasy material as it brackets ancient and modern worlds, is apparent in "The Assignation." The city so beloved by Byron and other writers and artists of Poe's time is molded into a territory haunted by spectres of thwarted love, hapless artistic impulse and creation, and potential violence. Such themes enhance situations of melodramatic rescue of a drowning child and an unhappy wife, couched in terms of sentimentality, fear, and ardent love. Double suicide culminates what to many seems a stereotypical tale of Italian intrigue, aimed no higher than the securing of a certain magazine marketability. The sardonic Byronic "hero" recalls to his bewildered companion, the narrator, the past glories of Sparta, where, he remarks, only a monument to laughter now clearly survives the overriding decay. His grisly humor reminds his hearer of the snakes inhabiting the crumbling cornices in temples once dedicated to Sun-worship in Persepolis. These long-past glories reinforce--by way of dramatic relief--the charged atmosphere in the Venice of a later day, called up by a story-teller eager to bring to the fore what he imagines as his own authority and perception.[3]

I suspect that influences from Dickens and G. W. M. Reynolds, in whose hands London is repeatedly

fashioned as a macabre, haunting, crime-ridden area, may have turned Poe's attention from cities of a bygone day to those of a nearer time. Ligeia's lover tells us that they met, he believes, in "some large, old, decaying city near the Rhine." The action in "Mystification" centers in another German city, one well-known in Poe's day, Goettingen; "How to Write a Backwood Article" and its sequel "A Predicament" are set in Edinburgh. Together, these cities seem to be places where the mysterious, the saddening, and the death-dealing are paramount. They suggest none of the American optimism concerning urban growth and expansion during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Instead, Poe's imagination runs closer to that of Thomas Carlyle or John Ruskin, who bemoaned the evils inherent in an ever-industrializing, ever-urbanizing society. Unlike the city underpinnings of Wordsworth's Westminster-Bridge sonnet, Poe sketches what are near relatives of Tennyson's fallen Camelot.

In like context Poe's crime tales usually occur principally in city regions, these apparently being conducive to lawless actions and thoughts. William Wilson's warped impulses take him on a whirlwind tour of major European cities, as he vainly seeks escape from that double who would check his criminous propensities. "The Business Man" also features urban backdrop for the gullings of the unsuspecting. "The Man of the Crowd" intensifies sinister criminal inklings within the narrator's psyche through adept use of foreboding London. Poe's first detective tale proper, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," published in 1841, unfolds before us a Paris very like Dickens's horrifying sections of London. The dim-witted narrator and his companion, the canny Dupin, fittingly seem to be possible madmen within such surroundings. Their eerie apartment lies within "a time-eaten and grotesque," and undeniably Gothic, mansion, deserted and crumbling in its "retired and desolate portion of the Faubourg St. Germain." Poe's purpose is to depict no literal geographical Paris, witness his alacrity to

substitute a fictitious street, the Rue Morgue, for the tame original he had conceived. Elements of the fantastic, in several senses of that word, abound in the sensational, yet seemingly realistic, recounting of murder and crime, that proves ultimately to be no crime, in a bizarre, wonder-filled Parisian framework.[4] When Dupin and his associate sit within their cloistral chambers, the infallible sleuth sets forth the most hair-raising aspects of the murders. Just so with the two later Dupin tales; cities are essential to the mysteries, even if, as is true in "Marie Roget," the murder is committed away from crowded streets proper. "The Pit and the Pendulum," in like manner, centers in a dungeon of Toledo, which city epitomized to many the atrocities of the Inquisition. The narrator in "The System of Dr. Tarr and Professor Fether" falls prey to rumors in Paris and consequently is easily deceived by inmates in a more rural madhouse. The reworking of the city mouse-country mouse theme is deft. "The Cask of Amontillado" chronicles a far more horrible deception perpetrated upon an unwitting victim. One almost senses the city conspiring with Montresor in wreaking the cruel vengeance of live burial upon poor Fortunato. In fashioning this gallery of appealing yet treacherous city traits, Poe aligns with other great writers of criminal fiction: Dickens, Wilkie Collins, G. W. M. Reynolds, George Lippard, and Conan Doyle, not to mention numerous latter-day descendants.

Overall, then, we may conclude from the foregoing survey--and I could cite more examples--that Poe artistically modelled cities emblematic of and as backgrounds for less pleasant elements in personality and society. Many of his protagonists--like Cain, who became a creature of the city after his curse--wander shadowy, fearsome sections or conversely seek glaringly illuminated sections of cities as they quest after certainty or turn their thoughts toward crime. That they typically blunder into physically or emotionally confining situations indicates a failure to achieve the certitude they so eagerly desire. Such characterization

pioneers in territories later developed by Joyce, Durrenmatt, Pirandello, Ellison, and others.

Richard Wilbur has ably analyzed Poe's repeated use of spiral staircases, whirlpools, and other disorienting phenomena; I note here that city trappings contribute much to interferences with humanity's hopes for straightforward actions or emotions within Poe's writings. His characters often experience visions of what they for the nonce assume is accurate, only to come to terrifying frustrations or fates amidst crazy-seeming urban surroundings. We might profitably remember at this point that the original title for "The Assignation" was "The Visionary," and that "visionaries" in Poe's era were thought to be mentally disturbed persons or those who were just not quite in touch with mundane realities. In *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, Almira Todd, earth mother that she is, opined that city folks are prone to "run themselves to death." Her statement might epitomize the nature of Poe's characters caught up in urban toils; their journeys, enveloped in expressions suggestive of mad "races," to maintain the Jewett imagery, lead them to physical death or emotional death-in-life, exemplified respectively in the courses of Fortunato and the Minister D_____. Poe's cities seldom bring prosperity or joy. Instead they deal out woe piled upon woe, even when overt comic surfaces initially direct reader's responses into other directions, witness "The Literary Life of Thingum Bob," "X-ing a Paragrab," or "Lionizing."

Poe and his literary cities stand as forerunners to many subsequent writers and artists. Given his own urban-inclined verse, we find no surprise that Ernest Dowson's favorite line was "the viol, the violet, and the vine," from Poe's "The City in the Sea," or that Dowson's vignettes of city life were wistful and gloomy. Illustrating "Murders," Aubrey Beardsley concentrated on the great ape moving before a city milieu. American successors to Poe in depiction of cities' effects upon society and individuals include

Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, John Dos Passos, Richard Wright, plus many others of more recent date, whose vision embraced the urban wasteland. In the literary imaginations of all, a mingling of nightmare with reality is evident.

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Notes

[1]David H. Hirsch, "The Pit and the Apocalypse," *SR*, 76(1978), 632-652; Richard Wilbur, "Poe and the Art of Suggestion," and Janes W. Cargano, "'The Fall of the House of Usher': An Apocalyptic Vision," *UMSE*, n. s. 3 [special Poe issue] (1982), respectively 1-13, 53-63. Poe's writings are cited and quoted from *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott. 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968-1978). Mabbott's notes often provide leads to Poe's biblical inspirations.

[2]Mabbott, pp. 188-192. Additional information appears in my "The Power of Words in Poe's 'Silence,' "*Poe at Work: Seven Textual Studies* (Baltimore: The Edgar Allan Poe Society, 1978), pp. 56-72.

[3]I treat these matters in "To 'The Assignation' from 'The Visionary' and Poe's Decade of Revising," *LC* [University of Pennsylvania], 40(1976), 221-251; and *The Very Spirit of Cordiality: The Literary Uses of Alcohol and Alcoholism in the Tales of Edgar Allan Poe* (Baltimore: The Edgar Allan Poe Society, 1978).

[4]Comedy and deception are analyzed in Burton R. Pollin, "Poe's 'Murders in the Rue morgue': The Ingenious Web Unravelled," *Studies in the American Renaissance*, ed. Joel Myerson (Boston: Twayne, 1977), pp. 235-259; my own "Backwood Articles 'A La Poe:

How to Make a False Start Pay," *Revue Des Langues Vivantes*, 39(1973), 418-432; and Dennis W. Eddings, "Poe, Dupin and the Reader," *UMSE*, n. s. 3[special Poe issue] (1982), 128-135.

Jesus, Judas, Job, or "Jes a Happy Ole Nigga";
Or, Will the Real "Uncle Tom" Please Step Forward?

When Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* first appeared as a book in March of 1852, three thousand copies were sold the first day, 100,000 copies within six months, and 300,000 in the first year, and such popularity was unprecedented in the American publishing industry. This popularity is especially impressive considering that there were only 23,000,000 people in the U.S. at the time, and 9,500,000 of those lived in the South, where the sale of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was forbidden. Considering the number of illiterates in the North in the 1850's, too, and the likelihood that more than one person read many of the copies sold, it is obvious that anyone who read much at all in the North in the 1850's read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.[1] Philip Van Doren Stern is thus accurate in noting that "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* struck the world with explosive force and influenced public opinion everywhere" (p. 7). This especially included England, where 1,500,000 copies were sold in 1852 by forty different publishers who obtained pirated copies of the book almost immediately upon its appearance in the U.S. (pp. 25-26). Though much attention has been paid to the novel's effect upon slavery and the Civil War, Van Doren Stern perceptively notes that the original *Uncle Tom's Cabin* "perpetuated false stereotypes of the Negro" (p. 11), and he criticizes the dramatic productions of the book, which continued almost non-stop from the 1850's until the 1940's,[2] as expressing the narrow prejudices of post-Civil War American playwrights who were even less enlightened than Mrs. Stowe. According to Van Doren Stern, these prejudices and stereotypes of Negro behavior "were hurting his efforts to escape from the

inferior role that had been thrust upon him. The happy-go-lucky, shallow-pated, subservient creature who spoke in a thick dialect was no longer an acceptable representation of the black man" (p. 9). Thus, of course, says Van Doren Stern, to Negroes "Uncle Tom became synonymous with servility, and Negroes began to hate the book which helped to set them free" (p. 10).

Given the widespread effect of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, then, and the irony of the dialectic by which its perhaps-positive role in ending slavery (to be elaborated upon later) is contradicted by its perpetuation of stereotypes and thus prejudice, it is legitimate to inquire into what effect such a well-known and widely read novel had upon literature--upon the works of later writers who were concerned with black people. Through a number of effects doubtless resulted, a fairly predictable one is the presence of Uncle Tom-like characters in other novels--for example, Old Zed in G. P. R. James' *The Old Dominion*,[3] Uncle Isham in Pauline Bouve's *Their Shadows Before*,[4] and Ben in Arna Bontemps's *Black Thunder*.[5] However, detailed analysis of these "Uncle Tom" characters provides valuable insight into literature's effect upon society and vice versa, as well as providing an important framework upon which to illustrate how evaluative judgments about works of art can be responsibly made by the reasonably objective literary critic. More specifically, in-depth study of these four versions of "Uncle Tom" (including Stowe's original) illuminates the authors' different purposes for and attitudes toward "Uncle Tom," at least partially how these purposes were arrived at, how "real" these "Uncle Tom" characters therefore are, and how this "realness" relates to the objective, formalistic evaluation of literature.

First, it is necessary to establish the basic similarity of these "Uncle Tom" characters. A close reading of Stowe's novel reveals many traits of Uncle Tom, such

as kindness, humility, benevolence, and simplicity.[6] He is also very religious, believing that everything that happens is planned by God, even going so far as to say that "thar don't a sparrow fall without him," and thus he refuses to run away rather than be sold south, believing that his being sold is God's plan (p. 109). He is described as having a "gentle, domestic heart" (p. 107), too, and he quietly accepts the "boy" label despite his advanced years. For example, when told to "Go anywhere you like, boy," he replies "Thank you, Mas'r" (p. 67). Also, even after he is mistreated by Simon Legree, he still is loyal and refuses to "betray" his master by running away. Cassy suggests that they escape to the swamps and find an island to live on, but Tom says, "No! Good never comes of wickedness. I'd sooner chop my right hand off" (p. 423). Related to this loyalty is the trait that is *most basic* to him, the trait generally most loved by white readers and most hated by black, and it is the predominant trait in the three later "Uncle Tom" characters, as well: *Uncle Tom cares more for white people than he does for himself or for his own people, even his immediate family.* For example, Tom falls on his knees before St. Clare and cries in an effort to make St. Clare stop drinking and carousing (p. 223), but he is never shown doing anything similar to keep a black person from doing the same as St. Clare. He even *thinks* more about white people than black. During a few moments of idleness at St. Clare's plantation, Tom's thoughts of his Kentucky home, and of buying his wife and boys, are presented in a few lines, but much more space is devoted to his thoughts of "his noble young master" and of "beautiful Eva, whom he now thought of among the angels" (pp. 339-40). Even more graphically illustrative of this trait is Tom's refusal, or inability, to keep a female slave from drowning herself because her child has been taken from her. Tom, the reader is told, "got up, and sought about him in vain," though he is earlier described as seeing something black pass him and as hearing a splash beside the boat (p. 146). Just a few

pages later, however, Tom acts quickly and decisively to save white Eva when *she* falls in the water. He is described as "after her in a moment" (p. 164). Clearly, then, Tom loves white folks more than himself or other blacks, which naturally endears him to many white readers and distances him from many blacks.

Old Zeb in *The Old Dominion* (published in 1856) is very much like Uncle Tom (though there are minor differences which reflect the different perspectives of the authors, which will be discussed later). Zeb, though free, still refers to Conway as "massa," and hates being free (pp. 13-14). More importantly, like Uncle Tom, Zeb consciously sets out to take care of Conway and only seems in good spirits when around white people. When first introduced, for example, Zeb is engaged in a heated dispute with another black (p. 12), but he is *never* seen having a conflict with a white person. Even the distant Britisher, Conway, is won over by the loving Zeb, and takes his "faithful" Zeb back to England with him at the end of the novel.

Though seen in considerably less depth than Uncle Tom, Uncle Isham in Bouve's *Their Shadows Before* is basically the same kind of character, too. He is described as "voluble" (p. 4), friendly, and deferential, given to repeated "Amens" in response to the remarks of whites. He even reacts with "unfeigned amazement" (p. 7) when his beloved, Eva-like Penelope asks him if he ever hated white people. Like Stowe's Uncle Tom, too, his religious faith tells him to accept present conditions to attain a greater glory beyond, so he feels that he can only "wuk an' wait" (p. 10).

Finally, Ben in Bontemps' *Black Thunder* is also supremely devoted to whites, and especially to Sheppard, his master. Though his friendship with another black, Old Bundy, leads him to temporarily consider revolt, his attachment to Sheppard wins out and he betrays his cohorts in revolt, at least partly because he believes that, compared to whites, "niggers ain't people" (p. 115). Like Stowe's Uncle Tom, too, he is repeatedly pleased to be referred to as a "good boy"

though he's older than Sheppard, and, again like Tom, religion plays a role in his betrayal, as he says to Robin Shappard, "But God beingst my helper, I'm standing by you from now on, suh" (p. 233). As James Baldwin says in *The Fire Next Time*, the Christian god is white; Ben seems to have realized it here and to have opted for a white god as well as white people.

Clearly, then, the four "Uncle Tom" characters are essentially very similar, but there are differences, and those differences serve to clarify the role of the overall society in the creation of literature, as well as the effect of literature in the creation of society (and they are not really evidence that the other "Uncle Tom" characters aren't modeled after Stowe's). Mrs. Stowe, in her "The Story of Uncle Tom's Cabin,"[7] relates the effects that personal contact with escaping slaves, visits into a slave state (Kentucky), and reading works by and about slaves (such as the *Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson*)[8] apparently had upon *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Also, one of the 1,500,000 copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that were quickly sold in England must have reached G. P. R. James and helped to account for Old Zeb in *The Old Dominion*, and it is safe to postulate that Pauline Bouve had either read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or seen a theatre production of it before she wrote *Their Shadows Before*, and the same is true of Arna Bontemps. However, despite this common reading material of the authors, the "Uncle Tom" characters of these latter three authors differ because of other societal factors, such as society-created interests and prejudices of the authors. For instance, Stowe's religious orientation makes Uncle Tom a nineteenth-century Jesus figure, sacrificing himself for the good of other humans. James's elitist British orientation causes his Old Zeb to become "jes a happy old nigga," due to James' own stereotyped attitudes toward blacks and his personal feeling of superiority (thus, *of course* Old Zeb would be delighted to serve Conway). Bouve's Uncle Isham becomes a Job-like character as he suffers and waits, but he only appears briefly due to Bouve's

overriding interest in Penelope's love life and otherwise, to the near-exclusion of Isham and Nat Turner (and also historical accuracy). And, finally, Bontemps' Ben becomes Judas, since he betrays his people for his personal gain, a choice condemned by Bontemps (since Bontemps was black) in his description of Ben as "a no-'count swine and lower than any dog..." (p. 174).

In addition, the works differ because of the authors' attempts to *affect* society in different ways. Stowe wants the end of slavery, so Tom's martyrdom death is a clear message from her that such good people cannot survive in slavery and should have their freedom. James' having Conway free his slaves but also bemoan their lack of ability to care for themselves is his appeal that blacks should be free but cannot ever really be equal to the "wonderful" British. Bouve's message to young women that they can control their lives and destinies is evident in the central role of Penelope as the possessor of Nat Turner's story (and again, regardless of how that message violates historical truth). Bontemps, too, manipulates his material to affect society, to create a vision of black power which will instill pride in black readers (and again, at the expense of historical accuracy, though the alterations aren't as pervasive as in Bouve's book). Thus, clearly societal factors help to determine the nature of art, but art also often has profound effects on society, clearly evident in the role of Stowe's book in helping to cause the Civil War and freedom for blacks (but yet, ironically, also causing stereotypes and prejudice), and also evident in James' reinforcing of British elitism, Bouve's presentation of feminine importance, and Bontemps' Juba and Gabriel, flawless role models for young black Americans.

Still, granted that these books contain similar "Uncle Tom" characters that show an almost certain influence relationship, and granted that the characters are somewhat different from each other due to the different purposes of the authors (and that those

purposes are created by the broad societal influences upon those authors, including personal acquaintances and literary tradition), the question still remains as to how to evaluate the works in terms of the "realness" of the "Uncle Tom" characters. Whose "Uncle Tom" is the most "real," or does it matter, or is it even possible to determine which?

Two contemporary critics, Barbara Foley and William Gass, address these issues directly. In her praiseworthy article (praiseworthy despite her misguided, and probably racist, attack upon William Styron), Foley states that non-documentary novelists create "an imaginative projection of people and events having possible correspondence in the real world; 'imitation' is directly founded on reality."[9] Gass similarly notes that "Authors are gods--a little tinny sometimes but omnipotent no matter what, and plausible on top of that, if they can manage it."[10] Thus, both stress plausible or possible correspondence to the real world as a valid criterion in the objective evaluation of fiction, and Gass goes even further, advocating that "great literature is great because its characters are great" (p. 700) and that "a great character has an endless interest; its fascination never wanes" (p. 700). So, though Gass overgeneralizes some here, clearly the "realness" of the characters matters, in that the characters should be plausible, or at least possible.

However, in the cases of Stowe, James, Bouve', and Bontemps, that "realness" criterion helps only a little in evaluating the works. All four "Uncle Tom" characters are *possible*, in that none has fourteen arms and flies through the air at will, and though Bouve's seems a bit more plausible, given that Uncle Isham is an old man working and waiting, and is not a suffering-for-all-humankind (and especially white humankind) Jesus figure, nor an isolated, betraying Judas, nor a one-dimensional, happy, devoted, protective servant-slave, is that grounds upon which to say that Bouve's book is great literature? Not at all. And besides, it is an excursion away from literary criticism and into

sociology and/or history to pursue the question of which "Uncle Tom" had more actual correspondence to the old black men of the era about which the works were written. Such study is relevant to historians and perhaps sociologists, or maybe even individuals in American Studies, as it reveals specifics of the culture of the time, but it usually doesn't help in evaluating the fiction (unless of course, there is *no* correspondence, as in an "Uncle Tom" character who can fly, as noted earlier; that is asuming that the work is not science fiction or especially fantasy, though, because in that case even a flying "Uncle Tom" is not necessarily a problem). Moreover, it may not even be *possible* to accurately measure such correspondence to reality in relation to novels which, in the case of Stowe and James, were written more than a century ago.

A more important evaluative criterion resides in a semantic extension upon "real" to make it "realized." In this other sense of "real," how completely a character is realized or rendered, or embodied, lies the more important criterion for measurement of greatness in characters, and thus, to a considerable extent, of greatness in literature as whole. This kind of determination can always be made, also, by a close, formalistic examination of the text of the work of art, and such a determination matters, since it helps to separate the great literature from the good, the good from the mediocre, and the mediocre from the poor.

In terms of the four characters that have been discussed, Old Zeb is simply poorly "realized," emerging as a flat character whose thoughts are never revealed, whose actions are generally ignored, and whose purpose is just to serve as a "sounding board" for the verification of the prejudicial attitudes of the protagonist, Sir Richard Conway. Zeb only appears in any length in the initial section of James' book, and he's only there to show the supposed (by James) happiness of blacks when they have a master to dutifully obey and who will, inturn, magnanimously protect them (and perhaps even take them to England,

which is, of course, next door to heaven, to James). Bouve's Uncle Isham is a bit more fully realized than Old Zeb, as Isham acts as a "sounding board" for Penelope's benevolent questioning, also, but goes beyond that to act in true "Uncle Tom" character and betray Nat Turner in order to save his beloved master (another illustration of whites being more important than blacks to "Uncle Tom" characters). Thus, Isham reaches at least mediocre status as a character. The original Uncle Tom, Stowe's, is even better realized than Isham, as his nature is developed both internally and externally, through both thoughts and actions. However, his position in the scheme of the work is still somewhat peripheral, Stowe leaving him constantly to focus on George Harris, whose actions are more central to one of Stowe's purposes: colonization propaganda (though Uncle Tom is present as anti-slavery propaganda--the fate of a good black person sold South--the colonization goal is also a primary focus, it being her overall solution to the dilemma created by slavery). Also, the plausibility criterion does affect Stowe's Uncle Tom to some extent. Though he doesn't fly with fourteen arms, still, in his Jesus-like sacrificing for whites and loving of and dying for them, he seems almost as rare a bird, having no really plausible correspondence to the actual world, since even Jesus didn't die for a different race (he was white, too). And, as Foley notes, even Stowe's claim that Tom is modeled after Josiah Henson is questionable, there being evidence to suggest that Stowe knew nothing of Henson until after *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was already written (p. 394).

That leaves Ben in Bontemps' *Black Thunder* as the only truly great character among the four. His greatness derives partly from his importance to Bontemps, who wants to present the *real* "Uncle Tom"--that is, "Uncle Tom" from the black perspective, but Bontemps is artist enough to *want to realize him fully*, not just to create an evil, unhappy, stereotypical opposite to the stereotypical Old Zeb. Thus, Bontemps

presents Ben's thoughts and actions in great detail, both beginning and ending the novel with a focus on Ben. All aspects of his character are explored--his attachment to Sheppard, his affection for Bundy, his respect for Gabriel, his awareness of the need to be free but also his knowledge of the burden that freedom would be. At one point, he thinks, "But it was so expensive, this love [of freedom]; it was such a disagreeable compulsion, such a bondage" (p. 116). Bontemps sees Ben's problem as clearly the central, perhaps even the archetypal, dilemma for blacks in America; as a member of a black minority which must assimilate to a white majority, or coexist with it, or leave, or revolt, what should Ben (and symbolically all blacks) do? Historically, of course, Gabriel's action in revolting against slavery was right, to Bontemps, but Ben's dilemma is the essential one especially now that slavery (in the old sense) is legally, at least, nonexistent. How accommodating should one become to advance in the society? Where should one "draw the line?" Ben opts for personal gain, evident in Bontemps' describing him as "clean and well-favored" (p. 223) after betraying his race. Thus, Ben has become too accommodating, as Stowe's original Uncle Tom is, to Bontemps, and thus Ben's totally fictional presence, as a response to Stowe, in a work based upon history (though not as accurately historical a work as Foley claims). Thus, too, Ben's final dilemma at the novel's end; the dilemma of betrayal or not being past, now Ben (and symbolically, all "Uncle Tom" blacks) faces justified retribution:

> But Ben could not forget Gabriel's shining naked body or the arc inscribed by the executioner's ax. He could not feel reassured about the knives that waited for him with the sweet brown thrashers in every hedge and clump. (p. 298)

Due to this roundedness of presentation--the archetypal realness, or plausibility, of the dilemma that Ben faces and his fully realized, or embodied, response to it, Ben rises to the level of a truly great character, not great because superficially, externally heroic, but great because he is, as Gass says of great characters, one of "those primary substances to which everything else is attached. (p. 708).

Thus, with Bontemps' book, the "Uncle Tom" character has come full circle, from the benevolent Jesus figure to the fully "flowered" Judas. It is important that such a cycle has occurred, too, given the harm that the "Uncle Tom" stereotype has done to black people. In fact, since the only real praise for Stowe's book hinges on its role in causing the Civil War, and since over 500,000 people died in that war when slavery could have, and should have, been ended in a better way (even a massive slave insurrection would have been preferable, in terms of the number of lives lost as well as in terms of black self-respect and pride gained), one indeed has to finally wonder if *Uncle Tom's Cabin* should have been written at all. Stowe's famous disclaimer was that God wrote the book, as a way to end slavery. However, with the slavery crisis, too, as God has in all of the other crises in the history of humankind, perhaps it would have been better if God had simply remained silent.

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Notes

[1]Philip Van Doren Stern, "Introduction," in *The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin* (N.Y.: Paul S. Eriksson, Inc., 1964), pp. 7-25. The page numbers of further references to this work are included in the text.

[2]A. E. Thomas, "Foreword," in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (N. Y.: Appleton-Century Co., 1934), p. v.

[3]London: Woodfall and Knider, 1856. The page numbers of further references to this work are included in the text.

[4]Boston: Small, Maynard, and Co., 1899. The page numbers of further references to this work are included in the text.

[5]New York: Macmillan, 1936. The page numbers of further references to this work are included in the text.

[6]Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: New American Library, 1966), p. 32. The Page numbers of further references to this work are included in the text.

[7]*Old South Leaflets*, v. 4 (Boston: Old South Publishing House, n.d.) n.p.

[8]Boston: B. B. Russell and Co., 1879.

[9]"History, Fiction, and the Ground Between: The Uses of the Documentary Mode in Black Literature," *PMLA*, 95(1980), 393. The page numbers of further references to this work are included in the text.

[10]"The Concept of Character in Fiction," in *Issues in Contemporary Literary Criticism*, ed. Gregory T. Polletta (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1973), p. 701. The page numbers of further references to this work are included in the text.

Tennessee Williams, in his quest for perfection of character, often shaped new characters from old ones. One classic character resulting from this regenerative process is Blanche Dubois of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. She becomes a curious blend of the central characters in three early one-act plays: "Portrait of a Madonna," "The Lady of Larkspur Lotion," and "Hello from Bertha."

It is Lucretia Collins, the principal character in "Portrait of a Madonna," who proves most useful to Williams in his creation of Blanche. From Lucretia, Blanch inherits aspects of Southern gentility, signs of mental instability, affectations of speech and manner, a tendency to live in the past, and a dependence on the generosity and kindness of strangers (Williams, *Twenty-Seven Wagons* 56-57). Yet, even in their similarities, Williams allows Blanche and Lucretia to maintain identities distinctly their own.

Lucretia Collins, for example, is pictured as a lady of refinement who can no longer distinguish between reality and illusion. Her world revolves around the past, the antebellum South and the boy she loved and lost during her youth. She behaves and speaks in an affected, girlish manner. For thirty years she has secluded herself in the top-floor apartment of a respectable hotel where she has slowly but surely gone mad. In her madness, Lucretia imagines that she has become pregnant by a man she hasn't seen in twenty years, and her guilt consumes whatever else is left of her rational mind. Because she can no longer care for herself, she is forced to "depend upon the kindness and

generosity of others" when she is taken to a mental institution by a doctor and a nurse (67).

Blanche also assumes the role of a lady of gentility, but her mental instability is not as evident at the beginning as Lucretia's is--it grows in direct proportion to the stress she experiences. Blanche often retreats to the past, to the plantation home and the boy/husband she has lost forever. Her affectations include a coquettishness and daintiness more fitting for a teenage girl and euphemistic speech more appropriate in Civil War days. Though she does not seclude herself in an ivory tower or a top-floor apartment, Blanche has isolated herself from others in her mind, if not her actions, as she searches for acceptance and respectability. She doesn't imagine herself to be pregnant as Lucretia does, but she does pretend that a millionaire she knew twenty years ago wants to resume their relationship. When her mind is unalterably affected, she is also forced to depend upon the generosity and kindness of strangers when a doctor and nurse reminiscent of Lucretia's doctor and nurse come to take her away. Her guilt, rather her sinful past, finally destroys her. She resists her fate, as Lucretia does, but to no avail (Williams, *Streetcar* 44-56).

Another character who may have contributed to the character of Blanche is Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore, the prostitute in "The Lady of Larkspur Lotion." Like Blanche, Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore is a proud and sensitive has-been who is too old for her profession and is now unable to earn enough money to pay the rent or buy the Larkspur Lotion that keeps the lice out of her hair. When she imagines that she owns a Brazilian rubber plantation, Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore reinforces the difficulty Blanche has in distinguishing reality from illusion. Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore is the only early character with any resemblance to Blanche who owns, or believes she owns, a plantation, the symbol of the security both Blanche and Mrs. Hardwicke-Moore seek (Williams, *Twenty-Seven Wagons* 38).

In "Hello from Bertha," Bertha is a dying prostitute who, like Blanche, has to depend upon strangers to take care of her. She talks of writing to a man, well-to-do but married, and asking for money to buy medicine, but she never does--just as Blanche never cables her millionaire. But, more importantly, she suggests the ultimate fate facing Blanche if she had not been institutionized (Williams, *Twenty-Seven Wagons* 49).

Though Williams depends a great deal on earlier characters when creating Blanche, he does not do the same with Stanley Kowalski. Since Stanley is Blanch's nemesis, Williams does not endow him with compassion or respect for weak people like Blanche, the fallen woman, or even Mitch, the "momma's boy" who almost marries her. Stanley, in effect, destroys them both by violating the relationship which would have saved Blanche's sanity and kept Mitch from a life of loneliness. Stanley is a unique character because he is the primitive beast in modern clothing. He still needs to be house trained.

Stanley is, in essence, an original character because only a few earlier characters provide elements of Stanley's nature. Val Xavier, of *Battle of Angles*, is one of the few: Williams instills Stanley with Val's pride, manliness, and attractiveness, but omits his compassion, understanding, and his love of delicate things (3-87). Stanley is reminiscent of Kilroy in *Camino Real* only in that he shakes his fist at anything that threatens him and dares further action. Hadrian, the hero of *You Touched Me!*, is the closest to a prototype of Stanley. Both Hadrian and Stanley are aggressive, tough, proud; they would consider themselves to be truly mucho macho (7). They are both war heroes. Hadrian sometimes shows a maturing philosophical nature, but Stanley has the philosophical bearing of junkyard dog.

As a character, Stanley stands on his own; he is his own man, for he has few prototypes. Blanche, on the other hand, gains greater dimensions because Williams so effectively blends her prototypes into a sympathetic composite. Compared with her forerunners, Blanche is

a delicately balanced, gentle woman who has been driven to desperate measures. She has a depth of character and understanding her counterparts cannot approach; she becomes such a sensitive, haunting creature that none of us can easily forget her.

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Tasting the Sweets of Liberty:
The Theme of Freedom in Post-Revolutionary Rogue Narratives

In 1769, at the age of twenty-one, Henry Tufts was plotting rebellion. Feeling righteous indignation, and believing that he had long been unfairly exploited, he carefully considered the ways in which he could secure justice, claim that which he felt was rightfully his, defy the authority which had enslaved him, and gain his liberty. Yet, unlike so many others in New England at this time, the source of his problems was not political, and the figure of authority he wished to defy was not King George III. Rather, Tufts's rebelliousness was directed at someone much closer to his home in Lee, New Hampshire--his father. As he explained in his curious autobiography, *A Narrative of the Life, Adventures, Travels and Sufferings of Henry Tufts (1807),* the source of discontent arose from the fact that, after he had reached the age of maturity, his father had refused him any sort of inheritance. While others in New England conspired to defy the Townshend Duties and thus collectively establish their rights, Tufts plotted an entirely different kind of rebellion for the sake of his own individual rights. In his narrative he explained the reasons why he refused to accept his father's decision.

> I grew angry and discontented, not well knowing what steps to pursue. The reflection that I had pretty diligently served my father during minority, (the whole term of which had been applied to the business of husbandry) and that my labor had contributed in a great measure to the support of the family, was

> constantly present to my indignant view. I considered, also, that little or no time had been allowed me to obtain knowledge, so that my education had been totally neglected
> . . . My mind being continually agitated with considerations of this sort, I was induced to believe myself entitled to some share of my father's estate, and thought I was injured by his ill-timed parsimony . . . I resolved, without more hesitation, to appropriate to my use some portion of his personal property. (21)

And indeed without further hesitation, Tufts proceeded to steal his father's best horse, which he then rode to a neighboring town and sold "for about thirty dollars, in ready money," thus gaining at once both his freedom and his inheritance.

In 1784, at the age of nineteen, Stephen Burroughs was also concerned with the problem of securing justice and liberty for himself. Like Tufts, he felt oppressed, the victim of tyranny. And again like Tufts, his response was to run away with a portion of his father's property. But Burroughs was not so much rebelling against his father as he was his community, which long before had judged him unworthy and which had condemned him to the role of an outcast. Although his father, a Presbyterian minister, was one of the most respected men in Hanover, New Hampshire, Burroughs was one of the least respected, since from an early age he had been inclined to prefer frivolity over piety, a wild life over a godly life. Now, as the colonies began to explore their new political independence, he looked for a way of freeing himself from the narrow-minded biases of his neighbors. His situation, as he described it in his autobiography, *The Memoirs of the Notorious Stephen Burroughs* (1798), was desperate. Aware that he had recently been thrown out of the newly established Dartmouth College, that he had recently been thrown in jail for theft and was suspected for several more thefts, and that he was

having a scandalous affair with a married woman, many of his sanctimonious neighbors began to make his life miserable, accusing him of numerous other crimes and indiscretions. Feeling "sunken and discouraged . . . shut out from even the dim rays of hope," he realized that he was imprisoned by the slanderous opinions of others and that only by running away and making a new start could he escape such opprobrium (43).

But Burroughs looked around for something a bit more dignified and profitable than simply stealing a horse. After running through a list of respectable professions and rejecting each one because of either a lack of experience or a lack of proper recommendation, he stated:

> Business of some kind I must enter into, and that immediately, in order to answer the present calls of nature. And what can that be? said I; have not I enumerated all the callings, which are profitable for me to attend to? . . . But what can now be done? A stranger--moneyless--and friendless. There is one thing, said contrivance, which you may do; and it will answer your purpose;--preach! (48)

Despite the fact that he much preferred the company of sinners over saints and that his only suit consisted of "a light grey coat, with silver-plated buttons, green vest, and red velvet breeches," Burroughs set off to become a preacher. Having listened to his father preach, and having spent a year at Dartmouth, was--he believed--more than enough preparation for the pulpit. Nevertheless, before leaving home, he further prepared for the ministry by stealing ten of his father's best sermons, which he then repeatedly preached throughout his clerical masquerade (48).

Between Henry Tufts and Stephen Burroughs, two of New England's most remarkable rogues, there were a number of striking similarities. In addition to defying their fathers, claiming the right to choose their own

inheritance, and running away from home, both were scoundrels of great, if dubious, accomplishment. In their pursuit of self-interest, both freely exchanged identities and professions according to circumstance and opportunity. In the curious course of their careers, these men were thieves, counterfeiters, fortune tellers, land speculators, soldiers, preachers, and even doctors. Although they shunned such common vices as drinking and gambling, they were both fond of women and practiced seduction as if it were another of their professions. In order to better facilitate their various deceptions, both continually travelled about New England, circulating their false money and their false promises until they became notorious in half a dozen states. Yet their defiance, disregard, and disrespect did not go completely unpunished. At different times in their lives, both were caught and jailed; in fact, they nearly ran into each other while prisoners on Boston's Castle Island. Reflective of their restless spirits, neither could abide imprisonment and were constantly at work devising jail breaks and plotting insurrections. When escape proved impossible, as it did for each on Castle Island, they languished, wasting away in both mind and body. For the greatest similarity of these two rogues was their love of freedom.

Ironically, in their various thefts and frauds, both Tufts and Burroughs came to dramatize the freedom of self later described by Emerson in "Self-Reliance" (1841): "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. . . . No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only wrong what is against it" (233-34). According to Emerson, this extreme form of self-reliance "must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men" (234).

Indeed, there are many revolutionary aspects in the narratives of Tufts and Burroughs. They are, in fact, documents tied closely to the American Revolution. That they were published during the post-Revolutionary period was not a matter of chance; had

the long debate over natural rights not taken place, had the colonies not defied King George III, certainly these narratives would not have appeared.[1] They embody both the fantasies and the fears of freedom. After the Revolution drew to a close in 1783, the new citizens of the United States were left to ponder the significance of their independence. No one, whether eastern merchant or western farmer, was quite certain how the Revolutionary ideology of self-determination would be transformed into daily existence.[2] There were some, wealthy Federalists for example, who had adopted the rhetoric of revolution merely as an expedient to justify their political break with Great Britain but who were unprepared to see theory of liberty put fully into practice. At the opposite extreme there were many who were convinced that the American Revolution marked only the beginning of a great millennial struggle in which all forms of individual oppression would be overcome. Much of the literature of the Early National period reflected this general uncertainty concerning the boundaries of freedom and in various ways dramatized the ambiguous relationship between personal liberty and public responsibility, between personal wealth and commonwealth. Among the most radical of those who explored the significance of the individual's right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" were the rogue narratives of Tufts and Burroughs.

In their pursuits of happiness, both Tufts and Burroughs continually experimented with the limits of freedom, committing outrages against all manner of authority. Rebelling against parental prerogative was just one of the many instances in which they refused any restriction of their liberty. Yet these small rebellions of sons against fathers represented an even greater act of autonomy--the freedom to reshape reality after their own fashion. Running away with a portion of their fathers' property was not simply a matter of tyranny overthrown. Tufts, for instance, while decrying the injustice of his father's "ill-timed

parsimony," forgot to mention that he had never been the most reliable of sons. By the time he was twenty-one, he was already an accomplished thief, having exhibited what many in his small community considered to be "a vicious and depraved disposition" (13). Instead of recognizing "the sanctity of individual property," he had been far more concerned with the sanctity of self, carrying off whatever he could convert for his own use or gain (13). Similarly, Burroughs' justification for stealing his father's sermons was equally shallow, having less to do with the demands of exigency than with a desire for novelty. Their selfishness was transparent, and their refashioning of reality conspicuously comic. Nevertheless, despite their exaggerations, they insisted on the righteousness of their justifications. Steadfastly refusing to accept the common system of values, they demanded the right to create their own.

Ultimately, they based their justifications on the belief that society itself was tyrannical, that it was their right to rebel against any authority which oppressed and enslaved them. As Jay Fliegelman has demonstrated in his book, *Prodigals and Pilgrims The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority 1750-1800* (1982), the rhetoric of familial discord was used throughout the colonial struggle for independence. The colonies where the children restless under the parental control of England and ready to assume responsibilities for themselves. But England was a corrupt, tyrannical parent, jealous of its power and its privilege. Demanding total filial obedience, it unnaturally refused to let the colonies venture forth on their own, therefore abusing its role as a gentle, loving parent. Both Tufts and Burroughs used almost identical language in not only justifying their abrupt departures from home, but also all of their subsequent deceptions. Tufts, for example, in one final comment on stealing his father's horse, stated that "the man, who gave his son, neither property, education nor trade, brought him up to be a thief" (21). Regardless of what he was

stealing, he believed he was doing only what was natural for him to do, since he was not raised to do anything else. Similarly, Burroughs also believed that personality was directly shaped by environment. Reflecting the wider eighteenth-century debate of nature versus nurture, he maintained that education required positive, not negative, examples and that injustice against youth resulted in "fatal consequences" (7). He stated:

> When we see the father of a family conducting with mildness towards his children, treating them all as equal members of his household . . . at the same time we see them inheriting their father's meekness and compassion. . . . But on the contrary, where we see the parent becomes the tyrant, punishing the faults of his children with the unrelenting hand of rigor, executing judgment unmingled with mercy, we see a family possessing the feelings of cruelty, lost to the godlike principle of mercy, at war with themselves, and governed by those ferocious feelings which distrub the tranquility of mankind. The same principles operate upon the great family of mankind. Where we find severe laws operating among a people, or mild laws executed in a cruel manner, we see the influence of this, upon the manner of a people, bo be very great. It gradually roots out the feelings of benevolence and compassion, and in their room, implants the sentiments of cruelty and severity. (130).

Burroughs concluded that "the laws and the manner of their execution, do ultimately form the manners and morals of a people" (131).

In their descriptions, society was the cruel, abusive parent, and under its oppression they became no better than they were allowed to be. That he was the victim of oppression Tufts made perfectly clear. Early in his

narrative, after his first marriage and after attempting an honest living, he claimed he was unjustly accused of stealing from a neighbor. In eighteenth-century New England society, where a man's reputation was his most valuable possession, accusation was often the same as condemnation. Although he pleaded his innocence, and although indeed there was no evidence for conviction, he was punished by his neighbors. "Every thing, stolen in the vicinity for years past, was now laid to the charge of Tufts. Protestations of innocence did not avail me, consequently I considered my character ruined and my credit at an end. As I could ill brook such injurious treatment, my peace of mind became effectually destroyed, and life itself grew burthensome" (30-31). Badgered by the tyranny of his community, Tufts again chose to run away. Abandoning his family, he set out to fulfill the scandalous stories about him. Later in the narrative he claimed that he had no choice but to steal in oder to support himself; society offered no alternative. He stated:

> By clandestine methods, then, I was constrained to procure the means of support, schooling poultry, sheep, and such other conveniences as chance threw in my path.
> . . . However, being in continual danger of seizure . . . I passed every moment in abject fear and perplexity. My farming business was wholly interrupted, and I durst not venture to hire out. To steal or starve, then, was the question; I wisely preferred the former . . . (132)

Because of the false accusations and cruel treatment he received, Tufts described his depravity as a kind of automatic reflex. He commented that, in direct response to torment and persecution, "I felt a *disinclination* for every laudable pursuit, and a *disposition* to travel on in my former dissolute courses" (161).

Burroughs as well described himself as the victim of injustice and discrimination. Like Tufts, he claimed that he was also falsely accused and cruelly mistreated. Due to the abuse he received from sheriffs, jailers, and judges, he felt that he had no alternative but to declare war on society, since society was already at war with him:

> I viewed the transaction of the government towards me to be inimical and cruel. I felt none of that confidence in her treatment which a child ought to feel towards the government of a kind parent. I considered that she had declared open war against me; and would take every opportunity to oppress me. Under this view of matters, I meant to make those arrangements in my conduct, which we see one nation making in their [sic] conduct towards another, with whom they are at open war. (153)

Borrowing the rhetoric of revolution, Tufts and Burroughs thus declared their independence from society. Once they had been shunned by their communities, they embraced their roles as outcasts and reveled in their renegade freedom. Persecuted by society, they refused to observe its boundaries or to accept its conventions. In their total freedom, all forms of limitation, whether imposed by Divine Providence or by social circumstance, were cast aside. Instead of remaining as landless farm laborers or as notorious bad boys, they--like Franklin--chose to become what they wanted to be and freely made themselves over--over and over again. In their eyes, all forms of authority were oppressive, and all laws despotic. In developing this sovereignty of self, they even claimed the freedom to create their own concepts of justice. Since society was in general corrupt and competitive, and since they both encountered betrayal, dishonesty, and cruelty, they believed that they were actually gaining justice by striking back at society.

Feeling justified and seeking redress, Tufts and Burroughs became extreme examples of the self-reliant, industrious American. Embracing the new social order, where money, not family, distinguished the different classes, they pursued wealth in a variety of extraordinary and extralegal ways. Moving constantly from one deception to another and from one region to another, they counterfeited character and calling for the sake of profit, freely reshaping reality to fit their individual needs and pleasures. In these unusual acts of self-determination, they disregarded all institutions, church as well as state.[3] And when posing as respectable preachers and doctors, they stumbled upon a basic truth about the American experience. In a new country, which had broken with the past and which had defied tradition, all that mattered was performance. As long as the performance was effective, neither qualifications nor intentions made the slightest difference. The freedom of self-creation was limited only by the individual's ability to act. And act they did. Before Burroughs turned to the ministry, he had already practiced medicine and taught school. After his sudden departure from the pulpit, the result of finally being recognized, he went directly into the business of counterfeiting, which, when he was not again posing as a teacher, he continued throughout his life. During his endless journeys, Tufts alternated between horse stealing, house breaking, doctoring, preaching, and fortune telling. Although he boasted that he was the best horse thief in all of New England, he was as well proud of his more acceptable roles. Commenting on his versatility, he stated: "In some places, therefore, I practiced physic; in others told fortunes, and in others again, I discharged sacerdotal office. I could turn my hand with equal facility to either of those scientific branches, and acquired some celebrity in them all" (240).

Yet despite their successful deceptions, Tufts and Burroughs were unable to maintain their radical freedom with impunity. At various times during their

careers, they were caught, punished, and imprisoned. And nowhere was their love of liberty more evident than in their reflections on the horrors of imprisonment. Whenever jailed, they bitterly complained and continually rebelled. Conditions were indeed intolerable at this time, and this made liberty all the sweeter a dream. Tufts, in the midst of the uproar occasioned by the Boston Massacre in 1770, was first confined in one of New England's "horrid mansions," having been apprehended for burglary (38). Stating that he "suffered miserably during imprisonment," he described himself in a "most comfortless situation" without enough food and clothing (38). Since it was "late autumn," he was unable to keep warm, and, unable to remain in this "gloomy situation" any longer, he decided to burn his way out (38). Although he failed to gain his freedom, he did manage to keep warm until he found a better opportunity to escape. The next time he was captured and imprisoned, Tufts was kept in "close confinement in the dungeon" (56). Heavily chained, he was only able to move "with extreme difficulty" and was only allowed "a miserable couch of straw" for a bed (56). In this "deplorable condition" he remained for ninety days (56). In his attempt to describe his sufferings, he stated:

> Judge then what were my sufferings, and what my sensations must have been at this distressing time; what trouble, anxiety, and gloomy apprehensions must have taken possession of my mind, and absorbed every comfort of life; sequestered from all intercourse with the rest of mankind, in a mansion of *darkness*, with hardly sufficient food and clothing to prevent me from perishing . . . think, I say what must have been my sufferings, both body and mind, at that dismal period. (57)

Because of the lack of food and clothing, and because of the dungeon's dampness and stench, as well as its rats and refuse, Tufts stated that his "health visibly declined" and his "strength daily decayed" (57). Luckily, he was again able to escape and once more breathe "the free air of liberty" (60).

This pattern of imprisonment, suffering, and deterioration of mind and body was evident throughout his narrative. At a later point he described the brutal treatment he received at the hands of a particularly cruel jailer. While chaining his ankles together, the jailer scalded Tufts with boiling water, then laughed at his extreme misery. Crippled by the burns, he remained unable to move for three months. This, added to the old problems of not enough food and clothing, dampness and stench, rats and refuse, reduced him merely to the point of death. He commented that "becoming daily more and more debilitated, I was at length convinced, that I must shortly fall a victim to this barbarous treatment" (144). For Tufts, like Patrick Henry, the question was reduced to "liberty or death." Not only was his happiness dependent on his freedom, but his very life as well. Realizing this led Tufts to feelings of rapture whenever he contemplated freedom. Late in the narrative, when he was once again imprisoned for theft, he sadly listened to the Fourth of July celebrations outside his prison walls. Aware of the irony, he commented that, compared to his "present slavery," freedom was a "delicious dream" (312).

In the same manner, Burroughs also compared imprisonment to slavery. As soon as he was thrown into jail for the first time, having failed in his first attempt to pass counterfeit money, he compared his own state of captivity with that of the colonies before the Revolution, finding it strange that a country which had so lately fought for its liberty should deprive him of his. "How is this," he asked, "that a country which has stood the foremost in asserting the cause of liberty, that those who have tasted the bitter cup of slavery, and have known from hence the value of liberty,

should so soon after obtaining the blessing themselves, deprive others of it?" (98) Burroughs acknowledged that he had been deprived of his freedom according to "every dictate of justice; whereas America was only struggling for her natural rights"; nevertheless, he still found it difficult to accept that a nation which stood for liberty should so easily take his away. He declared:

> "It has been abundantly said by the leading men in this state, that life without liberty is not worth possessing. . . . therefore, that the same characters . . . should substitute slavery for death, is to me, conduct truly enigmatical" (98).

Not only did Burroughs equate imprisonment with slavery, but also jailers with tyrants. Beaten, starved, and chained, he was reduced "to a point of desperation," and, in order to escape such cruelty, he decided to burn down the jail, thinking that death was better than slavery. While the flames danced around him, Burroughs stated that he felt himself "exalted above the operations of the petty tyranny of those who had exercised the rod of severity over me" (109). Unfortunately, the other prisoners in the jail did not share the same sentiment, and they raised an alarm before the fire had grown out of control. Not only was Burroughs saved, but he was subjected to even greater cruelties afterwards. Commenting on the injustice of his treatment, he complained that he was unfairly "subjected to the arbitrary will of a petty tyrant" who "punished when his inclination was for cruelty, and inflicted what kind his pleasure directed" (118). The relation between Burroughs' jailer and King George III was unmistakable; both were despotic. Equally obvious was the further comparison between Burroughs' struggle for freedom and the colonial rebellion. Subject to the will of a cruel master, he was held "in a state of abject slavery" (118).

Like the colonies, Burroughs rebelled, and much of the remainder of his imprisonment was characterized by his continual defiance, from his refusal to wear chains to his refusal to work. These gestures of defiance ultimately culminated in his own miniature revolution. After he had been transferred to Castle Island, he decided that he would either free himself or die in the attempt. Stating that he "panted for liberty with an ardor of desire beyond description," he resolved to make "one bold and daring push" to overcome the entire prison, turning jailers into prisoners and himself "master of the place" (157). Like Patrick Henry and Henry Tufts, he declared that he was determined "either to lose my life in the cause of liberty, or else gain a glorious freedom" (161). Basing his reasons for revolution on an Enlightenment view of natural rights, he exclaimed that "a man may be justifiable in opposing . . . the despotic transactions of cruelty in government . . . "(161).

Burroughs' rebellion failed; at a crucial moment, he was betrayed, and his noble struggle ironically ended in an even greater reduction of his freedom. Instead of liberty, he received "a pair of heavy chains" (168). Although he was more successful in breaking out of jail, Tufts was also an ironic revolutionary. When examined closely, their freedom struggles were travesties of the greater colonial struggle. Despite the lofty sentiments they used to cloak their jail breaks, they could not hide the fact that they were as petty as the "petty tyrants" against whom they rebelled. In reshaping reality after their own fashion, they often made themselves more heroic than they actually were. Tufts and Burroughs were far more opportunistic than patriotic, more mock-heroic than heroic. In developing their total sovereignty of self, this ultimate and yet perverse extension of natural rights, they declared their allegiance to no one and to nothing but themselves. Both not only ran away from their fathers, but they as well ran away from every other bond and loyalty throughout their lives. They abandoned wives,

children, mistresses, neighbors, friends, and partners whenever their interest was drawn elsewhere. They even abandoned the American Revolution. Although both were eager to enlist to fight the British, they quickly grew tired of the demands that being a soldier placed on them and deserted. In his narrative, Tufts proudly recounted his two two-month enlistments in the militia, when he carried off chickens and pigs more often than he carried a musket. But when he next joined for a longer three-year enlistment, he promptly deserted. Stating that he grew sick at the thought of marching around and starving for three years, he looked for "a convenient opportunity for desertion" (132). When such a chance occurred, he declared: "I made use of the privilege" (132). Thus, while the rest of the colonies struggled for their freedom against the British, Tufts decided to maintain his freedom by running away. And long before Burroughs declared war on society in order to defend himself from its tyranny, he ran away from the war for independence. The continual comparisons between his struggles for freedom and the American Revolution, then, were indeed ironic. One of his most ridiculous comments, for example, occurred when he was first thrown into prison. While commenting on his loss of freedom, he complained that imprisonment kept him "from tasting the sweets of liberty, for which we had so lately fought and bled" (98). The only cause either Tufts or Burroughs ever fought or bled in was their own. Truly, the only thing they held sacred was themselves.

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Notes

[1]It is interesting to note that both narratives appeared during years when the debate over personal liberty grew particularly sharp. In 1798, when Burroughs' story was published, the young nation was bitterly divided between Federalists and Republicans. The government of President John Adams had just passed the remarkably severe Alien and Sedition laws in an attempt to curtail political opposition. In 1807, when Tufts' story was published, the nation was again equally divided on the question of individual rights versus governmental authority. The government of President Thomas Jefferson had just pushed through the Embargo Act, which especially curbed the rights of New Englanders.

[2]For an examination of the changing concepts of liberty, see Gordon S. Wood's *The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787*, 24-25, 61-65, 403-413. For a discussion of natural rights during the Enlightenment, see Henry F. May's *The Enlightenment in America.*

[3]A few of their outrages were as symbolic as they were comic. For example, once while Tufts was being pursued for a number of thefts, he noticed that his clothing had become rather ragged and that he was in particular need of underwear. Recalling that he had seen a pillow in the pew of a nearby church, he decided that this "splendid cushion . . . might prove to be of great utility" in his forlorn condition. Totally disregarding "the horrid crime of sacrilege," he returned to the church and "without deference to the sanctity of the place," stole the cushion. After selling "the ticking and feathers," he made himself a fancy pair of underpants out of the "green plush" covering, which--he added--"lasted beyond calculation, and did me eminent service" (191).

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A Glass Face In The Rain

In the sky when clouds gather, and gather into rain,
and it rains,
I watch the rain fall outside my window into the open ploughing,
I hear you trooping and prating among the secluded down inside me.
When it rains, and you are alone, you long for her beside you, prating.
It has been raining for six-and-a-half days here outside Greenville, Mississippi.

I live without you--such is the lot--to live with you.
Even the root multiplies without water, sun, and air.
We survive
and sustain. We are one ocean wedged by the Sargasso Sea.
Each day is one light wedged by night and day.
The silos live alone on the lonely prairies.

A few humans have endured this mind-boggling, suicidal rain.
I put up without you, and you without me, day in and day out.
We become one river with two confluences. We sit back to back, invisible,
you are trooping and prating among the secluded down inside me.
I weep alone, incarcerated, in the most infallible, nondescript tears.

Regeneration

After the nimbostratus has cleared over Central Mississippi,
I hit the road again in plump happiness.
I am returning to you, let nothing happen
between now and after, so whatever direction
I move you wait for me; but on the road home
I stop to see them: the faces I missed hours ago,
the faces that are most loving and loved,
woodchucks wigwagging around the farmhouse,
a few strutting snouts, their bodies half-visible in the sundown,
and the roadside wildflowers, silently shooting,
what no one cares, no one counts or remembers to shut,
what endures like the loves of parents,
and the watercresses
blowing in the wind,
like the lives that are being born,
where no eyes mourn
where no deaths triumph,
and the mega moon
new and indolent among the waltzing stars.

Moss gathered around dead snails,
sailors telling yarns to their wives,
lovers holding each other's hands on the front porch swing.

Homecoming

The house down the road dozed and gaped,
The clouds hung low over the valley,

And the moon? No moon.
And last night when I arrived,
You were reluctant to speak.
"Welcome home," you mumbled,
Your whisper mellowed in the smell of grasses.
We know how things got late, how our hours grew smaller.

You were just a rain when I left you.

Alcorn State University

Poem by Lloyd Dendinger

First Childhood

The old woman grows childish.
She flutters her eyes, and her hands,
Like nervous birds, are never still.
Her attention span, like her frame, shrinks,
And painfully we come to see again
Inside this blear-eyed, wizened crone,
Her daddy's darling six-year-old, dimpled,
Smooth-skinned, with springy, golden curls.

The child has been there all along, of course.
Learning early to hide to survive,
She hid so long she nearly died.

She was there when the old woman became a bride,
And cried out to her husband, "Hold me,
Hold me, gently, but not too close."

But he would not hear her, and never knew
How narrowly bound she was.

And she was there when the old woman became a mother,
Crying out to her children:
"Let me be your sister," she cried.
But they could not hear her deep
Inside that deepest well called "mother."

But now, from within that fragile husk of age,
As if from some mutant chrysalis emerging,
She will not be denied. First, she takes over
Hands and eyes, then voice and memory. Finally,
Ending the long schizophrenic siege,
She dispossesses the old woman
And becomes whole again.

Sitting alone in the long evenings, she talks
To her mother about the coming trip by night.
Her hands flash white in the dusk, like birds
Trying to find a perch when the light has died.

University of South Alabama

Poems by Rosalie Daniels

Note to Baraka
(about his woman and my man)

My love's left handed also:
left handed lovemaking
left hand work
left handed whiskey

Yeah, my sweet man's left handed
The nuns probably tried
to change him
but gave it up
because he's stubborn too

"You owe the devil a day's work"
I say
and he flashes his pearlywhites at me
the way he does at all the women

All the papers he writes
lean like Pisa's tower
struck sideways
with his vicious left hand

Yeah, he's that way--
My sweet left handed man--
And I like it

Love Slipping
(a villanelle)

It is about to slip away from me
Because I do not hear the voice each day.
With love I look, I search, but do not see.

The love, the quick-sharp pain, has slowed to be
A dull numb-song to sing on my blind way:
It is about to slip away from me.

The fire of life, the love that burns the tree
Is now a still and quiet song by day;
Ninak to love, to search, but not to see.
A world to come with love will all agree,
Will reconcile our statement all the way:
It is about to slip away from me.

The picture here will pass and all will be
With you and me, with all who may not say
With love I look, I search, but do not see.

This slipping holds me straight and makes me be
The strength, the rock, the voice and breath to say
It is about to slip away from me:
With love I look, I search, but do not see.

**Ninak:* Choctaw word for "night"

Fountain

Just in front of Woolco's
Outside the pantyhose shop
There is a fountain in the center
Of the mall.

Under the crystal chandelier
It sprays peppermint cane water,
Gurgling and chuckling
To copper notes of far flung pennies
And to the beat of heart's wishes.
It hums and bubbles on,
Not knowing or caring that its paean
May be just a cement song
On late shoppers' peanut brittle ears

It keeps a steady rhythm

Like maybe it's convinced
Of its own worth,
Its own healing power
In its certain destiny down to Alph,
And, Christ, is the water dirty.

Jackson State University

Poems by John A Zurlo

Spider-bites

Insanity is
endemic
to those of us
who dive into cracks
and crevices.
We ponder
too many cobwebs.

The spider bites.

The sane--
they're never manic.
Cooly, they apply
insecticides,
then caulk and paint
the cracks.
And in uniforms
They march.

Mental health
Is
    An
        Opiate.

Snow Removal

Outside the window
in the treeless night
flakes of carbonized snow
glitter in the neon lights
like flecks of mica
with memory chips drifting
through the corridors of time,
fragmented crystals refracted
by the artificial lights
in the creases of yesterday.

Too quickly those snowflakes fall,
melt, and vanish,
leaving a slick film
on which nothing holds,
the center folds.
Things fall, dissolve, and wash away,
down the walk over the curb through the drain,
a whirlpool of forget-me-nots
sucked up, decomposed, and piped
underground, disappearing
forever.

Cracks

Everywhere he looked
the cracks looked back:
from the walls, the walks,

counter tops, coffee cups.
He asked questions.
Then came sessions
for sixty bucks an hour.
Group medical covered
what his shrinks uncovered.
Healed! (Guaranteed
for ninety days.)

He zigzags to work,
avoiding the cracks.
Locks his door,
arranges his desk,
punches into the main-frame,
then cracks
open the window
and watches puppets
ten stories below
dancing on the cracks.

His intercom talks all day
the main-frame
bangs away.
His phone flashes
like an ambulance light.
When they unlock his door
the room is dark
and he slips
through the crack.

Editor's note: *One of the highlights of this year's MPA meeting was the meeting of distinguished Albee scholars from around the country and from Mississippi to present papers on Edward Albee's themes, his adaptations, his indebtedness to other playwrights, and the performance ot his classic works. We are happy to reprint four of the five papers presented at the Albee session; Dr. Philip C. Kolin's "Of Jets, Milk Train's and Edward Albee's* ***Seascape****" has since been published in* ***Notes on Modern American Literature.***

Thematic Unity in the Theater of Edward Albee

Every since Jerry fatally impaled himself on the knife in *The Zoo Story*, Mommy and Daddy spiritually dismembered their child in *The American Dream*, and George and Martha verbally decimated each other in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Edward Albee has been recognized for his focus on confrontation and death. Indeed, verbal dueling and death--real and imagined, physical and psychological--pervade the Albee canon. Throughout his career, Albee continually returns to exploring the darker side of the human soulscape.

It is hardly surprising, then, to discover critics labeling Albee a pessimistic or even nihilistic writer, a dramatist whose plays are singlemindedly fixed on presenting the demonic, the destructive. Such a critical reception, coupled with Albee's alleged failings in the later plays, has made the playwright, in Robert Brustein's words, "the raw flesh of the American theater" world.[1] But I would like to suggest that Albee's plays embody an affirmative vision of human experience, one dispelling Albee's reputation as a

nihilist. Underneath the external action and obvious concern with death lies an inner drama, one disclosing the playwright's *compassion* for his fellow human being.

This sense of compassion, this affirmative vision becomes easier to understand when we listen to the playwright. Albee, himself, outlines what thematically engages his imagination:

> I am very concerned with the fact that so many people turn off because it is easier; that they don't stay fully aware during the course of their lives. in all the choices they make: social, economic, political, aesthetic. They turn off because it's easier. But I find that anything less than absolutely full, dangerous participation is an absolute waste of some rather valuable time. . . . I am concerned with being as self-aware, and open to all kinds of experience on its own terms--I think those conditions, given half a chance, will produce better self-government, a better society, a better everything else.[2]

Albee's observations provide a thematic key to understanding all of the plays. Alluding to a spiritual malaise that may psychologically anesthetize the individual, Albee suggests that "full, dangerous participation" in human intercourse is a necessary correlative to living authentically. Albee's remarks also suggest something of his underlying hope or optimism for his fellow human being. The Albee play, we see, becomes equipment for living. As the Woman in *Listening* recalls, "'We do not have to live unless we wish to; the greatest sin in living is doing it badly . . . stupidly, as if you were not alive.'"[3] In plays as different in dramatic conception as *The Zoo Story* or *Seascape*, Albee consistently implies that one can choose consciously to intermix the intellect and the emotion into a new whole, measured qualitatively, which is the aware individual.

While consistent in artistic purpose, Albee appears quite varied in method. A technically versatile dramatist, Albee demonstrates--often at the cost of commercial if not critical success--a willingness to take aesthetic risks, a deliberate attempt to explore the ontological status of theatricality itself. As Albee writes in his prefatory remarks to *Box and Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, ". . . since art must move, or wither--the playwright must try to alter the forms within which his precursors have had to work."[4] Each play demonstrates Albee's ongoing efforts to reinvent dramatic language and contexts, his awareness of the modern dramatic tradition and his own individual talents.

Despite his experiments with dramatic language and structure and the astonishingly differing interpretations of the plays, however, Albee invites to attend to a kind of intuitive *existentialist* apprehension of experience. When Albee was a teenager, reading the works of Albert Camus, he in all likelihood read in *The Rebel* that "The subject matter of art has been extended from psychology to the human condition."[5] For writing about "the human condition" becomes the nerve center of each play, an unmistakable thematic dimension of Albee's vision. Albee's vision allows us to witness, as Hazel E. Barnes argued in her study of existentialism and literature which appeared when Albee was first emerging as an off off Broadway force, "the ways whereby men and women either seek in bad faith to avoid the responsibilities which go with being human, or find the courage to recognize and 'engage' their freedom."[6]

Physical, psychological, and spiritual forces: these stand as the elements which so often mingle within Albee's characters. This intermixture, moreover, precipitates an elemental anxiety, what Albee calls in the Preface to *The American Dream* "a personal, private yowl" that "has something to do with the anguish of us all."[7] Accordingly, the power of Albee's vision

emanates not so much from the process of philosophic intellection as from the concreteness of living honestly, what Saul Bellow calls living with "the awakened eye of the Spirit."[8]

For Albee, the play becomes the hour of consciousness. And during this fleeting-but-illuminating hour, Albee's affirmative vision underscores the importance of confronting one's self and the other, without O'Neillean "pipe-dreams." In the midst of a dehumanizing society, Albee's heroes, perhaps irrationally, affirm living. If O'Neill's or Beckett's or Mamet's characters seem aware of suffering, they also accept an attitude that precludes any significant growth. In contrast, Albee's heroes suffer, but realize the opportunity for growth and change. Albee's heroes often experience a coming to consciousness that draws them, to allude to an important metaphor in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, towards "the marrow," i.e., towards the essence, the core of their relationships. Whether each character takes advantage of such opportunities varies from play to play, of course, but the point remains fixed: Albee's theater consistently stages the *possibility* that his heroes, through the process of engagement, can become more honest with both their inner and outer worlds.

Thus to regard Albee's use of verbal dueling and death as proof of a pessimistic vision--as many Albeephiles and Albeephobes have asserted--is misleading. Throughout his career, Albee defines "how we lie to ourselves and to each other, how we try to live without the cleansing consciousness of death." To experience the "cleansing" effects of such self-awareness, the Albee hero necessarily questions the nature of his or her values, predicaments, and relationships. To live honestly--as Jerry in *The Zoo Story* and Grandma in *The Sandbox* and George and Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and Tobias in *A Delicate Balance* and the Wife in *All Over* and Charlie in *Seascape* and Jo in *The Lady From Dubuque* find--is a liberating quality that frees the mind, even at the

risk of facing a puckish reality which may end in death. That certain figures fail to take advantage of this capacity does not negate the significance, Albee suggests, of such self-perception.

Let me refer to two works--*The American Dream*, and *Virginia Woolf*, to support my ideas.

The American Dream

The sense of innocence implicit in the myth of the American Dream collapses in Albee's *The American Dream*. Mommy and Daddy's dismemberment of their son is a fitting gesture of perverse defiance, the unabashed response to a satisfaction-guaranteed market and mentality. The then thirty-two year old Albee directed his satiric, ironic assault, not against an American work ethic, but against a culture which seemingly placed its faith in a consumerist, materialist cosmos.

A post-Eisenhower America, its unfettered enthusiasm for wealth and security an anodyne for the horror of the Depression and World War II, a country flaunting its recrudescence with chrome barges masking as high-finned Cadillacs, prompted the young Albee to re-think cultural values and assumptions and, finally, in this play, to generate deliberate imbalances. Satiric in tone, absurdist in technique, American in cadence, *The American Dream* was Albee's modest proposal. The humorous anger, for Albee was necessary. For when he wrote the play, America's post-World War II optimism had yet to be undermined by its modern versions of regicide, the Kennedys' and King's assassinations; further, Viet Nam and Watergate, the Beatles and the Sixties were unknown presences to Americans. The myth of the American Dream was still a talismanic force, a fanciful lie of the mind held at bay by unprecedented free enterprise and unlimited hopes. Optimistic and chauvinistic nationalism--

emblematized by the Space Race, technological and military prowess, science as Truth, a United States-dominated Olympic Games, youth, and, above all, money--infiltrated the American consciousness. The American Adam was now transformed to a post-lapsarian figure, his youthful innocence tempered (and corrupted) by a blatantly self-reliant consumerism.

Such a cultural milieu invited the ironising of experience. But for Albee the social climate, which greatly crippled Broadway, gave rise in *The American Dream* to absurdist satire. Yet Albee's attack stems from his desire to *improve*, to help, to nurture the individual sense of public and private consciousness. As such, *The American Dream* stands as a play of great optimism.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

Many scholars fail to recognize, even today, the unmistakable *affirmative* nature of *Virginia Woolf*. One of the most compelling features of the play's closure is the resilience of George and Martha's collective imagination to reinvent reality by subordinating illusion to Truth, a profound recognition of the regenerative powers implicit in facing human existence without what Henric Ibsen in *The Wild Duck* coined "life-lies." Albee, himself, often alludes to the affirmative texture of his masterpiece. The play challenges, Albee points out, the sorts of illusions paralyzing the figures in O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*, one of the plays that motivated Albee to write *Virginia Woolf*. "It's about going against the 'pipe-dreams.' After all, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* just says have your pipe-dreams if you want to but realize you are kidding yourself."[9]

The play's three act structure chronicles George and Martha's realization that their "pipe-dream"--their imaginary son--is "kidding" as well as killing them. But

such recognition comes only after twenty-one years of fabricating and nurturing their child-illusion. Private mythology turns to public issue, however, early in Act One, Martha's off-stage remarks to Honey about their son signaling an ominous shift in her marriage relationship and the psychodynamics of the game they play.

From early in Act One onward, most of George's social and psychological strategies center on one goal: to exorcise the son-illusion perverting their lives. Within this context, then, George and Martha's brutalizing language becomes a necessary social and psychological dynamic. In other words, the final expiation of the illusion is made possible by externalizing the lies governing their, and Nick and Honey's, relationship through such games as "Hump the Hostess," "Get the Guests," and, finally, "Bringing Up Baby." Conflict precedes resolution.

Although *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* stages a Strindbergian battle of the sexes, Albee's ultimate interest lies in presenting love as a unifying presence. Albee supplants the lack of compassion in *The Death of Bessie Smith* and apathy in *The American Dream* with George and Martha's reciprocal care and love. Love's opposite--indifference--finds no place in their marriage. Albee's dialogue mixes kindness and cruelty, Jerry's "teaching emotion," making George and Martha's verbal clashes, for better or worse, an ineluctable element of their relationship. But their wittily devastating repartee is born out of a profound love for the other.

The denouement of the play suggests that the son-myth, for now, has vanished. A "*hint of communion*" between George and Martha indicates the start of a loving armistice, a definitive change in their relationship. The play's closure, with its Joycean affirmative texture, implies more than a reconciliation of man and wife; it further implies that they can now accept their life, its cajoling ambiguity and terrifying flux included, without illusion. In their resolution, they, and perhaps Nick and Honey, acknowledge the

Dread implicit in human existence, and affirm the importance of living honestly. The tidy inconclusiveness of the play's closure, then, minimizes sentimentality while functioning thematically: Albee provides no promise that their marriage will be redeemed, that the illusion is inexorably shattered. But he does present the very real possibility for a truthful, loving renaissance for his heroes. Their new-tempered union will be measured in terms of their willingness to keep at bay the illusion that at one time was a source of happiness but, on this night in New Carthage, erupted in all its appalling forms.

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End Notes

[1]Robert Burstein, "Self-Parody and Self-Murder," *The New Republic* 8 (March 1980): 26

[2]Matthew C. Roudane, "An interview with Edward Albee," *Southern Humanities Review* 16 (Winter 1982): 41, 43.

[3]Edward Albee, *Counting the Ways and Listening* (New York: Atheneum, 1977) 110.

[4]Edward Albee, *Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (New York: Atheneum, 1969) x.

[5]Albert Camus, quoted in Hazel E. Barnes, *Humanistic Existentialism: The Literature of Possibility* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1959) 9.

[6]Barnes, 10.

[7]Edward Albee, *The Zoo Story and The American Dream* (New York: Signet, 1960) 54.

[8]Saul Bellow, *Him With His Foot in His Mouth and Other Stories* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984) 59.

[9]Roudane, 38.

Even though Edward Albee had been commercially--and, generally critically--unsuccessful in several adaptations (*Everything in the Garden, Malcolm,* and *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*), his decision to attempt a dramatic rendition of Vladimir Nabokov's brilliant and once-scandalous 1955 novel *Lolita* might have seemed very promising. Even Albee's detractors are willing to admit his skillful use of language in drama, a talent paralleled by Nabokov's linguistic magic in his fiction. Furthermore, as *Lolita* is ostensibly a novel about perversion, it would have seemed an amiable subject for the dramatist. Robert Brustein, in assessing Albee's career through *Tiny Alice* , wrote that, though the plays are different, each reveals a technical dexterity, an extraordinary use of language, and a concern with sexual pathology: " . . . each play revolves around a protagonist whose sensual life is paralyzed or perverted."[1]

Unfortunately, the opening of Albee's *Lolita* did nothing but further darken his already sullied reputation as an adaptor. Critics, who are always aware that their reputations seem to rest on their ability to turn plays and playwrights into hamburger, found *Lolita* the opportunity sans peer of 1981. Consider these remarks. Jack Kroll wrote: "Coldly, soberly, sadly, angrily, disgustedly, incredulously, helplessly, wonderingly, one must say that Edward Albee's long-delayed *Lolita* is an appalling fiasco . . . . Albee's version . . . is not shocking, it is deeply embarrassing."[2] Douglas Watt wrote, " . . . Albee has reduced Nabokov's pulsatingly brilliant novel to a coarse, loveless, sexless, and lifeless farce . . . . [W]hat a shocking piece of disfigurement. And what a monstrous bore." Frank Rich wrote, "This show is the

kind of embarrassment that audiences do not quickly forget or forgive." Howard Kissel wrote, "Albee has taken a work of wit and originality and reduced it to a leering Broadway sex comedy . . . . For Albee's sake it is a pity no one had the good sense to stop this embarrassment before it reached the public." A couple of headlines also illustrate the general critical reception. "Lo and Hum as Ho and Hum" headed T. E. Kalem's review, and Clive Barnes, who has been enthusiastic about several Albee plays which other critics have reviled, called Albee's *Lolita* "vulgar and misbegotten" under the headline "'Lolita' is humbug humbug."

Every reaction, however, produces an equal and opposite reaction. One reads these successions of derision and starts to suspect that perhaps the critics have overlooked something important. It wouldn't be the first time they were wrong. Albee, after all, has always been an innovator, and critics, by and large, don't like their preconceptions ruffled (one need only recall how *Oklahoma* was considered radical by the New York theater establishment). Albee has the daring to kick the tiger in his lair, and radical innovation is often mistaken for poor quality. Albee is obviously a major playwright, and most critics have been relatively insignificant in recognizing important moments in the history of art. Isn't it possible *Lolita* was underrated?

Unfortunately, the critics were right. The only way to defend Albee's adaptation is to ignore the play itself. Even if one were able to forget Nabokov's masterpiece and the subsequent moderately successful movie directed by Stanley Kubrick,[3] even if one were able to accept Albee's *Lolita* on its own merits--which is impossible because it leans so heavily on its predecessors--there are still too few nits of merit to justify its existence. One has the feeling that if Albee had not been committed to this production in some financial way, it would have gone back into the pigeonhole on his desk until he could resolve the myriad problems in it. In many ways, it is one of the

worst things he could have done at the beginning of the 1980's, confirming what many theater critics had begun to see as Albee's tumble from the creative powers he had exhibited in his earlier plays, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *A Delicate Balance*. At best, *Lolita* was a severe miscalculation. Albee managed to lose most of the best qualities of the novel, while retaining most of the worst qualities in Albee's writing.

What went wrong? How did such a monstrosity result from two authors who would have seemed to have much in common? Clive Barnes remarked that one should assess Albee's play individually and not unfavorably compare it to Nabokov's novel since they are works in different genres. As a principle, this seems reasonable. One shouldn't judge *Gone With the Wind* to be a bad book merely because the movie was so successful, nor should one judge Harold Pinter's screenplay for *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as successful or unsuccessful merely because of a preference for John Fowles' novel. However, Barnes aptly summed up why Albee invites this highly damaging comparison in the case of his play:

> Albee's central theme--the play is hardly in gear before we are told "love is the subject here"--is identical with Nabokov's and, naturally, the story is much the same. There are essential differences--all of them damaging to Albee.
>
> The comparison with the way Albee in his play has tackled the theme and the way Nabokov in his novel treated the same material is, in one sense, irrelevant. Yet it is those differences of approach, changes of tone and nuance, that enabled Nabokov to compose a masterpiece, and leaves Albee with merely a play of only passing interest.[4]

The comparison of play to novel is, therefore, impossible to avoid in this instance, all theory to the contrary, and affects any viewer's experience of the play. As Barnes goes on to say, only details have been changed. Charlotte Haze falls down the stairs rather than getting struck by a car, for example, hardly a significant alteration. Secondly, as remarked earlier, the play leans heavily on the success of the novel. One cannot entitle a play *Lolita* without facing the comparison, any more than a play entitled *Crime and Punishment* or *The Sound and the Fury* would avoid comparison to the great novels. Though many reviewers stated that Albee's *Lolita* was freely adapted, it is, in fact, not freely adapted at all except in the reviewers' eagerness to disassociate it from the original.[5] One of the things which is most irritating about the play is the unoriginal attempts to mimic certain aspects of the novel. What one gets from these is not a sense of Nabokov's novel metamorphosing into drama, but of Albee doing cheap imitations of Nabokovian technique.

Consider, for example, the injection of a character called "A Certain Gentleman." He begins the play by walking out and discussing himself as author. He breaks the realistic illusions of the drama a la Pirandello by addressing members of the audience as if he knew them, thus making it appear that the play is being created as it is being presented. He introduces Humbert Humbert, of whom he frequently asks questions--the writer "discovers" the character and finds him uncooperative. He discusses the action with Humbert and others, and addresses the audience at apropos moments. This technique of pointing out to the audience that the play is a play and not a reproduction of reality was once wonderfully surprising, even shocking, to audiences used to the illusion of realistic theater. About the time Nabokov was penning his novel, it was still one of the more radical techniques of theater, though becoming shopworn. By 1981? It was conventional, even tedious.

The presence of A Certain Gentleman is, of course, an awkward attempt to parallel Nabokov's skill at winking at his readers from between the curtains he has hung in the drawing rooms of his scenes. Despite his extraordinary ability to convey the essence of the reality of motel rooms or academia or emigre life in Berlin, Nabokov always, capriciously, reminds the reader that he is the illusionist , and the reader who enjoys Nabokov takes delight in the presence of a great offstage magician. This is far from a new technique in the novel. Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, and many others employed it with great skill. Generally, however, Nabokov's use of it is somewhat subtler, usually trickier than an address to the "Gentle Reader," and usually delightfully arcane. One immediately thinks of all the veiled illusions to lepidoptery in his works.[6]

By comparison, the clunking about of "A Certain Gentleman" is sophomoric. He isn't winking at the spectators. He's walking around. He's pretending to know people in the third row. He's engaging in senseless wordplay with the main character, who, in the novel, is the narrator. The blatancy of his presence is old hat in the theater and a violation of the tone of Nabokov's art. It is a disappointing way for Albee to handle the problem, and it simply doesn't work. At one point in Scene 5, Albee attempts to exploit Nabokov's use of self-allusion with the following exchange between Humbert and the Gentleman:

> ACG: What did you hear?
> HH: (Dismissing him.) Nothing; it was nothing; wind in the willows.
> ACG: How appropriate--child and all.
> HH: (A sneer.) What should I have said. . . Laughter in the Dark?
> ACG: (Chuckles.) Very good; very good.
> HH: (Ibid.) Or mentioned that tonight, in a comparative way, my passion burns with a Pale Fire: Though that is but one night's gambit?
> ACG: (Chuckles even more.) Oh, splendid

fellow; do go on.

HH: . . .That even though it is the American Dream--if we only admitted it--it's held in a delicate balance and will soon be all over?

ACG: Very good! Very good! (pp. 42-43)[7]

Fortunately, this inanity is interrupted by Lolita. The tortured intermingling of Nabokov titles with Albee titles can hardly be called subtle, and what is its purpose? When one considers how many scholars have found allusions to an extraordinary array of works (from Shakespeare to Steele to Strindberg[8]) in Albee's plays, one can only be stunned by the clumsiness of this moment, so contrived it can only be gotten to by allusion to a work by neither Albee nor Nabokov, Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*. The wordplay is so clumsy, it is impossible to imagine Nabokov in any incarnation chirruping "Very good! Very good!" to it.

One begins to suspect Albee is parodying Nabokov's penchant for these games, but there is little other evidence the play is intended to satirize Nabokov's art, and if it is, it is certainly mean spirited to attempt to exploit the fame of another author with the intention of discrediting him.

Yet, the mean-spiritedness of the play is deeper than that. Mean spirited was also applied to the play in the New York reviews: "It's not just that *Lolita* is incompetent or boring or lays waste to a masterpiece of modern literature:" wrote Frank Rich, "those are pardonable sins that have been known to occur in Broadway theaters. For all this play's babbling about love, it is rank with indiscriminate--and decidedly unearned--hate." Joel Siegel remarked, "You see, Humbert's obsession is repulsive enough so you don't like him." There was, on opening night, a feminist protest against the play, because it might seem to glorify statutory rape and incest, but, obviously, none of the placard bearers had seen the play, for the Humbert Humbert of Albee's *Lolita* is repulsive. One is neither moved by his lechery, nor is able to identify

with it. One is quite indifferent when he keels over in the last act, and, if Nabokov had written his Humbert as oily as this one, likely Albee would never have heard of the novel and viewers would have been spared this play.

It is a cliche of fiction writing--and, unfortunately, like most cliches true more often than not--that a story must have a central character with whom the reader can identify. Part of Nabokov's great achievement in *Lolita* is making the narrator Humbert likable despite his pathetic paedophilia. He accomplishes this in many ways. One, Humbert's desire for the girl is always couched in terms of the most passionate romantic love. He turns one of the most treasured emotions of the Western world into an unnatural obsession, which then ironically seems more justifiable because of its association with it. Humbert's desire reminds each reader of his or her own adolescent spasms of desire for some utterly unsuitable partner. In those terms, one is more willing to accept Humbert's unnatural desires, at the very least as comedy. Humbert's problem arises from the "purest" of emotions, and though the novel may, like Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, be interpreted as a lampoon of romantic love, one cannot help but identify with Humbert's passion.

Secondly, Lolita, the "real" girl behind Humbert's diary, is kept at a safe aesthetic distance from the reader by Humbert's point-of-view. One is only rarely forced to confront the emotional ambiguities such a relationship would create in a twelve-year-old. Humbert as narrator prevents the reader from seeing anything but through the filter of his mind, and all the other characters, Lolita included, are objectified. They are so cartoonish that the reader latches on to Humbert as the only one to trust and sympathize with. Only later in the novel does Humbert seriously dwell on his having been the "maniac" who deprived Lolita of her childhood, though there are occasional references to Lolita's crying in the night." . . . "I recall that on this and other occasions," remarks Humbert, "it was always

my habit and method to ignore Lolita's states of mind while comforting my own base self."[9] The most obvious scene in which Nabokov confronts the unromantic reality of Humbert's child abuse is in the wrenching scene when Humbert visits the pregnant Lolita, and this scene drives home the sordidness of the relationship.

Albee makes his most serious mistakes when he turns Humbert into a leering old lecher who is just as cartoonish as Claire Quilty and Charlotte Haze. The most likable character in Albee's *Lolita* is A Certain Gentleman, who has little or nothing to do with the emotional center of the play. In an important sense, the Gentleman becomes the main character by being the only one to whom the audience relates, but he has nothing invested in the situation and nothing to lose. Because of this, as Howard Kissel remarked, "There are almost no scenes of any dramatic significance . . . .[the scenes] seem more like sketches or vignettes, the characters themselves more like caricatures." When A Certain Gentleman mouths his last lines "And so it all ends. . . . Swept away like leaves" (p. 92), he has merely certified his, and the audience's, detachment. Humbert and Lolita, the central characters of the dramaturgy, are never more than leaves spiraling off a tree in autumn.

It is also significant that critics again and again attack Albee's use of vulgar language in the adaptation. Each time Humbert uses one of these smutty words, he is cheapened. The Humbert one knows from the novel would never describe little girls and boys "fucking and sucking" (p. 45), especially after his warnings to Lolita to watch her mouth (pp. 22, 23). Nor, despite his loathing for Charlotte, say she is the kind of "anti-Semite who differentiates between Jews and kikes" (p. 17). Even were it not inevitable to compare him with himself in the novel, one notes the contrast with his seedy elegance more true to the novel elsewhere in the play. The vulgar language is also particularly distasteful coming from Charlotte Haze. She is, in the

novel, adequately buffoonish without the distortions Albee inserts. In describing her relationship with Lolita's father she says, *He* has an orgasm, I want one! He comes: *I* come. None of this pile on, puff-puff, squirt, roll off and go to sleep. No sir! He comes, I come." Later she adds, "I guess I was into female lib before it ever had a name," and implies that Harold Haze died of the exertions of trying to service her (p. 29). It is easier to imagine these brutal words out of the mouth of Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, but besides being inappropriate in tone to the novel and inappropriate to the bourgeois mentality of Charlotte Haze, the adding of these lines is a blatantly misogynist slap at feminism, which has nothing to do with the drama, or the novel. The bashing of Mrs. Haze was also made more tasteless by the use of talented actress Shirley Stoler, who is most well-known as the Concentration-camp Commandant who has sex with Giancarlo Gianini in Lina Wertmuller's *Seven Beauties*. She was chillingly, repulsively effective in that film, but she is grossly fat, as Jack Kroll remarked, turning Charlotte "into a monstrously magnified version of Miss Piggy." The Charlotte Haze of the novel, and even as portrayed by Shelley Winters in the Kubrick motion picture of *Lolita* that Nabokov, rather surprisingly, liked,[10] is a satirical figure. She is comical because of her limited bourgeois mentality. Though Humbert reviles her, readers or viewers are familiar with the kind of woman she is, too ordinary to be loathed in the high-toned way Humbert does it, and thereby one is amused by both Charlotte's foibles and by Humbert's exaggerated way of seeing her. To represent her in such a vile way through her physical appearance and dialogue is just a cheap way of turning comedy into clownery. It would be insulting, were it not so boring.

There are many other things wrong with Albee's *Lolita*, but further enumeration of them would serve no useful purpose. Perhaps here is an instance which demonstrates the limitations of certain literary forms.

Nabokov created a great novel in which he exploited the artistic abilities inherent in the form. These devices do not translate well into either film or drama. If one considers authors whose narrative stance and language games compose a major part of their fiction, one usually finds abysmal attempts to translate their works into film or drama. (I am thinking particularly of Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and Joyce.) Albee, besides facing this fundamental problem, seems to have either grossly misunderstood the novel, or grossly underestimated his audience. Could he have been so self-deluded as to think that vulgarity and sex would shock an audience in 1981? Many critics seemed almost disappointed *Lolita* was not more pornographic. Did he think he could exploit the notorious novel and create the kind of sensation that swirled about *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*?? Did he think inserting shopworn stunts of the experimental theater could make up for a lack of dramaturgy? One hopes he wrote this poor script out of a serious attempt to discover some new way of expressing himself, and that this new way will manifest itself in a more significant theatrical experience. As it is, however, one should forget Albee's *Lolita* as a bad idea badly executed and hope it will end the playwright's misbegotten urge to adapt novels for the stage.

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Notes

[1]In *Modern Occasions*, ed. Philip Rahv (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1966): 124-127.

[2]This and all subsequent reviewers' remarks are from the *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews*, 1981: 312-318.

[3]*Lolita*, dir. Stanley Kubrick, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1962.

[4]*NY Theatre Critics' Reviews*: 314.

[5]See particularly the reviews by Douglas Watt and Barnes.

[6]It is hardly possible to catalog all of Nabokov's personal and literary allusions in *Lolita*. One can get some idea of the number of them by perusing *The Annotated Lolita*, ed. Alfred Appel, Jr. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1970)

[7]This and all subsequent references to the play will derive from *Lolita* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1984), Page numbers will be indicated parenthetically.

[8]A survey of the various sources associated with Albee's plays will appear in the introduction of *Critical Essays on Edward Albee* (Boston: G. K. Hall) by Philip C. Kolin and J. Madison Davis, scheduled for publication in December, 1986.

[9]*The Annotated Lolita*: 289.

[10]"Vladimir Nabokov, January 1964," interviewed by Alvin Toffler. In *The Playboy Interview*, ed. G. Barry Colson (New York: Playboy Press, 1981): 63.

The first act of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is called "Fun and Games," and the action begins with Martha and George returning late at night from a party. After a crash and a little of Martha's loud laughter they enter the living room of their New England Home. Martha utters "Jesus" and George responds "Shhhhhh" as she completes her "H. Christ." It is a theatrical beginning and the couple launch immediately into the biting repartee that characterizes much of the play. It is an effective beginning because of the abrupt entrance, the fast pacing, and the quickness with which Martha's apparent dominance is established.

At the very moment when it seems the tension might drop and they are preparing to have "nightcaps," Martha manages to "spring" a surprise on George. She has invited guests from the party they have been attending, and the guests are due to arrive at any minute. George admonishes Martha to be on good behavior, and at this moment the doorbell chimes. Instead of answering it, they get into an argument with George warning Martha not to get into the "bit" about the kid. The delay in the opening of the door is effective because it increases our expectations of what the guests will be like and because it makes us empathize with them. The exchange is timed perfectly by George who flings the door open framing Honey and Nick just as Martha yowls "**SCREW YOU!**"

It is an ugly gag, allowing the guests to be insulted before they are invited in, but it is characteristic of the social tension that will build during the course of the evening. One wonders why the guests come in at all or why they stay once they are there, but Albee

provides reasons: Nick and Honey are younger; they have just moved to town; he is new on the faculty; and it is important for them to ingratiate themselves into the social life of the community. This is all the more so because of the fact that Martha's father is president of the college where George is on the faculty (Martha says "staff") of the History Department.

No sooner have the guests come in than the gamesmanship that characterizes the play gets underway with George mocking Nick's analysis of an abstract painting that is hanging on their living room wall. After an awkward silence, George relieves the tension by humorously observing that the painting is actually a "pictorial representation of the order of Martha's mind." However, the really heavy-duty games, the sado-masochistic word flagellations that seem to define and direct George and Martha's existence do not begin until the latter part of the first act. This gives the guests time to learn about each other, and this information becomes a valuable store in each person's arsenal as they prepare (sometimes knowingly and sometimes not) for the battles to come.

In the light of George's initial reception of the guests, it seems appropriate that the first major game of the play should be "Humiliate the Host." Martha is the aggressor, George the victim, and the guests are the spectators. The sequence begins with Martha relating the story of how some years earlier her father had wanted to demonstrate the importance of self-defense and had wanted George to box. George had not wanted to and so while the men were talking, Martha had slipped on the gloves, shouted "Hey George," and hit him as he turned around. This story, which Martha says "colored our whole life," humiliates and emasculates George who responds by entering with a short-barreled shotgun which he calmly aims at the back of his wife's head. Honey screams. Nick rises. It is a genuinely frightening moment, but the tension is broken when George says "pow" and a large red and yellow Chinese parasol pops from the gun. After

torrents of laughter, a few kisses, and a Freudian suggestive remark to Nick--"No fake Jap gun for you, eh?"--Martha begins again to build to its climax the whole "Humiliate the Host" idea. George, who is ineffectual and contemplative, is contrasted with Nick, the geneticist, the man of action, the new wave of the future.

As the "game" builds it becomes apparent that Martha has violated a rule and told Honey about their son whom they expect home on the very next day. Martha cruelly suggests that deep down in his "gut" George may not be sure it's his own kid. George is stung but responds with a stirring speech assuring us that the one thing he is sure of is his chromosomological partnership in the creation of their son. Martha, nevertheless, is undaunted and demeans George for being unable to take over the History Department let alone the whole university. Martha's Oedipal-like thinking in marrying him in the first place had been to keep the college in the family. George's failures, however, have made it impossible for her to live up to the dream. She sees him as a flop--"a great . . . big . . . fat . . . FLOP." With Martha viciously triumphant the first act reaches a crescendo with George breaking a bottle against the bar and saying almost in tears, "I said stop, Martha." But she is not quite finished with him and so she recites his failures one more time as George sings "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, Virginia Woolf" in an attempt to drown her out. The act ends with Honey rushing out to vomit, Nick going after her, and Martha starting off, then looking at George contemptuously and saying "Jesus."

Act II continues the "Fun and Games" under the title "Walpurgisnacht," the German word for "witches' sabbath." The act begins with only George and Nick on stage. Soon the two settle into friendly conversation with Nick unaware that George may be gathering confidential information. George tells the touching story of a boy he had known while they were in prep school. The setting for the story was an old "gin mill"

where the boys went for drinks during Prohibition. It seems that the boy, who was fifteen at the time, had killed his mother by accident with a shotgun. On this particular evening at the gin mill the boy managed to arouse the general laughter of everyone there by ordering "bergin, please . . . bergin and water." The following summer that same boy with his learner's permit in his pocket had accidentally killed his father on a country road when he swerved their car to avoid a porcupine. The story is concluded with George noting that the boy had been put in an asylum thirty years ago and that since that time he has "not . . . uttered . . . one . . . sound."

There is a long silence at this point, but the full significance of the passage does not become clear until much later in the act when Martha tells a slightly different version. In her version that boy was the subject of a novel that George wrote, a novel that Martha's father prohibited from being published because of its disgusting subject matter--showing "a boy who murders his mother and kills his father and then pretends it's all an accident." This is the second wave of the "Humiliate the Host" game, and it climaxes with the shocking revelation that that boy was none other than George himself. This is the play's climactic high point and the point of real physical violence and danger. George leaps for Martha's throat yelling "I'LL KILL YOU!" and is prevented from choking her to death only by Nick's intervention. The depth of his rage would suggest that he may have indeed killed his parents, but his rage may have been over the emasculation of his creative work, his novel. The question of whose version is correct is never resolved, and, this lack of resolution points to one of the play's central themes--the difficulty, even the impossibility, of distinguishing truth from illusion.

Following this Act II climax, George and the others recuperate for a bit, then George regains his composure and concludes that it is time for a little game of "Get the Guests." Recalling all of Nick's confidences, he

makes up a story about a scientist and his mousey little wife out of the midwest. We learn that Mousie's father had been a religious charlatan--a man who had run "a traveling clip joint, based on Christ." George even reveals the circumstances surrounding their marriage--how they had gotten married after she had *seemed* to have gotten pregnant. She had "got all puffed up" but after they were married "the puff went *away* . . . like magic . . . pouf!" Honey, who has been slow to catch on that *she* is being described, is horrified to discover that such shameful intimacies and family secrets have been betrayed. Hysterical, Honey runs out of the room for a second period of sickness in the bathroom. Nick is outraged at having been damaged in this way and, shaking with inner rage, follows his wife. Martha remains to critique George for picking on Nick (she calls it "pigmy hunting"), and in the ensuing conflict they agree to engage in "total war."

At this point Nick re-enters indicating that Honey is resting on the bathroom floor. George goes out of the room for ice just long enough for Martha, the Earth Mother, to begin making advances on Nick. When George returns, he picks up a book and begins reading. This, oddly, infuriates Martha for a moment until she turns her attentions to Nick pointing out, "We're going to amuse ourselves, George." This is the beginning of the "Hump the Hostess" sequence, but George, who is supposed to be the victim pretends to care less as he continues to be preoccupied with his book. After all, it's four o'clock and, as he says, he always reads a book at that time. At last Martha sends Nick into the kitchen to wait for her and with anger close to tears announces her intention of following Nick into the kitchen, and of taking him upstairs. George responds sadly, softly, indicating that if she wants him so badly she should go about it honestly instead of covering it over with "all this . . . footwork."

Left alone onstage George returns to his book, reads a moment, then considers the passage aloud.

> And the West, encumbered by crippling alliances, and burdened with a morality too rigid to accommodate itself to the swing of events, must . . . eventually . . . fall.

He then laughs ruefully, rises, then with a howl he hurls the book against the chimes. In that moment he is expressing his philosophical distrust of the new wave of technologists and scientists, the men like Nick, who represent what may be an inevitable, but dehumanizing future where the uncertainties, the surprises, the complexities of human behavior are replaced with a more grey-colored world of machine made certainties. There is, no doubt, this element of intellectual emasculation that angers the humanist, but at the same time, surely, it is also a moment of jealous rage over this additional meaningless infidelity that Martha is pursuing among the plates and saucers in the kitchen.

At this point Honey, who is "worse for wear, half asleep, still sick" and "weak," staggers in in a dream world. In this scene we learn of Honey's fear of having children and George is able to surmise her secret--that she takes "the pill" or has some other method. The younger couple's childless condition makes an interesting point of comparison with the older couple's sterility. Whereas Honey does not want any children, at least not at this point, George and Martha have so desperately wanted a child that they have created, nurtured, and raised a boy entirely in the realm of their imaginations. As the act nears its conclusion, George develops an idea for the ultimate game he can play. He develops the idea in response to Honey's question as to who rang the doorbell. George concludes that it was a message about their son, a message that their son is dead. Honey takes the news of the son being dead at its face value. The act ends with George talking softly to himself, mixing laughter with tears as he plans his final assault saying, "Can you hear me, Martha? Our boy is dead."

Act III is called "The Exorcism" and begins with Martha alone onstage fixing one more drink for herself. After an entertaining monologue, she is joined by Nick who she informs is "certainly a flop in some departments." Martha goes on to recite the history of her infidelities, and there emerges a sad picture, for we learn that it is only George who can make her happy. She is in the process of defending George, even elevating him as she demeans her new "houseboy" Nick, when George flings open the door and thrusts in a large bunch of snapdragons. The truth/illusion theme is introduced again as the question of whether Nick should be called a "stud" or a "houseboy" is discussed. Then George, throwing the snapdragons one at a time at Martha, begins to prod her to anger so she can be ready for one last game called "Bringing Up Baby."

This last game begins softly with Martha reciting how their son came into the world twenty-one years ago tomorrow. She relates in detail the beautiful events of his childhood--the "school . . . and summer camp . . . and sledding . . . and swimming." This image of the perfect child reaching out to the parents for "support, affection, teaching, even love" rouses Honey to the realization that she too wants a child. It is a touching moment, but gradually the beautiful images become twisted. As the story of the child growing older is presented, the images of parental failures begin creeping in--George's weaknesses and failures and Martha's drinking and braying. The recriminations build with George and Martha each telling their own versions of "Bringing Up Baby" until it reaches a crescendo with Martha reciting her litany of complaints while George simultaneously begins to intone the Roman Catholic Mass for the dead in Latin. The play at this point takes a decidedly ritualistic turn. By telling others about their boy, Martha had violated a trust, a confidence, and so George now pushes on with this final game in deadly earnest so as to destroy the lie that had become central to their lives. Martha wants to stop, and the guests prematurely and

mistakenly think the game is over, but George pushes on with a touch of genuine heroism saying, "I'M RUNNING THIS SHOW!" He reports that while Martha was out of the room, they got a telegram from "good old Western Union" with the message that their boy was dead. George adds that "He was . . . killed . . . late in the afternoon . . . (a tiny chuckle) on a country road, with his learner's permit in his pocket, he swerved, to avoid a porcupine, and drove straight into . . ." But Martha interrupts the fabrication and in a "rigid fury" says, "YOU . . . CAN'T . . . DO . . . THAT!" It takes some time for the logic of this development to sink in and for Martha to realize that George *can* , indeed, report that their son is dead. She even asks to see the telegram, but George after a long pause and with a straight face says, "I ate it." It is only after George has reminded her of the rules of their game that Nick begins to understand what has happened--that the boy has only existed in their imaginations.

The exorcism is completed with Latin words of comfort being offered by George. *Maybe* now they can accept each other and live in relative peace. This would seem to be the promise of the third act's title and the whole purpose of this ritual, but it seems hard to imagine George and Martha not engaging in their reciprocal flagellations. In any event, there is a new level of acceptance, tolerance, and compassion as the play draws to its close.

The party ends with the coming of dawn, and the younger couple leave quietly. Nick and Honey want to thank their hosts for the revelations that may lead to a fruitful marriage for them. Nick says, "I'd like to . . . " but then they say no more than "goodnight" leaving George and Martha alone again. The remaining moments are quiet ones of gradual resignation, of Martha's accepting George's decisions. "Did you . . . did you . . . have to?" "Yes," is his reply. As the play ends, George puts his hand gently on her shoulder, comforting her and singing "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf, Virginia Woolf, Virginia Woolf. He begins the

refrain again as Martha responds, "I . . . am . . . George . . . I . . . am . . ." and the play ends with a tableau of the couple remaining in silence.

One of the more prominent themes in the play has to do with the illusory nature of our perceptions of reality. Humans apparently need illusions or dreams by which they may lead their lives, but these dreams can become destructive when they are too far removed from reality. Attaining a level of acceptance of life *as it is* seems to be one of the things the work is about. In spite of the play's searing, vitriolic quality, it seems to move its characters and the audience toward a kinder, more humane view of life. Albee has written the play with a sense of compassion toward his characters.

Another theme pits science and technology against art and humanity and, like the Expressionist plays of the 1920's, reflects the fear that modern man may become dehumanized and mechanized and that things that are valuable will somehow be lost in the name of progress. George (with one hand on his scrotum) is a valiant Everyman in the struggle and proves that the dehumanizing forces may not be so inevitable after all. George, the sensitive artist who *seems* incapable of acting with decisiveness, at last rises to the occasion and proves that there are forces on his side too--that all is not lost in the struggle to preserve the human spirit.

A final point about the play, however, is that its greatness lies not so much in *what* it says as in the *way* it says it. The play is structured as a series of power struggles, each of which in itself is a highly theatrical piece with its own beginning, middle, and end. The play's power and its appeal lie in its theatricality which in turn is augmented by its slashing, witty, urbane, uproariously funny dialogue. As a pure piece of theatre it approaches perfection.

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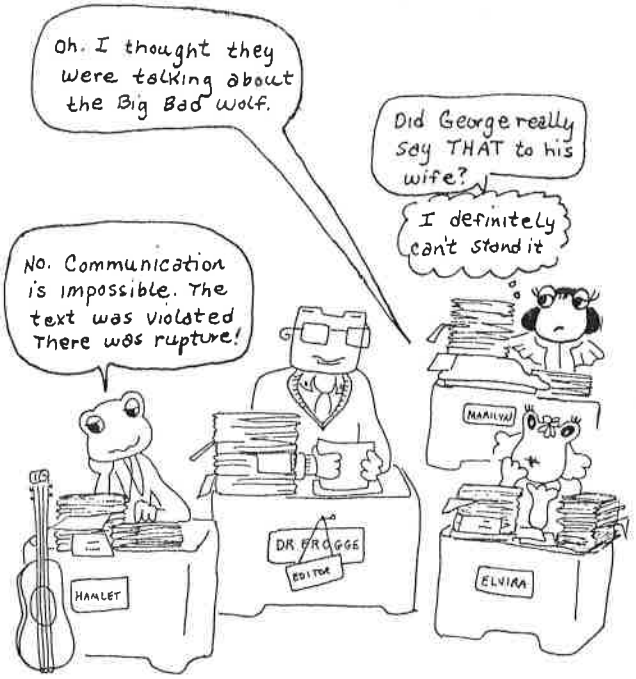

Albee's Meta-Lolita:
Love's Travail and the Artist's Travail

During an interview the day before the March 1981 opening of his ill-fated stage version of Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita, Edward Albee was asked to "generalize . . . about dramatizing a non-dramatic piece of literature." He responded: "It translates it from one medium to another. It's a fundamental translation, and one must not try to be literal; one must do equivalences" (*Edward Albee: An Interview and Essays*, ed. Julian N. Wasserman. Houston: University of St. Thomas, 1983, p. 17). The first equivalency Albee devised in the process of "translating" Lolita turns out to be his most significant--and the one that makes his play a fundamental transformation of its source.

Nabokov begins his 1955 novel with a Forward by "suave" John Ray, a psychiatrist who is admittedly an "impersonation" of the author himself (*Lolita*, New York: Crest Books, 1963, p. 282) and who ostensibly receives the manuscript of "Lolita, or the Confessions of a White Widowed Male" from his cousin--who had been the deceased Humbert Humbert's lawyer--with a view to preparing it for publication. The opening frame provided by Nabokov/Ray's Foreward variously and contradictorily denominates Humbert's "Confession" as "memoir," "novel," and "case history," arguing for its ethical import as "a tragic tale tending unswervingly to nothing less than a moral apotheosis" (pp. 6-7). In the author's afterward headed "Vladimir Nabokov on a book intitled Lolita," which might loosely be regarded as a kind of closing frame, the novelist (or maybe just "an impersonation of Vladimir Nabokov talking about his own book"(p. 282)) takes back what his persona said about the book's potential

"ethical impact," asserting instead that Lolita has no moral in tow. "For me a work of fiction exists only insofar as it affords . . . aesthetic states of being where art . . . is the norm" (p. 286). This dichotomy between the ethical and the aesthetic intention is just one of many such antinomies in the novel, the central ones being perhaps lust/love, fact/imagination, time/eternity.

Humbert Humbert, in both novel and play, seems closer to his original creator's (that is, Nabokov's) claim than he does to John Ray's in that he lives and works and has his being primarily in an aesthetic rather than an ethical realm. To borrow Henry Scott Stokes's formulation from a different context, we could say that Humbert's overriding "impulse (is) to aestheticize every aspect of existence" ("Lost Samurai," *Harper's*, October 1985) in the sense of making a work of art out of his life. Yet aestheticizing experience involves, of necessity, turning people into objects (art or some other kind). Through penning his "Confession/memoir/novel/case history," Nabokov's protagonist hopes not only to "save" his own "soul" (pp. 280-81)--employing "articulate art" as a "very local palliative" for his "putrefaction" (p. 258)--but to make "immortal" through "the refuge of art" (p. 281) both Lolita and himself, sharers in that immortality through the efficacy of the word. If, as Humbert claims, "sex is but the ancilla of art (p. 236), might not the entire memoir be seen, in fact, as his totally fanciful imaginative construct: fiction-making as a way of securing through art what he lost in life--his first love Annabel Leigh? Only through this means can he recapture the past.

Not that either Nabokov's novel or Albee's play is lacking in a moral center such as John Ray, psychiatrist, claims for it. In the first, it comes through Humbert's realization of ruined innocence: he had broken irretrievably something within Lolita, absenting "her voice (forever) from that concord . . . of children at play (p. 280). Although the play dispenses with the novel's infinitely poignant mention of Lolita's

"sobs in the night--every night, every night" (p. 160), Albee renders Humbert's retribution more immediate than his source's restitution of Lolita through art; camouflaging his own hurt, Albee's Humbert lies about the true nature of his feelings so that Lolita will not suffer from the knowledge of having betrayed him: "Well, Dolly, it doesn't really matter, for, as you say, I had everything I really wanted. I never wanted your love--your heart, your soul, as you put it. All I ever cared about was your body. It was pure, simple lust my sweet; just that. Us dirty old men don't love" (*Lolita*, Dramatists Play Service, 1984, p. 79). This from a man earlier consumed with self and selfishness, continually denying Lolita's personhood by possessively claiming "She's . . . mine" (pp. 10, 31), "my treasure" (p. 35).

In Nabokov's novel, Humbert Humbert, while awaiting the start of his trial for Quilty's murder, recalls (and relives) the past at least partly, as we have seen, as a confession to purge his conscience. Although Albee does not entirely jettison the retrospective nature of Humbert's narrative, he does considerably mute it--the movement from present to past here being effected by a simple shift in tense at the end of Scene One rather than at the end of the Prologue. Nor is there any very clear demarcation of the arrival back in the present at the play's end. Furthermore, in Albee's "translation"--to adopt his own term--we now no longer have the sense so much of Humbert as storyteller, but rather of Humbert as central character in a fiction told by another, namely by a Certain Gentleman. Despite instances of direct address by both Humbert and A Certain Gentleman that involve the audience actively in the fiction-making conceit, we as audience sense that what unfolds before us is the process of the imaginative creation of the characters and the play that we are watching. So the former emphasis on art as "palliative" falls away almost entirely. Rather than a novel focusing upon Humbert and Lolita, what is erected in its place is a play about Humbert and his

creator: a conflict between the artist and his recalcitrant creation.

This major shift in emphasis is effected through the dominant "equivalency" Albee devises in adapting Lolita to the stage. In place of John Ray, Ph.D., he gives us the interlocutor named "A Certain Gentleman," part portrait of Nabokov and part, very definitely, "impersonation" of Albee himself. In the opening narrative frame, A Certain Gentleman, who announces himself as an author of "precision, dedication, and . . . talent . . . burdened with the kind of mind . . . incapable of pandering to the public taste," decries the decline of culture as evidenced in its "drugstore fiction, . . . little better than drama, art as commodity"; and yet he admits to occasionally "yearn(ing) . . . to indulge in trash for trash's sake" (p. 5). He also confesses--and this will be familiar to readers of Pirandello--that the character, once imagined, assumes a mind and will of its own, going off in "directions I am not altogether certain I care to deal with" (p. 6). This tug of wills--the character rebelling against the designs of the author, the author's pique when threatened with loss of absolute control--becomes an ongoing tension throughout the play; ultimately, it eventuates in A Certain Gentleman's throwing up his hands in despair and admitting "There's nothing to do with him [Humbert]" (p. 82).

This emphasizes, then, the play's highly self-reflective nature, foregrounding the making of fictions and the artificialities involved in the making of fictions. For not only is Humbert the protagonist of A Certain Gentleman's story, but he is likewise cast as audience (and critic) looking at that story and the way it unfolds dramatically, as when he charges his author with "taxing credulity" during the scene (I, 4) of Charlotte's wake--which culminates with her "sit(ting) up in her coffin; rage suffusing her face" (p. 37). Yet the highly self-aware and self-critical Certain Gentleman has already beaten his character to the draw, shrugging off the mechanics and exigencies of

his play (things like Charlotte's discovery of Humbert's diary before she dies falling down the stairs while she threatens to kill him) as "Plot, you know" (p. 31). He apologizes for "a most peculiar" scene between Quilty dressed as a female social worker and Humbert as Harold Haze that "doesn't advance the plot or anything" (p. 54) and then forces "a turn in the plot" (p. 57) when Humbert gets out of hand and threatens to marry Lolita.

The stage version is self-referential in still another way. In place of Nabokov's brilliant play with language, Albee cleverly yet somewhat feebly works in allusions to both Nabokov's writings and his own: Humbert's "passion burns with a Pale Fire.... but one night's gambit" (p. 42), while the young Man, after a menage a trois, implores "Speak, memory!" (p. 66); Humbert himself, further commenting on his passion, manages in one line references to three of Albee's other plays: "That even though it is the American Dream--if we only admitted it--it's held in a delicate balance and will soon be all over" (pp. 42-43). When Lolita offers herself to Humbert, spreading her arms wide so her robe falls open and off, she replicates, as Albee indicates, a famous bit of stage business from Tiny Alice (p. 44); and when Humbert suggests that A Certain Gentleman should be "list(ed) . . . among the Absurdists," the latter smilingly responds, "All in good time" (p. 45).

Albee's Humbert, like Nabokov's protagonist, attempts to control time by freezing the object of his obsession in the ever-present now of art. Believing that he has, through Lolita, "found the past" (i. e., Annabel), he seeks to "suspend time" (p. 51) by keeping Lolita forever a nymphet, forever with him: "Time must stop; she must never grow older" (p. 46), he implores A Certain Gentleman. The character, however, does not share in the wisdom of the author about "how ephemeral all things are, how mutable," and for this we should "Pity him" (p. 60). But if the sexual act that ends Scene Five somehow seems to permit Humbert to

escape the confines of time ("And time stopped" [p. 47], A Certain Gentleman tells us as he manipulates the intermission), even the fictionalizing artist, while theoretically he can, in practice cannot finally stop time at just any moment: his audience demands appropriate closure, and his characters do as well--as Pirandello again has shown us. Albee's Humbert seeks ultimately to control time in this other way that makes him like the audience: he wants to share in A Certain Gentleman's--the creator/god's--limitless knowledge, demanding to know the end and its consequences. The altered focus which results from Albee's major equivalency of A Certain Gentleman's Prologue for John Ray's Forward resides precisely in this: the play, unlike the novel, is primarily concerned with man as finite and contingent, not only in the sense of being subject to time, but limited in knowledge and freedom as well.

In one sense, A Certain Gentleman as plotter and "pull[er of] a few strings" (p. 7) is equivalent to Aubrey McFate, as Nabokov's Humbert "dub[s] that devil of [his]" (p. 53). In other words, a character can have at best the illusion of freedom when it comes to living out his own life. Furthermore, for the fully realized character, his life as imagined by the artist becomes the only reality: these things are not made . . . up"; they did "happen" (p. 69). And while the audience may violate the character's integrity, limiting his perceptions by their own, judging his actions by their ethical values, to do this is to deny the only possible truth available to modern man--subjective truth, either real or imagined (or real because imagined); as A Certain Gentleman concedes to Humbert Humbert, "No one doubts your Lolita; no one doubts your bliss, or your loss" (p. 70). Does anything, finally, have any existence outside the mind imagining it? If not committed to words, what was imagined will cease to exist, "vanishing" just as it had "appeared" (pp. 80-81). And when the obsessively dreamed-of object is lost, it may seem solipsistically like death and annihilation:

"The world has closed; there is no sense, no reason any more; the light of my life has gone out" (p. 80).

If this sounds like a variation on the analogy between the artist and God and between the character and the creature, it is: Humbert Humbert is to the mind of A Certain Gentleman as we, the audience, are to the mind of God--though A Certain Gentleman is more playful and devilish than any traditionally conceived beneficent deity. And if all this sounds strangely familiar to readers of Pirandello, it is that, too. Yet Albee's Lolita takes some of Pirandello's epistemological and ontological implications one step further. In Pirandello's "Six Characters in Search of an Author," for instance, the characters, like the audience, are unfinished: they, like us, do not know their end, or how they will reach it, and this is cause for anxiety. They (and we) lack in life, in other words, what they (and we) need and get from art--closure. (Perhaps, in fact, we find closure in art, though illusory, so psychologically satisfying because we are happily condemned to go on without it in life, where, ironically, to close is to die.) In Albee's play, though, Humbert, as both actor in and audience at his own story, insists on knowing the end. Man craves the control of the artist. Knowing the end, however, does not bring rest; instead, the anxiety remains. Humbert, given a preview of how A Certain Gentleman will perfunctorily tie up the loose ends through Lolita's death in childbirth and her baby boy's death "an hour or so" afterwards (p. 91), dies not in a masturbatory paroxysm as A Certain Gentleman seems to have considered but in a last defiance at his loss: "My sin; my soul. Lo-lee-ta" (p. 92). He dies knowing more of his fictionalized end than Nabokov's Humbert knows of his, but he dies leaving less behind since he, unlike his prototype, has not written down his life as "Confession/memoir/novel/case history." Nor has A Certain Gentleman, who is simply sharing with us as audience a "creation of [his] mind" (p. 5) yet written anything down. He is still suspended in the process of

imagining, at a stage of gestation, so his Humbert does not die into the eternity of art but into the timelessness of annihilation: "And so it all ends, swept away. Autumn? A sudden breeze? Swept away like leaves" (p. 92)--the question marks perhaps a desperate grasping at not letting go.

In the artistic process, the merely imagined has no facticity, though it does have boundless freedom. If closure for characters (and audience) might be satisfying or even transcendent, for the artist closure means the end--at least temporarily--of imagining, of fictionalizing, of spinning out the object of his own obsession. Once the artist commits himself to closure, his own freedom is circumscribed. By giving us the process of A Certain Gentleman's imaginings, rather than the product of Humbert's authorship, Albee has shifted the focus of his Lolita away from the lover's obsession and loss to the artist's. He converts the lover's travail to the artist's travail--and either one entails loss, since Lolita is to Nabokov Humbert what Humbert is to A Certain Gentleman; what, in fact, any work of creation (novel, play) is to the artist. Nabokov's Humbert loses his Lolita and Albee's A Certain Gentleman his Humbert, just as any creative artist must ultimately lose the object of his imagination: through never writing it down; through the disparity between the unlimited imagination and finite artistry; or through finally letting it go into the hearts and minds of an audience.

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Theory and Anti-Theory:
The Crisis of Theoretical Foundations

I. The Origins of Anti-theory

In an introduction to his 1952 anthology, *Critics and Criticism: Ancient and Modern*, R. S. Crane raised the problem of the status of the humanities casting doubt upon the "existing intellectual state of the art, that is to say, upon the sufficiency of the principles and devices in vogue among its practitioners to a full discovery of the values that lie within its scope" (4). By comparison with the experimental disciplines, Crane notes, we lack "most of the compelling motives to reexamination of our basic premises and procedures." To rectify this state of affairs, Crane suggests "subjecting the principles employed in the various humanistic arts to a systematic critique of their powers and limitations." Such, he maintains, is the aim of his anthology: "To explore the possibility of a general critique of literary criticism . . . such as might yield objective criteria for interpreting the diversities and oppositions among critics and for judging the comparative merits of rival critical schools" (5).

In an essay on the status of criticism's diverse parties twenty-five years after Crane's remarks, Rene Wellek concludes that "There appears to be a tug of war between the main trends--judicial, personal, scientific, historical--a tension which was still continuing unabated in the 1970's" (Hernadi, xiv). The theoretical anarchy remains. Moreover, Crane's hope for theoretical foundations sounds far too optimistic for what theory has come to mean since 1952. Indeed, since Crane's essay, theory has undergone a radical

transformation through three stages: foundational hope, negative theory, and anti-theory.

As recent decades have witnessed the emergence of a variety of theoretical influences on literary criticism, the profession of criticism has responded with an interest in the status and possibilities of theory. At times, optimism has been expressed in so-called 'foundational' projects such as Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, which hoped to put criticism on a scientific footing. At other times, optimism has been expressed in even broader interdisciplinary movements such as structuralism, which, for Roland Barthes, gives us, not man-the-discoverer-of-truth, but "l'homme fabricateur de sens" (218). In its most ambitious moments, this foundational theory-hope has sought a single set of theoretical principles which might yield a meta-system to integrate the diverse theoretical threads of criticism's pluralism. One such project has gone under the name of "general hermeneutics" which seeks the interpretive rules which must be true in all cases. This version of the foundational hope began with Schliermacher and continues in our time in the work of E. D. Hirsch.

The recent versions of this foundational hope were not long unchallenged. Close behind the rise of interest in "the sciences of man," there arose a counter-movement--occasionally from the same people that brought us structuralism--which seemed to turn the theory-hope on its head. Whereas for structuralism, the abstract versatility of "significant difference" promised a comprehensive foundation for uniting the human science, the unlimited potential for generating significant differences in any given text seemed to threaten all interpretation with indeterminacy. For the seeker of theoretical foundations, the critical practice which has come to be known as 'deconstruction' seemed to undo with the play of differences everything which the universality of structuralism promised. Where the structuralist method appeared to leap across national, disciplinary, historical, and most other boundaries to

show what signifying features all human artifacts had in common, deconstruction arrived to demonstrate how unstable the most mundane linguistic and symbolic abstractions turned out to be under close scrutiny.

While the influence of deconstruction often took the form of skeptical practices, subversive interpretations, and equivocating analyses, it also gave rise to a more general skepticism about the possibility of theory as the foundation which had been hoped for, the ultimately unifying system of interpretation and criticism. Positive theory found itself confronted by 'negative theory,' the position which is constituted by the more general claims against the very possibility of a foundational theory. Such claims assert the necessarily arbitrary, conventional, irrational, or random aspects of meaning production. It is the necessary and universal character of this new breed of skepticism (of which Paul de Man may be the foremost example) which makes it resemble positive theory stood on its head.

Given this swing of the dialectical pendulum , the search for theoretical foundations for criticism and interpretation has yielded an often expressed polarization between those who championed the search for such a theory--the positive theorists--and those who argued that such a theory is impossible--the negative theorists.

Furthermore, within the last few years, a new variant strain has developed, throwing the status of theory into even greater disarray. Where the positive theorists argue for the cause of theory, and where the negative theorists argue that such a hope is impossible of satisfaction, a new group of "anti-theorists" argue that the whole theoretical question has been misconceived. While it is true, they argue, that the positive theorists cannot succeed, the proper response to them is not negative theory, for this only makes the same mistakes of theory in a disguised form. Negative theory, that is, merely turns positive theory on its head with equally theoretical pronouncements about the limits of theory,

whereas the real answer to the problem is to eliminate theory altogether. The polarization of theory, they submit, merely perpetuates the same theoretical errors in inverse terms. The answer, rather, is to stop doing theory at all.

Although the arguments of the anti-theory debate seem remote at points, what is at stake affects our whole conception of literary and critical theory and what we expect to accomplish by it. For the anti-theorists, the error of theory is the hope of governing critical practice from the outside. The discovery of the true foundational system is supposed to allow for the theoretician to objectively adjudicate between the claims of all critical practice in questions of critical legitimacy. The relation between the theorist and the practical critic would be as the philosopher-lawgiver to the craftsman-practitioner in Plato's republic. This notion of foundational theory standing above and beyond practice is just the notion anti-theory rejects. Anti-theory wants to save critical practice from foundational theory by saying that since foundational theory is impossible, we should stop doing theory.

Unhappily, judging by the various and furious responses to the position of anti-theory, this attempt at a clean sweep of the problem by banishing theory from the new republic has only raised more dust. In fact, a closer look at the genesis of the anti-theory position indicates that the problem of theory has not been understood in the same terms by those who defend and by those who attack theory. Indeed, they are usually arguing over two different senses of theory, one much narrower than the other. Those who attack theory are, by their own definition, attacking "foundational" theories, theories which attempt to comprehend the whole of the fields of criticism and interpretation. The defenders of theory, on the other hand, offer arguments--for theory and against the anti-theorists--which do not seem either to presuppose or commit to foundational theories. The defenders of theory, that is, are usually content to consider theory in its pluralistic

and empirical array, and are staunchly committed to preventing the discrediting of all theory on the basis of its more extreme foundational exponents. The crux of the anti-theory debate, then, is this: If the anti-theorists do not have a persuasive cause for identifying critical theory with foundational versions, then their articulation of the question of theory is only distracting us from whatever more acceptable view of theory might be found.

The crux of this miscommunication is not easily dispensed with for the anti-theorists are quite explicit about the need to define theory as foundational. This feature of the anti-theorists' position is an unhappy route, however, for several reasons, not one of which can be discussed here. Perhaps the best place to begin a critique of anti-theory is with a reexamination of the origin of its anti-foundationalism in the philosophy of pragmatism, from which it borrows its arguments. For when we look at this origin we note a curious irony. As we saw above, the point of anti-theory is to suggest that there can be no theory outside of practice, a point which is made with pragmatist philosophical arguments. Coincidentally, these pragmatist arguments originated in a critique of foundationalism which was intended to show that there can be no philosophical practice without theory. Though pragmatism, like anti-theory, stresses the inescapability of practice, pragmatism had critiqued earlier foundational philosophy by showing how such giants as Kant, Descartes, and Compte erred in trying to find a philosophical starting point that was beyond the liabilities of theory.

II. The Pragmatist Origins of Anti-Foundationalism

Anglo-American anti-foundationalism was invented by America's greatest philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce, under the name of 'pragmatism.' Pragmatism

was an answer to the traditional view of philosophy as the quest for an absolute, universal, rational, unambiguous, and comprehensive system of thought which could preside authoritatively over all more specialized domains of thought. With a characteristically American orientation for getting things done, Peirce proposed a view of philosophical authority which was based on results produced rather than on speculative first principles. As William James later put it, pragmatism is "The attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities; and looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts." Pragmatism puts an end to a tradition of idealism-first which extends from the Greeks, through Christian philosophy, and into modern rationalism. Pragmatism credits ideas primarily according to what they do, not primarily according to what we think must be true about them in the abstract.

Foundationalism in literary criticism resembles this traditional view of philosophy insofar as it seeks a system whose authority precedes our practices and authorizes practice from without. Likewise, in attacking foundational theory anti-theorists believe that they carry on the pragmatic spirit--which is why anti-theorists are sometimes called "new pragmatists." On the other hand, though Peirce wished to reject the old foundational conception of philosophy--which would have discovered a system of philosophical authority prior to all practice--Peirce never suggested either that theory is foundationalism or that we abandon theory altogether. In fact, Peirce repeatedly referred to pragmatism as a theory, and his most cogent critical strategy against foundational philosophy was to demonstrate that they contradicted themselves by attempting to deny their theoretical roots.

Thus when we go back to Peirce's original anti-foundational arguments, we discover something quite surprising in light of the claims of the "new pragmatism": for Peirce's anti-foundationalism was, in fact, a defense, not a repudiation, of the necessity of

theory. When Peirce attacked Kant's system of a priori truths, Descartes' method of radical doubt, and the claims of nineteenth century positivism, he always did so by demonstrating that they tried to be foundational by denying their theoretical character. Take, for example, that most famous claim: "I think therefore I am." Descartes' point is that this is a thought which is immediately true, self-evident, that is, it cannot be thought and not be recognized as necessarily true. Being all this, it escapes the weakness of theory and hypothesis, since it cannot be understood and be doubted at the same time. It is not theoretical but immediately true. With this thought, Descartes believed that he had escaped the limitations of theory in his discovery of the most secure philosophical foundation.

On Peirce's analyses, foundationalism in its traditional philosophical mode was always liable to the same kind of weakness typified by Descartes' famous dictum: the weakness of claiming an authority was necessary, universal, and true before either theory or practice, an authority which would be known to be true without any inference, because inferences are always fallible. In seeking necessary a priori truth, such arguments attempt to deny the fact that they are mere theories by claiming immediate truth. Peirce's critiques of such traditional foundational arguments are nothing more than demonstrations that foundational arguments are themselves only hypotheses that are part of larger theories. Thus, according to Peirce's critique of traditional foundationalism, the foundational error is not that of being theory--which all philosophy is--rather, the error is to want to escape theory with immediate and necessary truth. As with arguments of the new pragmatists, the thrust of Peirce's original pragmatist critiques is to show that foundationalism errs by trying to deny its own theoretical roots.

The anti-theorists are not inconsistent to criticize foundationalism for trying to govern practice from the

outside, for according to their pragmatism, there is no judgment without practice. All theoretical authority, that is, derives from the particular effects which all theories are designed to achieve in particular contexts. The error of the anti-theorists is to think that because foundationalism is an extreme form of theory, that foundationalism is somehow itself identifiable with theory. But this is to mistake the species for the genus. In fact, as Peirce shows, foundationalism is contradictory just because it is a theory that wants to deny its theoretical liabilities. Thus, traditional foundationalism must fail just because no philosophy can escape theory any more than any thought can escape its practical and historical context.

Thus, pragmatism was born in a demonstration that any attempt at universal philosophical foundations must contradict its own dependence on theory. Ironically, the new pragmatists have interpreted the anti-foundational project not as a demonstration of the interdependence of theory and practice, as Peirce has shown a hundred years ago, but as the subversion of theory as a whole. In doing so, the anti-theorists betray they own theoretical roots, the same pragmatic theory on which they stand.

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"The literature of the fantastic leaves us with two notions--reality and literature--each one as unsatisfactory as the other." Tzvetan Todorov

There exists in modern fantastic literature a reluctance to present definitive versions of "truth" or "reality." This reluctance, or perhaps inability since for contemporary novelists truth and reality have become rather elusive, is mirrored in its own practice as a linguistic system. The fantastic, being structured upon contradiction and ambivalence, concerns itself with that which cannot be said, that which evades articulation, or that which is represented as unreal or untrue. Its central concern is the relation between and the nature of the real and unreal, and it makes explicit the problems of establishing reality and meaning through a literary text.

One of the significant and central means of articulating truth or reality in post-Romantic fantasies is the realization of modern writers that it is impossible to verify events. There are basically two reasons for this. First, the modern writer posits a world where perception becomes increasingly confused --what we see is not necessarily what we get. Second, signs and signals in a fragmented, chaotic, irrational universe are open to multiple and contradictory interpretations; consequently, truth tends to vanish into the text, and meanings recede indefinitely. This lack of signification that has a distinct meaning is the major defining feature of the fantastic, and that gap between sign and meaning is anticipated by many post-Romantic works in the fantastic mode. In *Molloy*, Samuel Beckett registered a final disjunction between

word and object. "There could be no things but nameless things, no names but thingless names." (Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*) In other words, Beckett says that modernist fantastic language is an expression of a severance of the connecting lines of meaning. Beckett's division, this gap between signifier and signified, works first in the presentation of "nameless things." Nineteenth century fantasy and horror tales are full of these "nameless things." MacDonald's *Lilith*, Bulwer-Lytton's *Zanoni*, Maupassant's *Horla*, Poe's tales, and the beginning of Stoker's *Dracula* all use as means of apprehension the something unnameable that can have no adequate articulation. The "it", the "thing", the "something" can only exist through suggestion and implication. H. P. Lovecraft particularly in the early twentieth century stressed this impossibility of naming the unnameable presence; in too many stories to identify, Lovecraft finally reverts to the "thing" which can only be registered in the text as absence and shadow. The endeavor to visualize and verbalize the non-visual and the non-verbal, the attempt to somehow get beyond language, is one which inevitably falls short; it can only draw linguistic attention to the difficulty of utterance. One example from *The Mountains of Madness* illustrates my point.

> The words reaching the reader can never suggest the awfulness of the sight itself. It crippled our consciousness completely . . . what we did see . . . was the utter objective embodiment of the fantastic novelist's "thing that should not be" . . . a terrible, indescribable thing. (pp. 106-107)

The Transition of Juan Romero, a Lovecraft fragment, works similarly.

> . . . I had arrived at the abyss . . . I peered over the edge of that chasm which no light could fathom. . . At first I beheld nothing but a seething blur of luminosity; but then shapes, all infinitely

distant, began to detach themselves from the confusion, and I saw . . . but God! I dare not tell you what I saw! . . .

Lovecraft as a product of the pulp magazines of the twenties might well be only a gifted hack, but his fiction does make explicit (his criticism makes nothing explicit) the problem of naming all that is designated unreal.

On the other side of Beckett's dichotomy there are those "thingless names," recurring in the fantastic as words apprehended as empty signs, signification without meaning. Lewis Carroll's boojum and jabberwocky, Poe's Tekeli-li, Lovecraft's Cthulhu and Nyarlathotep are all signifiers that lack referents. They are non-sense words indicating nothing, unsecured by the weight of signification. We can say, then, that a primary difference between realistic narrative and fantastic narrative is the gap between the signifier and what is signified; in the first the gap is closed, while in the second it is left open. From Lewis Carroll through Kafka up to modern writers of fantasy like Barth, Burgess, and Borges there is a progressive dissolution of any real or predictable relation between signifier and signified. Fantasy consequently becomes a literature of separation, a discourse lacking an object, which foreshadows the twentieth century focus on problems of literature's signifying activity found in contemporary mainstream writers like Nabokov, Hawkes, and Pynchon and the anti-realistic texts of the French and the Theatre of the Absurd. Sartre himself, in an essay on Maurice Blanchot's Kafka-esque fantasy *Aminadab*, defines the fantastic as a language of peculiarly empty utterances. The non-signifying signs, Sartre claims, no longer lead anywhere and represent nothing. They are signs, tokens, signifiers, superficially full, but leading toward a terrible emptiness. For example, the object world of the fantastic in Kafka's fiction is one of semiotic excess but semantic vacuity. Thus Sartre writes of this

world, long before Barth postulated his "Literature of Exhaustion," as being one which is pregnant with emptiness:

> The law of the fantastic condemns it to encounter emptiness only. These instruments are . . . not meant to serve men, but rather to manifest unremittingly an evasive, preposterous finality. This accounts for the labyrinth of corridors, doors, and staircases that lead to nothing, signposts that lead to nothing, the innumerable signs that line the road and that mean nothing. In the "topsy-turvy" world, the means is isolated and is posed for its own sake. (Sartre's essay on *Aminabad)*

The fantastic as mode, then, is consistently moving towards an area of non-signification. It does this either by attempting to articulate the unnameable, those nameless things of horror fiction, or by establishing, through "thingless names," a disjunction between word and meaning. In either case, the distance between signifier and signified linguistically dramatizes the impossibility of defining meaning or absolute reality. Fantasy consequently has great difficulty in moving towards metaphor or allegory. Since it tends toward the non-conceptual, it takes metaphorical constructions literally and resists the conceptualizations of allegory and symbolism. Donne's metaphor "I am every dead thing" literally is true in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*. It can be argued, justifiably, that in the fantastic mode objects do not stand for or suggest other objects; they literally become those others, metamorphosizing from one shape to another in a permanent state of change, flux, and instability.

Three particular things in fantastic texts work together especially to suggest this movement towards non-signification and non-meaning. The topographical character of the represented world is of a completely different kind in fantastic worlds than in the imagined

universes of the marvelous. Fantastic topography is in opposition to the marvelous in that the first is relatively bleak, empty, and less definable as places. The colorful fullness of what Auden and Tolkien term secondary universes is replaced by spaces, white, grey, or shady blanknesses. Movement into a marvelous realm, Morris's *The Wood Beyond the World*, Baum's *Oz*, Lewis's *Narnia*, Leiber's *Nehwon*, and Tolkien's "Middle Earth," transports the reader into an autonomous, duplicated cosmos; in other words, they build up another universe out of this one. These worlds, like the ones in *Gulliver's Travels*, are linked to the real world through an allegorical association, an emblem of things to be avoided or embraced. By contrast, fantastic landscapes are non-conceptual. Many of the strange worlds of modern fantasy are located in, through, or beyond the mirror. They are spaces behind the visible, dark areas from which anything can emerge; consequently, the modern fantastic suggests a preoccupation with the problems of vision and visibility. All of these visual objects--mirrors, glasses, reflections, portraits, eyes--tend to effect a transformation of the familiar into the unfamiliar. Lewis Carroll, E. T. A. Hoffman, H. G. Wells, George MacDonald all write fantasies relying heavily on phobias related to the eyes, loss of sight, and the inability to see things clearly. Similarly, they write about apertures opening into regions found in spaces between the familiar and known. Frequently the mirror is employed to introduce the Doppleganger, with the reflection in the glass becoming the subject's other, as in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Unlike marvelous, secondary worlds which construct alternate realities, the shady worlds of the fantastic construct nothing. They are empty, becoming empty, or dissolving. Opposed to the rounded, three-dimensional worlds of the marvelous, the emptiness of fantastic topography, rather than fulfilling desire, perpetuates it by insisting upon absence, lack, the non-seen, and the

unseeable. The problem of vision is a central thematic concern of the fantastic. Modern culture tends to equate the real with the visible, thus giving dominance of sight over the other sensory organs; conversely, that which cannot be seen, which is invisible, is equated with the unreal. "I see" becomes synonomous with "I understand."

Another of the frequent landscapes of fantasy has been the hollow world. Morris's *The Hollow Land*, for example, is an empty world, a place of absence, surrounded by the real and tangible world. Finally, the classical unities of space, time, and character are fractured, threatened with dissolution, in fantastic texts. Kafka's *The Burrow*, Peake's *Gormenghast*, Borges's *Labyrinths*, and LeGuin's *City of Illusions* all tend to narrow space into an enclosure where the fantastic becomes the norm. These enclosures run throughout fantastic texts since 1800. From the threatening castles of Gothic fiction through the threatening architecture of the grotesque to the metropolitan nightmare in Dickens, Kafka, and Pynchon, all tend to rely on the Gothic limitation of space as an enclosure of the highest transformation and terror. Examples are endless, but Stoker's *Dracula*, Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, Poe's *House of Usher*, and Hitchcock's *Psycho* should be sufficient to indicate the pervasiveness of this mode.

Chronological time is also fragmented in the fantastic. Past, present, and future lose their historical sequence and dissolve into what might be termed an eternal present. There is the confusion between history and validity as in *The Sot-Weed Factor*, *Little Big Man*, and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Moments become isolated in what Fowles has termed "a grey, formless infinity." Fantasies of immortality have become increasingly popular in post-Romantic fiction. Dali's limp and dissolving watches are artistic images which indicate the contemporary belief in time as flexible and fluid. Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* passes through time, time is suspended in Nerval's *Aurelia*,

and Kafka's *Metamorphosis* slowly erases clock time. Just as the fantastic views the space between reality as central, so are the intervals between hours and minutes a special concept of the fantastic in relation to time. Both are simply attempts to see as things the spaces between things.

The themes of the fantastic focus especially on this problem of making visible the unseen, of articulating the un-sayable; in fact, fantasy's central thematic issue concerns the uncertainty as to the nature of reality. These themes can be clustered into several related areas: (1) invisibility, (2) transformation, (3) dualism, and (4) good versus evil. Each of these in turn generates certain recurrent motifs: ghosts, shadows, vampires, werewolves, doubles, fragmented personalities, reflections, monsters, beasts, and cannibals. Also derived from these thematic concerns are the abnormal psychological states usually categorized as hallucination, dream, insanity, and paranoia. Todorov divides these themes in fantastic literature into two groups: the first is constructed around the relationship of the individual to the world. That world becomes structured through the *I*, the consciousness, which sees, through the eye, and interprets self in relation to a world of objects. These themes revolving around self deal with problems of vision and perception. Fantasies in the second group deal with problems generated by desire, by the unconscious. Sadism, necrophilia, incest, murder all make explicit the unconscious desires structuring interrelationship, or the interaction of the I and the other on a human level. It is not suprising that Todorov among others has insisted upon the primacy of language in this group of fantastic themes, for it is always language which gives form and structure to relationships. All of these themes remain inextricably bound to the signs which either signify meaning or signify nothing.

Starting from Todorov's two groupings, those dealing with the I and the other, it is possible to see two

prevailing myths in the modern fantastic. In the first, the threat or the source of otherness is within the self. The origin of the fantastic emanates from the subject usually through excessive knowledge or the misapplication of the human will. Too extreme an application of this human will or thought becomes destructive and creates dangers, fears, and terrors which can only be countered by correcting the original sin of overreaching or the misapplication of knowledge, science, or technology. Examples include Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Poe's *Ligeia*, and King's *The Shining*; however, the archetypal story centering on the fantastic within the self is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.*

In the second kind of myth, the fantastic originates in a source external to the self; in other words, the self suffers an attack of some sort which makes it a part of the other. These tales generally involve invasion, metamorphosis, and fusion in which an external force enters the subject, changes the self irreversibly, and usually gives the self the power to initiate similar transformations. Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is a good example, but the archetype there is Bram Stoker's *Dracula.*

In the Frankenstein type of myth, self degenerates into other through self-induced metamorphosis. The subject's alienation stems from himself and results in the splitting or multiplying of identities; in the Dracula mythic structure, otherness is established by fusing self with something external, producing some new form or "other" reality. Both myths push towards a state of undifferentiation of self from other. These two mythical patterns dominate and determine the modern fantastic.

That which is not seen and not said, non-signified, cannot be known, and it remains as a dark, terrifying area from which any object or figure can enter at any time. The relation of the individual self to the world, to others, and to objects ceases to be safe; and problems

of apprehension, both in the sense of perceiving and of fearing, become central to the modern fantastic.

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Story by Dennis E. Minor

A Time to Dig Down

A person might wonder what all this digging back here has to do with someone being sick, unless of course that person dies and I'm digging a grave. That's not what this is; it's not that serious but I'm going to tell you about it anyway, why we're digging. It all started with a trip we took a couple of months ago down to the hospital. Grandma was kind of sick. We first noticed it when she didn't pay attention to the soap operas but just laid around the house. We knew something was up the night we had the big thunderstorm. Usually thunder and lightning really stirs her up and she paces all over the house. But this time she just laid around as usual.

So anyway, Ma decided to check Grandma over to see if she could tell what was wrong. The only thing she could find was a sort of bulge on Grandma's side that was about as big as a pear and mostly purpley color. We wasn't sure what to think. Since really old people get kind of funny looking anyway, we didn't know if this kind of thing wasn't natural. But Ma couldn't remember seeing one on her Grandma and I didn't remember seeing any on the old guys down at the creek, so we decided that maybe she was sick and not just slowly passing away. We didn't know what to do with her. None of us ever got very sick and usually you could drink a little and wrap up and take it easy and in a few days you was o.k. But Grandma took it easy all the time anyway and never got too cold and always had enough to drink, so we was at a dead end. Ma said that maybe we ought to take her to the

hospital in the big town. One of her sisters had been there once and had written her about it. Her sister had got well after that, but she died later.

Well, the hospital is quite a ways so we decided that all of us should go in case we had any trouble. All of us is me and Ma and Grandma and Sammy. Sammy's twenty and not really a blood relative like the rest of us, but he is like a part of the family anyway. He came up to live with us about ten years ago when his Ma and Pa was burned up in a fire over on their farm. I was already growed up then and was over there after it happened. People figured that the chimney to the wood stove had caught the roof on fire. Sammy's room was furtherest from the stove and he had hopped out the window and had seen the whole thing. Then he came to live with us cause Ma was such good friends with his folks. So me and Sammy lived together on the farm but it was different to him than it was to me, I guess cause I always had most of my family around and he didn't have none of his real ones. The place where his Ma and Pa growed up, somebody else lived there now.

So I got the car ready, an old Dodge automatic with a lot of miles on it and a busted speedometer but it still ran pretty good. I checked the oil and the water and the transmission and went into town and got some gas and aired up the tires. It was ready to go. I was gonna drive. Ma can, though, since the car is an automatic.

Anyhow, we got off about ten in the morning. We figured to get there by maybe five in the afternoon and get Grandma in the hospital that day or whatever they would do with her. We rolled along, making pretty good time. About noon we ate some fried chicken and drank some tea we brought along. Grandma didn't eat much but she ate some. About one we got on down into the piney woods on a hilly, curvy road when we ran into a cloudburst. It rained so hard I couldn't hardly see. The chewed-up windshield wipers on the Dodge didn't do much and we had to creep along to keep out of the ditches. And it wouldn't

let up. Then we crept down into this one little dip that had filled up with water and hit it just fast enough to splash water all up under the car. That got the motor wet. It started missing, chugged along for a little ways, and then died.

After a few minutes of sitting there, Ma said that she knew cousin Shorty lived around there and she thought it might be just a mile or so down the road. Maybe he could come and give us some help. There wasn't nothing else to do, so I said I'd go look for him. Sammy said he'd go along too. I think he would have felt uneasy staying there with Ma and Grandma. So we jumped out in the rain and started running down the road. We got soaked in about a half a minute so we quit running. Then we had some luck. A pickup stopped to give us a lift. It was driven by two colored boys and so didn't have no room for us in the front. I'm not saying I wanted to sit in the front. They said they was going by Shorty's place so we climbed in the back and took off, wet as hell. Me and Sammy sat down up against the cab and shut our eyes, trying to get a little dry.

Before we'd gone a mile, the truck started slowing down and then stopped. Me and Sammy looked up. We was in front of a colored beer joint. The two in the truck said they was going in for a while and they would drop us off later. They said we could come in if we wanted to. We figured it was drier in there than out so we went in, feeling funny.

It was dark in there; we was the only white boys and everybody looked at us a little strange but nobody did anything. They was all kind of happy, talking about cars and farming and women and laughing a lot. Me and Sammy sat down in a corner and looked down at the table and pretty soon everybody forgot about us. After we'd been there about a half an hour this tall, bony, older colored guy came in, dressed up pretty nice in a suit and hat. Everybody knew him and was talking to him. Somebody asked him where he was going. "On my vacation" he said. 'Where?" this young

one asked him. "To Alabama" he said. "Sure enough?" this young one said. The older one kind of drew back and grinned and said "Man, I'd have to be crazy to go to Alabama for a vacation." Then they all laughed like hell. Me and Sammy didn't know if we should laugh or not, so we kind of grinned and then looked back down at the table.

Well, everybody was looking at him like he should talk some more. "Naw," he said, "I ain't going to Alabama; ain't really going on a vacation at all. Got to go over and see one of my old Aunties. My Uncle Jackson died a while back and this is the first chance we got to go see her. They used to live out around here but when they got so old they moved into the city. We been thinking about that too, things here been hard on us lately."

"My Uncle Jackson, though, he was a fine man. I use to go over and stay with him when I was a little boy, bout five or six specially. One thing he did I won't never forget. My Mamma had taken me to a carnival and I went to the side-show and saw a fire-eater. Next time I stayed with Uncle Jackson I asked him bout fire-eaters. 'Uncle Jackson,' I says, 'how them fire-eaters keep from burning their mouths? That's some kind of trick ain't it?' 'Naw,' Uncle Jackson says, 'that there is real. I could do that myself.' Me, I'se a pretty smart kid and I figgers Jackson is just putting me off. So I says, 'Well, come on, Uncle Jackson, show me how you do it.' 'Alright,' he says, and grabs a bottle of red-eye and takes a big slug and sloshes it all around in his mouth. Then he pulled the chimney off the coal oil lamp and blows a big breath over it. Sure enough, a little blast of fire come out of his mouth. 'See,' he says, 'it ain't so hard.'"

"Then, ever time I'd go over to Uncle Jackson's place he'd do his fire-breather trick for me. But then I went over there one time when I's getting pretty big and Uncle Jackson already had a heavy load on. He must been drinking some powerful stuff, maybe some old bootleg. Anyway, he insisted on doing his trick. He

took a big swallow of the stuff, pulled the chimney off the lamp, and turned the wick way up. Then he took a big breath but something went wrong. He coughed a couple of times and he musta backfired. First there was a little bitty flame and then Foom! he blasted the whole table, bout setting it on fire. Aunty, she grabbed the dishpan and let Uncle Jackson have the supper dishwater right in the face. Old Jackson had done singed his eyebrows and burned a hole in Aunty's new tablecloth. Uncle Jackson didn't quit drinking but he never did that trick no more. I don't believe he coulda took doing it again."

When he got to the end of the story, everybody in the place was laughing fit to bust a gut, me included. But I looked over at Sammy and he wasn't laughing at all. He looked like he might cry and I think he did, a little. I remembered then about his Ma and Pa. I didn't know what to say, so I didn't say nothing; but I couldn't laugh no more.

After that the two in the pickup finished their last beers and hauled us by cousin Shorty's place. Shorty was petting his dogs when we came up. He lives by himself and does a little farming and odd jobs around at different places. He doesn't do too well but he gets by. I like Shorty but you got to watch him sometimes; he'll try to fix anything. We told him about the car and Ma and Grandma, so he got out a big rope and we all got in his truck and headed for the Dodge. Ma and Grandma's asleep when we got there. The car wouldn't start so we hitched the rope to it and Shorty towed us down to his place. The rain had stopped by then. Ma said it was too late to plan on getting to the hospital that day and asked Shorty if we could spend the night. He said we could and he'd try to fix the car while we's waiting. Ma said she'd make supper then while we's working on it. Cousin Shorty got out his tools.

Actually, I don't think the car needed much except to sit there a while so's it could dry out with the heat left in the motor. But Shorty pulled the plug wires off and put them on and looked at the points and fiddled

around with the carb. Then he got in to start it and it wouldn't hit a lick. Sammy looked around and put the coil wire back in and it started while Shorty's still grinding on it.

Then Shorty said for us to get in and he'd try it out. Me and Sammy got in and Shorty lit out, winding the old Dodge up in Low and Drive till I thought the rods would come out. When we got up to about seventy-five, it started missing and the front end started shimmying. "Sounds like it needs the soot blown out of it," Shorty said, and he bore down on the gas. Sammy looked kind of funny and I know I did too, cause we thought the car would either blow up or we would fly off into the trees. We stopped on top of a hill about two miles down the road. The motor sounded funny. "Looks like that helped her," Shorty said, and he wheeled around to head back. "Let's see if she'll run any faster now." Then he mashed the gas down to the floor. When we got up to ninety or so I thought the front end was going to jump out from under the car. Sammy was white round the mouth, and I about pulled the armrest off the door. When we finally got back to Shorty's place the radiator was steaming and the motor smelled like burnt grease. "That ought to fix her," Shorty said. Me and Sammy was just glad we was out in one piece. We all went inside and ate.

There wasn't much to do that night after supper. Shorty didn't have a TV so we all just caught up on family talk. Grandma laid on the couch and didn't say nothing. Shorty looked at the purpley place and kind of poked at it but he didn't know what it was either. He said people shouldn't have them but he thought he'd seen some of those kinds of things on dogs before. But his dogs now didn't have none. "They can probably cut it off," he said. Grandma kind of moaned at that.

Then we all went to bed. Shorty let Grandma have his bed, the only one in the house; Shorty slept on the couch and me and Ma and Sammy slept in Shorty's extra room where his dogs slept. Ma slept on an old mattress; me and Sammy slept on some quilts; the dogs

slept in the corners. During the night we all had to get up and go out a time or two cause we all had a couple of beers before bed. There was some water on the floor that I walked right through. The next morning, at breakfast, Ma said something about that water on the floor. Didn't none of us see where it come from. Then it hit Ma. "I bet those dogs pissed on the floor," she said. Shorty said, "You know, I bet they did." It didn't bother Shorty much; we wished we could wash our feet.

After Ma helped with the dishes and stuff we loaded Grandma back in the car and got ready to leave. I had to put in a couple of quarts of oil. We got away about eight and didn't have no more trouble getting down to the hospital. It was a big town but we had already looked on a map and found out that it wasn't too far off the highway. It did take us a while, once we got there, to find out just what part of the hospital to take her to.

The doctor looked at Grandma quite a while. While he was doing that a nurse asked me a lot of questions. I told her we didn't have much money but that we wasn't poor. When the doctor came out from looking at Grandma, Ma went and had a talk with him. She knows more about medical things than I do. She asked the doctor if Grandma had some kind of cancer. That really made me feel bad. The doctor said it was something they could cut out and it wasn't cancer as far as he could tell. He said Grandma would feel a lot better if they got rid of it. Ma said to go ahead.

They took it off the next day. Turned out we didn't have to pay for it, Grandma being that old. She did have to stay in the hospital a while. We wasn't too prepared for that. We had really kind of figured that Grandma's time was up and we hadn't brought along any extra food or clothes. So we slept in the car and the hospital and ate out of a grocery store. I mainly hung around the hospital with Ma those days. She was really worried about Grandma.

But Sammy'd perked up a lot since we got into town. He wasn't around much those days we waited for Grandma. He said when we first come down he wondered what it would be like to live in town with all those people around. Said he figured there must be something he could do there. He was fairly talented with machines and had done a little work on them back home. On the last day he came and talked to us. He said he decided he wasn't going back to the place. He had found a job at a garage and wanted to try that now. He said he didn't want to wind up alone like old Shorty. His boss said he could stay with him for a while, so's me and Ma wouldn't worry about him. It seemed alright but we all felt a loss. He went up and said goodbye to Grandma and said he would write to us and would come up when he could. He will, too.

When we left we was all glad to get away from the hospital. We knew we needed it for Grandma but we just didn't feel right around there. On the way back we stopped off at cousin Shorty's again, just for a minute. He was glad to see us and we was glad to see him; we was glad the floor was dry, too.

When we got home we all felt sad; Sammy's gone and Grandma wasn't doing too well. That evening Ma did something she always did when we got back from being away: she went out to the old cemetery way back behind the house in a pretty bunch of trees where Pa and Grandpa and old Grandpa and Grandma's buried. The wind usually blowed through there, it being on a little hill, and it was a good place to sit in the cool of the evening. Course we all felt close as a family there too. There was an old well back there, all filled in with rocks and dirt now.

Grandma was up at the house, so it was just me and Ma sitting there. I looked at her in the twilight and I realized I hadn't seen her up close for a long time. I'm twenty-five, so Ma's about sixty. I saw her face had lines in it and her hair which had been all black, now had lots of gray spread through it. I guess I saw them things but I never really knew I saw them until now.

It made everything around turn a little grayer for me then.

Then Ma started to talk to me, kind of low and solemn, a little bit like the wind through the trees. She told me a story I never heard before from her. "You know, Ike, that old well over there was dug by your Great Grandfather when he first got this farm started going around the turn of the century. Course they needed it mostly for water but he used it for something else too, which I thought was always kind of curious. Whenever any of the kids was born he would pour water on them out of that well. Said he wanted them baptized from the land and the water. Great Grandma was always religious so she got everybody baptized in the church too. But your Grandma and her brothers and sisters all had water poured on them out of that well. Then he did it to the next generation too, including me. We didn't take it too serious then. We always figured the church baptism was what was important. Then Grandpa died and the well eventually dried up and got filled in and we got one closer to the house and kind of forgot about this old one back here."

Now the sun was most down and the light on Ma's face was gold colored, and I could see two big tears on her cheeks. I put my arm around her and we sat there quiet until long after dark and the stars came out. Then we got up and walked back to the house. That was an awfully dark night.

And the next days wasn't much better. I suddenly felt like Ma was old too besides Grandma being about to die. With them gone that would leave only me, and I could see me going into town like Sammy with all my blood ties gone or fixing cars and stuff along the highway like Shorty.

But you know, in a while rather than dying like she ought to have done from being so old and sick, Grandma started getting better. Pretty soon she was up clompin around the house in her slippers and one day even stuck some curlers in her hair, to what effect we never could tell. That of course cheered Ma up and

both of them getting better made me feel good; I began to think that we wasn't gonna wind up in some boneyard behind a truckstop after all, least for a while.

To make a long story short, that's why I'm out here digging. I've undertook a couple of projects since that trip and that night back here. I've decided to open up this old well. I'm down about twenty feet now. I ain't found what old Grandpa found yet but I'm gonna keep digging till I do. Ma's been out watching and helping a little, moving rocks and talking. Grandma came out and sat and watched and seemed to like it. Course, she went inside if any clouds came up.

That's my one project. For my other, I shined up the old Dodge and started checking through the countryside, looking for a pretty woman to come and be with us here. She's got to be suitable. She's got to have big green eyes like my old kitty cat, and fine black hair like Ma's, and she's got to want all them kids we're gonna have to get baptized out of this here well. Soon as I get it dug.

Louisiana Tech University

Story by Joy-Ellis McLemore

Interview

She perturbed me before I even met her. My car had broken down coming in from Austin the morning we were to have a nine o'clock interview, and I was twenty minutes late. She'd had a fast cup of coffee with my old law school buddy in whose suite I was meeting candidates for a bland job with a government agency. All other resumes looked boring besides Katie's. She'd left a terse message at 9:17: "Have other things to do. Will possibly be home around mid-afternoon, after car pools, if you wish to call." Feisty. Impatient. Definitely not right for this job.

The only trouble was that I ran into this incredible female getting onto the elevator when I was coming up to John's office. She wasn't what anybody would call pretty, but I couldn't keep from staring. The eyes did it. They were a strange color and sort of squinty. Or maybe it was the legs, a little skinny, but an interesting shape. And all the other women in my life wore pants and did not seem to have legs unless I succeeded in undressing them, which I usually did before I knew them very well. Or maybe it was the slightly nervous smile.

"You just missed Katie, old man," said John as I walked into the office. "Have a cup of coffee."

Over coffee he explained that she had once been married to a local criminal lawyer, who couldn't control her at all. Yet people had strangely sympathized with her when she had packed up their three little boys, two Labrador retrievers, assorted stray cats--and left. Last John had heard she was living on a

farm outside Austin, getting a master's degree in special education, and marching in civil rights related parades on Guadalupe Street. Oh, brother.

As Soon as John headed for the court house I called her home.

"Cohen residence," a child said, home with the maid, because she had fever. She wanted to know if I had fever too. Katie would be home to have lunch with her. I left a message.

When my call was not returned, I tried again at 4:00. The maid answered and got Katie, which took two whole minutes. I timed her.

"Look," I began, "I'm really sorry about this morning." No answer. "The excuse sounds so lame that, well, just, I'm sorry."

Another pause, then she answered, "Your friend's secretary fixes good coffee."

Women usually don't put me off, but I didn't know how to deal with this one.

"Well, uh, I guess your daughter didn't give you the message, but--"

"I got the message."

Note: Don't be late for this one again. Come on, man, it's just a woman.

"Look, Katie, is there any way I can see you today? Your resume looks terrific."

She was chewing something, from the sound of it maybe a carrot, and didn't seem interested. Then after still another long pause, she ventured, "All right, if you're sure you can be there this time, I'll come in at 5:30."

"You can't come right now?"

"No way. I skipped lunch and I'm eating. Then I'm going to wash my hair." Then slightly apologetically, "You see, it's the last chance I'll get. There's a basketball game at 7:00 that my son's playing in, then after that I have a date, then tomorrow morning I have to be at school--"

"Okay. I'll see you at 5:30."

"I'll only have one hour. I mean, we probably won't need that, but I have to leave--"

"No problem. See you then."

A date after the basketball game. With whom? And what possible difference did it make to me?

She was five minutes late and rushed in apologetically, with a kindergarten-type kid in tow.

"I would have been on time, honestly. But every light was red."

Suddenly I felt better and laughed. "Now we're even."

"No, I was five minutes late. You were--" and then she laughed too. "This is Karen, my chief assistant. She's the one who took your message today."

"How's your throat, Karen?"

As the kid explained about her tonsils and upcoming operation when school was out, I found and reheated a leftover Danish pastry. Busying her with some paper and colored pencils, I was all the time thinking that kids are a big nuisance. My own boys lived with their mom and didn't give me too much static in the one weekend a month I'd seen them for the last year.

Katie's slightly graying hair was still damp from the shower, and her clothes were chosen for a basketball game, not a job interview. She'd covered up those marvelous legs with boots and a long skirt. I began the interview.

"How old are you, Katie?"

She swallowed her coffee wrong and choked and sputtered and there was nothing to do but beat her on the back. Red in the face and embarrassed, she finally smiled.

"Maybe the question was too rough," I attempted.

"Maybe the birthday was too rough," she answered. "I turned forty last week."

"Forty! But you look about--"

"Never mind all that. I can't believe it either. Look, if you want somebody younger for this job--"

"I don't. Anyway, I turned forty a couple of years ago, and I'm still alive and everything. You'll make it."

Suddenly I wanted her for this job. I had to see her somehow. She took a long swallow of the coffee, stared at me, but said nothing.

"John said you've been divorced almost nine years. How'd you manage a daughter Karen's age?"

"She's really my niece. My sister died, and her husband thought one more wouldn't make much difference. I love kids."

"That's fortunate. Why do you want this job?"

"Partly for money, partly to try something different. I get bored easily."

"*You* get bored?" How on earth--"

"I know. It's crazy. And you're probably wondering why I have a maid if I need money. I have a hard time accepting money from my parents, but I can accept this maid. They pay for her. She's worked for our family, well, even when I was growing up. She's part of us, and we'd die without her."

"You have smart parents."

She mulled this over.

"In some ways, yes."

I decided not to pursue that line of questioning.

"Look, Katie, I'm not sure you're right for this job. I want you, but I'm trying to figure out when you'd work in the basketball games, sore throats, social life," I trailed off. The old hard-to-get trick.

"When will you let me know what you decide?" she asked.

"How about seven o'clock Monday morning?"

"Okay. I'll wait at least fifteen minutes." We both laughed, she collected Karen, and they left.

At seven sharp Monday morning I called. She was obviously still asleep and awoke quite flustered.

"Oh! The alarm! Oh, it's you. Excuse me." She sounded a general alarm at the top of her voice and returned to the phone. "Look, I'm sorry, but I can't

talk now. You said I wasn't right for the job anyway, and I understand--"

"But I *want* you for the job."

Now she was confused.

"Could you call me back today around five o'clock?"

I said I would, and I did. By then she had somehow decided the job wasn't right for her after all, but she knew the names of two or three people I might contact.

That did it. Never would I talk to this muddled creature again.

John and I had coffee that morning, and he commented, "She's feisty all right, and pretty scatterbrained they say. I don't know why I've always liked her." He was obviously interested in the whole exchange between Katie and me. And then my old school chum had the audacity to mention that he'd been thinking of asking her out.

"Not so fast, Buddy. *I'm* asking her out," I challenged.

"You just want to get her into bed," countered John.

"Hm-m. I haven't noticed anything special in the femme fatale department."

"Me neither. But wouldn't you like to find out?"

"Come to think of it, yes I would."

So I called her the next day, again at five o'clock.

"Oh, it's you." Her enthusiasm almost overwhelmed me.

"Look, Katie, I'm glad you're not going to be working for me, 'cause I'd like to take you to dinner."

To my surprise she answered, "I'd like that too." Pause. "When?"

"Whenever you say."

"Where?"

"You pick the place. I don't know much about this town yet."

That weekend took forever arriving. At seven o'clock sharp, after running two yellowish red lights, I

arrived at her door. A ten-year-old baseball-capped half-baked masculine version of Katie answered.

"I'll bet you're the man who's taking Mom out for Mexican food. I like Mexican food," stated what turned out to be Erik. He hollered for his mother, then told me to sit on the floor by the fire. He, a cordial host, sat beside me.

"Are you married?" said Erik. "Mom says most of the men who make passes at her are married."

I refrained from laughing aloud and said, "No, Erik, I am not married. And I haven't made any passes at your mom."

"That's too bad," he answered, but before I could find out what part was bad, we both spotted a rodent running under the sofa.

"Hannibal!" screamed Karen, as she dashed into the room, a large cat close behind. Where was Katie?

Somehow I wound up holding the excited cat--I hate cats--while Erik and Karen corralled a frightened hamster back into his cage. I'm not fond of those little rats either.

Just as Katie appeared, looking beautiful and nervous in a long-sleeved blue ruffled blouse with the same long skirt in which she'd had the interview, a teenaged boy appeared asking for the car keys. That turned out to be Greg, the basketball player, and he stopped just long enough to shake hands.

"You've met Karen and Erik. Kurt's in the basement trying to fix the washer that overflowed this morning."

"Is it always so lively around here?" I questioned.

"This? This is *nothing*," Katie assured. I shifted uncomfortably. What was I doing taking this lady anywhere anyway?

"Goodby, you two. Mind Kurt. He's staying home with you tonight."

"Can we make fudge?" pleaded Karen.

"Only if you don't leave everything dirty like you did last time," Katie conceded.

We left at the beginning of an argument between Erik, who did not intend to make any stupid fudge,

and Karen, who would die if she didn't have some right away.

The Mexican restaurant was perfect--dim lights, a properly placed dozen or so people, a native waiter, and flamenco music. Briefly I thought of my ex-wife and our trip to Guadalajara only two years before. Katie was waving to two couples in the corner. She seemed to know everyone there, and they were all glad to see her. She ate like a field hand.

"We have lots of time, Katie."

"I know, but I'm starving. I'm always hungry. And usually I have to eat fast because I'm running somewhere or, oh, it's just a habit. I forgot to tell you. We have to be back 9:30 so that Kurt can leave. He's spending the night with a friend. And could we get some cat food on the way home?"

Great, just great. After one year of women who all looked alike, talked alike, felt alike, and acted alike, I meet an interesting one and she turns out to be a lunatic. Maybe I would give up women altogether.

"How do like those enchiladas?" Katie wondered aloud. "I order different things but always come back to cheese and onion enchiladas."

Onion enchiladas. I hate onions almost as much as hamsters and cats and can hardly wait to kiss this dame. I drank my beer and stared.

"You're not talking much," she accused, and kept right on talking and eating nonstop. I kept trying to figure out if she had incredible vitality or just nervous energy.

After pralines, which Katie complained about because they do not contain fortunes, we took a pleasant stroll downtown. To my surprise, she held my hand. I tried to remember if any lady had ever just reached out and grabbed my hand like that. She had a nice hand, small and soft. I couldn't keep from wondering about those legs.

When we arrived at her house at 9:30, Kurt said hello and goodby all in one breath, muttering something about the two younger ones being awful brats. The hamster was out again, the cat was locked in a closet without her litter box, the washer was flooding once more, and one Labrador retriever was howling.

"It's always good to get home," she laughed, taking off her coat before I could help her. "Would you like some fudge?"

"No, I wouldn't like some fudge; I'd like a Jack Black double on the rocks."

"Would you settle for a glass of Blue Nun? A friend gave me a big bottle for my birthday." The cat yowled loudly from a distant closet.

I accepted, and wondered if the friend who gave her the wine were the same friend who took her out after the basketball game. As I stirred the fire, Katie chased Erik and Karen to bed, hollering things about brushing teeth, finding hamsters, setting alarms. Good grief. How did people live in such bedlam?

Katie returned shortly with her hair down and freshly brushed. Had that top button been open before? Was that another animal under the wing chair? No, it was somebody's sneaker.

"Oh, good, you fixed the fire."

"I had to do something to take my mind off the flooded basement and rampant rodent."

"Well, I guess you're not used to a family like ours."

"You might say that."

Not knowing, apparently, what else to do, Katie stared at the fire and ate another piece of fudge. She was having a cup of coffee that she'd somehow managed to fix during all this madness.

"Would you like to sit on the floor closer to the fireplace?" suggested Katie, who by now was stifling yawns.

"No, I'll tell you what. I'm tired too and have a big day tomorrow. I'm going to leave and call you next week."

She didn't seem to regret my announcement and cheerfully saw me to the door. Safe in my Porsche, I heaved a sigh of relief. I was luckier than I had realized.

Tulane University

William Shakespeare's Sonnet 129 is an explicit statement about the suffering of a lustful man who deeply regrets his lack of restraint.[1] The poem opens with an unequivocal assertion which states that lustful activity causes a shameful perversion of energy. Then it elaborates upon the highly reprehensible nature of this activity and moves toward the conclusion that yielding to lust causes an ever-increasing unhappiness. Shakespeare builds the effectiveness of his statement by clothing his thought in a variety of rhetorical elements which control the arrangement and organization and style and ornamentation of the poem. An elaboration of these elements is the primary task of the rhetorical analysis that follows. It identifies the rhetorical strategies which contribute to the poem's effectiveness, and, in the process, it highlights the poem's stated and suggested meanings.

Since a poem is an artistic expression designed to win the reader's approval of--or at least to encourage the reader's insight into--the poet's point of view, it is quite logical for one to assume that the craft of a poet is similar to that of a rhetor who aims at affecting an audience. Therefore, the success of Shakespeare's Sonnet 129 may be explained by submitting it to a rhetorical scrutiny. Such a scrutiny shows that the poet has employed many rhetorical strategies as conscientiously as a rhetor is accustomed to. He has arranged the poem's content in the pattern of a classical oration because the poem has parts that can be easily recognized as *exordium, narration, argument, refutation,* and *peroration.* The first line "Th' expense of spirit" is an effective exordium because it introduces the subject with adequate ambiguity. The

key terms of the line--"expense," "spirit," and "waste"--create sufficient fog around the meaning and thus whet the reader's curiosity which is needed to draw him into the poem. The line that follows serves as narration because it begins the task of clearing the fog. It names the "expense of spirit" as "lust in action." The succeeding line begins the argument by naming the traits of "lust in action" as "murd'rous," "bloody," "savage," and "perjured." In the second quatrain, the poem focuses upon the deceitful and savage attributes of lust, of its success in luring the victim and leaving him dejected, desperate, and confused. The third quatrain continues the elaboration of the luster's frustration as he continues to seek happiness by seeking what proves to be an illusion whose joy is as short-lived and as unreal as that of a happy dream. As a result, the luster keeps progressing inevitably toward hellish experiences of physical waste, moral degeneration, and spiritual torment. The phrases "bliss in proof" and "a joy proposed" in lines eleven and twelve respectively serve as refutation by suggesting opposition to the idea of being trapped in misery after having swallowed a bait. The concluding couplet contains a summation in "all this" and a reassertion of the poet's position of sympathy but disapproval of the protagonist's tendency to head toward his own torment through constant confusion of the states of temporary pleasure with the state of lasting bliss. Such a summation and reassertion are the marks of an effective peroration which is the last part of a classical oration.

While the arrangement and organization of Sonnet 129 show that the poem fits within the pattern of a classical oration, its artistic merits show that Shakespeare's art is controlled by the same principles that control the art of a rhetorician. Like a rhetor, he employs all available means of persuasion to communicate his impressions of lust and the luster. Since Aristotle grouped the available means of persuasion under the three headings of *logos, ethos,* and

pathos, this study will examine these three aspects of sonnet 129 as the logical, ethical, and emotional appeals.

Logical appeal of Sonnet 129 rests both in the idea and in the method of presenting the idea. The poem's central thought concerns human beings of all ages and places because right and wrong of human activity has continued to engage the minds of religious persons, sociologists, philosophers, and psychologists. Again and again, artists have presented the dichotomy of human motives and actions as a conflict between higher values and lower desires. Employing different modes and details, some artists have portrayed the conflict with sympathy and understanding while others have mocked and ridiculed the erring victims of this conflict. By focusing upon the internal conflict which leads to socially reprehensible behavior, Shakespeare's Sonnet creates the impression of treating a familiar subject which concerns every human being. Such familiarity is always attractive to the reader.

Complementary to the familiarity of the central idea of Sonnet 129 is Shakespeare's method of presenting the idea. He begins the poem with a deduction about lust and then adds details which support the deduction and thus enhance the logical appeal. After defining lust as a shameful and perverse activity, the poet elaborates upon its nature through adjectives such as murderous, cruel, and savage. Then he moves away from the abstractions and portrays the luster as an animal who has swallowed a bait. Thus personified, lust demands more attention and the hunt image serves as an appropriate induction needed to support the opening deduction. Moreover, buried in the hunt image is a syllogism which may be reconstructed in the follow words:

Lust is an animal passion.
Sometimes a man may lust.
Therefore, man is an animal.

In the context of this syllogism, the reader is able to apply the adjectives of the earlier lines to the activities of the luster and see him as cruel, murderous, savage, and unworthy of trust.

By demanding special attention through personification, the hunt image extends the poem's logical appeal, and the reader responds to the image in more than one way. In addition to seeing the luster as an animal, he sees him as a hunter as well, because like a hunter a lewd man must know the art of sneaking and he must face the potential danger of changing places with the victim of the chase. This dual suggestion about the luster's situation evokes a dual response toward him: awareness of his animal nature evokes a disapproval of his conduct, and awareness of his victimization evokes a moderation in our disapproval. In addition, the image provides literary delight by reminding one of the hunting activities which are frequently used in medieval literature as thematic and structural devices.[2]

Because of such suggestiveness, the hunt image of Sonnet 129 acquires the power to direct "the mind inward to supply from remembered experience what is unstated" and allows the reader to think connections which are not overtly supplied (Tuve 101). By engaging the reader's mind in this way, the image enhances the poem's logical appeal.

Logical appeal of Sonnet 129 is also developed by its diction. To suggest that the actions of the licentious person are both vigorous and repetitive, Shakespeare repeats key words like *action*, *mad*, and *extreme*. He also uses some sound effects to suggest an increasing sense of shame and suffering which follows the repeated acts of lust. At the structural level, the phonemic repetitions are responsible for dividing the fourteen-line poem into three quatrains and a couplet, and at the thematic level, they serve the poet as a means of emphatic assertion. Surely, the alliterative arrangement of *s s s* and *sh* in line and one of *d d t* in line five is highly suggestive. Passing of the *s* into *sh*

and of the *d* into the voiceless *t* is congruent with the poem's suggesting of an increasing sense of shame and guilt as the lustful act reaches its consummation.

Complementary to the diction and sound arrangement is the syntactical arrangement of the adjectives. The poem states that "lust in action" is "perjured, murd'rous, full of blame." The order of these epithets makes them a panorama of the entire sex act, from the initial giving way to the urge to the actual indulgence and the consequences of this indulgence. "Lust in action" and "perjured" seem to suggest the first stage of the panorama as one in which the lewd man is committing adultery and thus violating the marriage vows, or--in case no marriage vows have been taken--at least violating his honesty through false oaths about his chastity to pass a respectable citizen of the community or simply to give assurance of his fidelity to his lover. Thus, lust involves him in perjury because he swears fidelity to his spouse and/or lover partly to safeguard her love and loyalty to him and partly to safeguard the fetish of his own respectability. "Murd'rous" suggests the next stage of lust, because killing of rivals is a natural consequence of mixing love, lust, and possession. In addition, the word "murd'rous" is reminiscent of the murdering eyes of the familiar sonnet lady, and it is suggestive of the lusting male's murdering of a part of his psyche that deters him from immoral acts.[3] Next in the sequence appears "bloody" which reinforces the meaning of "murd'rous" and simultaneously refers to the innate nature of sensuality and the loss of virginity as its inevitable consequence. Shakespeare places the phrase "full of blame" appropriately at the line's end to suggest that when the lusting male makes progress from perjury to the murderous and bloody act, he invites a package of blame which is too full to leave the female untouched, in case she has been only a victim of his lust.

Conscientiously imposing a phonemic and syntactic arrangement upon the lines, Shakespeare is successful in suggesting the progressive degeneration of the luster.

He also places the lines in an order that allows the poem to begin as a detached observation and end as an emotionally charged statement, with the subtle suggestion that the passion-governed man is more of a victim than an aggressor. The first quatrain shows that as he lusts he calls forth much blame; the second shows that he realizes the worthlessness of his desire and yet remains unable to free himself from this powerful, though irrational, urge. On the surface, this irresistibility of the female is typical of the male view that regards the woman as both the catalyst and the object of the male passion--as the temptress who holds a promise of heavenly delight but proves to be a harbinger of physical waste, mental agony, and moral degeneration. However, the focus on the luster's becoming trapped in sensuality lends the poem a naturalistic overtone which invites the reader's sympathy. To surface the naturalistic meaning, Shakespeare makes an ingenious rhetorical shift in the grammatical voice in the second quatrain. Employing the passive voice, he states that having swallowed the bait, the man becomes wild, frenzied, and mad, but, without rational self-control, he keeps reaching for that which disgusts him with the attainment. The third quatrain portrays his utmost suffering by stating that as his pursuits reach an extreme, they entail his veritable woe--his woman becomes his woe. Finally, the concluding restates this woe as "hell."

While Shakespeare creates the logical appeal of Sonnet 129 through proper arrangement and organization of the material and through appropriate selection and arrangement of images and sounds, he develops the second means of rhetorical appeal--the ethos--by creating a speaker who impresses the reader as an intelligent, noble, and kind-hearted person. He takes a moral stance on the subject of lust and takes pity on the luster who is unable to restrain himself in spite of realizing his folly. Therefore, the reader views the speaker as neither smug nor morally indifferent, but as kind and impartial. Consequently, his utterance--

the Sonnet--develops credibility, and the climactic arrangement of his thoughtful words affects the reader.

Impressing the reader with the thought (*logos*) itself and with the poet's attitude and ability (*ethos*), the poem simultaneously develops an emotional appeal (pathos). The details that focus upon the disgust that entails the experience of yielding to overwhelming lust create much sympathy for the luster. His disgust makes the desired object "despised straight," although it was "a joy proposed." Although "a bliss in proof," "a dream," and a "heav'n," lust leads men to "hell." The luster is unable "to shun the heav'n" of id so that he may be able to enjoy the more dignified and somewhat more secure pleasures allowed by the ego and the superego. Therefore, he becomes a victim to both the public scorn and self-loathing. Thus, irrationality and suffering remain inevitably associated with lust, and the luster's helplessness and the reader's feeling of sympathy reach a simultaneous climax in the concluding couplet that draws in the word "hell" and thus connotes an intensive and extensive suffering. This simultaneity highlights the earlier focus on ambivalence as it shows that the intellectual and the emotional movement of the poem go hand in hand. And because of the conjunctive movement of the two, the poem has come to be recognized as one the "finest" examples of "rhetorical controlling, and being controlled by, emotion" (Vickers 161-63).

In addition to employing the means of attracting the reader emotionally, ethically, and intellectually, Shakespeare develops the rhetorical appeal of Sonnet 129 through stylistic embellishments. Writing in an age in which plain speech was considered "crude" and students and writers were encouraged to polish their writing with schemes and tropes which were catalogued and explained by pedagogues in their handbooks on the subject, Shakespeare uses his "endless ingenuities of wit" (Vickers 161). One such ingenuity is the poet's employment of the device of *catachresis* in the second

quatrain where he develops the hunt image. Here, the implied metaphor that suggests a comparison of the luster with both the hunted animal and the hunter must be understood immediately to proceed forward; another is the use of *paronomasia*, though all layers of meaning covered by the puns may not be easily surfaced by an inexperienced reader. "Expense of spirit" of line one can refer to man's semen, to the loss of the generative spirit in the sex act, and to the monetary expense of keeping a mistress; "waste" suggests wastefulness and the female waist at the same time. "Laid" of line eight suggests the spiritual torment of the fallen human being as it suggests the laying down of a woman for sex; and "hell" of line fourteen suggests much suffering and the female sex in the manner of Shakespeare's Sonnet 144 (Booth 129: 14 and 144: 12).

In addition to highly suggestive words, Shakespeare employs the rhetorical device of chiasmus as in "lust in action" and "action lust" in line two and "well knows" and "knows well" in line thirteen. In each case, the chiasmus narrows the poet's focus and draws attention to the phrases themselves and to their contexts. As the reader begins to turn and re-turn these phrases in his mind, he tends to view the poem as an artistic creation of a wavelike motion--a motion which is very vigorous and repetitive like the activity the poem elaborates upon. Furthermore, as the reader experiences the intellectual stir, he surfaces some literary echoes. These echoes are of common proverbs such as "No extreme will hold long," "Hot love is soon cold," and "Flee that present pleasure that bringeth afterward sorrow" (Booth 441). The poem also reminds one of some lines of Shakespeare himself, lines such as "Violent delights have violent ends" (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2.6.9) and "What fools these mortals be!" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 3.2.115). As one recollects the contexts of these lines, the sonnet's meaning acquires more detail and enrichment. Such enlivening of the reader's literary memory, together with the suggesting of the

paronomastic meanings and meanings suggested by phonemic and syntactical arrangements which have been discussed earlier, is what the rhetoricians call *significatio*. Because this *significatio* is attained through a careful selection and arrangement of the sounds, of the grammatical voice, and of the epithets, images, and syntactical units, the poem acquires a rhetorical balance between the premeditated expression and artistic spontaneity, and it is this balance which makes it an epitome of the eloquence of the English sonnet. Its eloquence is due not to what Shakespeare himself identified as "strained touches" (Sonnet 82) of rhetoric, but to the subtleties of a poet-rhetorician who knows the art of concealing art. He suggests much more than he states, and he states by stimulating the reader rationally, ethically and emotionally.

Diljit K. Chatha
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Notes

[1]The text for this study is the sonnet as it is printed in Stephen Booth, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), 111. For possible shifts in meanings caused by critical emendations the reader may refer to Robert Graves and Laura Riding, "A Study of the Original Punctuation and Spelling, Sonnet 129" in *Discussions of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Barbara Hernstein (Boston: Heath, 1964), 116-23. In earlier publications this essay has appeared under a different title. The Graves-Riding position has not been accepted by many authorities, including S. Booth.

[2]For information on the medieval author's fascination for the "rhetoric of the hunt" see Marcelle Thiebaux, *The Stag for Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1974).

[3]K. M. Wilson has asserted that since sonnet love had become "a courtier's game," Shakespeare was struck by "its unreality and artificiality" and he deliberately wrote sonnets which are parodies of the typical sonnets of the Elizabethans. See *Shakespeare's Sugared Sonnets* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1974). For the specific parodies contained in Sonnet 129 see pp. 105-112.

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Tom Jones and Arabella Hunt: The Ideology of Affective Individualism

In recent studies of his life and work, Fielding has been presented as politically uncertain (McCrea, 51), as a thinker who would "try situational solutions to circumstantial issues" (Hunter, 13), and as a writer a novelist who could never decide "how the individual should relate to social class" (Kraft, 32). In this paper I will argue that Fielding indicates that the ideological horizon could be altered but only if preceded by change at the individual level. No where is this position--the germ of all ideological change--made more clear than in chapter eleven, book fifteen of *Tom Jones*.

In this brief scene, Tom receives from Arabella Hunt a letter proposing marriage. The proposal comes immediately after he has broken with Lady Bellaston but before he is reunited with Sophia. Although the scene represents Tom's "last temptation," it does not forward plot resolution. The importance of this scene is the mirror it provides for the major ideological tension of the novel. In rejecting Arabella Hunt, who offers all of the benefits a union with Sophia would provide, Tom places individual affection above personal gain. But more importantly, Tom does more than reaffirm his love for Sophia. He actually chooses himself and rejects the possibility that his love for Sophia was motivated by class expectations or upon the possibility that she symbolized the self-image he had chosen (Black, 216).

In his other encounters with women--Molly, Mrs. Waters, and Lady Bellaston--Tom had been affectively safe. Although he may have given in to the moment, either from high spirits or from a misplaced sense of

honor, these temporary affairs had not challenged his feelings for Sophia. Arabella offers a different form of temptation, one which the narrator must explain, and in the course of that explanation, the narrator's voice provides a key to interpreting the significance of chapter eleven.

The chapter opens with a very satiric account of the circumstances and person of Arabella Hunt: "Her age was about Thirty; for she owned Six and Twenty; her Face and Person very good, only inclining a little too much to be fat." She had married an "old *Turkey* merchant with whom she lived without Reproach, but not without Pain, in a state of great Self-denial, for about twelve years, and her Virtue was rewarded by his dying and leaving her very rich." Currently, she divided her time between "Devotions and Novels, of which she was always extremely fond." Her state of "Very good Health, a very warm Constitution, and a good deal of Religion, made it absolutely necessary for her to marry again." In her first husband she "had married young by her Relations. Now, she has "resolved to please herself in her second Husband."

However, the text of Arabella's letter belies the social/sexual satire of the narrator's description. The reader's negative expectations of Arabella are not fulfilled. She sounds as though she is a sensible woman, one fully aware of the socio/economic system in which she lives and who attempts to control her interactions with that system. The straightforward manner in which Arabella declares her passion for Tom reflects a sense of judgment which recognizes and attempts to balance both reason and passion.

She writes, "Although I was immediately attracted to your person, I would not have approached you had not the Ladies of the Family where you are lodged given me such a character of you, and told me such Proofs of your Virtue and Goodness, as convince me you are not only the most agreeable, but the most worthy of men." "I have a Fortune sufficient to make us both happy, but which cannot make me so without you." . . . "In

thus disposing of myself I know I shall incur the censure of the world; but if I did not love you more than I fear the world, I should not be worthy of you." . . . "One only difficulty stops me: I am informed you are engaged in a Commerce of Gallantry with a woman of Fashion. If you think it worth while to sacrifice that to Possession of me, I am yours; if not forget my Weakness...."

At this point, Tom's world view intersects with the materialistic basis of most marriage arrangements within his class which were generally undertaken with an eye towards status and security. The accepted arrangement was to choose a bride for her value, "economic, moral, or decorative, or if very lucky, all three" (Calder, 33). The ideological tension generated by this intersection of values is emphasized by the discrepancy between the voice of the narrator and the epistolary voice of Arabella Hunt. Instead of a semi-literate "Cit" of Restoration Drama, Arabella speaks as a rational, mature, prudent woman who has carefully assessed the value of the product she wishes to purchase and who has determined the price is not too dear if Tom will meet her demand for territorial exclusiveness. The tone of her letter effectively negates the derisiveness of the narrator's initial presentation of her person, understanding, and character.

The voice of the narrator attempts to restore the distance and bemused detachment of the opening paragraphs in the chapter: "At the reading of this *Jones* was put in a violent Flutter." But the attempt fails. Arabella has made a serious proposal and acknowledging the mercenary basis for most of the marriages within her social order forces the narrator to treat her offer with an immediacy that defuses the satire. Tom is in a dilemma for Arabella's offer is very attractive and his financial resources are at a very low ebb. There are emotional attractions as well, for at the time he receives the offer, Sophia is in the hands of her father, and Tom has little prospect of

ever being able to see her again. And Tom has no objections to Arabella. Both her fortune and her person are attractive to him.

But Tom rejects the proposal. Marriage to Arabella Hunt would have been financially lucrative and socially acceptable, but Tom, in the words of the narrator, "was not able to stand very long against the Voice of Nature, which cried in his heart, that such Friendship was Treason to Love."

Tom replies to Arabella's offer in a manner equally as direct and honest as her proposal to him. He acknowledges the attractiveness of her proposal but affirms his attachment to Sophia. He states that since he cannot give her his heart he cannot accept her hand, and, he continues, "I had much rather starve than be guilty of that. Even though my Mistress were married to another, I would not marry you unless my heart had entirely effaced all Impressions of her." In this exchange of letters, social expectancy has encountered individual desire. Both Tom and Arabella have recognized and treated with respect the expectations of the other.

The narrator's voice breaks the drama of this encounter by reassuming a satiric tone. "When our Heroe had finished and sent this Letter, he went to his Scrutore, took out Miss *Western's* Muff, kissed it several Times, and then strutted some Turns about his Room, with more satisfaction than ever any Irishman felt in carrying off a Fortune of fifty thousand Pounds."

The ideological significance of this scene is in its demonstration of Tom's newfound locus of control. No longer does he respond to ideals peculiar to his class and to his conception of what is expected of him. Tom rejects the opportunity to achieve sexual, social, and economic independence as well as performing a heroic sacrifice because it would require his giving up the woman he loves.

In *Tom Jones* Fielding presents a detailed picture of the interaction of social classes. But more important than the class is the mind-set he gives to

representatives of these classes. Ideologically, characters in the novel belong to two broad groups: one group is composed of characters who respond programmatically according to preconceived historical, political, or philosophical notions. This group is countered by those whose actions are governed by situational considerations. Usually Fielding's upper class characters behave programmatically and the lower class characters are more apt to respond to the situation. Characters in the first group, regardless of whether they are born into it, marry into it, or achieve membership by some other means, are defined by their acceptance of certain ideals that are reflected in their intellectual, affective, and social actions. Whether the ideal be Allworthy's virtue, prudence, and benevolence; Western's laissez faire Toryism; or Lady Bellaston's noblesse oblige, these characters behave fairly consistently according to a pre-established precept. Tom, as a bastard member of this group, shares its mindset and world view. His fixed ideal--honor--is one that an aristocratic society would unquestionably accept as appropriate to a penniless outsider.

In contrast to characters who act according to a fixed ideal, Fielding presents another set of characters for whom such ideals are useless concepts. Although these characters may pay lip service to the "Good Old Cause" or the virtues of home and hearth, their interactions with the world and with other characters in the novel reveal a pragmatic rather than an idealistic approach to reality. The common denominator among characters, such as the lawyer Dowling, Partridge, the various land ladies, Black George, and finally the arch-villain Blifil, is that expediency and the situation rather than a fixed ideal determine action.

Ideologically significant scenes in *Tom Jones* occur when representatives of these two groups interact. At such a time, when Tom lies for Black George for example, the topology of each group contains properties of both. Such a situation is charged, containing potential either to remain static if ideals or

personalities remain fixed, or to become dynamic if some form of character modification resulting in expanded social consciousness results. If static, the event, such as "the man of the Hill episode" would be asymptotic--having meaning, but remaining ideologically vacant. If dynamic, the situation creates new readings of fictive situations, characters, and authorial intention impacting earlier readings and subsequent textual codes.

The Arabella Hunt scene is ideologically important precisely because of its dynamism. Tom's relationship with Arabella is particularly significant when contrasted with his previous relationships with women. The standard critical position is that the three affairs chart Tom's moral degeneration. This position is summed by Murial Brittain Williams with the comment that "The progress of incontinence from the first indulgence with Molly to thoughtless acceptance of Mrs. Waters' favors and finally to the indignity of being Lady Bellaston's kept lover is a degenerative process" which "brings Tom to the brink of destruction" (80). Perhaps this is the case from a moral/ethical point of view, but these affairs are ideologically vacant. They reflect a pattern of male/female interaction that is not questioned by Tom, by the women involved, by the woman Tom loves, nor by the patriarchs of his society. In each of these affairs one suspects that Tom is primarily motivated by class expectancy and not individual preference.

Tom's dalliance with Molly Seagrim, although grounded on strong physical attraction, can be dismissed as the accepted custom of the young lord of the manor making use of the chattel. Although this affair could have proved awkward when Molly became pregnant, that situation alone certainly would not have affected Tom's nor Molly's position within the community nor the class expectations of either. Tom, whether he married her or not, would have remained at Paradise Hall, and Molly, even if she were unwed, would have received compensation from Tom or from

Allworthy. Molly might have married up, but Tom would not have married down.

The encounter with Mrs. Waters at Upton is equally void of ideological impact. After rescuing her from Northern's attack, Tom receives the reward of her favor. Although he is not a knight and she is not a lady, they both perform according to a heroic code that neither questions. Again, although there may have been repercussions--with the intervention of Fitzpatrick seeking his wife, with Sophia seeking Tom, and finally with the red herring of incest that appears later--the affair does not cause Tom to consider her as a liberated woman, in the modern sense.

When Tom arrives in London, he engages in a lucrative relationship with Lady Bellaston. Again, he is responding to an aristocratic expectation. He considers it an affair of honor, a duel to be fought in the bedroom rather than on the field of honor. In these three affairs, the pattern reflects an enactment of accepted class behavior rather than individual preference. Middleton Murry's comment that Tom's sexual encounters are not characterized "by physical appetite but by his own notions of what gallantry and gratitude and honor require" (92) accurately summarizes Tom's limited affective involvement in each of these affairs.

Tom's response to these three women is essentially the same because the participants belong to the same topological group. Since each affair results in a reordering of the items within the group, each of these scenes is ideologically asymptotic. Although each affair does contain some ideological interest as members of the same group prey on one another, each scene remains static. Neither Tom nor any of the women involved displays any essential change in their understanding of personal relationships or in an expanded class consciousness.

By considering the marriage possibilities these three women offer, one might also see how ideologically vacant each affair is in terms of the novel. In fact,

models of such marriages appear in the novels of Jane Austen. Had Tom married Molly, he would have become Robert Martin of *Emma*. Had Tom married Mrs. Waters, or at least followed her to winter quarters, he might have become Wickham of *Pride and Prejudice*. Finally, had he married lady Bellaston, he would have become Willoughby, a handsome but useless social functionary. Had Tom married any one of these three women his ideological horizon would not have altered. There would have been a reordering of the members within the group, but the group would remain insulated.

The Arabella Hunt scene deflates and ironically reveals the ideological hollowness of a society where marriage is based on either pragmatic concerns or false idealism. Wolfgang Iser maintains that the irony in Fielding's works creates knowledge through a series of negations, that "By negating the familiar the irony indicates that now something is to be communicated of which hitherto there has been no proper conception.... This negation irony drives us to seek the proper conception beyond the confines of the familiar models" (*Reader*, 249-250). The three earlier affairs have established a familiar model, and the narrator's introduction of Arabella Hunt causes the reader to expect another variation on an established motif. Tom, having conquered a representative of lower, middle, and upper class woman within his topological group, now turns to a contiguous group to continue his "secret life."

This scene becomes ideologically charged because Tom encounters a woman and situation he cannot fully understand, forcing him to confront an altered perspective of his current and future prospects. Significantly, what is important here is what is not said--in the question that the text fails to answer (Eagleton, 101). It is in these silences, according to Iser, that the reader "has to imagine new codes" (*Act* 48). Arabella does offer the reader the option of a new

code--a code that Fielding has Tom reject, but one which would have been viable in his society.

What is not said in this scene is how Arabella meets Tom Jones's class expectations and why in rejecting her he also turns his back on the ideals of the group he has belonged to until that time. Arabella Hunt is a new woman, a woman spawned by the rich, trading merchant class. She is a mixture of high personal esteem, religious devotion, social awareness, and individual initiative. In this combination of traits she resembles more the character of Sophia Western than any other woman Tom has encountered. Ironically, marriage to Arabella would place in Tom's possession the same class ideals he gains when he marries Sophia--social and economic independence. The presence of Arabella Hunt at this point in the novel presents an instance of ideological significance, reflecting the possibility for a union that would combine members of the aristocracy and the bourgeois into a new social class. The scene presents the intersection of the two power groups of the eighteenth century, the established landed interests and the new monied interests, and reveals that aside from accidents of birth little separates the two groups in terms of expectations. It is this similarity that creates the ambiguity of tone that characterizes the narrator's depiction of the scene.

J. Paul Hunter calls Fielding's discursive strategy "the homiletics of retreat." He points out that "when there is commentary, it is usually ironic, but its degree of irony is measurable against events and the description of them so that there is substantial certainty about what one is to think" (208). Although this is true most of the time, it is not at all clear about what one is to think in the Arabella Hunt scene. In the ambiguity between the satiric tone of the narrator's introduction and conclusion and the sincerity and honesty of both Tom's and Arabella's letters, Fielding gives no indication as to which is the dominant voice. Rather he refuses to choose one over the other, having Tom answer a question Arabella did not ask and having

Partridge rush into the room at the beginning of the next chapter with the news that Sophia is found.

This ambiguity does fit in with current critical positions that Fielding "enacted in his own person, a struggle between . . . opposite qualities" (Rogers, 14), and that "at the heart of his literary uncertainty was political uncertainty--an inability to choose between two different political groups and two different conceptions of the nature of man" (McCrea, 51). Tom likewise has reflected this dichotomy throughout the novel, but becomes more active and assertive after his reply to Arabella. In this scene he makes the only ideologically decisive decision in the novel--he chooses on the basis of personal rather than programmatic preference.

In discussing Fielding's contribution to the development of the eighteenth-century novel, Henry Knight Miller argues that Fielding did not intend to write a novel, but in fact wrote what he intended to write, a comic epic in prose. In the same light, Tom does not accept Arabella's proposal for the obviously stated reason: he did not love her. This reason is just as important in the development of the novel as Pamela's love for Mr. B. Tom does more than reject the advances of an enamored cit, he assesses the situation and assumes control of his destiny. In his past experiences he has been remarkably passive, responding to the imagined code of his set rather than to his own personal inclinations. In his interactions with men as well as with women he mostly responds to rather than initiates action; yet, at this moment he becomes his own author, creating a future that is independent of his past experiences and present expectations. Arabella represents a serious decision, and her offer comes at a time that finds Tom caught without a set of values to guide him. He has rejected the false honor of his aristocratic ideal and Arabella offers him a mirrored set of values to replace those he has lost. By accepting her, and her bourgeois world view, he can become a representation of the man he wants to be; however, he

would become a body without organs, pretending to have achieved the certitude of Allworthy and Western but without the vision that made such certitude a dynamic force in the alliance of bourgeois/upper class interests that came to dominate eighteenth-century society. The only guide Tom has at this point and the only guide he will follow throughout the remainder of the novel is his affective attachment. This attachment, however, is not to Sophia. It is to himself, to his own desire for self-actualization and to the personal control and self-definition which his rejection of Arabella makes manifest. In this scene, Fielding reveals his awareness of the great ideological shift from larger social unity of family, clan, and class, to self. A shift that was occurring throughout his society (Stone, 22).

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Boswell in Search of Boswell:
A Quest for Self-definition

From his own lifetime to the present, James Boswell has been something of a puzzle, a curious contradiction of cross-purposes which, if not shadowed by the serious, would perhaps remain merely ludicrous. The recovery of the Boswell papers has only complicated the issue, for through his massive autobiographical experiment, Boswell reveals himself in all his human weakness with remarkable frankness. Amid the mass of data, the central dialectic of both Boswell's intense interest in the study of the self and his quest for self-definition has often been missed. Following Macaulay's lead, many have judged Boswell to be "a dunce, a parasite, and a coxcomb," a poor fool who was only a great writer because he was so great a fool (Macaulay 171). His defenders, on the other hand, have offered excuses or, with Frank Brady, argued that, because "Boswell's mode of self-presentation, his putting his personality at the disposal of his craftsmanship, polarized his readers from the beginning" (554), the reader must "make the elementary distinction between man and writer" (Brady 555). Although such a defense has a certain academic validity, it begs central issues of biography. In fact, it must be admitted that both defenders and detractors alike have obscured important questions central to Boswell's fundamental interest in the self and its interaction with its world.

With characteristic perspicacity, however, Dr. Johnson succinctly identified the central dialectic of Boswell's character in a single sentence: "Sir," he said, "a man may be so much of every thing, that he is nothing of any thing" (*Life* 1203). Although Boswell does not

offer the exact context of this statement in the *Life*, its applicability makes it reasonable to assume that Johnson was speaking directly to Boswell about Boswell, for unlike most men, Boswell was neither willing nor able to make what may be called the empiric compromise with either himself or his world. He seems to have always been looking for a role, a metaphor, in Lacanian terms, that would somehow be the synthesis of all his contradictory and undefined longings. All of the contradictory roles that he played out with such zest seem to have been related to his quest, and his journals, its obvious major manifestation. Boswell was, in fact, in desperate search of himself, of some role, some defining metaphor that could contain all of his duty and desire. Consequently, a layman's applications of Lacanian structural psychoanalysis would, within the rigid limits of any layman's use of the highly technical language of psychoanalysis, offer important insights into both Boswell's character as a man and into his own relationship as artist to his art.

The fundamental problem of Boswellian self-definition is a problem of the limits of language, a problem of the linguistic medium that structures man's world by ordering in some sense the "real." Heraclitus perceived man's linguistic problem when he proclaimed: "One thing, the only truly wise, does and does not consent to be called by the name of Zeus" (Kirk and Raven 204, num 231). In his relation to the "real," man's problem is definition; it is in what the post-structuralists have come to identify as the signifier's movement along the continuum of the signified, in, that is, the ambiguity of language (Wright 120). Man is, as it were, forced to seek for a definition of the self that always limits the self and yet never fully defines all of his desires, hopes, and fears, for there can never be a true and happy match between the defining words and conceptions and the loose, unstructured chaos of desire that falls beyond the limits of definition.

In Lacanian terms this is a central dialogical conflict in the self:

> This potential endless movement from one signifier to another is what Lacan means by desire. All desire springs from a lack, which it strives continually to fill. Human language works by such a lack: the absence of the real objects which signs designate, the fact that words have meaning only by virtue of the absence and exclusion of others. To enter language, then is to become prey to desire: language, Lacan remarks, is 'what hollows being into desire'. Language divides up--*articulates*--the fullness of the imaginary: we will now never be able to find rest in the single object, the final meaning, which will make sense of all the others. (Eagleton 167-68)

Language, in other words, is necessary to define the self into being, but the limits of language grounded in the slippage of signification give birth to the unconscious through "the mis-match between language and desire" (Wright 121-22).

For Boswell this paradox of definition was both extreme and central. He seems to have hoped to find the illusion of personal totality that is most prevalent in the pre-linguistic stage of development known by Lacan as the mirror stage. In this stage Lacan describes the infant as taking his identity as he begins to formulate his *I* from what he sees reflected back to himself from his external surroundings:

> But the important point is that this form situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone, or rather, which will only rejoin the coming-into-being of the subject asymptotically, whatever the success of the dialectical syntheses by which he must resolve

> as *I* his discordance with his own reality. (*Ecrits* 2)

The ego, therefore, is made up by the child's identification with his perception of totality, but this perception moves "in a fictional direction." It is "an imaginary projection, an idealization ('Ideal-I'), which does not match the child's "feebleness," and consequently, the ego is "a victim of an illusion of strength, a fixed character-armour, which needs constant reinforcement" because a relationship of alienation develops between the self and its own image of itself (Wright 124).

Boswell, however, longed for the fictive totality of this stage of development, and his journal became his mirror that could reflect back to him a structured image of personal coherence that eased the internal stress of alienation. "As a lady," he wrote, "adjusts her dress before a mirror, a man adjusts his character by looking at his journal" (*Life* 898). Boswell desired, that is, to find through the exercise of autobiography who he was, but, ironically, he wanted his personality to have a pre-linguistic illusion of totality that is in the mature, linguistic world impossible. Consequently, Boswell laments the limits of words to define the "real":

> I find it impossible to put upon paper an exact journal of the life of man. External circumstances may be marked. But the variations within, the workings of reason and passion, and, what perhaps influence happiness most, the colorings of fancy, are too fleeting to be recorded. In short, so it is that I defy any man to write down anything like a perfect account of what he has been conscious during one day of his life, if in any degree of spirits. (*In Search of a Wife* 242)

Boswell desired to find a perfect metaphor that would contain all of the "real," but, at the same time,

he rejoiced at the freedom that a lack of definition brings. No man can be defined if he is "in any degree of spirits." Definition limits, but the internal fleeting continuum of desire is infinity. Boswell could not accept any definition of himself that did not encompass all possible Boswells.

Caught in a linguistic trap, he longed for and needed definition in some role that would express himself in a coherent manner, but he was both unwilling and unable to accept any personal definition that was less than the imaginary totality of his pre-linguistic "Ideal-I." Because the "Ideal-I" of the mirror stage is "irreducible for the individual" and comes prior to "social determination" (*Ecrits* 2), Boswell's need to find expression for all his unconscious desires that were excluded by any social definition or role placed him in a direct conflict with those social forces that most demand conformity to a certain standard of conduct. Never wholly integrated into a mature *I* that could function happily within the limits of structured life, Boswell, in Lacan's terminology, could not "resolve as *I* his discordance with his own reality" (*Ecrits* 2).

His life, therefore, disintegrated into a series of contradictory roles in which he could not find contentment because he was always aware of a persistent and unsatisfied desire for the other. In Scotland he longed for London, and in London he felt bound to Scotland by unbreakable ties of family and profession. Erring and repenting with predictable rapidity, Boswell was torn between duty and desire. Limited by what he perceived as his duty to his father and the family name of Auchinleck, while longing to fulfill his own desire for a free London life among important friends, Boswell searched for a synthesis of irreconcilable contraries because he was never willing to make the empiric compromise with himself that makes for contentment.

Boswell's view of himself, however, was sharp and searching, for he was by no means the fool drawn by Macaulay; he was, in fact, most painfully and

profoundly aware of his dilemma. "I am a singular man," he wrote in his journal. "I have the whim of an Englishman to make me think and act extravagantly, and yet I have the coolness and good sense of a Scotsman to make me sensible of it" (*In Search of a Wife* 39). The same journal entry ends with a harsher judgment: "I am a weaker man than can well be imagined. My brilliant qualities are like embroidery upon gauze" (40). No doubt, Boswell was aware of his "brilliant qualities," which certainly did exist in an abundance of *bon ami*, a rich and simple prose style, and a courage of self study that confounds commonplace courage; nevertheless, he was also aware of the unsubstantial foundation of his conception of his own personality.

The roles that he chose to play in his life assume, therefore, a central importance in his quest for some successful integration, and the zest and seriousness with which he could throw himself into any role for a time is an indication of his need for definition. In this light his apparently commonplace comments in his letter of 1 February 1767 to Temple assume a special importance:

> A bachelor has an easy, unconcerned behaviour which is more taking with the generality of the world than the behavior of a married man possibly can be, if he acts in character. The bachelor has a carelessness of disposition which pleases everybody, and everybody thinks him a sort of a common good . . . a feather which flies about and lights now here, now there. And accordingly the connections of a bachelor are always extensive. Whereas a married man has a settled plan, a certain degree of care, and has his affections collected by one great attachment, and therefore he cannot be such good company to everybody he meets. But, in my opinion, after a certain time of life a man is not so desirous

> of this general flutter. The mind becomes more composed and requires some settled satisfaction on which it can repose. (*In Search of a Wife* 23)

We see the pattern of duty juxtaposed to desire, and a final resolution for "settled satisfaction" that was Boswell's hope, but never his reality. This is the pattern of his life, his dialectic, as it were, that is to a greater or lesser extent everyman's, but in Boswell's case the question is always one of extremes.

In accordance with his premarital view, he quickly threw himself into the role once he decided on marriage. Picking Margaret for love against his father's wishes, Boswell began to play the young lover: "But while I was in church, I thought that if M. gave me a prudent, cold, evasive answer, I would set sail for America and become a wild Indian" (*In Search of a Wife* 239). The juxtaposition between the structured world of the church and the symbolically limitless savage life is symptomatic, for, once again, a desire for order is set against an idea of complete and unrestricted license. Once accepted by Margaret, Boswell took on the role of the settled young man: "They danced the country dance, and I stood with my black clothes and my cane, looking as grave and anxious as if I had been their parent"(242). When going to London to be cured of venereal disease before his marriage, he packed only two black suits because he "was determined to make this jaunt of perfect economy" (264). He even went so far as to test himself in the role of prospective husband by visiting an "old dallying companion" to see if he could resist her charms (275 n. 2). Marriage, however, like any particular defining role, was a limitation that could not long be honored. Boswell was, as he well knew, subject to fall in love with the woman sitting next to him at the dinner table (*In Search of a Wife* 122), and, even in the midst of conformity to an idea of "settled satisfaction," he appeared at the Shakespeare Jubilee in

Stratford-upon-Avon in the guise of an armed Corsican chief, sporting a black cap embroidered with the slogan "*Viva la liberta*" (*In Search of a Wife* 278). To choose one woman or plan of life was to forego all others in exactly the same manner that to choose one definition of the self was to reject all possible other selves.

The key to the curious contradictions of Boswellian behavior, therefore, is that he saw in every choice in life a limitation that excluded other possible choices and was unable to accept this limitation for any extended period. Searching for some defining metaphor that could reproduce the infantile sense of the wholeness of the self, Boswell went on a lifelong quest in search of a successful definition of James Boswell. This search was futile, but he, nevertheless, continued it with a courage that staggers the imagination. His various roles, his eccentric characteristics, his maddening habits are all to be read in the context of a fragmented self. Ironically, so are his relationship with Dr. Johnson and his literary success in the role of Johnson's biographer because it was in the laboratory of his own *I* that Boswell learned of the depth and multiplicity of everyman.

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Anthony Trollope was a mid-Victorian man essentially in tune with his times. Like many of his upper-middle class, he disliked and distrusted change (Sadlier 5). Yet he found himself living in a time when his society was experiencing some of the most sweeping and rapid changes in history. An intelligent man, he could not fail to see what was going on around him, nor could he deny that the forces of change were too strong to be contained. Somehow then, they must be accomodated, and, if possible, controlled, so that they would not destroy the society he valued. Calling himself and "advanced Conservative-Liberal," he set himself to portraying the course of action most acceptable to his basically meliorist nature (Booth 15-20). In *Barchester Towers* he writes what appears to be the story of an interloper into, and his ultimate expulsion from, a quiet cathedral city, causing a brief period of crisis after which peace and order are restored. But a closer examination reveals a more complex study of change, its inevitability, and how best to cope with it. Representatives of these three aspects can be found in the persons of the three major male characters in the story: Theophilus Grantly, Obidiah Slope, and Francis Arabin.

In the mid-1850s when Trollope was writing *Barchester Towers* the very air seethed with new ideas--political, social, economic, and scientific. Although England had escaped the revolutions which had swept the Continent in 1848, the Chartist Movement, mild though it was by comparison, had struck terror into the hearts of the British ruling classes. Each succeeding year seemed to bring some new challenge to the traditional institutions of England, and representatives of established authority felt increasingly threatened.

The establishment which Trollope chooses for his story in *Barchester Towers* is the Church of England. As an extension of the ruling aristocracy, unfailingly conservative in its attitudes, the Church was one of the institutions whose values and functions were being questioned. Within the Church there were reformers at work from both sides, from the Tractarians of Edward Pusey and the Oxford Movement, both seeking to make the Church more formal, closer to the Roman Church in dogma, to those who would remove all ritual and ceremony from the Church and make it Low Church rather than High. The efforts of these reformers could be felt as far away as sleepy Barchester.

The conflict in *Barchester Towers* centers around the events in a provincial city, out of the mainstream of intellectual, social, or political upheaval, but still subject to change precipitated from the outside world. Barsetshire and its seat, Barchester, are a microcosm for the larger world. As Bradford Booth says, it is "the world in little" (x), in which Trollope "sees the possibilities for solving the problems of his world" (Polhemus 47). The characters of *Barchester Towers* are clergy and clergy-related, and the subject matter is their attempts to deal with church-related problems, but within their "world in little" they represent the forces of change and resistence to change beyond the boundaries of Barsetshire.

In *Barchester Towers* the past and the future, the old and the new, are juxtaposed, and the conflict which results is finally resolved by a moderation of both into a third possibility, a solution satisfactory to one who preferred that the problem had not arisen. There is little of the revolutionary in Trollope, but in this novel he has created a world of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis which, while less violent than that predicted by Marx, would nevertheless be recognizable to him. The established order of the Church of England is personified by Archdeacon Theophilus Grantly, while the forces of change which threaten that order are found in Obidiah Slope, a newcomer to Barchester with

reforming tendencies of the Low Church type. In Francis Arabin, some degree of synthesis of these two extremes can be found. Arabin's promotion to Dean in the final chapter represents the triumph of moderation and good taste. The extremes have been rejected, and both stagnation and chaos have been avoided. Change has come to Barchester, but it is not disruptive; it is controlled. Order reigns, but it is a new order.

The desire for balance and moderation which triumphs at the end is apparent throughout the novel. The reader is not allowed to see characters as either good or bad, even though we may suspect the author liked one better than another. The best of them are subject to error, and the worst have their redeeming qualities. As a result they all seem very real, very human. It has been said that "Trollope had the conservative outlook of a Tory" (Knoepflmacher 10), and that the outside forces which invade Barchester are for him "representatives of social values which deserve to be mocked" (Knoepflmacher 12). Mock them he does, but the local folk come in for their share of that same mockery. While refraining from making devastating value judgments about his characters and refusing to allow his readers to do so too comfortably, Trollope mocks both extremes, Tory as well as Whig, High Church as well as Low, traditional as well as modern. While it is true that Grantly, the traditional representative, is more likeable than Slope, the modern, the difference is a matter of degree only.

Archdeacon Grantly, a staunch Tory and defender of the status quo, is the prototype of the successful High Churchman in Victorian England. A "proud, wishful, worldly man" (*Barchester Towers* 4), who has virtually ruled the diocese during the long illness of his father the bishop, he expects to be appointed to the episcopal seat in his own right upon his father's death. Such preferment would give him a seat in the House of Lords, and Grantly "certainly did desire to play first fiddle; he did desire to sit in full lawn sleeves among the peers of the reals, if the truth must out, to be

called 'My Lord' by his reverend brethren" (*BT* 10). Not only is his ambition thwarted, but he learns that there is something worse than losing the bishopric. The new bishop's chaplin, Obidiah Slope, presents a challenge to Grantly's deepest convictions--that gentlemen clergy should maintain all the privilege accorded them by the accepted standards of the day.

On the surface, few men could be more different than Slope and Grantly. In a marvelous passage, the narrator tells us that while Slope's figure is "on the whole" good, his countenance is "not specially prepossessing." We are convinced. Slope has "lank . . . dull pale reddish hair," which hangs in "three straight lumpy masses"; his face is redder than his hair: "not unlike beef . . . beef of bad quality"; his mouth is large, with lips "'thin and bloodless"; his forehead is "square and heavy, and unpleasantly shining"; his "big, prominent, pale brown eyes inspire anything but confidence"; and his best feature, his nose, has a "somewhat spongy, porous appearance, as though it had been cleverly formed out of a red coloured cork." And if this is not enough, he exudes a "cold, clammy perspiration" (*BT* 28-29). Grantly, on the other hand, as introduced in an earlier novel,

> looked like an ecclestiastical statue . . . ; his shovel hat, large in every inch, declared the profession as plainly as does the Quaker's broad brim; his heavy eyebrow, large open eyes, and full mouth and chin expressed the solidity of his order; the broad chest, amply covered with fine cloth, told how well-to-do was its estate; one hand ensconced within his pocket evinced the practical hold which our mother church keeps on her temporal possessions; and the other, loose for action, was ready to fight if need be in her defence; and below these the decorous breeches andneat black gaiters, showing so admirable the well-turned leg, betokened the decency, the outward beauty, and

> grace of our church established. (*The Warden* 51)

The physical descriptions we are given of the two men make them seem completely dissimilar, but we must not be too taken in by it. Obviously the narrator has emphasized the negative aspects of Slope while emphasizing the positive about Grantly. Just in case we have missed the point tht the narrator prefers one to the other, he simply tells us that he personally finds Slope unpleasant (*BT* 29), but we are also told that Slope has a certain way with women (*BT* 31), which leads us to believe that the narrator has deliberately exaggerated in his physical description of Slope. While Grantly is presented as a man of strength and permanence, intense, vital, even pugnacious, thee is more than a slight edge of irony in his description, and a slightly satirical trace in his parallel with the Church.In their religious preferences the two men are diametrically opposed. Slope represents the new order of Low Churchmen who would like to see the church purified of empty ritual and form. He would have the clergy work harder, maintain closer ties with parishioners, and be less secular in their pastimes and perferences. In addition, Slope is also from the middle-class, a man who would have had little chance of high church office except for the social climate of change. It is probably for this that many of the old order in Barchester cannot forgive him, more than for his ecclesiastical views. He is simply no gentleman. His open challenge to the clerical community in his first sermon is a good example of his ignorance of, or disdain for, the conventions of polite society.

Grantly is above all things a gentleman. Born to wealth and position, he has never had to fight for those things as has Slope. He nevertheless recognizes when his comfortable sinecure and his position of authority are threatened. Heretofore he has as archdeacon been very lenient with the clergymen he rules:

> He was not troubled with a propensity to be curious, and as long as those around him were tainted with no heretical leaning towards dissent, as long as they fully and freely admitted to the efficacy of Mother Church, he was willing that that mother should be merciful and affectionate, prone to indulgence, and unwilling to chastise. He himself enjoyed the good things of this world, and liked to let it be known that he did so. he cordially despised any brother rector who thought harm of dinner parties or dreaded the dangers of a moderate claret-jug; consequently dinner parties and claret-jugs were common in the diocese. (*BT* 30-31)

From this point on, however, Grantly will carefully examine all those around him, and if they are not in total agreement with him, then they will be considered his enemies.

Slope's approach to his clerical duties is not so benevolent as Grantly's:

> He conceives it his duty to know all the private doings and desires of the flock entrusted to his care. From the poorer classes he exacts an unconditional obedience to set rules of conduct. With the rich, experience has already taught him that a different line of action is necessary. (*BT* 31)

The differences between these two men, both Church of England clergymen, extend to their educational backgrounds also. Grantly is, of course, an Oxford man, to which much prestige is attached. Slope, as fitting for a parvenu, is from the lesser academic world of Cambridge.

In spite of these obvious differences, there are many similarities between Slope and Grantly. Both men have

tremendous pride and great vanity; both are stubborn and ambitious; both are jealous of other authority; and both truly believe in the rightness of their positions. Neither has, as far as we know, ever questioned the validity of his own beliefs. In the final instance, their differences are not so important as their similarities. It is these traits of character which will make them worthy opponents:

> Both men are eager, much too eager, to support and increase the power of their order. Both are anxious that the world should be priest-governed, though they have probably never confessed so much, even to themselves. Both begrudge any other kind of dominion held by man over man. Dr. Grantly, if he admits the Queen's supremacy in things spiritual, only admits it as being due to the quasi priesthood conveyed in the consecrating qualities of her coronation . . . Mr. Slope's ideas of the sacerdotal rule are of quite a different class. He cares nothing, one way or the other, for the Queen's supremacy; these to his ears are empty words, meaning nothing. (*BT* 30)

The religious climate in Barchester has long been amiable, a benevolent dictatorship. With the avowed intent of Mr. Slope to exert his authority and bend all to his will, Dr. Grantly does that which is most typical of people who feel threatened--he retrenches, becomes even more extreme in his views and actions. Suddenly, in response to Slope's Low Church philosophies, Grantly becomes more High Church than ever before and is less willing to allow anyone else to be otherwise. He realizes that if the candles, incense, vestments, chanting, and litany of the High Church can be challenged successfully, so can the special privileges he enjoys as their representative. For him the battle is a class war--the privileged position of the gentleman

churchman challenged by an upstart commoner churchman.

This shift to the right becomes most apparent when Grantly, fearing that he needs reinforcements to fight Slope, calls upon the services of the Reverend Mr. Francis Arabin, a great scholar from Oxford noted for his High Church stance as well as for his ability to defend that stance articulately. In fact, he has done so in print, with none other than this very Slope for an opponent. Arabin's leanings toward ritual and tradition are so pronounced as to have led him in his youth to consider joining John Henry Cardinal Newman when that worthy defected from the Anglican to the Roman Catholic Church.

Arabin has become famous within clerical circles for his loyalty to the Church of England in resisting the impulse to follow Newman. What is not general knowledge are the circumstances under which his decision was made. When faced with the choice between churches,

> He left Oxford for a while that he might meditate in complete peace on the step which appeared to him to be all but unavoidable, and shut himself up in a little village on the sea-shore of one of or remotest counties, that he might learn by communing with his own soul whether or no he could with a safe conscience remain within the pale of his mother church. (*BT* 98)

All of his instincts seem to be urging him toward the spiritual safety of "the ceremonies and pomps of the Church of Rome, their august feasts and solem fasts" and "laws which were certain in their enactments" (*BT* 189), but on his retreat:

> Providence was good to him; and there, in that all but desolate place, on the storm-beat of that distant sea, he met one who gradually calmed

> his mind, quieted his imagination, and taught him something of a Christian's duty . . . . It was from the poor curate of a small Cornish parish that he first learnt to know that the highest laws for the governance of Christian's duty must act from within and not from without; that no man can become a serviceable servant solely by obedience to written edicts; and that the safety which he was about to seek within the gates of Rome was no other than the selfish fredom from personal danger which the bad soldier attempts to gain who counterfeits illness on the eve of battle. (*BT* 189-190)

Thus Arabin, the High Church Anglican, the man of books, has chosen to remain loyal to his Church by searching within himself, by tempering reason with emotion, by "communing with his own soul." He accepts the ritual and form of the Church, the "written edicts," but he knows that his duty goes beyond them. Even at this early time in his career, he is capable of blending two extremes.

We learn immediately upon Arabin's introduction, then, that he is a more introspective man than either Grantly or Slope. But here are other differences also. Arabin's background is somewhere between that of the other two. The younger son of a country gentleman, he is socially acceptable to the class-conscious Church heirarchy, but his family is not wealthy, so he lacks the privilege of wealth. In fact, though he went to Oxford, he was enrolled there as a commoner (*BT* 186).

At one time as proud and ambitious as either of the others, Arabin has since overcome these traits. For instance, he was once "inclined to look upon the rural clergymen of most English parishes almost with contempt" (*BT* 189), seeing himself as one far removed from them, and wanting to help them improve themselves spiritually. But he is one of these very cerlgymen who helps *him* spiritually, and he becomes a better and more humble man, eventually accepting a

rural church post for himself. Unlike Grantly and Slope, both of whom are worldly and materialistic men, Arabin has withdrawn from the world and renounced its goods. He lives simply and frugally. While both the others are puffed up with pride, Arabin truly believes himself "a person of so little consequence to any that he was worth no one's words or thoughts" (*BT* 194). But he has not become self righteous and he does not lie to himself. He understands what he has given up, and he sometimes regrets his decision. Ambition may have been overruled, but it is still present. He admits that though he is "only vicar of St Ewold's," he still has a "taste for a mitre" (*BT* 198).

Even in his physical description of Arabin the narrator strikes a middle ground. Here he gives us neither the obviously prejudical description with which Slope was presented nor the tongue-in-cheek favor accorded to Grantly. Arabin is

> above middle height, well made, and very active. His hair which had been jet black, was not tinged with gray, but his face bore no sign of years. It would be wrong to say that he was handsome, but his face was, nevertheless, pleasant to look upon. The cheek bones were rather too high for beauty, and the formation of the forehead too massive and heavy: but the eyes, nose, and mouth were perfect. There was a continual play of lambent fire about his eyes, which gave promise of either pathos or humour whenever he essayed to speak, and that promise was rarely broken. There was a gently play about his mouth which declared that his wit never descended to sarcasm, and that there was no ill-nature in his repartee. (*BT* 191)

Grantly, confident that Arabin will solve the problem with Slope, gets more than he bargins for. While Arabin becomes the resolution of the conflict between Grantly and traditional religion on the one hand and

Slope and modernism on the other, it is not by strict adherence to the one or the other, but by adopting some of both. He will ultimately be his own man.

> He was content to be a High Churchman, if he could be so on principles of his own, and could strike out a course showing a marked difference from those with whom he consorted. He was ready to be a partisan as long as he was allowed to have a course of action and of thought unlike that of his party. (*BT* 197)

Arabin vanquishes Slope, and we are glad, because we, like our narrator, don't like the fellow much. Arabin also marries into Grantly's family, but this is not, as one critic has said, a triumph for the forces of conservatism (Knoepflmacher 12-13). Arabin has those very qualities of thoughtful contemplation and self-examination which Grantly lacks, so the machinery for change has been officially installed in the cathedral--even though the archdeacon may not realize it. The services are not "two degrees higher" than they were with Slope, but that is not so many degrees, and we realize from our knowledge of Arabin that they are not the empty ritual they may have been before Slope.

What we see, then, in the conclusion of *Barchester Towers*, is a resolution of conflict between old and new which is not so much the welcome of change as the tacit acceptance of its inevitability. Slope would have swept away all the old; Grantly would have allowed nothing new. Arabin, presiding over the parochial world of Barsetshire, while preserving High Church ritual, is more progressive than Grantly. The implication for the future, therefore, from Trollope's "world in little," is orderly transition into a more modern world.

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Ezra Pound and Music Theory: A Consideration of the **Treatise on Harmony** *and Its Importance*

Music and literature have often been rival arts. Although the annals of music history are filled with well-meaning collaborations--Mozart and Metastasio, Shakespeare and Morley, Stein and Thomson, Milton and Lawes--the *Harvard Dictionary of Music* more aptly describes the relationship between music and literature as

> a bizarre affair made up of poetry and music in which the poet and the musician each equally obstructed by the other give themselves no end of trouble to produce a wretched result.[1]

If the number of successful collaborations seems slight, then the number of successful solo efforts--works in which the same individual serves as both the librettist and composer--is far fewer. Richard Wagner and Gian Carlo Menotti are perhaps the best known examples of musicians-turned-librettists. None of these men, however, bring to their adopted art forms an experience equal to both fields. Wagner and Menotti aren't known as poets. The career of Ezra Pound seems to transcend best the boundaries of artistic genres. In addition to writing poetry, Pound was a music historian, critic, theoritician, and composer. Not since Campion have music and literature experienced equal understanding by a single artist.

Such an achievement should have earned Pound an undisputed place of importance in the history of artistic synthesis. A review of the literature concerning Pound and music, however, reveals relatively little scholarship. Most articles discussing his efforts seem to concentrate either upon musical allusions in the *cantos*,

or upon his opera *Le Testament de Villon.*[2] While those two areas *are* of interest, of greater value perhaps are Pound's prose writings concerning music--many selections of which are found in a slender volume, *Treatise on Harmony*[3] and in a substantially larger work *Ezra Pound and Music.*[4]

If one were to ask a musician to name a famous modern music theoritician, one would likely hear the names Stravinsky, Schoenbert, Piston, or McHose. A musician of serious training would go directly to the masters of the craft. His background is sufficient; therefore, he needs no intermediaries. Ned Rorem in his introduction to the reprint of Pound's treatise, writes:

> a cultured and imaginative lay genius like Pound can insist on learning the hard way (i.e. on his own) what a trained professional was quite simply taught at school and takes for granted. The lay genius will present the professional with his "unique" discoveries, but the professional, dull though he be, heaves a plaintive sigh for genius who could have saved so much time merely by opening a book.[5]

Rorem's comments are true, if the one looking into Pound's writings is a trained musician. On the other hand, if one's background is literary rather than musical, or if a musician wishes insight as to how librettists or poets often perceive the rudiments of music harmony particular both to poetics and music, then Pound's writings offer a great deal, indeed.

If musicians find Pound's music theories wanting, how much more amusing must they consider his music reviews. The reviews, which were written for *The New Age, The Egoist, The Little Review, The Outlook, The Athenaum, The New Masses,* and *The New Criterion* under the pseudonyms William Atheling, M. D. Adkins, and T.

J. V.,[6] at first seem little more than the writings of an untrained, overly critical, biased listener who is incapable of separating personal distaste from evaluations of actual performances. To those well-versed in the stylistic conventions of various music periods, some of Pound's comments amount to utter nonsense. For example, most periods had certain stylistic conventions. During the Renaissance, polyphonic music was performed sans vibratto. Music of the baroque used a similar notation found in earlier periods yet the rhythm was not quite the same. A dotted eighth note followed by a sixteenth note would be performed as a double dotted eight note followed by a thirty-second note. To remark, as Pound often does, on the apparent deviations from the modern score when performers employ historically accurate conventions reveal the ignorance of the critic.

Yet, suprisingly, these errors and the amateruishness give Pound's criticism its greatest value for musicians. Pound provides composers and performer/singers with the *librettist's* conception of performance and its compatibility with the individual elements of performance: organized sound appendaged to written word which is given life through the nuance of performance. pound's views are even more significant considering his lack of formal training in music.

Pound grew up in a "musical" home, but he never became proficient on any instrument. Although his mother played the piano well enough to give lessons and to accompany William Carlos Williams' violin solos,[7] Pound's piano ability never amounted to more than a one-fingered hunt-and-peck melody, a technique which later infuriated pianist Walter Morse Rummel. Pound and Richard Aldington were visiting Rummel in his studio while waiting

> Ezra started playing Debussy with one finger on the open grand piano. Suddenly Rummel, dressed only in his underclothes, rushed in,

shouting; "Ezra! Ezra! If you touch that piano once more I'll throw you out the window."[8]

Apparently, Pound's singing ability wasn't anything to crow about, either, a fact that Pound readily admitted in a letter to James Joyce:

> I have the organ of a tree toad, fortunately, for if I had been able ever to sing "My Country 'Tis of Theeee" without going off key four times in each bar, I shd. have warbled & done no bloomin' thing else--che pecatto & wot a loss to litterachure.[9]

Thus, though the young Pound was no musician, he was familiar with performers and artists, and as such spent a great deal of his life in a pseudo music appreciation class.

Later work with the texts of the troubador poets whetted Pound's interest in music. Many poems were accompanied by music written before the standardization of key, meter, rhythm and staff found in modern notation. Medieval music used intervalic patterns called modes. Notes were called breves and were divided similarly to the way notes are divided today. Breaks and phrasing were indicated by tick marks. Perhaps the most significant variation in modern and medieval music lies in the conception of rhythm and meter. Music of the troubador period (and through the "common practice period") was wide open for interpretation, without any definite system of recurring downbeat (the note receiving the most emphasis, usually the first note in a measure) or measure (the regular grouping of notes according to systematic emphasis). There were no bar lines. The performer then had full interpretive control, and since the performer and the composer were usually the same person, no one could argue that the performance was not what the author/composer/performer intended or

that it was incorrect. This is the principle Pound seems to have had in mind as he expounded his theory of harmony.

The *Treatise on Harmony* is a short work divided into four chapters. In the first, Pound declares that the element most grossly omitted from previous theories is Time, and that no one has considered how much time must elapse between sounds if they are to effect a pleasant consonance. He follows that statement with an extraneous statement: That a sound or group of sounds may be followed by any sound or group of sounds providing a sufficient duration of time exists between the two, that the practibility of sound depends upon an audience being able to remember the sounds in sequence--as the sound alone, as a unit, and as that unity interacts with those units which come before and after it. Therefore, harmony is a horizontal--not vertical--process; a chord is an end to itself, not merely a means to express harmonic rhythm; that is, the number of melodic notes being performed in relation to the number of chord changes occuring within a given piece.

On the surface, Pound's views are correct. A chord should and is capable of standing for itself within a composition. However, when an instrument (any instrument) plays a note (any note) in tune, the vibrations of that sound will set up a series of sympathetic vibrations called the overtone series which is not always audible to the unaided ear. The overtone series, when most audible to the unaided ear, can be perceived as similar to that noise which occurs when an unfiltered microphone "blows" the speakers. And easily demonstrated example of the overtone series occurs when a singer depresses the damper pedal of a tuned piano while singing a note directly into the string box. If done correctly, the corresponding notes of the overtone series will sound from the respective strings. The higher the pitch, the better this works; it won't work at all if the note is sung sharp or flat. These examples show that, in reality, there is no

absolute lapse in sound. That which is not immediately audile is nonetheless felt. Furthermore, today's sense of harmony may be tomorrow's discord. What in the Middle Ages was acceptable and considered pleasant sounding--parallel fourths, fifths, and octaves--has been supplemented by today's polyphony, polytonality, thirds, sixths, sevenths, tempered and electronic instruments. Volume regulation is another aspect which Pound neglects. Before electronics, the amount of time a pitch sounded was fairly regular; one voice could only get so loud and that sound carried only so far. Today, one voice can be given the volume and resonance of any number of voices. This advancement, then, often distorts a performance for the purest listener who would have all things historically accurate according to the period of the piece performed.

In Chapter II, Pound provides a progression of intervals which he calls "mathematically sound;" the point being that analysis of music will not necessarily teach a composer to compose. Pound then presents one of his over-blown generalities. When a mystery guest asks how Pound found those four notes in his progression, Pound replies, "By listening to the sound that they made, a thing no pyanist (sic) has ever done" (p. 16).

Chapter III seems to express exactly what Pound has been trying to convey. The traditional music theory student understands harmony to indicate in the broad sense all the elements by which music is written and performed: rhythm, timbre, color, tone, pitch, melody, voicing, cadence, and meter, and in the narrow sense, chord progression and voicing. To Pound, however, the term in the broad sense means rhythm and meter, and in the narrow, interpretation. Pound asserts that "the harmony for one instrument is BY NO MEANS necessarily the harmony for another," and that when good players have "'got the most out of a composition, they played their subtle seizing of this. . .' he has a sense of rhythm."[10] Such technique is called interpretation and is in part derived from study of

practices of the appropriate period and in part from instinct. Pound believes that teaching meter and rhythm to music students impedes the natural flow of the music, and basically he is correct. Many early compositions, which in the original were unmetered, lose their beauty and expressiveness when regulated. Pound does not seem to be asking for complete *ad libitum* on the part of the performer; rather he seems to be asking for expressivism. The same problem occurs with poetry. A sing-song rendition of an iambic line without the subtle shading of emphasis upon the stresses produces boredom--not delight--on the part of the audience. Performances which exhibit only a high degree of technical success and metronomical merit prostitute the art.

In the final chapter, Pound provides "corollaries and complications" for his preceeding maxims. To his idea of 'harmony particular to instrument,' Pound adds that admiration of those who are able to tell pitch deviation is giving way to those who can tell rhythmic deviation; *i.e.*, those who can view a score and sightsing it perfectly intervalically are not as accomplished as those who can sightread a line of poetry complete with emphasis on the correct syllable, with the correct tempo and at the correct volume. In addition, a composer should be able to know instinctively whether an arrangement written with a tied note would sound better than an arrangement written without the tied note. Theoretically, there should be a definitive answer. However, the instrumentation greatly influences the compatibility of one sound to another. Timbre, vibrato, tone color, resonance, all contribute to the quality of a sound. While Pound is correct that duration is important (as when one is still singing after the rest of the choir has stopped), he is not correct that rhythm is the only factor necessary for a pleasing sound.

Pound continues Chapter IV with a series of four testimonies concerning the validity of his treatise. Of the four, only one source is named: George Antheil,

the self-proclaimed "bad boy" of music. He then states common knowledge. Lower notes have a slower frequency; on an organ one can often count the number of pulses/waves per minute for low pedal tones. As the pitch is raised, the number of waves becomes faster until they are so rapid that the ear cannot distinugish between many, but hears only one continuous sound--the aural "movie" so to speak. Pound then makes one his most glaring errors. He defines rhythm as "nothing but the division of frequency plus an emphasis or phrasing of that division,"[11] but as evidence, he cites the metronome markings in his score of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*. Pound then challenges the reader: "If anyone is interested, or cares to speculate upon Mozart's indubitable comprehension of the matter,they might do worse than study the time proportions in the opening of the *Concerto in A Major*."[12] The metronome was invented in 1812; *Figaro* was written in 1786. Mozart died in 1791. The markings, therefore, must have been added by a later editor.

Finally, Pound makes his real point. He hopes to get musicians to "give up trying to compose by half-remembered rules, and to really listen to sound."[13] Until the advent of computerized/ chance/ serial/ tape/ electronic/ 12 tone concepts of music, most composers used techniques established during "common practice period" (which began in 1660). These rules established acceptable chord progressions and voicing, and organized the arrangement of sound in time through rhythm and meter. Undergraduate students are almost always required to memorize these rules for part-writing and, denied the freedom to compose as they please, stay within those "common practice period" restrictions. One must learn the rules, it seems, before one is allowed to break them.

Pound closes his treatise with a distinction between musicians with perfect pitch and those with intervalic reading skills. Pound believes that intervalic reading is a misrepresentation of a composition, that a

transposition and a piece in the original key do not "sound" the same. Again Pound is correct, but being correct doesn't help prove his point. Transposing a piece does alter the register and range, and therefore, will change the sound. However, a piece played by two different performers also sounds different. Nor will the piece sound the same if the performer is the same but the particular instrument changes; no two instruments sound exactly alike. Furthermore, a piece played by the same performer on the same instrument in the same room will sound different if the performance is held at a different season or even at a different time of day. The only way for a written composition to remain unaltered from its first performance is for it never to be performed again.

Obviously, Pound's treatise is flawed, yet the accuracy of the work is not of the utmost importance. Pound knew that he was an amateur musician; no one would have believed otherwise. What Pound was trying to do is to convey to musicians--using their own vernacular and home ground--that somehow the balance between music and lyric has been destroyed, particularly in the modern art. Pound's efforts to revolutionize poetry found no counterpart in music (how the Stein/Thomson partnership must have frustrated him). His treatise is an attempt to explain what about his poetry is different, and it is an invitation for young musicians to trust their own ears and experiment within their art as he experimented within literature.

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FOOTNOTES

[1]*Harvard Dictionary of Music*, ed. by Willi Apel. Belknap Press: Cambridge, 1969. p. 592. All other musical definitions and facts will be cited from this source unless otherwise noted.

[2]Virtually all articles concerning Pound and music appear in *Paideuma*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1973.

[3]Ezra Pound. *Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1968.

[4]Ezra Pound. *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism*. (Ed. by R. Murray Schafer.) New York: New Directions Press, 1977.

[5]Ned Rorem, "Introduction," in *Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony*, by Ezra Pound.

[6]Pound, *Ezra Pound and Music*, p. 50.

[7]*Ibid*., p. 29.

[8]*Ibid*.

[9]*Ibid*.

[10]Pound, *Treatise on Harmony*, p. 18.

[11]*Ibid*., p. 27

[12]*Ibid*., p. 28.

[13]*Ibid*., p. 29.