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Contents

The Gospel of Freudian Psychology in *Couples*

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

These questions made me wonder what Updike has to say about his own book. I soon located a statement he made in his radio dialogue with Eric Rhode in 1969. "The book is, of course, not about sex as such: It's about sex as the emergent religion, as the only thing left" (*Picked-Up Pieces* 505). Although his remark does not directly explain the presence of the textual details I have observed, it does give me the clue that the overt preoccupation with sexuality in Freudian terms has its thematic significance. To avoid reading my own interest in Freudian psychology into Updike's novel, however, I started to read criticism on *Couples*. A little to my surprise, few critics seem to have paid much attention to the Freudian concepts in the text. In a largely sociological study of Updike's novels, Judie Newman briefly comments upon "Piet's deep-seated Oedipal desire for security" in a chapter entitled "The Social Ethic" and discusses Piet as a man whose individuality is threatened by an antagonistic society (23). In his scrupulous and ingenious book, John Updike and the *Three Great Secret Things: Sex, Religion, and Art*, George Hunt addresses the psychology of sexuality in Couples in Kierkegaardian terms of guilt, dread, and original sin, ignoring whatever textual details concerned with Freudian concepts (117-138). Al-

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

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

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

As a church, the couples meet every weekend in their homes, drinking liquor, playing games, and conversing with each other. In these weekly communions, Freddy Thorne plays the role of a minister. He preaches to his church members, organizes all sorts of games for fun, talks to individuals about their problems, offers counsels, and helps solve their problems.

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

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

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

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

to Freud's theory that "there exists in the mind a strong tendency toward the pleasure principle" (Freud 9).

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

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

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

Updike's use of Freudian psychology in *Couples* does not stop at the parabolical level. To enable the reader to have a deeper understanding of the Freudian gospel, he presents case studies. Of the ten women, at least three (Janet, Marcia, and Angela) are seeing a psychiatrist. Janet and Angela are described as being alike in many ways. One of the similarities is their fear of frigidity. having been raised in "good families," the two women "have

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

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

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

> She covered one breast, alarmed, but he had knelt, and his broad mouth fastened on the other. The thick slow flow was at first suck sickeningly sweet. . . . Foxy's hand lightly cupped the curve of the

back of his skull and now guided him closer into the flood of her, now warned by touching his ear that he was giving her pain. (328)

The picture of a mother nursing a hungry baby is painted for the reader, suggesting Piet's desire for pleasure and security from his Oedipal lover. Piet's Oedipal need is so strong that he explicitly says, "I only like married woman. They remind me of my mother" (441). Sometimes, his mental pictures would suggest an Oedipal child's vision. When discussing sacrament in marriage with his partner Gallagher, Piet says, "You know what would seem like a sacrament to me? Angela and another man screwing and me standing above them sprinkling rose petals on his back." Gallagher immediately points out, "As you described that I pictured a child beside his parents' bed. He loves his mother but knows he can't handle her so he lets the old man do the banging while he does the blessing" (232). As these textual details indicate, Piet manifests a classical case of Oedipus complex.

The parabolical church structure of the couples as a group, the foregrounding of terminology and concepts of Freudian psychology in the narrative, and the case studies of individual characters strongly indicate that Updike's vision of "the emergent religion" in *Couples* is largely based on Freudian theories. Moreover, Freudian theories seem to be held parabolically as the gospel of the "church" the couples have made each other. In a sense, Updike has narratized Freud's view of sexuality as the core of human existence. His extensive use of Freudian psychology, however, does not necessarily mean his total acceptance of it. Evidence from the book itself shows that Updike's attitude toward the hedonistic way of life in the novel is rather ambivalent. On the one hand, he sees that modern man needs a new religion. Traditional formal religion does not seem to help the Tarbox couples to live a meaningful and fulfilling life. Without some kind of religion and a community based on it, though, life would be too lonesome and dreadful. Since he believes that "the basic unit of bourgeois order -- the family unit built upon marriage contract -- is erotic" (*Picked-Up Pieces* 402), the religion for modern bourgeois men and women, then, also has to embody, or at least deal with, erotic issues. In one of the epigraphs for *Couples*, the erotic tone of the book is set: "We love the flesh: its taste, its tones / Its charnel odor, breathed through Death's jaws. . . ." When asked about the epigraphs in *Couples*, Updike says, "The generation after mine seems to be attempting to find religious values in each other rather than in looking toward any supernatural or transcendental entity" (Campbell 281). Updike, therefore, is trying to narratize this attempt. And he also believes that he has done a good job at it, for he says, "To some extent, in the years since I've written *Couples*," what he envisions as the emergence of "an unchristian religion," "a religion of human interplay including sexual interplay" has actually happened (Campbell 281).

Updike's own attitude toward such a religion, on the other hand, is rather reserved. In the other epitaph, he quotes Paul Tillich from *The Future of Religions*: In essence, Tillich says that to think that one's personal action

does not concern "the life of the society to which he belongs" is "favorable for the resurgence of religion but unfavorable for the preservation of a living democracy." By quoting Tillich Updike seems to be suggesting that the mood of the Tarbox couples is understandable but also dangerous. People who desire to think and act the way these couples do should be prepared for the pleasurable yet destructive consequences as portrayed in the story. That is probably why Updike chooses Freddy Thorne -- a failed medical student, an alcoholic, and a tolerable but also despicable figure -- to be the minister of the "church." It is also why Piet Hanema, the constructor by occupation, is ironically presented as being destructive in a number of ways. Piet destroys his own marriage, the marriage of the Whitmans, and even the fetus of his own seed of love. Throughout the novel his stature as a man is gradually diminished, from a partner of a construction firm to a construction inspector, from a husband of the celestial Angel(a) down to that of an animalistic Fox(y), and from an important citizen of Tarbox at the opening to an insignificant man of just "another couple" on the last page. What Updike does in *Couples* is to capture the mood of upper middle class Americans during the "unique historical moment which, in retrospect, emerges as a dramatic transitional period between a more tradition-oriented Cold War era and the consciousness-raising changes of the late 1960s (Hunt 118). His typical ambivalence toward the subject matter leaves readers to make their own moral decisions.

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Creative Orality: Writing Orality Into African-American Literature

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The basic orality of language is permanent.
-- Walter J. Ong, S.J.

Anyone who analyzes black literature must do so as a comparativist, by definition, because our canonical texts have complex double formal antecedents, the Western and the black.
-- Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

What is the difference between writing dialogue, first person narration, or stream of consciousness and orality, as in oral traditions? The answer is by no means a simple one, but it can be summarized as a difference in thought, primarily abstract versus imagistic. When an author, such as Ishmael Reed or Ntozake Shange, creates a text filled with the stories of their characters, an act more complex than writing occurs. Each of these writers, as it is with many African-American writers, calls upon or responds to an African orality that dates back to the pre-15th century. This, of course, is a time before the influence of writing, or more appropriately a time before printing, a time when thought consisted of natural and supernatural visual images rather than a series of ink marks, notations for abstract words. At this point, however, let it be noted that this author recognizes the existence and use of non-Western written languages prior to the European invasion of Africa. Those written languages consist of both indigenous African as well as Arabic writings. However, for the most part, the West African ethnic groups were oral cultures. For example, even the Hausa and Fulani peoples who converted to Islam in the 11th century were, except for the elite, either non-literate or illiterate (Awe 55-71, Ifemesia 72-112, and Hunwick 113-131). Thus, for the purposes of this essay, the position is that the oral tradition dominated African life and thought.

As members of oral cultures, Africans formulated the formal and informal aspects of their lives on a matrix of images. Although epics, drama, and folktales, as oral performances, possessed some of the more common orality traits, e.g., formula, poetic structure, repetition, tonal langauge, and body language, the shorter transmissions, such as proverbs, riddles, and greetings, often resorted from memorization. These linguistic structures and maneuvers did not disappear when the Africans were brought to the New World, Europe, or the Arabian Mideast for that matter. Apparently, once the Africans were re-settled in their slave and non-slave communities, they

expanded their linguistic structures and set about re-creating and re-structuring their oral cultures. At this point, however, orality and oral tradition need to be defined.

First, Walter J. Ong defines orality from two different perspectives. These perspectives are quite important for a clear understanding. His terms, and the terms that shall be employed in this text, are primary orality and secondary orality. In his book *Orality and Literacy,* Ong writes,

> I style the orality of a culture totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print, 'primary orality'. It is 'primary' by contrast with the 'secondary orality' of present-day high-technology culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print. Today primary oral culture in the strict sense hardly exists, since every culture knows of writing and has some experience of its effects. Still, to varying degrees many cultures and subcultures, even in a high-technology ambiance, preserve much of the mind-set of primary orality. (11)

It is this idea of a mind-set that separates this approach to the oral tradition from many of the more common or superficial studies. In this approach the idea of the oral culture is an all-pervasive concept that never quite loses its influence, even after the introduction of writing. Jack Goody describes this concept in the following manner:

> The notion of an oral tradition is very loose. In a nonliterate society the oral tradition consists of everything handed down (andipso facto created) through the oral channel - in other words, virtually the whole of culture itself. In a society with writing both the literate and oral traditions are necessarily partial. Moreover, elements of the oral tradition, like folktales, inevitably get written down, whereas elements of the written tradition are often communicated orally, like the Indian Vedas. . . . From the standpoint of composition, even literate works are composed at least partially in the head - orally - before being written down. (13-14)

As further explanation of orality and oral culture, one should also understand the fundamental differencebeween an oral and a literate culture, i.e., sound versus sight. Ong writes,

Without writing, words as such have no visual presence,even when the objects they represent are visual. They are sounds.You might'call'them back - 'recall' them. But there is nowhere to 'look' for them. They have no focus and no trace (a visual metaphor, showing dependency on writing), not even a trajectory. They are occurences, events. (*OL* 31)

In other words, a primary oral culture does not recognize a visual connection to language but rather a visual connection to the images conjured up via sound, the primary sense in an oral culture. Events may be described and words may be spoken over and over again, but those sounds are not visual representations. As such, it soon becomes quite apparent why a particular culture or group needs an individual or select group of individuals to preserve the sounds as they were initially spoken and intended. The power that comes from this position can easily be seen as one that borders, if not challenges, that of the rulers. In addition to this oral construct, is the fact that primary orality is tied directly to communication, i.e., orality in an oral culture is dependent upon dialogue not interior monologue (Ong, *OL*, 34).

Ong explains this communication and learning as, "[Persons from a primary oral culture] learn by . . . listening, by repeating what they hear, by mastering proverbs and ways of combining and recombining them, by assimilating other formulary materials, by participation in a kind of corporate retrospection. . . "(OL 9).

As an example of the transition process from primary orality to secondary orality, the re-settlement and re-structuring of Africans and African culture in America illustrates the closeness of the two oral cultures. The influence of writing and print soon became quite evident in the African-American context. Written language defined their new existence as property as well as subhuman beings. In a response, the African-American people began to re-formulate their African culture as best they could, given that ethnic and religious groups were decimated. Thus, through linguistic innovation, the African-Americans became the products of secondary orality. Two guiding aspects of the New World African orality became storytelling and signifying.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. offers one explanation of African-American orality and literature as a joint effort in the Introduction to his text *The Signifying Monkey*:

> I believe that black writers, both explicitly and implicitly, turn to the vernacular in various formal ways to inform their creation of written fictions. To do so . . . is to ground one's literary practice outside the Western tradition. Whereas black writers most certainly revise texts in the Western tradition, they often seek to do so "authentically," with a black difference, a compelling sense of difference based on the black vernacular.
> (xxii)

From these terms and explanations one can construct the concept and definition of creative orality.

Creative orality is the written text derived from re-collecting the communal memories of the people, the storytellers and the listeners. However, instead of concentrating on a story or series of stories, the creative oral artist

does as the label implies - *creates* oral stories as they would have been told if they had existed in the repertoire of the storyteller. How does the reader know that the story is creative orality or literary written narrative? Once again, the importance of re-collection cannot be avoided or underestimated. The creative oral artist sets out to re-construct the past via the language and style of the past. Yet, since the re-creation will be in writing and print, the sense of orality dominates the syntax.

Nowhere is this creative oral artist more prevalent than within a succinct group of African-American writers who have tried to create their oral culture in print. On an initial reading of this statement, there does not seem to be any great difficulty, especially since writers from all over the world have been writing various forms of orality into their prose and poetry for hundreds of years. However, the primary difference in this form of orality is that it is not a series of visualized words, phrases, or verbal exchanges. In other words, this form of orality is a re-creation of the storytelling past, yet not a rendering of storytelling in the typical sense. This is not Joel Chandler Harris writing down, in dialect, the tales of Southern African-Americans. What exists in this created form of orality is a combination of mythological and literary interaction. As Marcel Proust, James Joyce, and Virginia Wolfe gave the world stream of consciousness, these African-Americans, e.g., Ntozake Shange and Ishmael Reed, give creative orality.

Often an African-American writer, such as Ntozake Shange, will combine the ideas of orality and literature as well as Gates' Western and black vernacular into her text. When this occurs, the reader must not only pay attention to the words written and their multiple meanings, but also to the printed marks on the page. In other words, the writer constructs another set of images out of the actual words and typographical markings. In a sense, it is these images on the printed page that become the performance of creative orality. The following is an excerpt from Shange's *Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo*:

> Hilda Effania couldn't wait till Christmas. The Christ Child was born. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. The girls were home. The house was humming. Hilda Effania just a singing, cooking up a storm. Up before dawn. Santa's elves barely up the chimney. She chuckled. This was gonna be some mornin'. Yes, indeed.... Praise the Lord for all these gifts. Hilda Effania justa singin':
>
> *Poor little Jesus Child, Born in a Manger*
> Sweet little Jesus Child
> & they didn't know who you were.
>
> [A drawing of three leaves.]
>
> BREAKFAST WITH HILDA EFFANIA & HER
> GIRLS ON CHRISTMAS MORNING

Hilda's Turkey Hash
[Recipe follows.]

[Another drawing of three leaves.]
[Return to the narrative.]

Along with the earlier comments by Ong and Gates, Gayl Jones adds some pertinent words that give even more meaning and depth to the above excerpt from Shange:

> When the African American creative writers began to trust the literary possibilities of their own verbal and musical creations and to employ self-inspired techniques, they began to transform the European and European American models and to gain artistic sovereignty. (*LV* 1)

Perhaps the only thing Jones could have added to her statement would have been to say, "they began to transform the European and European American models *as well as the African models*." Modern and contemporary African-American artists are not and should not be restricted by cultural limitations. Shange exhibits this rebellion in her novel. She also illustrates her supreme command of language and orality. Her visual inserts, the symbols that would most probably have been related to an audience through physical movement during the performance, now exist as drawings, changes in type style, receipts, poems, songs, chants, and letters. In other words, just as it is difficult to define a genre in the oral tradition, it is also difficult to pin down Shange's "novel."

In addition to Gates' interpretation and Shange's example there is also another facet of the orality - literature concept. Besides the work on orality, such as the oral theory of the Homeric texts or European epics, the African oral tradition is not limited to the epic guidelines. Instead, it is highly interweaved with a series of images that construct the mythemes and myths of the culture. As mythemes and myths, these images are often parables, tropes, and riddles that demand cultural interpretations. An example of the mythemes and myths as segments of the creative oral tradition is the use of the voodoo spirit Legba by Ishmael Reed. As Reed writes in *Mumbo Jumbo*, Legba goes by many names, e.g., PaPa Loa in Haiti, PaPa LaBas in New Orleans, and PaPa Joe in Chicago (77). The stories move throughout the New World and continue to re-enforce the stories, myths, and rituals of Africa. In other words, the name may change but the essence survives. This is one of the integral principles of oral narrative discussed by Axel Olrik in *Principles for Oral Narrative Research*. For example, Olrik writes, "When a narrative migrates from one area to another its geographical horizon will normally be adapted either totally or partially to the horizon of the new narrators" (77). This principle holds true in creative orality equally as much.

After all, it is with the effort to re-create that the artist struggles, even if the re-creation is a fabricated story from a fabricated oral tradition. In this case, the mythemes become more important than the myths because the myths may not be from the older oral tradition but the mytheme most probably are. (For a discussion of the possibilities of mytheme and myth transmission, see Gates, *Signifying Monkey*, Chapter One, 3-43.)

Harris exercised his literary abilities via direct storytelling. In other words, this is an example of African-American stories transferred into print, more of a recording than a creative action. However, when Ishmael Reed writes the story of PaPa LaBas, the voodoo detective, he does so in a series of tightly woven creative images. Interspersed among the written imagery are photographs, drawings, and symbols that offer a postmodernist vision of the voodoo tale. Here, though, is the point of diversion, the point where Reed successfully manipulates the orality issue. Through a series of juxtapositions Reed re-creates the African oral tradition in the form of short paragraphs and chapters that use his collection of visual symbols to supplant the riddles, litanies, and body language of the storyteller. Furthermore, Reed's African-American text as intentionally orally constructed thus becomes an example of creative orality in an effort to undermine Western writing/logic as the literary prerequisite.

Ruth Finnegan's approach to orality lends support to the idea of creative orality. Finnegan recognizes the variation and complexity of orality in both the primary and secondary sectors. Her discussion of the scope of orality broadens the issue of "what is oral" and how to distinguish oral texts from typographic texts. An important point that Finnegan presents is that a poem can be initially written but designed for oral transmission. This concept of design and plan alters, or at least extends the definitions employed by Olrik and Ong. Furthermore, Finnegan inserts the importance of performance as a key aspect of oral poetry. If the poem can be read and understood as easily without its presentation through an oral performance to an audience, then it should be considered, at least in a limited fashion, a written poem. On the other hand, if it is necessary for the poem to be heard aloud by an audience, while the audience views the griot's presentation, then the poem demands a place within the oral poetry canon (*OP* 16-29).

From the perspective of creative orality, Shange and Reed both write their concept of performance into the text. However, the performance must come from the reader's imagination, her visual interpretation of the text as a living body. When these textual insertions are chosen for their particular "Blackness," as with Shange's receipts of Southern cooking or Reed's photographs of Black Panthers, the insertion stirs the imagination to various levels of re-membering, i.e., recalling the past and re-experiencing the events. In this way, the text becomes an extension of Ong's sound-as-event statement.

Thus, Shange and Reed manipulate the reader's aural-visual memory. In so doing, both writers not only introduce the past but also the "possible

future" based on the re-construction of the past, a past grounded in a historical orality and a mythic consciousness.

Politically, this re-construction challenges the Eurocentric concept of oral tradition and literature; however, as an ethnocentric approach, this historical orality and mythic consciousness embraces a future based on a full-blooded African and African-American past. As a result, the future, or more properly the "possible future," represents an optimism not found in traditional European-American literature, especially that literature referring to Third World peoples. Since it is impossible to re-create the oral tradition in all of its complexity, and just as impossible to return to that primary oral state, the option of re-inventing the oral tradition out of secondary orality is the most logical. With further innovative research and imaginative creativity, orality will lead scholars and artists alike to new areas of literary and anthropological endeavors.

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Swift's Esthetic in "The Progress of Beauty"

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In his scatalogical poems, Jonathan Swift explores disillusionment, employing shocking detail to make his point that surfaces and exteriors bear little resemblance to the realities they cover. For instance, in "Strephon and Chloe," the new husband expresses his profound disappointment when he finds that after twelve cups of tea, his wife needs to urinate just as would any other human: "Can Chloe, heavenly Chloe piss?". In another poem of this group, the reader receives a similar shock, because of the discrepancy between the title of "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed," and its content: the text concerns no nymph and no beauty, but rather a prostitute, and an ugly, diseased one at that.

There is a related surprise in "The Progress of Beauty", since it, too, works violence upon genre expectations, discussing, instead of natural beauty, only the cosmetically created beauty of a woman in rapid physical decline. Certainlythe nature of appearance, and its relation to truth, or reality, undergo elaborate study in this poem. But this disjunction serves only as a vehicle for Swift's main argument: "matter" and "form" exist interdependently, so that though artifice may obscure a completely objective view of the matter it shapes, this deception will collapse of its own nature in time.

The poem is not what it appears to be. In fact, to say so is merely to repeat a point that originates most of the discussions of "The Progress." Yet the statement is essential: the text challenges all the reader's impressions with unrelenting counterpoetic techniques. In the title, for instance, the reader sees that the text takes the form of a progress poem, and it does in fact follow Celia through her ascent. But the text continues into her descent, so that Celia comes full circle from ugliness to ugliness, and therefore she does not progress at all in the sense of "moving forward." Actually, if one examines the extreme points--one month, or "moon," coincidental to the waxing and waning of Diana, quite typical to this genre--Celia does not progress in the sense of "ameliorate," either. Since she is uglier at the end than at the beginning, perhaps the poem warrants the epithet "The Regress of Beauty."

The text's contents destroy other expectations in a similar fashion. Swift calls his "beauty" Celia, thereby invoking a tradition of glorified, or "made-up" appearances employed by both the Cavalier and Restoration poets (Rees 241). Again in this vein, from the title and from the subject's name one constructs and anticipates a heavenly maiden. And because of the mention of Diana, one supposes this idealized woman will be compared

favorably to the moon. Swift does say that "Twixt earthly Femals and the Moon/ All Parallells exactly run" (9). He also follows the most natural "moonrise to moonset" scheme in his exposition of the argument. But he forces the Cavalier and Restoration equation of the phases of the moon and the beautiful woman *ad absurdum* in order to derive his own subversive counter argument.

In fact, the narrator's comparison of Celia to the moon depends just as much on their common decay as on their beauty. While the moon disappears naturally in lines 85-88 (Partridge's "cause" of attack by the constellation Cancer notwithstanding) Celia's disappearance is decidedly unnatural: she has contracted syphilis, and it is destroying her body. Her face is "cloudy" (4) and her cheeks "muddy" (37) not only from runny makeup, but also from syphilitic cachexia, a symptomatic yellowing of the skin. She also suffers from "spots" (8), "foul Teeth [and] gummy Eyes" (15), and hair loss (18-19), all due to the progress of venereal disease. As John Aden says of another Celia, the woman in "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed," she is "no courtesan, but a common whore" (218). The reader is given to understand from the distance between the usual practice of convention and Swift's own practice thereof, that appearance and reality cannot be equated.

Christine Rees explains this state of matters in her article on Gay and Swift, remarking that the conventions under discussion are artificial and illusory, "painting" women to their advantage in order to please them esthetically. Swift's nymph, on the other hand, is "a creature of the imagination [and a literal being, too], mocking reality by her travesty of beauty and desire" (239-43). Swift's success at turning the conventions around, at parodying beauty and desire, depends on his ability to show what has been hidden by the previous commentators on Celia. To achieve his goal, he furnishes his reader with a narrator who goes where he ordinarily could not, following Celia out of the public eye and into her bedroom. Without such a narrator, there is no way to see that the "parallel" of Celia and Diana is in part a joke, that it is actually, as C. J. Rawson suggests, a spoof of the "chaste Diana" topos (64).

Inside the room, the narrator possesses the advantage of proximity, and can thus demonstrate that beauty is proportional to distance--up close, it may degenerate into something entirely distasteful. From his vantage point, the narrator observes the real progress of beauty, from before others see it, when the matter, or body, of Celia lacks the benefits of art, to the application of art and the resultant harmony of matter and form, to the failure of both, when art no longer sustains its matter. In the beginning of the poem's dubious progress, for example, Celia's marred makeup jars his sight:

> Three Colors, Black, and Red, and White,
> So graceful in their proper Place.
> Remove them to a diff'rent Light
> They form a frightfull hideous Face. (21-4)

And in the end, after she is wasted by disease, Celia appears to no better advantage:

> When Mercury her Tresses mows
> To think of Black-head combs is vain,
> No Painting can restore a Nose,
> Nor will her Teeth return again.
>
> Two balls of Glass may serve for Eyes,
> White lead can plaister up a Cleft,
> But these alas, are poor Supplyes
> If neither Cheeks, nor Lips be left. (109-16)

The two passages reflect common enough concerns for the Restoration writer, issues of place and context, for the colors are "graceful in their proper place" and not otherwise. In the wrong places--white sliding to the cheeks where "rose" should be, black leaving the hair in favor of the face, colors mixing on middle ground (31-6)--the effect is quite the opposite of serene beauty.

It is not the worst possible case, though. The second passage tells of a "hideous face," but at this point in the cycle nothing will remedy it. As Rees says, "Art, the poor mortar of crumbling nature, has nothing left to hold together" (250). A. B. England, in his book *Energy and Order in the Poetry of Jonathan Swift*, notes that Celia's demise and her attempts to repair the damage are "not parallelled by details relating to the moon" (199). He implies that Celia, as a human being, tries to bring order to the chaos of her visage, just as Restoration values attempt to derive harmony and concord from dissimilar elements. Her failure proves Swift's point: a lack of substance will not sustain order for very long.

It takes Celia four hours to make herself presentable (53-4), which seems rather a long toilet by any standard. But when she is done, "Celia's the wonder of her sex" (54), amazing the fops who see her at her window ("The Window is her proper Sphear" (66)) or through the glass of her sedan chair (73-6). The poet notes however, that her beauty, long in coming, is transient, needing an overhaul every morning, and also that it is "brittle," though "[bright]" (63). As she loses parts of her own physiognomy to the disease, however, sustaining beauty at all is more difficult:

> Yet as she wasts, she discreet,
> Till Midnight never shows her Head;
> So rotting Celia stroles the Street
> When sober Folks are all a-bed. (101-4)

Apparently she becomes so hideous that she can prostitute herself only to the very drunk, and even then only when it is very dark. And presumably, sooner or later, Celia, a "[mortall Beauty]," dies, or "[drops]" (118).

The explanation of Celia's collapse appears in abstract terms where the poet explains the relationship of substance or actual content to appearance or artifice.

> Matter, as wise Logicians say,
> Cannot without a Form subsist,
> And Form, say I as well as They,
> Must fayl if Matter bring no Grist. (81-4)

In these lines, Swift throws off the metaphorical dialogue he has hitherto employed, and he also discards the vehicle of laudatory poetic convention, including his antagonistic rhetorical stance. He discusses the issue in terms of philosophy, matter and form, and defines the relationship that the rest of the poem has exemplified.

He posits two properties as necessities to each other: "Matter.../Cannot without a Form subsist." Though the two are vital to each other, Swift does not say that form is a prerequisite to existence. If there is no form to contain or structure matter, the matter will not subsist, that is to say, it will not be sustained in its existence. And on the other hand, if form lacks content ("Matter brings no Grist"), the form in existence will be mutable; it will "fayl." Celia is a fitting case study: her "failure" is due to the corruption of her "matter" or body, but one must notice that the failure of her "form," an illusion created by artifice, comes some time after syphilis set about destroying the matter underneath.

But even if Swift departs from literary device, the reader may still apply his philosophical statement to literature. Celia's decay, the matter--figurative or literal--of Swift's text, relies on a rigidly structured form itself. In its carefully traditional organization and in its absolutely regular meter and rhyme, the poem preserves Swift's statement by virtue of its own matter-form relations. For instance, Swift tells of Celia's disintegration and the subsequent detriments to her form, but the entire narrative is rhymed abab without any exceptions, while meter and stanza length hold strictly to their numbers, too. Such scrupulousness is only part of the Cavalier and Restoration convention. In addition, Swift accepts the extendedmetaphor as a vehicle for his tenor, which is not only Celia, but also "form" in the abstract sense.

These conventional means of poetic language appear twisted--it is hard to imagine anyone else doing the same thing Swift does, but when the reader notes the narrator's unusual proximity, and the privileges of time and place he gains from his position, perhaps they are not convoluted at all. Maybe Swift applies them in a proximity other love poets see fit to avoid. After all, if any Cavalier poet saw his Celia or Corinna before she made up her face in the morning, he chose not to report the sight.

It is for the reader's benefit that Swift's narrator reports. Besides reinforcing the adage about appearances beingdeceiving, he shows a complex interrelation of matter, the chaotic world, and the organization that human-

ity desperately wishes to impose on it. "The Progress of Beauty" warns against deception and cautions the gullible, yet refuses to condemn form as arbitrary artifice, when the narrator is inspired to encomium and nausea by the same "matter" in different "forms." Clearly there is also a warning against obsessions with form to the exclusion of matter; Celia can deceive a fop long after she is literally hollowed out by disease, and only through proximity to the subject, and by careful examination of the matter, can one discern this fatal core of empty surfaces. Hortatory as this seems, and grim as it is, Swift adds a strained word of encouragement: if either form or matter lacks, the part that is present will never "subsist," but will always "fayl," clearing the atmosphere for maidens with more virtue, or for poets with greater integrity.

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Notes

[1]Vieth notes that in Swift's poetry jarring discrepancies between the vehicles and tenors of Swift's metaphors are not unusual, citing as a familiar example from "Description of a City Shower" the comparison of London's "dingy, worn-down condition and the. . . . Golden Age in the Garden of Eden" (57).

[2]That Celia has syphilis is a critical commonplace, though the specific symptoms are not generally named. For the curious,besides "syphilitic cachexia," one may designate Celia's spots "syphilitic macules"--roseola which may go away after a few weeks (when "her Visage clears" in line 8), only to return later. Her foul teeth are due to the destruction of the peridental membrane ("periostitis"), her eyes are gummy with "syphilis-in-

duced iritis," and her "attack in the milky way" in line 92 is a gray discharge from the infected mucous membranes (Taber S119-S120).

[3]Cf. Pope's "Essay on Man" and "Essay on Criticism," and Rochester's "Satyr Against Mankind" for expressions of similar concern for context.

[4]"Swift's main attack is on complacency and moral obtuseness. . . . [he] does not 'teach' us anything at all, really; he forces us to teach ourselves or be damned" (Rodino 162).

Shadows and Light: Messengers and the Message in Ellen Douglas's *Apostles of Light*

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In a 1983 *Southern Quarterly* article entitled "Ellen Douglas: Moralist and Realist," Carol Manning offers a broad examination of the body of Ellen Douglas's fiction existing at that time. Manning praises Douglas's first two novels, *A Family's Affairs* (1962) and *Black Cloud, White Cloud* (1963), and she compliments Douglas's 1973 novel *Apostles of Light* for "its sensitive characterization of old people." But she goes on to criticize that novel (and two subsequent works) for what she labels as "transparent manipulation of narrative design and characterization for thematic purposes"(128).

Since responsibility itself is a "recurring theme" in Douglas's work (117), the thematic purpose Manning sees as creating these manipulations is the author's desire to expose, as misguided, the sense of responsibility readily assumed by some of her characters. Douglas exposes this misguidance by scrutinizing the usually unexamined motivations underlying one's sense of duty. These motivations under attack are, as Manning points out, "conventionality, Southern bigotry, greed, modern impersonalism, and materialism" (128). It is the way Douglas exposes these things in this novel--even if it is a manipulation--that bears closer examination.

Apostles of Light is the story of the elderly Martha Griswold and Lucas Alexander and Martha's family (the Clarkes). By focusing on the problems that aging creates for the elderly and for those responsible for them, Douglas poses difficult questions about moral responsibilities and about conventionality. The specific way Douglas does this is through her handling of various details associated with Christianity.

In a 1989 interview Douglas stated that "man's religious nature" has been "a lifelong, deep abiding concern." And that concern is clear in this novel.

While it does not seem that Douglas is attacking Christianity itself, it does seem that she is questioning the ready conventionality--often posing as Christianity--with which many such as the Clarkes approach life's moral dilemmas. Douglas raises her questions about such conventionality in three ways: through her characterizations, her imagery, and the novel's title.

The title *Apostles of Light* readily establishes religious connotations, whether or not the reader identifies the title as coming from II Corinthians 11:13-15. With the designation "apostles" Douglas suggests that her characters are those whose actions are motivated by a particular set of principles--and the connotation of the term in our society is certainly a Christian one.

Since being an actual witness and being chosen and sent forth is at the heart of apostleship, there's a special sense of divine rightness and "direct

chain of authority" that "the chosen" must struggle with. Douglas demonstrates this in the self-righteousness and the elitist Calvinistic attitudes of some of her characters.

This sense of divine rightness is reinforced because the term "apostles" is connected to "light." Although many readers' connotations of the phrase continue to be positive since "light" is a metaphor Christ uses to describe himself, once the readers move into the novel and meet the clearly evil Howie Snyder, another Biblical possibility for "light"--and the one Douglas obviously had in mind--begins to dawn. The "light" these apostles are following may not be Christ, but may instead be Satan, for as Paul warned the Corinthians "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light " (II Corinthians 11:14).

Thus from the very beginning, with the title, Douglas creates a tone of religious irony and cleverly juxtaposes the possibilities of good and evil, suggesting that things are not what they seem and raising questions about them.

Douglas continues her questions about moral responsibilities and conventionality through her characterizations of concerned family members, opportunistic leadership, and a tolerated eccentric. Once again the initial appearance of Christian goodness becomes ironic. The Clarkes (George and Louisa, Albert, and Newton) and their first cousins represent the typical conscientious and progressive community leadership. They are concerned family members and responsible Christians--good Presbyterians comfortable with thinking in terms of "predestined roles" (39). While the family pride themselves on fulfilling their duty toward their aged Aunt Martha, their concerns and actions actually are tempered by blind preoccupation with material, social, and political ambitions. This is demonstrated by their readiness to turn Martha's home into Golden Age Acres, a care facility for the well-to-do elderly.

To this cast of these well-intentioned relatives Douglas introduces someone whose intentions are not honorable. This deceiver--or "angel of light" --is Howie Snyder, a distant cousin who is down on his luck. Howie is able to mislead the Clarkes because his evil is disguised by what they see as his "priestly quality" and by his faithfulness as an Episcopalian parishioner, senior warden, and "yearly attendant at the church retreats for men" (25-26). His outward bearing and faithfulness at church are exactly what the family members admire and base their trust in him on.

Although the Clarkes readily embrace Howie's ideas for Golden Age Acres, Douglas's readers are aware of Howie's hypocrisy and duplicity because she presents it clearly in several ways. One is including Howie's greed and ambition which motivate his ideas for homes for the elderly. Another is his sexual involvement with 19-year-old Lucy (a black employee), and still another is his hiring and defending Mrs. Crawley (a woman with a history of botching illegal abortions and drug involvement and pure hatred of her mother's submissive faith). Perhaps Howie's evil is

at its worst in his knowingly stealing the health and dignity of the elderly residing under his care by giving them unnecessary narcotics.

But just as Douglas gives her readers a figure of evil, she gives them a character to challenge it. Dr. Lucas Alexander--Aunt Martha's eccentric, beloved friend-companion-lover--sees Howie for the completely evil man that he is. And because of Lucas's insight, Howie maliciously sets out to discredit Lucas with the others while taunting him in private. Howie's hypocritical lectures are both sarcastic and scripture-filled as this passage demonstrates:

> "Ain't we been instructed in plain words 'Judge not that we be not judged?' Now, you ought to think about that some, Doc. I know you don't go to church and all--you're fallen away. But think about it." (166)

At other times, Howie turns his tauntings into thinly veiled threats as a defense to Lucas's challenge:

> "I'm not putting up a front....I'm sincere...you remember what it says in the Bible about pride goeth before destruction and all? You think you too good for the rest of us. Too *righteous*. Just remember what happened to Job, righteous as he was." (206)

Howie knows well all the proper phrases to say and things to do to make most people conform to his wishes, and his remark about Lucas's "churchlessness" puts the finger on one of the things that have undermined the doctor's influence in the community.

Although Lucas is Douglas's figure to challenge Howie's evil, she tempers him as a tolerated but not generally respected figure. His ideas about poverty, health, and race have been too progressive, too liberal, too unconventional for the Southern community's elitist protestant leaders such as the Clarkes. He's lived by his own set of convictions, not conforming to the status quo even by attending church.

Douglas underscores the significance of these things through the remarks Albert and Louisa make to each other as they try to rationalize Lucas's accusations about Howie's deceptions. Albert dismisses Lucas as a "selfish, self-centered, nigger-loving bastard *nut*" (237) and Louisa condemns him for working for some "communist health project" and for being "the very type of individual who is gnawing at the roots of our society" (238). While these remarks are intended to discredit Lucas, they actually reveal more about the small-spirited speakers themselves.

It is by contrasting the influence and credibility of characters such as Lucas, Howie, and the Clarkes that Douglas inverts surface appearances and keeps the reader aware of the irony of conventionally accepted "proper Christian behavior and duty."

Douglas continues to make the reader conscious of Christianity in yet other ways, most of which are small, outward rebellions again organized religion. Early in the novel, the elderly Martha recalls the day she and her sister Elizabeth rebaptized Elizabeth's daughter in the birdbath in their beloved garden. Martha remembers Elizabeth's words and purpose:

> "And I, too, baptize thee Mary Hartwell, in the name of sun and summer and of bitter wind and winter rain....To leaven Mama's Presbyterian passion." (31)

Like her sister, Martha has rejected some of the family's Presbyterianism. Douglas has prepared the reader for this with Martha's grief after Elizabeth's death. When Martha cries out prayer-like "Someone! Please help me. Please don't let me feel how lonely I will be," the only response she finds is silence, which the author describes as coming from "the vaguely pantheistic deity who live[s] in the natural world [Martha] love[s]" (19).

Such details, along with George's remark that Martha has "never been very churchy" (49), indicate that Martha, like Lucas, stands apart from the conventional Christianity seemingly motivating the others in the novel. At the same time, these details (about baptisms and birdbaths and pantheistic deities) begin to point to the significance of the garden outside the Griswold home.

As an actual place, the garden--from the opening scene onward--is described as neglected and overgrown, as too much for the elderly Martha and her aged helper Matthew Harper to control. Of course, when Howie enters the garden, he lops off branches and uproots things with the same abandon with which he prunes away the control Martha and the others have over their own lives.

As a symbolic place, the garden--with all its tangles and pitfalls and worn out vegetation--is certainly a figure of the world in which the elderly find themselves. Yet its symbolism goes beyond this.

By emphasizing Martha's deep love for the garden and the memory of the baptismal scene, Douglas creates for the garden an image of innocence and idyllic existence. But when she focuses briefly on an elm tree in the corner of the yard, she once again ironically shifts appearances.

During a walk in the garden with her niece Mary Hartwell, Martha wonders out loud: "I'm afraid this old tree is going to go....Dutch elm disease? Has it gotten to us?" (267). Though Mary Hartwell does not answer, by this time the readers know that the implications of Martha's questions are heavy and that Douglas would have them nod "yes," that it is disease, not just age, that threatens. Into this Eden-like garden, once again, by way of a tree, the knowledge of evil has come.

In addition to the garden image, Douglas uses another powerful Christian symbol--that of fire, a tool of judgement, purification, and destruction--and combines it with a promise of salvation.

Because Lucas is not able to convince the Clarkes that things at Golden Age Acres are seriously wrong, that Howie is deceiving them, he decides there's only one route left open. In the face of inevitable helplessness, with a stoicism he denies, Lucas acts against his medical oath and takes both the offense and defense. He administers medicine to several residents as deeds of mercy killings, then deliberately sets the home on fire and alerts Howie, and finally attempts murder-suicide with Martha. Like an avenging angel, he chooses fire to destroy and purify.

But his fiery act is an ironic type of salvation. Because it's an impossible mixture of self-sacrifice and murder, his attempt to defeat death is doomed to fail–he cannot "transcend his fate" or "overcome his own helplessness" by "choosing death for himself or for someone else" (119). (Issues of death and life, of destruction and survival, are questions Douglas explores at length through Matthew Harper and his cave theory.)

Though he may have temporarily forgotten, Lucas knows this, for earlier he had remarked to Howie: "Everything we've touched is contaminated, diseased, drowning in moral confusion" (163). But Douglas reminds her readers. In the fiery closing paragraphs of the novel she reveals both the irony and agony in Lucas's moral position: "For a moment agonizing doubt [emphasis mine], more terrible than fire, shriveled [Lucas's] soul" (307).

In *Apostles of Light* Douglas has exposed as shallow and callous the conventional answers to deep basic questions of moral responsibility that often are offered by Christians like the Clarkes and Howie. But she also creates doubts about answers personified by non-conformists like Lucas. What she leaves with us--her readers--are questions about our own moral responsibilities, about the nature of life and death, about destruction, about self-sacrifice, and even about redemption. And we--as eye-witnesses to the fire, as individuals and as a society--are being challenged to find light by which we can answer such questions.

The Coldfield-Sutpen Plans

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Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* records two quests for respectability: Thomas Sutpen's obvious quest for and dynasty and Goodhue Coldfield's more subtle quest forrespectability. As the two men combine their quests, uniting their families in marriage, their separate plans begin to show similarities. Rosa Coldfield, Coldfield's daughter and Sutpen's sister-in-law/fiancee, moans, "But that it should have been our father . . . what there could have been between a man like that and papa" (13). DespiteRosa's protest, Coldfield and Sutpen appear as similar characters in several areas, most notably in the existence of their individual plans for their lives, by which they seek to gain the respect of the Jefferson community.

Coldfield and Sutpen both share the need for a plan. As non-natives of the community, both men feel an intense desire to gain the respect of Jefferson society. Rosa remembers that her family originally came from Virginia, by way of Tennessee (11). Faulkner, in the chronology and the genealogy, records that Sutpen likewise originally came fromVirginia. These appendices note Sutpen's birthplace as the "West Virginia mountains" (307), which Southerners would recognize as part of Virginia before the secession of 1863. Sutpen also lived in Tidewater Virginia, from whence he ran away from home in 1820. Both of these men with Virginian roots arrive in Jefferson in similarly odd manners. Coldfield arrives with one wagon containing the inventory for what would become his store, and his family. Coldfieldrolled into town with this wagon, laden with every sort ofodd and end, an unusual name, and four female family members(60). Out of this lone wagon, Coldfield built a business, raised a family, and began to create his reputation in the town. Sutpen arrives in a striking manner, with "a band of strange niggers" (5), "a horse and two pistols and a name which nobody ever heard before" (9). Just as Coldfield leads the way as the lone male among a band of females, Sutpen leads as the lone white man among his group of negroes. With this entourage Sutpen begins to build his business, a plantation, and upon that name, which Rosa denigrates, he begins to build his Rosa. Sutpen "came out of nowhere" (5), but it seems that everyone knows after some time that Sutpen came to Jefferson from New Orleans, just as everyone found out soon enough that the Coldfields came to Jefferson from Tennessee.

Both Coldfield and Sutpen, as outsiders, have the need to plan to earn the respect of the town. Coldfield and Sutpen both develop plans to gain respectability. Coldfield seeks to build his business, raise his family, and become a part of the moral backbone of the community, assuming the position of steward in the Methodist church (13). Mr. Compson remembers

that Sutpen had shared a secret with Compson's father under an oath of confidence, "out of regard for Mr Coldfield's carefully nurtured name for immaculate morality" (49). Compson's statement articulates Coldfield's plan, and the relative success that he achieved in nurturing that name. Sutpen likewise works to nurture his name, as he "sought the guarantee of reputable men . . . he needed respectability . . . to make his position impregnable" (9). Rosa terms his plan an

> assault upon . . . respectability which . . . consisted in Sutpen's secret mind of a great deal more than the mere acquisition of a chatelaine for his house. (28)

Rosa calls Sutpen's bride the completion of "the shape and substance of that respectability [which was] his aim" (31). In Jefferson, therefore, there exist two men who possess an ulterior motive for their actions: the execution of a plan to gain respectability.

Coldfield and Sutpen use sacrifice and self-denial to execute their plans. Coldfield's life in Jefferson exhibits "sacrifice and doubtless self-denial," and "tedious and unremitting husbandry" (38). He possesses a"spartan hoard," the result of his "self-denial and fortitude," along with "abnegation" (66). Out of this self-discipline, Coldfield finds the ability to support his family of five persons and set a sober example for Jefferson, allowing him to earn respect for his work ethic. Sutpen follows the path of self-abnegation as well. General Compson notes that Sutpen does not drink when he first comes to Jefferson because he "did not have the money with which to pay his share or return the courtesy" (25). Sutpen's restraint stems from his plan to save enough money to purchase land and establish his plantation. He sacrifices this communal drinking action so as to conserve his resources and to execute his plan. Later, Rosa remembers another bit of sacrifice on Sutpen's part. He wears work clothes all the time, as he carefully saves his one good suit of clothing for later use in courting Ellen Coldfield (28).

Coldfield and Sutpen employ an appearance of morality to execute their plans. As a Methodist steward, Coldfield appears as a model of temperance. Rosa revels in her father's supposed moral superiority over men like Sutpen. She remembers her father as "a man with a name for absolute and undeviating and even puritan uprightness in a country and time of lawless opportunity, who neither drank nor gambled nor even hunted" (32). Such moral rectitude yields Coldfield the reputation and respectability he desires. When Sutpen begins to court Ellen, he adopts Coldfield's appearance of morality. Rosa recalls:

> from that day there were no more hunting parties at Sutpen's Hundred . . . The men who had slept and matched glasses with him under his roof . . . watched him pass along . . . with a single formal gesture to his hat. (32)

Such a change in activity reveals the adaptation which Sutpen has made in order to execute his plan. In order to earnColdfield-like respectability, he ceases to drink, gamble, or hunt. As long as he courts Ellen, he displays a facade of impeccable morals.

Coldfield and Sutpen both use the church to execute their plans. When Coldfield needs to marry off his daughter, he uses the Methodist church, with its formal wedding ceremony, as a tool to gain respectability. Mr. Compson observes:

> Mr Coldfield apparently intended merely to employ, use, the church, apart from its spiritual significance, exactly as he might or would have used any other object . . . He seems to have intended to use the church into which he had invested a certain amount of sacrifice and doubtless self-denial and certainly actual labor and money for the sake of what might be called a demand balance of spiritual solvency, exactly as he would have used a cotton gin. (38)

This passage's description of Mr. Compson uses economic terms: "employ," "invested," "labor," "money," "demand balance," and "solvency." These terms combine to create an image of Coldfield as a shrewd, calculating manipulator, who uses the church to further his plan to achieve respectability. Sutpen uses the church as a tool to find himself a potential bride. When Sutpen enters the Methodist church one Sunday, only the men express surprise at his appearance. Rosa notes:

> The women merely said that he had exhausted the possibilities of the families of the men with whom he had hunted and gambled and that he had now come to town to find a wife exactly as he would have gone to the Memphis market to buy livestock or slaves . . . He had apparently come to town and to church to invest. (31)

Sutpen knows that he can use the church as a tool to make known his wishes toward Ellen, so he enters the Methodist church and marks Coldfield with "cold and ruthlessdeliberation" (32). Both men seize upon the opportunity to execute their plans by using a powerful arm of the community.

Although Coldfield and Sutpen work desperately to execute their plans in careful manners, in the end they fail. The extrinsic motivations for their lives result in vanity. Coldfield dies alone in his attic, with his respectability shattered like his store and his starved skeleton. Sutpen's dynasty never passes to the next generation and finally burns to the ground. Just as both men need a plan, both prepare plans use similar means to execute their plans, finally failing in their quests for respectability. The subsequent generations reveal that any respect gained during either man's life has been hopelessly lost after his death and the cessation of his plan.

Table

Comparison of Similar Aspects of Coldfield and Sutpen

Coldfield	Sutpen
family from VA (11)	born in VA (307)
unusual arrival (60)	unusual arrival (5/9/10)
antihero (53)	hero (13,53)
Rosa took place of maternal figure in household (19)	Rosa took place of maternal figure in household (48)
appearance of morality (32)	appearance of morality (32)
used church (38)	used church (31)
sacrifices (38,66)	sacrifices (25, 28)
sex as killer (46)	sex as killer (47)
queer silent man (47)	queer quiet man (25)
"adversary" (49)	"adversary" (49)
plan (49)	plan (9, 28, 31)
dishonesty suspected (65)	dishonesty suspected (36)
hated by Rosa (65)	hated by Rosa (5)
was Rosa's father	could have been Rosa's father (by age) (55)

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Swift's Prayers to Stella: The Other Side of the Satirist

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Two hundred and sixty six years ago, there died a woman whose relationship with the man she loved still puzzles scholars. The exact nature of the relationship between Swift and Stella may perhaps never be fully understood, as was pointed out by Hermann Real, author of the most recent study on Stella.[1] Real aptly states that "we know next to nothing" about Stella, and proceeds to examine Swift's role in educating that girl he first met when she was an eight-year-old child in 1688-89, on his first joining Sir William Temple's household.[2] This kind of approach in studying the relationship Swift-Stella, suggested by Real, consists of discussing only that which we know for sure about Stella, as opposed to the traditional legends. In his paper, Real analyzes the question of Swift's education of Stella on the basis of books which were found to have belonged to Stella. Continuing from the previous study of books belonging to Stella in 1986,[3] Real offers a list of books which, at one time, certainly belonged to her. The list is a respectable one, even though it often reflects the literary taste of her tutor: the list includes *The Rape of the Lock, Paradise Lost,* Matthew Prior's poems, and Nicholas Brady's translation of the *Aeneid* into blank verse.[4] Another aspect of the relationship Swift-Stella that has a concrete foundation is Stella's involvement with the transcription of Swift's poems. A volume containing Stella's transcript of some poems by Swift had been in possession of the Duke of Bedford family, and was reported by James Woolley to be mislaid in 1983-88.[5] However, Sir Harold Williams had ordered photostats of and made notes about the volume, in the course of preparing his edition of Swift's poems.[6] It is thanks to Williams' thoughtfulness that we are able to see, in a recent essay by James Woolley, a full description of the volume's contents.[7]

Two other sources of discussion are obviously the 65 letters forming the *Journal to Stella,* and Swift's twelve poems to her. And we are fortunate to have, in the twentieth century, more sensible and scholarly analyses of Stella, such as Herbert Davis' book on Stella,[8] and Williams' summary of her life in an Appendix to his edition of Swift's correspondence.[9] But, while those accounts helped to eradicate many legends and inaccuracies about Stella, they also left many questions unanswered. Even Ehrenpreis himself confessed that much of his discussion of Stella is "speculation based on Freudian psychology or on inferences drawn from a few data."[10] Even the few portraits of Stella present problems of identification,[11] and the question

of her supposed marriage to Swift is still open to debate, although Maxwell Gold's thorough study had concluded they were indeed married.[12] Gold's conclusions are open to questioning, to the extent that Ehrenpreis passed over Gold's evidence, and positively declared his belief that Swift and Stella never got married.[13] Finally, John Irwin Fischer has thoroughly discussed Swift's poems to Stella, but there is still another series of writings by Swift to Stella which has not been properly discussed. This consists of three prayers written by Swift to Stella when she was very sick. Like the poems, the prayers offer a new dimension to our knowledge of that which is probably one of the most mysterious relationships in the history of English literature.

The first two prayers, simply entitled *Prayers for a Sick Person during her Illness,*[14] first appeared in 1746, as part of Faulkner's edition of Swift's works. Actually, this title was not even printed together with the text, being only mentioned in the table of contents. It is stated that the prayer was written on October 17, 1727, and that was a particularly intense period for Swift, emotionally speaking. On April 9, Swift journeyed from Ireland to England, and by April 22, he was with Pope at Twickenham, in what would be his last visit to England. While Swift was enjoying the company of his English friends, his thoughts were still with Stella who was extremely sick in Ireland. On June 11, 1727, Stella's Irish friends, including Thomas Sheridan, wrote a verse tribute to Stella, which contains some of the ideas later to be presented in Swift's prayers to her. The title is *The Humble Petition of Stella's Friends:*

> Poor Stella hourly is perplext
> Betwixt this World here and the next;
> Her Friends imploring her to stay,
> And Angels beck'ning her away.
> Behold the Balance in Suspence!
> She's unresolv'd for Here, or Hence.
> Ah let our Friendship turn the Scale,
> 'Till you have liv'd what Time is due,
> And then we'll all expire with you.[15]

Swift certainly knew about this poem, as he refers to it in his letter to Sheridan of July 1, 1727.[16] On August 29, Swift told Sheridan he expected to hear of Stella's death, which he called "the most fatal News that can ever come to me, unless I should be put to Death for some ignominious Crime."[17] In his last letter to Sheridan during that trip to England, dated September 2, 1727, Swift's emotions are evidently intense, a situation which does not quite agree with the stereotypical view of Swift we oftentimes see. Swift says he had received Sheridan's letter of August 24, and kept it for an hour in his pocket for fear of reading "the worst News" that could be passed on to him.[18] Swift says life's last act is "a Tragedy at best" and it is even worse "to have one's best Friend go before one."[19] As the letter continues, it

becomes increasingly difficult for Swift to control himself. He professes, upon his salvation, that Stella's condition makes life indifferent to him. Swift then laments the fact that, even if he recovers from the painful symptoms of Ménière's disease (Swift's life-long illness),[20] it will be only to "see the Loss of that Person for whose sake Life was only worth preserving."[21] Swift concludes the letter with a melancholy statement: "I was never in such Agonies as when I received your Letter, and had it in my Pocket.– I am able to hold up my sorry Head no longer."[22]

On September 18, Swift left England for the last time, and would reach Dublin only on October 2, after delays and accidents along the journey. Swift's continued anxiety for Stella is seen in *The Holyhead Journal*, written while he was traveling back to Ireland.[23] Fifteen days after arriving in Dublin, Swift wrote the first of his prayers to Stella. The first point about the prayer that may call the reader's attention is that, in spite of all his depression and sadness over Stella's condition, Swift opens the prayer with expressions of thanksgiving. Since it was not intended for publication, and only appeared a year after Swift's death, we can confidently believe in Swift's honesty of feelings as stated in such an intimate, private piece. Swift shows an admirable ability to resign to God's Will, in the best tradition of The Book of Job in its main idea that "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."[24] Swift's words are:

> Oh GOD, thou dispensest thy Blessings and thy Punishments, as it becometh infinite Justice and Mercy; and since it was thy Pleasure to afflict her with a long, constant, weakly State of Health, make her truly sensible, that it was for very wise Ends, and was largely made up to her in other Blessings, more valuable and less common.[25]

Swift is here at his best as an Anglican priest. He does not concern himself as much with asking God to cure Stella, as with asking God to make her thankful for the gifts she had received from Heaven. Swift remembers Stella's virtues, and, stressing that they won for Stella "a most unspotted Name in the World,"[26] he not only asks God to make Stella continue in her gratefulness to Him for the gifts she had received, but also that she may be worthy of entering the "Everlasting Habitations."[27] Unlike some prayers for the sick, Swift's prayer is primarily directed at the health of Stella's soul, rather than her body's. In emphasizing thanksgiving for Stella's virtues, instead of petitions for her physical health, Swift closely follows prayers like that of Christ's before Lazarus' tomb. In front of His friend's tomb, Our Lord first thanks the Father: "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me."[28] Only after this expression of gratitude towards the Father, Christ proceeds to raise Lazarus. This pattern of prayer was also emphasized by Saint Paul: "Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God."[29] Swift mentions his request only after half the prayer had already

been stated: "Restore her to us, O Lord, if it be thy gracious Will, or inspire us with Constancy and Resignation, to support ourselves under so heavy an Affliction."[30] Swift's words "if it be thy gracious Will" remind us of the leper's words to Christ: "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean."[31] Swift here re-affirms his faith in God's healing power, as, shortly before his request, he says: "O All-Powerful Being, the least Motion of whose Will can create or destroy a World."[32] The question is not whether God *can* cure Stella, but whether God *wants* to heal her.

Likewise, Swift appeals to God's merciful providence, not demanding that something be granted, but stressing the good practical results of whatever God will be pleased to grant. Swift asks God either to restore Stella's health, or to give her friends resignation to stand the loss. Swift begs for Stella's cure "for the Sake of those Poor, who by losing her will be desolate, and those Sick, who will not only want her Bounty, but her Care and Tending."[33] If this is not God's Will, then Swift asks that God may be pleased to raise up "some other in her Place with equal Disposition, and better Abilities."[34] Swift also asks God to lessen Stella's pains, or give her "double Strength of Mind to support them."[35] And, as a last resort, if God's Will is that Stella should die, Swift asks that her friends' thoughts may be turned "upon that Felicity" she will enjoy, rather than upon her loss.[36] What emerges from these words is a pragmatic and also sensitive mind. Swift's sadness over Stella's condition does not hinder him from remembering that God is not the indifferent "clock-maker" as defined by the Deists. God works even through tragedies such as Stella's, and Swift's only request is that whatever happens may be for the spiritual good of the persons concerned. The hope that this will be accomplished is expressed in Swift's way of addressing God throughout the prayer ("most merciful Father," "in thy Mercy"). The God of Swift's prayer is the New Testament's *Abba*, rather than the menacing God dwelling in Mount Sinai.

Swift's second prayer was written on November 6, 1727, less than a month after the first one. Its opening words disclose Swift's idea of God's nature:

> O Merciful Father, who never afflictest thy Children, but for their own Good, and with Justice, over which thy Mercy always prevaileth, either to turn them to Repentance, or to punish them in the present Life, in order to reward them in a better;[37]

Swift trusts that God, being infinitely good, will not allow anything evil to happen to Stella, even though she is dying. This unconditional trust in the Divine Providence even compels Swift to justify Stella's reactions in the eyes of God:

> Forgive every rash and inconsiderate Expression, which her Anguish may at any Time force from her Tongue, while her Heart continueth in an entire Submission to thy Will.[38]

Again, the priest speaks louder than the affectionate friend (or lover). It is remarkable that, while maintaining an emotional tone, Swift does not get despondent. He wishes that God will give Stella a humble and assured hope that God's mercy is acting in mysterious ways behind the tragedy of her illness. What follows is an echo of the message conveyed in the Struldbruggs' episode in *Gulliver's Travels*. Swift begs God to suppress in Stella "all eager Desires of Life, and lessen her Fears of Death."[39] Swift acts here the part of the converted Gulliver in the country of the Struldbruggs: he knows that "it is impossible that any thing so natural, so necessary, and so universal as death, should ever have been designed by providence as an evil to mankind."[40] Remembering the tradition that Swift always read chapter III of The Book of Job on his birthdays, we might observe that, in his prayers to Stella, Swift becomes a hopeful version of Job. He mourns over tragedies, but he goes a step further: even if there should not be certainty about happiness on the other side of the grave, there is in death at least a relief for present miseries, and this is enough for Swift. And, having once introduced the young Stella to books, Swift now hopes she will also follow him in his idea of "the Vanity, Folly, and Insignificancy of all human Things."[41] As a priest might very well do, Swift also asks God to forgive the sins Stella had forgotten to repent of, and then he turns his attention to Stella's friends. The closing part of the prayer shows that Swift was not praying alone. He asks God to grant the requests on Stella's behalf, on the grounds that Christ had promised to be in the midst of a group of people, even if it consisted of only two or three persons, gathered in His name.[42] Swift refers to "us who are met" in Christ's name, and one interesting turn in the prayer's last part is that Swift also asks a grace for himself and for Stella's friends, which will ultimately benefit Stella herself: that their grief may not "have an ill Effect on her present Distempers."[43] Even when he is apparently asking for something for himself and/or Stella's friends, Swift has Stella's welfare as his ultimate goal: whether spiritually or physically, her healing will also benefit others. In Swift's words, her cure would be a comfort to her friends who will be able to benefit from "her Conversation, her Advice, her good Offices, or her Charity."[44] Swift is concerned about Stella both because of her own sake, and for the good she does. It is almost as if the world would be the real loser in case of Stella's death. When we read the closing lines, with their earnest and intense tone, we might think about Delany's description of Swift praying before meals:

> His [Swift's] saying grace, both before, and after meat [sic], was very remarkable. It was always in the fewest words that could be uttered on the occasion, but with an emphasis and fervor which every one around him saw, and felt; and with his hands clasped into one another, and lifted up to his breast, but never higher.[45]

Delany then mentions Swift's prayers to Stella as one of the proofs of Swift's sincerity in religion.[46] And, the third and last prayer is explicitly entitled *A Prayer for Stella.*[47] It first appeared in 1765, as part of Faulkner's eleven-volume set edition of Swift's works, duodecimo, begun in 1763. The three prayers also appeared in a collected edition of Swift's works related to religion (such as the Sermons and *Thoughts on Religion*) published by R. Dampier and others in London, probably in 1790.[48] Again, Swift's major concern is that Stella should be mindful of God's mercy in case of her cure, and keep the "good resolutions" she was making in her sickness. Swift does not tell us what those resolutions were, but he recalls Stella's charity towards the poor: because of Stella's liberal care of the destitute, Swift asks God to retribute her good deeds in fulfillment of Christ's promise that whatever good we do to others, we do to Him.[49] Swift expresses his interest in Stella's happiness in the other world, and her conformity with the designs of a God who makes good out of evil. Once more, the shadow of the Struldbruggs appears: "take from her all violent desire, either of life or death, further than resignation to thy holy will."[50] Swift even goes so far in his attempt to see any good in that terrible situation as to ask that Stella's friends, by seeing her dying, may "be drawn to repentance" before it may please God to visit them "in the like manner."[51] This is probably the only passage in the prayers which reminds us of the conventional Swift we know from his satires: he attempts to shake up those around him in their basic assumptions about life, and to lead them to once again ask fundamental questions about themselves and the world. Back in 1710, Swift had said he was ready for death after learning of his mother's death.[52] Now it seems that the death of the other woman in the world he loved had struck the final blow.

Stella would not survive very long. On December 30, 1727, she drew up her will, and on January 28, 1728, at about six in the afternoon, she died. About three hours after her death, Swift wrote *On the Death of Mrs. Johnson, Stella,* his final characterization of Stella. It is significant that Swift did not attend the funeral, choosing rather to remain in his room and write about her. The Stella we see in Swift's final words about her is the same virtuous and charitable person of his prayers to her. In the light of the fact that none of Stella's letters to Swift survive, we should be appreciative of Swift's accounts of her, especially when they are as objective and personal as the prayers or as *On the Death of Mrs. Johnson, Stella.* In fact, the only writings of Stella we have are two poems, and even those are not certainly determined to be hers.[53] Ironically, the extant texts that we know for sure to have been written down by Stella are transcripts of Swift's works. If indeed Stella was as virtuous and beautiful as Swift says in his prayers and poems to her, as well as in his final narrative about her, we can only hope that further research and discoveries will let us know more about this extraordinary woman.

Frost's Syllogism in "The White-tailed Hornet"

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"Alas! my Poins, how men do seek the best,
And find the worst, by error as they stray!"
--Thomas Wyatt, "Of the Sure and Mean Estate" (1577)
in *The Poetical Works of Thomas Wyatt* (London: Bell and Daldy 1866) 188, l. 70-71.

Robert Frost's title of his poem "The White-tailed Hornet" is a hymenopterous misnomer. The *Vespiadae* family includes all thirty species of paper wasps, yellow jackets, and hornets, which are divided into four representative genera--*Politistes, Polybia, Ropalidia,* and *Vespula* (Howard E. Evans and Mary J. West, *The Wasps* [Ann Arbor: Univ Michigan P, 1970] 22). Hornets are those *Vespula* which are black and white in color instead of black and yellow (Christopher Andrewes, *The Lives of Wasps and Bees* [New York: American Elsevier Publishing, 1969] 100). Of these black and white hornets, those building aerial nests (like Frost's "white-tailed hornet) are in the sub-genus *Dolichovespula* (Andrewes). The *Dolichovespula* genus includes the white-faced hornet, the *Dolichovespula maculata* (Carl D. Duncan, *A Contribution to the Biology of North American Vespine Wasps* [Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 1939] 11). Frost's hornet is not white-*face*, but white-*tailed*. Since there is no white-tailed hornet, why then has Frost, who seldom errs in dealing with subjects of nature, made such an error? Or, is it really an error? Is the white-tailed hornet a colloquial synonym for the white-faced hornet? Having been stung twice, is the narrator merely emphasizing the tail or the stinger? Or, does he use the misnomer purposely as an example of the fallibility of humans (and likewise himself)? The latter seems more in keeping with the meaning of the poem.

Divided into three stanzas, "The White-tailed Hornet" forms something of a syllogism. The first stanza is the major premise; the second, the minor premise; the third, the conclusion. The monologue's first stanza shows the unerring certainty of the hornet juxtaposed against the erroneous attempt of the narrator to reason with the hornet. In the second stanza, the fallibility of instinct is brought to the attention of the reasoning narrator--it is a reversal of the first stanza in which the insect is wrong and the narrator is right. In the third stanza of the monologue, the poet, skeptical of old ideas regarding instinct and reason, explores the need for the revision of the Great Chain of Being.

Frost begins the poem with a metaphorical description of the hornet's nest--he calls it a "balloon" and extends the metaphor to include the buoy-

ancy of a balloon: "The white-tailed hornet lives in a balloon/That floats against the ceiling of the woodshed" (*Selected Poems of Robert Frost* [San Francisco: Rhinehart, 1963] 81, l. 1-2. Subsequent references are by line number). Continuing the description of the nest, Frost claims the exit "[i]s like the pupil of a pointed gun" (4). This simile includes another simile that likens the hornet's "coming out" to that of a "bullet." These two similes introduce an extended gun metaphor. The hornet leaves the nest via the barrel or "pupil." He can "change his aim in flight," and is therefore "[m]ore unerring than a bullet."

The poet next reports: "Verse could be written on the certainty/With which he penetrates my best defense" (7-8). In lines 7 through 21, the speaker elaborates on this same "certainty." This certainty with which the hornet attacks him is "instinct" or "insect certainty." If the hornet has this "unerring" and "certain" infallibility of instinct to attack "the sneeze-nerve of a nostril," what of its instinct not to attack when near the house or near the children? These are exceptions to the hornet's attacking instinct, and the speaker would ask why he too is not an exception. The poet sees himself as "[o]ne who would never hang above a bookcase/His Japanese crepe-paper globe for a trophy" (17-18). The "Japanese crepe-paper globe" alludes to the hornet's nest. Traditionally, paper-making was learned by persons in the Far East from the paper wasps. Indeed, the white-faced hornet is often called the "paper hornet." The word "crepe-paper" joined by its hyphen combines the Oriental image of "Japanese crepe" with the "paper globe" of the hornet's spherical, "balloon" nest. By precise diction and syntax, Frost joins the literal with the metaphorical to form this complex universal image. The speaker attempts to explain to the hornet that he would not destroy him for the nest prize. The speaker tries to reason that he is an exception. However, the hornet stings him not once, but twice: "He stung me first and stung me afterward,/He rolled me off the field head over heels,/And would not listen to my explanations" (19-21). The hornet instinctively stings while the speaker reasonably explains. Reason and instinct conflict, and instinct triumphs. Thus, the first stanza of the poem is the presentation of the major premise of the syllogism--that instinct is infallible.

At the beginning of the second stanza, the poet informs the reader that the confrontation of the first stanza occurred at the woodshed, the hornet's domain. The setting of the second stanza is the speaker's house: "As a visitor to my house he is better" (23). The hornet is "better" than the "worse" which he was in the first stanza. The hornet comes near the house because "[h]e's after the domesticated fly/To feed his thumping grubs as big as he is" (30-31). The white-faced hornet is a carnivorous fly-hunter, who preys on bee flies, green bottle flies, screw-worm flies, blowflies, drone flies, crane flies, stable flies, and houseflies (Duncan 107). Again, Frost reflects his experience with, and demonstrates his knowledge of, nature, the primary concern of his poetry.

In the poet's domain, near the house, the hornet is not aggressive; he is content to search for flies. He can even be trusted to touch the skin without

stinging. Here in the human domain, one can "[t]rust him then not to put you in the wrong,/He won't misunderstand your freest movements" (269-270). Here, the hornet is "at his best" in terms of his peacefulness, but not always so in terms of his instinctive abilities. The hornet mistakes a nailhead for a fly. He strikes and realizes it is a nailhead; however, he then strikes a second nailhead. The reasoning speaker informs the hornet: "Those are just nailheads. Those are fastened down" (36). The hornet then strikes at a huckleberry, and Frost draws an analogy between this action and that of a football player recovering a ball: "He stooped and struck a huckleberry/The way a player curls around a football" (38-39). The poet once again chastises the hornet and informs him of his unreasonable attack: "'Wrong shape, wrong color, and wrong scent,' I said" (40). Parallels between Frost's words to the hornet and the actual hunting methods of the species of *Vespula*, which includes the white-faced hornet, further illustrate Frost's detailed observations of hornets. In the narrator's line to the huckleberry-attacking hornet, he mentions "shape," "color," and "scent" in that order. The two visual characteristics of color and shape precede the olfactorial characteristic of scent. Christopher Andrewes in his *The Lives of Wasps and Bees* writes:

> Species of *Vespula* hunt on the wing, flying rather high and pouncing suddenly on their prey, which they recognize by rather generalized features of color and form. Sight plays the major role, and scent only when they get quite close. (103)

Frost has described the "wrongs" in descending order, the order in which each should have become apparent to the descending hornet. Frost, as he does in many of his other poems, demonstrates a most precise knowledge of the insects he describes in nature.

Next, the hornet sees a fly at which he "shot" (Frost continues the gun metaphor), but he misses. The hornet errs with his instinct by successfully attacking two nailhead and a huckleberry--two wrongs. With his instinct, the hornet correctly identifies the fly, but then he miscalculates and does not catch it--this is the third wrong. It is the missing of the fly that concerns the narrator: "But the real fly he missed would never do;/The missed fly made me dangerously skeptic" (48-49). The speaker is skeptical. He doubts, because his own fallibility has taught him to doubt. He doubts the theories that support the major premise of his syllogism in the first stanza. Thus, the second stanza presents the minor premise of the syllogism--that instinct is not always infallible.

In the third stanza, the poet explores what he doubts. The experience with the instinct of the hornet gone-wrong provides the genesis for his doubt. By reason, the narrator doubts, and he reasons all the way through the third stanza. The skeptical narrator questions: "Won't this whole instinct matter bear revision?/Won't almost any theory bear revision?" (50-51). To theorize, one must reason, yet reason can be fallible. If one has reasoned to create theories, could he have reasoned incorrectly? If he has,

the theory can be revised. The theory in question, of course, is the Theory of the Great Chain of Being. According to the Great Chain of Being, plants and animals are below man, and angels are above man on something of an ascending and descending ladder (Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* [New York: Harper and Row, 1960] 268). The poet is concerned more with the lower aspects of the Chain.

After questioning the Great Chain of Being, the speaker notes that "[t]o err is human, not to, animal" (52). This is a precise statement of the major premise of the first stanza, but "[t]o err is human" is a half-line from Alexander Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1731). Pope also concerns himself with the Great Chain of Being in Epistle I of his *Essay on Man* (1731):

> Vast chain of Being! which from God began,
> Natures aethereal, human, angel, man,
> Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,
> No glass can reach! from Infinite to thee,
> From thee to Nothing!
> (*The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt [New Haven: Yale UP, 1963] 513, l. 237-241. Subsequent references appear by line number.)

If there are mistakes in man's reasoning and no mistakes in insects' instinct, then the poet suggests that we "pay the compliment to instinct" by saying it is unerrable; however, our compliment is "too liberal" and "takes away instead of gives." Infallibility is more "taken away" from us than "given" by us. Like infallibility, human beings have lost to the lower species "worship," "humor," and "conscientiousness." As humans, our misconception was ours, "[a]nd served us right for having instituted/Downward comparisons" (58-59). Examples of these "downward comparisons" are in Epistle III of Pope's *Essay on Man*:

> The Arts of Building from the Bee receive,
> Learn of the Mole to plow, the Worm to weave,
> Learn of the little Nautilus to sail,
> . . . . . .
> Learn each small People's Genius, Policies:
> The Ant's Republic, and the Realm of Bees. (173-184)

These are a few examples, but the list is almost infinite. Humans have attributed all but fallibility to other animals below them on the Chain of Being. Before these "downward comparisons," humans were better off--"we were men at least" with the "upward comparisons":

> As long on earth
> As our comparisons were strongly upward
> With gods and angels, we were men at least,
> But little lower than the gods and angels" (60-62).

The "little lower than gods and angels" reflects the words of David in the Bible: "For thou has made him a little lower than angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour" (Psalms 8.5). There is nothing wrong with the ascending from man to gods; however, the narrator complains of the descending to animals or the making of "downward comparisons":

> Once we began to see our images
> Reflected in the mud and even dust,
> 'Twas disillusion upon disillusion" (64-66).

On one level, man lost all but fallibility to the animals. On another, he lost his place under gods and angels by recognizing an evolution up to him--man lost the coming-down to-him of gods by seeing the coming-up-to-him of animals on the ascending and descending Chain of Being. In this dilemma, men gave up being less than gods, hoping to be more than animals; however, as a result of his parceling out of attributes, he became somewhat less than animals. Frost's simile suggests as much: "We were lost piecemeal to the animals,/Like people thrown out to delay the wolves" (67-68). The speaker concludes his monologue with a statement of why the theories need revision: "Nothing but fallibility was left us,/And this day's work made even that seem doubtful" (69-70). If the hornet with infallible instinct does err, as he did in the second stanza, then the reliability of his instinct is suspect. The hornet usurped the only thing left to man--fallibility. Or the poet, at least, attributes it to him. Thus, the third stanza or third part of the syllogism concludes that there is a need for theory revision. Or, is there the need? Is the syllogism valid?

"The White-tailed Hornet" is something of a syllogism--each stanza forming one of the three parts. The first stanza is the major premise: According to theory, all hornet instinct is infallible. The second stanza is the minor premise: Regardless of the theory, the hornet instinct fails. Therefore, the third stanza is the conclusion of the syllogism: The theory needs revision. However, in deductive reasoning, one must remember that the formal validity of the syllogism may be distinct from the truth, because the reliability of a syllogism is dependent on its two premises. The question of the syllogism's validity gives Frost's poem a delightful ambivalence. The deductive reasoning of the speaker could indicate that he is still fallible, that he has not lost this last attribute to the lower species. At the very least, it shows that the speaker is one who can err in the mis-naming of the hornet.

GAZELLE GHAZAL

The antelope's lyrate horns twist toward responsibility
Of having held out in the corruption of these deserts.

Yellow, like the sand where there is sand,
Is the dark triangle on the forehead a pyramid?

Such structures suggest an age older than civilizations,
Not only in North Africa, but North America.

The tender twists to the tension of the horns
Remind us in their duplicity of the lines of ghazals.

Two white streaks repeat this duality
In their extension from the horns' base to the nose.

That complementary black stripes border the streaks
I recall from viewing the Arabian species.

This occurred outside the African arena,
Most assuredly along a state highway at County Line,

Oklahoma, sometime in the spirit of my twenties,
But I new them also from the zoos of my youth.

Dead remains, I'd seen them stuffed as trophies
On the wall of the big game hunter in "A Decade

In the North American Game Room," my poem
Where I made the Moroccan most of the Mohr.

Once at a garage sale in Midland, Texas,
I denied myself the purchase of a single horn.
Mounted perpendicular to a heavy marble base,
Its singularity demanded the presence of its other.

No longer in Texas, far from Oklahoma, now
The poem is a jeep that struck a leaping antelope.

All the angles of the body striped argued
Determination of the type named by Soemmering.

That we'd driven ourselves clear across Abyssinia
Clenched the identification of that gazelle.

"The world is a vale of tears for it is only
through suffering that the heart can be
taught the true meaning of love."
--E.D. Hirsch

What I knew had nothing to do with love,
For in the dispensation we call grace
The raw nerve shakes off its mantle of light,
And the told fiction furnishes the truth--
That to take is to take, to give, forgive;
In the warm hollow of the held hand, hope
Rings out against more and less until hope
Translates its own version from language that love
Brings in its judgement of what to forgive,
Shouted denial, the betrayal of grace.
That more might have been made of it than truth
Turns the eyes to be blinded by the light
Or turns turned head away from the bright light--
Yes, only the helpless hold out for hope--
And it is in the struggle that the truth
Agonizes over what it will love.
Speaking of the unconditional grace-
Fully, I only ask that you forgive
Me my pride and my lust, that you forgive
Me for not having stood better, in light
Brighter, bright enough to illumine grace
With aureoles and auras of hope
With its bud-tight wrapped raptures of pure love,
The roses and angels of Dante's truth.
If I should be allowed to teach such truth,
Then I would speak of the gift to forgive
Myself for having learned the lessons love
Taught me so poorly in limited light.
In the moon-like reflection of hope,
Before a gathering of the gulls, grace
Fans together the with feathers of grace;

A white shoe stands on the threshold truth
Places there as its holding place. The hope
Its wearer wears is the faith to forgive
Other dancers their failure to dance light
And quick into the arms of one they love.
What we are taught by grace is to forgive.

As we seek the truth we project the light
Through our despair until hope brings us love.

MONOLOGUE IN ATTEMPTED ACQUISITION OF DIALOGUE

Pumpkin, just you, where is the doll
More beautiful than just you girl,
sparkling warm,
The moon beaming from the zenith at equinox
a perfect season,
Ripe in flowers
with magic in the eye's glance.
Your lips are moist
your neck that alabaster white
and your breasts the mark;
Your hair blue in its shining,
your arms better than high interest.
Your lashes whisk my hard cheek--
butterflies land like that
Your buttocks are sculpture of the buttocks,
Your legs long beyond length.

Dance your moving
(I tell the truth!)
If we love I'll be yours forever.
Every head raises--that is eyes eying eyes--
to see your face.
No arms worthy to embrace you;
all marvel how you make any room yours.

Jesus Christ! you're sexy.
all eyes go temporarily blind
when you chance to step out of sight,
All poetry ends,
silently.

I adore this goddess-become woman,
What's-her-name,
and I sing her.

I thank the gods of heaven

I give thanks to the government,
Agents know my desire
And have followed me to my gal
Who drove herself here to meet me.
Fidelity is riding shot-gun!

I stand proud
and laugh
in the Triumph when I say:
Yes
And hold her.
Nota bene:
The other guys' heads spin,
Waiting to beat my time.

I tell her I love her
because she had made herself my very own.
I have been searching for years
calling her here
Without ever having known her name.

Today. Most days I do not see her.
I grow heavy,
gravity pulls!
I have forgotten who I am.
Drugs do me no good, alcohol is powerless,
this condition is nameless.

I say only she can cure me,
her voice will restore me,
Her words are the only sounds my deaf ears
can ever hear.
My baby is the best dealer around,
better than other prescriptions.
My life is in her coming;
my withdrawal will cease at the sight of her.
Let her restore my blindness
and touch my arms alive again;

Only her voice can make me speak;
Making her will shake off my lethargy.

That subtle babe,
she has left me!

Poems

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BRAHMS FAREWELL

As in the Brahms fourth symphony
in the fourth movement clarinet opens up
as if in valleys and everything thereafter
opens in the music and mind of Brahms
who wrote greatly of forest and field
his great love he was always walking into
and from places where he stood in pines
he remembered the ordinary day of his studio
his piano his music paper his stub of pencil
all emblems of his heart in the woods
why should it be said in e minor
this grand opening that was farewell
through all the movements where he talked
some secret beauties hidden
like a woman known
of one great love hugely wrought
of lullabys sonatas the hungarian dance
afternoons sunlight shattering linden trees
as if he had seen Yosemite
he his loving world in bars and memories
said farewell

CANCER REMEDY

Reach back
before going on
find something
childhoods broken wings
a kiss in the car
midnight air
her unravelling blouse
bare feet in long grass
a hand in leaves
touching the mountainside
as before steady her form

with your strong arm
find her eyes
tell her again
how loves life goes on
take her if you can
to a fresh cold
April dawn
over the pond

NEW CANTON, CHINA

In canton today a man comes
to answer questions about roads
new faces of the hard regime
want a new city to match modern times
so they say they will take down
this old building whip tiled roofs
out of sight and exchange bicycles
for gas cars to speed the superhighways
they will build who gave them that idea
what of this ancient past
here already built who will take charge
of air and water and keep
the new trash dragon nobody
wants to tend

COUPLE TODAY

They are not married but they take
each other into one anothers arms
they carefully hold themselves at last
alone in a room against the world
that has so shut them off from marriage
no marriage can take place but this
love-making in the day and in the night
yes they are living upstairs where no one
else can see them where mom and dad can-
not spy on their movements and if a preg-
nancy occurs it will have a life till
fear puts it back down and careful has
been too careful the truest thing of all
is lost again

THAT EYE THAT OPENED

That eye that opened
at the last minute
flickering awake
pierced us where we sat
then looked around the room
turning back to us
as out of a cave
a tight-fitting blanket
enclosing the last thing
we would see
before the last winter darkness
came to freeze us where we sat
with its final closing
her self disappearing
like she was inside
the last pinhole of snow
winter dark through trees
moon winking down
behind a mountain

FACE IN THE MOUNTAINSIDE

The face in the mountainside
half-green half-brown
lying at an angle to the sun
wakes me this day with its waving smile
but keeps one eye turned down
as if sleeping with a question
unanswered unsaid in winter
from the dead leaves tumbling down
when I look up and see this face
I half-think it has a crown
and the other eye is open to me
and I think how earth and he
have grown this way to make
a mountain say what it has to say
that even in the mountains here
what is covered up must come
through kudzu and poison ivy to be
flowers and ferns with the sun

SAY FRIEND HOW I NEED YOU

Say friend how I need you
across these dark spaces of the year
how a man to lead us now
must rise from deeper places
than coldest snow
how we have sought that place together
believing we can turn the faces of our world
to the greater achievements of the mind
how we can make our poem say something
the world needs and perhaps find
how I need you friend to hear my poem
a voice coming to you where you are
said on a telephone scratched on an envelope

LATE LOVE

Late at night I quiver in my bed
looking for you the television is dead
and moonlight through my window
pierces my space nothing exists
without you I say and think of calling
you over the years of remembered faces
but its late at night and late
in my life I never would have thought
of this if it werent for you some chances
I missed because too slow or didnt know
quivering in my bed I think how I missed
this one and that one in school always
put off by my mother who thought of me
as a poet when I was learning to be a fool
so I never caught up with my desires
she was always just a few feet away laughing
in a snowbank it was another boy undid
her blouse and now when love has caught
up with me and I lie here in my bed
its too late for me to go for you
and take you out to see the stars
late for me to go back where you are
some moments that slipped away
to years so far

SO WE WILL TAKE OUR PLACES

So we will take our places
against whatever it is
desires to control
for profit
to take the free enterprise
system for a ride
to abuse the fat middle class
so the rich upper class
can have it all
we saw the communists
go bankrupt believing
the lower class could
rule without a fall
and now the American automobile
speeds its way into empty space
in a dream where even
the rich will run out of gas
The people say no more
monopolies to manipulate
the masses from shore to shore
so if the roof leaks
and the maintenance fees
go endlessly up
dont call the condominium manager
she's too busy
lying to the creditors
lying to the people
who've forgotten
what it is to revolt

OH THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE

Oh there was something else
I was supposed to drink
but I dont know what it is
I turned on the faucet
and water came out
I turned over the wine bottle
and the last of the red drizzled down
I thought of beers in taverns
cold in their cans foamy in glass
and nothing would come nothing would last
I was thirsty for an ocean salt but all

I could swim in was this tonic of the years
that wears tears completely out
and can never be imitated

THREE POEMS ABOUT A KISS

I
After that big kiss you gave me
the other day
I couldnt do anything else
all afternoon
in the evening my body trembled
and fitfully slept
looking for you in the morning
was it your hand your eyes
something alive I want to know
or was it just you looking at me
saying I am the music
that you hear

II
After that kiss you gave me
a whole week went by
a resonance remembered
as of sound upon a string
as of violin over my chest
a sudden cry
and grass forced and white blossoms
your waving with me there

III
Did we alarm the cat
by holding a whole kiss
longer than the cry of violin
did he think to leap into your lap
just as we had taken
from his bowl everything
he had been waiting for?

RECOVERING AT WALDEN

That man came out in green connemara
fact is he was green from head to foot
and a long pole and line and cap
and green waders up to his chest
was there anything about him
that *wasnt* green? As he crossed
from the park south of the dump
to get down to Walden ah that
was his purpose and to traipse
around like that and down
and perhaps catch a man like me
he could tell lies to and then some
so he said he caught trout
in this pond great numbers of them
forty I think he said one day
just kept pulling them out of a hole
we passed just then yessirree he said
people kept coming around just to see
me catch another one course I returned
them to the water there say did you
know this pond has some of the largest
sturgeon in the world in it they come
all the way from Lake Champlain
by an underground river that opens up
way down below Walden where they
aint no bottom just this river flowing
and sturgeons that look green on top
but are blue on the bottom half hour
one day pulled one of em up
was just long as I am and no foolin
so I looked at him then in full light
of the ponds reflection and sure enough
he was green and Im sure enough
if he were turned over
all the way over
he would be blue on the bottom

desk hours and a menu by the door. The scene smoothed out his uneasiness, and he felt not unlike a native--save the suit--as he pushed open the little iron gate and climbed the stairs to the reception area.

The room felt like an old friend to him and he approached it with both expectation and a vague air of relief; he entered and sat the bags at the end of the bed, glancing around and wondering if he had a good view of the city long before he had parted the curtains to see for himself.

From the balcony, the scene far from surreal, he could see a corner of the city, the traffic-crowded streets and an ariel view of the wanderers on the paths around the Mosel. The river, so it seemed, was a magnet for wanderers, as rivers throughout time had been; he pondered its mystique without ever realizing that he was doing such. In his mind, the question formed in a much more simplified version: "Why the river?" And as he was not a victim of double - analysis, he dismissed the thought, choosing instead to nap for a few hours before venturing out into the city to take a closer look at things.

The late afternoon had faded into a haze of waning sunlight and potentially dank sentiment; after he awoke from his nap he was unable to find any coffeehouses nearby to pull him out of the half-asleep mode that catered to these vagueties. Thus, he wandered from the hotel into the darkening streets and sought some sort of connection. It was, as he certainly knew, only to be found in the faces of strangers. For it was they, he theorized, walking about in their own circles of family and thoughts, that could usually be depended on for a no-strings-attached smile or a "hello" that carried no deeper meaning. Anything more than this brief merging of glances, two-syllable words, would have simply been an intrusion, an abomination of the impersonal nature of their lives.

At a finally-found café on the banks of the Mosel, he stared down into his coffee cup, thoughts like these turning in his head with the settling of the cream. But with the first gulp of the already-too-cool coffee, he became disgusted and pushed the chair back impatiently, making a scraping noise that turned the heads of the restaurant-goers as he twisted his way through the maze of tables and back out onto the path beside the river.

Thoughtless and still grumpy, he hurried back to his hotel room, noting the shallowness of the water, its lazy calm, the northeasterly drifting of the boats and again the people, who did not approach the water as he would have liked to do, but stayed on the dirt walkways, as if held there by an invisible wall. He paused just before reaching a bridge, noticing the sturdiness of the supports and how that strength seemed to compliment the lazy calm of the waters. He followed the patterns of the traffic for awhile, breathing in the funny mix of smells--exhaust fumes, the dankness of the water and a new smell that he had not noticed before that moment-- the smell of freshly cut grass. With this recognition, his senses tingled; the pollution and the pollen should have given him an instant headache, as he was severely allergic to both. Instead, though, as he inhaled and exhaled

for those few seconds, there was only a vague sweet taste and a sleepy lightness twisting somewhere behind his heart.

He hurried on, no longer agitated, but eager, all the same to get a good night's rest, so that he might begin his work as soon as possible.

Awakening with a start the next day, he felt his way out of bed and groped for the lamp switch. The sun had not yet begun to warm, and his thin frame heaved and trembled as he pulled a shirt over his head. Later that night he might have realized that his pants and shirt did not match--nor did his socks, for that matter, but at the time, he did not care to bother with such trivialities. He wiped his eyes and stumbled towards the door, near which his sketch tablets and other materials were propped. It was at times like these that he was able to forget himself, as children do. Those were the priceless times when the art of things took over and he found more wonder in the sounds that people made and the trash turning on the walks than in the intricacies of the other pointless life-things that people in general constantly worried about.

Hauling the drawing materials was not easy for him; though not heavy, their bulk made his task arduous, and as he made his way out of the hotel and stumbled on the occasional root, stone or crack in the pavement, his face grew hot as the stares of the people crashed laughingly against him. Again, the heat was becoming a problem; this time, he ignored the salty torrents that coursed down his brow and worked his way through streets, parks and alleyways towards the bridge by the river. The realization that he would work in that precise spot had hit him the evening before as he had watched the traffic; this feeling, the elation that always preceded his inspirations, was all the motivation he had needed to confirm his direction.

When he had finally reached the riverbank, the legs of the easel sank unevenly into the sand, and when his attempts at stabilizing them with stones from the water's edge did not improve his situation, he was forced to sit on the embankment and prop the sketch pad on his knees. The view, which he had been commissioned to capture on canvas for the church, now seemed entirely different from the pictures he had seen. From the backsides of the cliffs on the opposite side of the river rose dramatically steep hills, on which the occasional house was perched in the midst of the thick, dark pines. On the crest of the highest mountain, arms sretched to the heavens and robes flowing into the earth, was the statue of the Madonna, saint of the masses and mother of God. Poised there, her angelic face turned upwards, she reigned over Trier, Mother of all and the divine protector of the city.

From the distance, the grey stone looked smooth and warm; her stance was so graceful that she appeared to have been frozen there in life. He began to sketch, scraping his pencil across a stone for good measure and begining with her face, which he could not see very clearly, but knew well enough from other images. So sunk into recreating and perfecting this creature was he that even after a few minutes he was completely absorbed in his work. His mind became blank and the world fell silent around him; he would later

and her majesty. Shadows of clouds dragged across their faces, and along with the wonderment of the sight before him, a new weakness, as if the boy had taught him an altogether new religion; for as he aligned his gaze with the folds in her skirts, followed them upward past the sash and the graceful bosom, he noticed not only the shadows falling on her, but the cracks which the darkness accentuated. They were seated exactly as the boy had described them; a deep diagonal running across her neck and face, the folds of her garments eroded away, exposing pale and graceful arms that had also crumbled over the course of the years, victims to the grime and the greyness hanging thick in the air. He stood, mesmerized, and wondering if the boy had actually thought about these things, as he was doing, or if he had merely seen them and dismissed the image; he knew the alertness of youth is prone to move quckly on to the novel and the immediate. No matter for the time being, though; the boy was tugging at his sleeve and urging him to hurry for dinner. His sister would be angry, he explained, if he were to be late. And so, looking back from time to time, eager to further his new perspective with more of the boy's naïve insight, he stumbled after him, now on a rough and overgrown path, towards the world of apartment buildings further across the slope. Being at that altitude, though, the man could not see her once they had left the clearing, and though he strained his eyes time and time again for a view of the statue, all he could see once again was the treetops and the boughs of pine that swatted him on the face and shoulders.

Before any time had passed, or so it seemed, they were in front of the stucco apartments looking up at the staircase zigzagging across the side without any windows. Once again they ran, one behind and then in front of the other, now and again tripping on a piece of turned-up metal grating and catching themselves on the cold black railing that prevented their fall to earth. They rang at the door, and the vague sound of footsteps grew nearer and then louder behind the solid brown barrier. Suddenly, a rush of air fluttered from behind them and a pretty young woman opened the door, frowning slightly and then smiling as she greeted the unexpected guest holding the small boy's hand.

When she asked him to dinner, the boy winked at him sideways with a knowing smile. The meal, which had already been prepared in modest dishes, had been spread across on a heavy pine table, the steam swirling up the sides of the glass bowls and disappearing into the dimness of the room. She paid attention to details, he thought as he bit into a slice of hard bread; and a quick look around confirmed his first impression -- the flat was spotlessly clean. Everything had it's place here, he thought, noticing the careful arrangement of the furniture. The meal progressed through patch-works of conversation, the day's events, and the story of how he had come to meet the boy.

The after dinner coffee was a pungent blend, and went along nicely with the conversation, which had grown more confident and fluid over the course of the evening. Sitting on an overstuffed sofa, he noticed a stack of

writing magazines on the coffeetable. He asked her if she wrote--the inevitable question--and she slowly averted her gaze, lowering her clear eyes so that the paleness of her eyelids, white-blue and illuminated, guarded her from further interrogation. The boy tried to change the subject, spoke about the Madonna again, but she countered his attempt as if wanting to confess, reaching for his hand and pulling him to the edge of the room. Sliding the glass doors open now to face the cool rush of the night air, she groped to pull the curtains out of his way and beckoned him outside to the balcony.

Looking around, his eyes not accustomed to the sudden state of half-darkness that had been inspired by the night lights of the city below, he could only distinguish the bulk of the objects on the porch. His pupils, now wider, finally allowed him to process his surroundings: to the side against the building stood a leaning cardboard table, on which an ancient blackened typewriter hulked, weighting down the corner of a stack of papers and covered with the wax that had come from many hours of candlelit reflection. She, leaning over the balcony into the night air, appeared to be dreaming her way out over the city, hair blown back, her blue eyes clouded with thought.

He pressed a key on the typewriter, startling her out of her reverie and inspiring a sharp turn to the side. She seemed to remember why she had brought him outside; she stared now at the little table. "Yes, I write"; her voice was low. "A line or two a day." But the time was not right for the weight of what she wanted to divulge, for her face snapped back into the cheerful expression she had worn earlier as she had greeted the two. She walked back inside, waited for him to follow and closed the doors. She had to put her brother to bed, she hinted, and so he left, thanking her for dinner and saying goodbye to the boy.

Walking down the hill, the trip seemed considerably shorter, and he breathed in the visions and humours of the night air, thinking of the girl on the balcony, the transformation that had come over her, her sudden retreat and the stack of papers on the table. When she was not looking, he had tried to see what she had written, but he was only able to tell that there was one line of typing on each of the top few pages. He had hastily stepped back from the whole arrangement, his conscience getting the best of him, and had clasped his hands together firmly in an effort to accentuate his distance from it all.

Now, exhausted from the enigmatic turns of the day and his contemplation of such, he dragged his feet up the front steps of the Gasthof once again, looking forward to the clean, deep sleep that was sure to come to him and not wanting to think, for the time being, of the project that he was to reevaluate the next morning.

His head clouded from the deathlike shrouds of deep sleep, he awoke with a start, confused by his surroundings and his muddled thoughts. He did not move so quickly, as he had the day before upon awakening, and sat for some minutes on the edge of the bed, hoping to focus on a point around which he could structure the day. His immediate need was that of breakfast

and a stout coffee, but somewhere behind that, something pushed him urgently to get out of the room and get to work again on his drawings.

Over the swirling blackness of the thick German coffee, his mind cleared and he was able to set his goals for the day. In hindsight, he had learned a lot from the little boy and his perspectives regarding the Madonna. He began to think of her essence, her humanness; indeed, she too, in her life, had seen the deceit and erosion of the ages, the debilitation and the powerlessness of life. The revelation struck him as obvious and splendid at the same time; so enthused was he that he rushed back to his room to get his sketching materials and pens. The room, however, save the bed, his suitcases and the preexisting furniture, was empty. Thinking back, he discovered that he had left them, in all of his fervor, at the base of the statue the day before. They were probably wrinkled and ruined from the cool night fog and the morning dew, but no matter; he was to begin anew anyway.

Without showering and in a hurry to get back to his task, he left the restaurant and headed directly for the side of the mountain, hoping to find his materials all there, if not intact. He crossed the bridge again, this time alone; the spiders still hung from the streetlights in the tangle of their horrendous webs, the traffic still pushed and ceased, remained symmetrical, the river still ambled. Taking a different route through the neighborhoods at the base of the hills, he found different children playing different games, yet appearing the same in all of their obliviousness to outside factors.

By this time he was on the gravel path again, stumbling as he had done the day before, but with a much different mission. He hardly remembered his surroundings, for yesterday, he had been caught up in the laughter of the young boy and the curiosity of the changed appearance of the Madonna.The smells, though he had not noticed them in full the day before, remained the same, and they wafted past him with a foreign déja-vu, in the form of a cloud that he was not immediatly able to place; one does not always realize the impact of recent developments.

He set his materials up quickly this time, leaning the easel aganst a tree for support, and lost himself in her flaws this time, tracing them onto the paper happily and with more satisfaction than he was accustomed to. When the work was finished, the figure on the paper was truly exact. Caught in the one-dimensional boundaries of the paper was all of her depth, all of the pain and worry of the weather on her face, as if the true mother of God stood before him, raising her hands to the heavens in a plea for immortality and for mercy. Something, though, was not right; he stared at the drawing for some time and still unable to detect the problem, he packed up his work and headed once again towards the apartment building to the east, where the boy and his sister lived.

Though he did not notice it immediately, the sky had grown dim above the trees, and by the time he neared the building, he could barely see which side he would have to turn to to reach the stairs. As his eyes strained to decipher his direction, a point of bright light caught his attention, and then

a slight noise from above. Following the tiny blaze of light, he saw that there was a candle burning on one of the balconies; indeed, it could have been the very balcony he had stood on in the same air the night before. Behind the light, a figure -- and the first signs of faint sobs floating out and down, growing slowly louder and provoking an image of the child's tears on the riverbank the day before, winding slowly down his ruddy cheeks to find their course in the lines around his mouth, travelling there for a split second before arcing off of his chin to the earth. His eyes followed the rows of balconies lengthwise across the building, and he counted his way through, trying to find the precise balcony he had been on the last evening with the boy's melancholy sister. Remembering the writing table with it's dried drops of wax, he realized at once that the figure above him was indeed standing on the very same balcony. At the same time, from somewhere behind him, a faint glow began to illuminate the scene before him, and he saw the girl leaning on the rail, as he had already seen her once before, her face covered with her hands. The sobbing noises, still floating down, were synchronized with her heaving figure, and his heart fell at the melancholia before him. He wanted to call out to her, but a force even greater than the gravity that held him riveted to the spot kept him from interrupting her trauma. Snapping out of her stance without his help, she turned suddenly away from the balcony, so that the wind, which had begun to spiral up from the river, threw her hair into sporadic distress. She almost ran the length of the balcony back to the little table, where the now-extinguished candle smoldered and sent up rings of smoke, banged her fists once on the table, hurling the typewriter sideways into the wall, and crying harder now than before. Grabbing the stack of papers that he had seen the evening before but had not been able to read, she swept back across the balcony in one swift lurch and sent the sheets flying into the wind, scattering and diffusing like the morning light. With that, she let out one more scream of despair, and falling back into the apartment, slammed the doors shut, trapping the breeze-whipped curtains in them like an animal.

The slamming of the door, which had startled him into a sweating-palms, racing-heart mode, seemed to wake another source in the woods, as well. The glow that had earlier become apparent, now raging like the fires of hell, gave birth to a howling and to a letting-go from the statue on the hill, which he now recognized as it's source. Out of the glare above, a hoard of angels, undulating with an intensity greater than that of such a fire, headed straight for the balcony, cutting through the wind that now made even standing up a monumental task, and raced to the source of her grief--the papers, still turning here and there, catching tree limbs and scrapping down the pathways. Holding to the trunk of a pine for dear life, his breath gone and his limbs numb, he fought the wind's pull desperately, staring in speechless disbelief as the angels reached their target, searing the papers blindly, destroying them with animal howls that turned his skin corpse cold. One of them, less enraged than determined, swirled along with one of the papers, and he watched the scene as the figure read the typing,

shrieked, recoiled and plummeted to the earth, a frothing beast reduced to a writhing mass of light and fire, and then a small pile of ashes, scattering in the sudden silence and waning wind. He looked around, frightened now by the vacuumlike quality of the air and the immmediate disappearance of the turmoil. His arms loosened themselves, now hanging heavily at his side and he found himself running as fast as he could, not minding the underbrush and the low hanging branches that swatted his face. Without direction he raced, running blindly, recklessly, madly to the river, where he knew he would find the answer.

The one remaining sheet that had, in fact, killed the angel, drifted across the cobblestones, scraping up bits of dust and skirting across the bridge, hanging itself in a spiderweb containing already-trapped flies and one struggling moth. Zigzagging through the traffic, he leapt breathlessly onto the rail, choking as he screamed the words aloud.

The traffic drowned out his revelation, and indeed, not one person noticed his body drifting downstream with all the patience of the water. The wind, having renewed itself, freed the paper from the web on the streetlight, sending it down into the waters as well, the words dissolving from the page forever.

"True beauty," it read, "cannot be transcribed."

Tom Jones: "I Haven't Read the Book, But I've Seen the Movie"

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I remember my father's reaction when I was first assigned to read *Tom Jones* for school. He exclaimed, "*Tom Jones*! That's the novel about the bastard hero who goes gallivanting around England, sleeping with every woman he meets and doing all kinds of wickedness. But it's all okay in the end because he's really got a good heart. That's trash! Don't read it." My father, a strict Southern Baptist minister, had never read the book, but he had seen the movie.

Remembering my father's assessment of *Tom Jones* via the 1960's film version, I read the novel prepared to be shocked and morally offended--and I was shocked, not by the risque plot materials, but by the overwhelming moral impetus. Fielding's commitment to realistic portrayal of human nature required him to depict a flawed hero who, despite his intrinsic benevolence, frequently exhibits indiscreet or immoral behavior that might offend the reader. But throughout the novel, in elaborate authorial commentary, Fielding directly states the moral purpose of his story. In the Dedication, he attests:

> I hope my reader will be convinced at his very entrance on this work that he will find in the whole course of it nothing prejudicial to the cause of religion and virtue, nothing inconsistent with the strictest rules of decency, nor which can offend even the chastest eye in the perusal. On the contrary, I declare that to recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this history (vii).

Hence, Fielding carefully delineates the moral that he intends the reader to draw from Tom's behavior: "I have endeavoured strongly to inculcate that virtue and innocence can scarce ever be injured but by indiscretion, and that it is this alone which often betrays them into the snares that deceit and villainy spread for them" (vii).

After presenting several examples of Tom's "indiscretion" and its destructive consequences, Fielding as author intrudes upon the narrative in a special chapter to provide his fullest statement of the novel's moral. He condemns Tom's "wantoness, wildness, and want of caution" (117; bk. 3, ch. 7) and asserts that by "recording some instances" of Tom's immoral behavior, he is offering

> a very useful lesson to those well-disposed youths who shall hereafter be our readers; for they may here find that goodness of heart and openess of temper, though these may give them great comfort within and administer to an honest pride in their own minds, will by no means--alas!--do their business in the world. Prudence and circumspection are necessary even to the best of men. They are, indeed, as it were, a guard to Virtue, without which she can never be safe. It is not enough that your designs, nay, that your actions, are intrinsically good; you must take care they shall appear so. . . . No man can be good enough to enable him to neglect the rules of prudence, nor will Virtue herself look beautiful unless she be bedecked with the outward ornaments of decency and decorum (118; bk. 3, ch. 7).

Thus, Fielding clearly explains that he is condemning rather than condoning Tom's sexual escapades, and he is using Tom's story as an example of the need to unite intrinsic morality with prudent behavior. Therefore, Tom's story ultimately promotes virtue because such "an example is a kind of picture in which virtue becomes, as it were, an object of sight, and strikes us with an idea of that loveliness which Plato asserts there is in her naked charms" (Fielding vii).

This comment returns us to the film *Tom Jones*, for a film is literally a "picture" that objectifies ideas, but if Woodfall Productions' 1963 film version of *Tom Jones* is considered an accurate depiction of the novel, then my father's assessment of *Tom Jones* as condoning sexual immorality seems justified. While this film does depict "naked charms," they are certainly not those of "virtue." The film is famous for its wild, high-spirited bawdiness: one critic praises the film's "excess of animal spirits" and its "roaring ungovernable physical vitality" (*Time* 120), while another claims, "There is enough bedwork [in the film] to populate a continent with bastards" (Morgan 54).

Script writer John Osborne creates a screenplay remarkably faithful to the novel's central events, and director Tony Richardson propels the audience through those events at a break-neck pace, using a variety of cinematic techniques to emphasize the comic rather than the moral implications of the characters' behavior. For instance, the opening sequence in which Squire Allworthy discovers the foundling Tom is filmed as a parody of old silent movies, a technique which reduces Allworthy's attack upon premarital sex to the level of comic melodrama.

Slapstick abounds throughout the film, as characters smile or wink naughtily at the camera, or directly address the audience in brief asides to draw the spectator into vicarious enjoyment of the adventure. The handsome hero races through a series of sexual escapades portrayed with a breath-taking gusto and comic delight that undercut any attempts to moralize. Such a film is certainly not designed to satisfy the strict moral standards of an austere Protestant minister such as my father.

But critics who, like my father, judge the novel according to the film fail to realize that the film's moral implications directly oppose those of the novel. While preserving the essential plot, the screenplay eliminates the novel's authorial commentary in which Fielding presents his moral. In fact, the film's narration, which has the illusion of having been lifted directly from the author's intrusions in the novel, is actually the script-writer's invention. John Osborne's substitute narration and Tony Richardson's comic, whirlwind direction place subtle twists upon the action to interpret Tom's adventures not as a warning against imprudence, but as a glorification of impulsive behavior. The film suggests that the good-natured hero can be excused and even admired for his imprudence because it reflects the innate honesty and vitality that separate him from hypocrites who hide their inherent wickedness beneath a decorous facade. The movie implies that virtuous appearance, which Fielding stresses as a necessary adjunct to good nature, does not actually matter much as long as the hero has a "good heart." Thus, the film condones a free indulgence of basic human instincts, without reflecting too deeply (if at all) on the moral consequences of such indulgence.

Comparison of the final scenes from the film and the novel also exemplifies this thematic opposition. In the novel, after barely escaping trial for murder, Tom experiences a moral enlightenment and reformation. He tells Squire Allworthy, "Though I cannot charge myself with any gross villainy, yet I can discern follies and vices . . . which have been attended with dreadful consequences to myself, and have brought me to the brink of destruction." Allworthy replies by stating Fielding's moral: "You now see, Tom, to what dangers imprudence alone may subject virtue. . . . Prudence is indeed the duty which we owe to ourselves" (830; bk. 18, ch. 10). Sophia then provides the final reprimand. She admires Tom's "great goodness of heart" but points out that "an entire profligacy of manners will corrupt the best heart in the world; all which a good-natured libertine can expect is that we should mix some grains of pity with our contempt and abhorrence" (833; bk. 18, ch. 10). Tom conquers Sophia's contempt by swearing to translate his good nature into moral action, and Tom and Sophia are united in a faithful marriage that allows Tom to exhibit his reformed behavior.

In the film Tom demonstrates no new moral awareness. After being cut directly from the gallows in a slapstick, last-minute rescue, Tom is whisked home by Squire Western and immediately thrown into the waiting arms of Sophia, who, far from expressing "pity, contempt, and abhorrence" for the "good-natured libertine," rewards him with a tremendous kiss, while Squire Western beams upon the lovers from the background, encouraging them with bawdy comments. There is no mention of reformation or marriage. Instead, as Sophia and Tom are locked in a lusty embrace, the film closes with a final voice-over narration:

Happy the man, and happy he alone,
He who can call today his own,
He who secure within can say,
"Tomorrow do thy worst, for I have lived today!"

The film's *carpe diem* attitude contradicts Fielding's moral philosophy. As one critic remarks, "The principle of his [Tony Richardson's] 'Tom Jones' is that anything goes" (Gill 169-70).

Why is the film's interpretation of Tom's actions so much at variance with Fielding's? The film was produced in 1963 during the era that witnessed the full flowering of the Free Love movement, the psychedelic movement, and the drug culture. In this period, audiences probably would not have been particularly receptive to Fielding's moralizing about the necessity for prudence and circumspection. "Decency and decorum" had been the emphasis of the 1950's, and filmgoers of the '60's were perhaps ready to escape that emphasis by watching a hero who could defy prigs and hypocrites and act upon his honest desires without losing his innate goodnature. One film critic analyzes the movie's contemporary appeal:

> Societies are notorious for inventing such pasts as they need; at the moment, thanks to our nervous twentieth-century police habit of rounding up and grilling suspicious emotions, . . we tend more and more to long for a past ideally unself-conscious, in which people were able to respond without taking thought, in fierce gusts of love and hate. It's just this sort of blessedly mindless past that Richardson has created out of Fielding's . . . work (Gill 169).

Ironically, the reviewer finds the film appealing in its depiction of eighteenth-century England as "blessedly mindless," whereas many critics of the novel view Fielding's emphasis upon circumspection and moral awareness as indicative of the eighteenth century's growing interest in the psychological motives for behavior. The reviewer sees the film's sexual immorality as intimating his society's need to escape its preoccupation with "decency and decorum": "In our dry-cleaned and deodorized present, how we rejoice in the fantasy of a rude clucking and cackling barnyard of yesterday, where every blossoming hedge hides its rogue and wench" (Gill 170). The film version of *Tom Jones* apparently appealed to audiences that were tired of the moral self-analysis which often created hypocritically contrived, stifling social codes.

Prior to their production of *Tom Jones*, John Osborne's and Tony Richardson's stage collaborations had also been noted for reflecting a younger generation's dissatisfaction with increasingly constrictive cultural attitudes. The play *Look Back in Anger* had earned them the appellation of "angry young men," who attacked social values that had become exhausted, often destructive conventions. Their play *Luther* (a biography of Martin Luther, which, incidentally, starred Albert Finney, the star of *Tom Jones*)

emphasized the individual's need for freedom from religious and moral hypocrisy, a theme which likewise appears in *Tom Jones*. If Osborne and Richardson were in touch with a youthful strain of dissidence in their generation, their work might represent a general social trend toward affirming the individual's intrinsic value and personal desires in opposition to false social precedents, a tendency toward greater latitude in society's moral standards.

That Osborne's and Richardson's notion of virtue varies so strongly from Fielding's implies that the public moralities of their respective societies were drastically different. While the morality of Fielding's public demanded that innate virtue be combined with socially acceptable behavior, the morality of Osborne's and Richardson's public glorified innate goodnature to the increasing exclusion of or opposition to societal norms. Reading *Tom Jones* from the perspective of their own cultural milieu, Osborne and Richardson interpreted Fielding's concept of virtue as ultimately promoting the triumph of the "natural" individual in resisting "unnatural" authority. Their depiction of Tom as a "free spirit" rather than an example of the need for prudence reflects a movement in their own society toward the casting aside of traditional cultural roles.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the film won the 1963 Best Picture Academy Award and garnered rave reviews. Some critics, in their eagerness to interpret Fielding's work according to the changing standards of their own society, attributed the movie's glorification of an impulsive lifestyle to Fielding's moral philosophy embodied in the novel. For example, the reviewer for *Time* magazine attests,

> Vitality is what *Tom Jones* is really all about: the terrible vitality of Fielding's England, the primitive illimitable will to live the whole of life. You are a pack of dirty dogs, Fielding told his fellow men, but then every dog will have his day. The great novelist saw all the slavering horror of life and he laughed in its face. Live, he demanded mightily, live it all! And in its final frame the film demands the same (120, 123).

So much for Fielding's notions of "prudence and circumspection," "decency and decorum"! The reviewer fails to realize that the film's final narration, which encourages the audience to "live for today," is nowhere to be found in Fielding's novel and is in direct contradiction to the message of careful judgment and controlled behavior that Fielding relentlessly repeats throughout the authorial commentaries in *Tom Jones*. One might suspect that this reviewer saw the movie, but never read the book.

Whether or not the critics, audiences, or film-makers were aware of Fielding's moral intentions in the novel, the popularity of the film *Tom Jones* reflects a society that was moving toward increasing social and moral laxity. Easing of sexual standards made the tale of Tom's sexual adventures

palatable to 1960's audiences without the moral warning that had been demanded by eighteenth-century readers.

Such contrasts in interpretation between different social milieux have significant pedagogical implications for the interpretation of literature in college classrooms. Teachers and students should be aware of how their approaches to texts are influenced by their own cultural backgrounds. For instance, the readings I have just presented of *Tom Jones* the novel and the film are undeniably grounded in my own background in Judeo-Christian ethics. But alternate interpretations of literature can enhance learning. Comparing film adaptations with literary originals can help students see how interpretation varies with social context and with individual readers and can help them examine their own reading processes. They can see how literature is both "timely" and "timeless," how readers continuously "re-invent" a text by diverse readings of the universal issues the text presents.

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Tom Jones. Dir. Tony Richardson. Woodfall Productions, 1963.

Poems

Paul Hunter
North Lake College

Radio Darkness

(For Rod, the first of my students to die of AIDS)

The Bible Belt hamartia,
Jesus-loving hate,
Blows through the late night
AM "Opinion Line"
Of the '64
Road Warrior
Fury,

At you,
Phaedrus,
Who so silently,
So softly,
Slides
back
in
to
Earth,

At 21--
Too pink,
Too green--
To be claimed by a rhetoric
Not
of your own
invention.

Judas Goat

The shepherds call me Felipe Segundo;
The children, who point and curse,
Call me Judas Goat.

The children are right.
I am the elder
Who leads the young to their slaughter.

Most of the time I live with the shepherds
Near this ancient, walled city
In Portugal--Evora.

I play with their children;
I eat from their table.
But sometimes they take me to a field.

There I graze for a week or two with younger goats
Who learn to trust me
As I tell them old stories.

Then one day at dawn
A shepherd leads me into town.
The young ones follow.

Through the city gate
And under the aqueduct,
The aqueduct that no longer carries water--

These men know not how to repair it--
But holds up many houses
Built inside its wide stone arches;

Past that chapel that the monks are building
With human bones--4,000 skulls!
I shiver when I smell it!--

Then into the ancient stone slaughterhouse
At the top of the hill:
I pass safely but the others meet their end.

Past the taunts of the children,
I am led back home--
"Judas Goat! Judas Goat! Judas Goat!"

But let me tell my side of the story.
Beginning with my first visit to that building of butchers
I have heard the voice of the Goddess:

"I am Diana," she calls out to me,
"And this is my temple.
The Romans built it for me

"A millenium and a half ago.
They learned about me from the Greeks
Who called me Artemis,

"The virgin goddess of the hunt.
The Greeks learned of me
From Minoans who called me Britomartis

"From Phrygians who called me Kybele
Who drew me with lions yoked to my chariot,
From Cappadocians who called me Ma,

"And from Egyptians who called me Hathor,
The virgin who consorted with Thoth,
Who invented writing.

"All those people knew how to worship me–
With blood, blood drawn from animals,
Blood drawn fresh, drawn hot, drawn deep.

"The people who followed the Romans here
Knew not how to worship me.
They let my temple stand idle;

"They stripped it of its marble skin
For idols of their own.
Then they built a new temple to me,

"Then another, then another.
They gave me a new name--Maria!--
But they knew not how to worship me.

"They will not flood these new temples
With the blood that I require.
I tried to tell them;

"I showed myself to some children,
Down the road at Guadelupe,
But they cried and ran off.

"Then their parents came to that spot
And built yet another
Of those damn bloodless temples,

"Full of golden candlesticks
And statues of some poor joker
Stuck on a cross.

"But here at Evora I have made my stand.
I have forced these people--
Who have forgotten that this building

"Was ever a temple,
Who think it just a building--
To use my temple to slaughter their animals.

"They do not think of it as worship;
What they do across the street--
Eating bread, sipping wine, lighting candles--

"They call that worship.
I, a trickster, have confounded them
Into erecting that macabre Capella De Osso

"The prayer chapel built from exhumed human bones,
Which all the world will visit,
And will wonder of the Evorans
"What made them so different?
What made them so sick?
And you--the goat they call Judas--

"You are my priest,
And you will have me
When you die."

So that's my story, a tale wagged by a goat:
What these humans call a life of shame,
I know to be a life of service.

And some day,
After I have gone to the other world,

After I have licked her virgin body
With my long and expert tongue
For five hundred years,
I will tell my story to some wandering singer.

He will learn it and write it down.
He will think himself the first to know my story.
Shallow artist!

I will piss on him and laugh.
I am Judas Goat,
High priest to Diana!

The Old Cowboy Singer

Like an amputated arm on a rolling steel gurney,
The suitcase and its contents lay disturbingly still:
The suitcase, a thirty-year-old aquamarine hardshell,
(Its lock now broken for good),
Critically overstuffed too many times--
with clothing,
men's toiletries,
a sequined suit for the bigger shows,
publicity photos with a phone number for a Nashville answering service,
and several dozen tapes to sell between sets,
ten dollars each,
three for twenty-five--
All of that stared back at the old cowboy singer.

"American Airlines is sorry for your inconvenience,"
the uniformed young woman scolded,
"But you had it overstuffed."

The old cowboy singer had waited next to me
by the baggage carousel.
None of us pretending not to watch him
knew how to help.

At first, he just tried to stuff it all back in.
Impossible.
How had it ever fit?

Next, he unpacked a little,
Filled the hole with something else,
But made no progress--

a hound dog chasing his tail.
Finally, he unpacked it all,
Made neat, well ordered little piles;
Still it would not fit.

As I watched his despair set in,
I remembered well that feeling from my thirty-seventh year.
The container was broken;
Never again would it hold as much.
I tried--how I tried--to get it all back in.
"If I can just get it right,
Just one last time--
I'll never let it fall apart again."

But no.
It would not go.
Panic set in.
Despair.

Not like the rebel soldier
In the Hornet's Nest at Shiloh,
Holding his bowels in his hand,
Knowing the nearness of death;
Rather, like this old cowboy singer,
Feeling two hundred eyes
Watching his pitiful ritual.

For my part, I had to let go of a good bit--
"Important stuff," I wept.
"How can I go down the road without it?"

But I had little choice.
I could leave it behind forever or forever stay behind--
There in that airport baggage claim area,
Where lives come apart,
And some turn around.

And you, Phaedrus, my student,
When I look into your eyes,
I can see that same baggage claim area,
Feel the baggage carousel's cold steel,
Smell the Old Spice spilled from a cracked porcelin bottle,
Hear the scolding of a displeased young woman.

And I see still there
The old cowboy singer

Still trying--O my brother--
To get it all back in
Just one last time.

The Tiles

My name is Enrique Suarez.
In Valladolid, capital of Spain,
I repair the church tiles,
Today, in 1551.

The tiles break loose;
I make the repairs.
The tiles break loose.
Why? Porque?

Because the friars, gaunt and tired,
Kneel on the floor?
Because spirit quakes?
Because earth trembles?

Father Las Casas was here,
This year and last.
He walked on these tiles
Each day.

Back and forth he walked on these tiles
As he carried on his argument
Before the judges, the junta,
Here to deliberate the fate of the Indian.

"Brother Suarez," he said to me,
"How we need you in New Spain,
In Chiapas,
Where all of our tiles break loose."

"Gracias, mi padre,"
Was all I would say,
Not wanting to tell him
How lean we are here,

How the young apprentices
Are snatched from our hands
Before their training
Is complete,

Snatched from our company
By that new disease of the blood,
That sixteenth century plague--
Colonialism.

Why do the tiles break loose?
Porque? Why?

Father Bartolomae de las Casas
Traveled here to dispute,
To dispute the issue of slavery,
The slavery of the native American.

Las Casas traveled here to dispute,
To dispute Juan Gines de Sepulveda,
Sepulveda the humanist,
Who studied in Bologna,

With the Florentine Platonista,
Who learned from Cardinal Bessarion the Greek,
That in Christ's church
Aristotle and Plato converge.

Sepulveda the humanist,
Who drew his major premise
From Aristotle,
From Aristotle's *Politics*,

His major premise, that some races
Are slaves by nature,
His premise that it is good and just
To conquer them with arms,

To enslave them,
To torture them if necessary,
In order to instruct them
In the ways of our Lord.

Sepulveda, who watched the sack of Rome
From his opulent Vatican apartment;
Sepulveda, snatched from the masses starving
In Napoli under siege,

Rescued by a bishop
Who needed Sepulveda's skills

To complete a new translation
Of Aristotle.

Why, porque, do the tiles
Break loose? Why?

Las Casas traveled here,
From Chiapas in Mexico,
Here to argue that the Indian
Deserves to be approached in peace,

Deserves to be respected
In his enigmatic otherness,
Deserves to be instructed
By Spaniards of goodwill,

Not to be driven to his knees
With a garrote round his neck,
A rusty garrote tightened
By some Estremaduran brute untutored.

Porque? Why do these tiles
Break loose? Why?

Yesterday the junta solemn
Issued its verdict:
Las Casas, they said,
Las Casas, who has spent his life

Growing old with those native people;
Las Casas, whose utopian laboratory
Collapsed in the tempests
Of colonial economics;

Las Casas, whose writings reveal
The cruelties of our sad young Conquistadores;
Las Casas, whose writings give comfort, many say,
To the enemies of Spain;

Las Casas, who laid out his case for otherness
On grounds prepared by Aristotle,
Written down by Aristotle,
And named by Aristotle, the *Rhetoric;*

Las Casas, the junta said,
Is right--

The enslavement of these people
Must stop.

But what will the verdict change?

Will it stop the slaughter
Of the Aztec boy, the Mayan girl?
Will Col. Kit Carson decide
Not to murder thousands of Navaho

In that concentration camp he will establish
At Fort Sumner, New Mexico, in 1872?
Will he change his mind
On account of today's declaration?

And the doctors in the US Army?
Will they decide not to distribute blankets
That they know to be infected with smallpox
As gifts to Indian children?

And what of the brewers of cerveza?
Will they decide not to name their poison,
Their poison that enslaves,
Crazy Horse Malt Liquor?

Why? Why do these tiles
Break loose? Porque?

Perhaps because the uniform tiles
Are laid on a foundation of Aristotle,
Set in a mortar of Augustine,
Grouted with a mixture of Aquinas.

And I, Enrique Suarez,
Who repairs the church tile in Valladolid,
Live in the middle of a century
That sees these materials lose their strength

And crumble.

My friend, the end is at hand.

"The winds did sing it to me": Renewing Voices and Memory in *The Tempest*

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The language of *The Tempest*, like the co-ordinates of its magical island, remains opaque to critical encounter. More than one critic has observed how this play's rich and strange language seems to provoke and resist a vast range of reductive allegorical readings--often contradicting one another. And Anne Barton, in her New Penguin introduction to the play, notes that often the responses to *The Tempest* that come closest to its mystery are not critical analyses at all but creative redactions--as if the play provoked in us not so much judgment or even understanding as a kind of answerable style.

Ever in motion, the play blurs deconstruction and analysis alike with its peculiar Heisenberg deflections. It is not surprising that the most revealing critical studies of the play are by those critics who, like G. Wilson Knight or Reuben Brower, acquire in their own critical language a liquid smoothness that "on the sands with printless foot / Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him / When he comes back" (V.i.34-6).

A number of recent critics, Stephen Greenblatt, Terence Hawkes, and Stephen Orgel among them, have heard in the language of *The Tempest* something more specific: an echo of the exploitative and powerful features of the European language of colonization as it responds to what Greenblatt describes as the opaqueness or otherness of an essentially alien culture by subsuming that culture within the domesticating and conforming influences of a conquering language. Greenblatt writes: "In *The Tempest* the encounter between a lettered and an unlettered culture is heightened, even parodied, in the relationship between a European whose entire source of power is his library and a savage who has no speech at all before the European's arrival" (*Learning to Curse* 23).

In an earlier influential essay, Terence Hawkes establishes a three way analogy among Shakespeare, Prospero, and a colonist. "A colonist," Hawkes argues, "acts essentially as a dramatist. He imposes the 'shape' of his own culture, *embodied in his speech*, on the new world, and make that world recognizable, habitable, 'natural,' able to speak his language.... Like Shakespeare, like Prospero, he imposes the Globe on the globe, so that the new world acquires the dimensions of a stage whereon a new society can be 'dramatized.'" Hawkes concludes: "Similarly, the dramatist is metaphorically a colonist. His art penetrates new areas of experience, his lan-

guage expands the boundaries of our culture, and makes the new territory over in its own image" (211-12).

These critics make a compelling case for the powerful intersection of drama and language in subordinating colonial cultures. The celebrated example of Spanish Conquistadores reading in Spanish the "Requirement" document before hundreds of bewildered natives only to punish the Americans for their very noncomprehension offers a harsh gloss to Caliban's complaint to Prospero that "you taught me language and my profit on it is I know how to curse"--or perhaps Stephano's instructions to Caliban as he plies him with drink: "Here is that which will give language to you, cat" (II.ii.85).

But while the language of colonization and exploitation is unmistakably a strain within the larger discourse of *The Tempest*, it is only a strain. It fails to encode the many contradictory energies of the play's vocabularies. That may be because language itself in *The Tempest*, like so much else in this play, is in a continual state of metamorphosis, of becoming, as it seeks to discover in its own verbal resources appropriate terms of human connectedness in a brave new world.

The play begins in a din of cacophony: "A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning" echoed by the "confused noises of angry courtiers," answered in turn by the mariners' shouts. There is a swirl of contesting and irreconcilable words--as if the entire world were being dissolved, not merely by the wild waves of the tempest but by the breath of worldly men as well. Most audiences sense in the discandying of the courtiers' authority before the high rage of the sea the total disintegration of all the old marks of social order and distinction, as king, duke, jester are all disgorged with equal indifference. But the blustery noise of the scene also attends the disintegration of language, exposing its preposterous claims to authority and power. "What care these roarers for the *name* of king?"

But old habits die hard. Most of the island's inhabitants are guilty of exploiting or misusing power. That arrogation of power, in turn, is effected through words or books. During their confinement on the island, their "heart's sorrow and clear life ensuing" is tested, quite appropriately, in terms of their various verbal responses to the island's excellent dumb discourse. Of the several clusters of inhabitants, littered throughout the island, most --Antonio and Sebastian, Stephano, Caliban, Prospero--respond to the magical noises and gestures with a common strategy. Rather than submit themselves to the unknown, or even seek to understand it, they create elaborate structures of language--commands, demands, curses, conspiracies, narratives--designed to impose their wills on the mysterious, to recover it and keep it tame. For those various explorers, language has a second purpose: to impose upon the island a memory, shaped by the grammars of individual will, intended to rationalize conquest. The results of these verbal strategies are telling. They all fail utterly because the language that would hold them together collapses--either dissolved in the wider sounds of the island or choked by its own contradictions.

Prospero's case is most interesting. More sinned against than sinning, Prospero also enjoys a mysterious double status in the play. At once he is the figure most in tune with the "quality of the isle" and at the same time most untouched by its special graces. The treacheries committed against him by Antonio, Alonso, and, later, by Caliban are unforgiving. But so are Prospero's obsessions. Indeed, there is a self-regarding consciousness in Prospero's relations, not just with Antonio and Caliban but with Ariel and Miranda as well, a self absorption that connects him with his adversaries. His smoldering anger, barely confined in parentheses, whenever he speaks to Antonio or Caliban, anticipates his recognition, at the end of the play, that "this thing of darkness, I acknowledge mine" (V.i.275-6). As a badge of their dark intimacy, Prospero and Caliban share a language. Prospero has taught Caliban language and his profit on it is that he--Prospero--knows how to curse.

Prospero's power, as well as his frailty, is rooted in language. The source of all his magical powers, as Caliban well knows, lies in his books. But his being "rapt in secret studies" also provided the occasion, not merely for his loss of temporal power, but for a correlative loss of identity: "and to my state grew stranger, being transported / And rapt in secret studies" (I.ii.76-7).

Moreover, Prospero's loquaciousness on the island ambiguously positions him as both the play's moral center and its comic senex. He is the island's historian and the play's chief source of exposition. His narratives establish a repository of painful memories for characters like Miranda, Ariel, and Caliban that fix for the audience both identity and moral relation. But at the same time, there's a comic bluster to his repetition and self-interruptions. His multiple--and completely unwarranted--admonitions to Miranda to pay attention finally result in Miranda's one moment of irony: "Your tale, sir, would cure deafness" (I.ii.107). In fact, it puts her to sleep.

The strange power of the island's noises to expose and disable the verbal pretensions of others on the island is even more insistent. Early in the play, responding to Ariel's "solemn music," all in the king's party save Antonio and Sebastian are lulled asleep. Twelve years earlier, "in the dead of darkness," Antonio had usurped Prospero's dukedom, a theft secured through language and the manipulation of memory:

> He being thus lorded--
> Not only with what my revenue yielded
> But what my power might else exact, like one
> Who having into truth--by telling of it,
> Made such a sinner of his memory
> To credit his own lie, he did believe
> He was indeed the Duke. (I.ii.97-103)

Now Antonio, reducing Ariel's wonder to mere opportunity, begins to weave together with Sebastian a language of conspiracy: sleepy, vague, agentless, subjunctive phrases suggesting the indicative. Antonio does

something else. He creates for Sebastian a memory that will serve to rationalize the murder of Alonzo: "I remember / You did supplant your brother Prospero (II.i.273-4). But the powerful language of conspiracy dissolves in Ariel's song and metamorphoses, appropriately, as a warning cry of predatory beasts.

There is a similar pattern in Trinculo and Stephano's verbal responses to the "wonder" of Caliban. What little capacity for awe Trinculo may feel quickly adjusts itself to the opportunistic language of a mercantile trader:

> What have we here? A man or a fish? Dead or Alive? A fish! He smells like a fish. A very ancient and fish like smell...A strange fish! Were I in England now, as once I was, and had but this fish painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver. (II.ii.25-31)

But Trinculo's capacious language cannot sustain itself any more than Antonio's, stifled by the sounds of thunder as well as by his own terrors.

It is one the finer subtleties of the isle that the unlettered Caliban is infinitely more attuned to the language of the island than either of the two sophisticated Neapolitans, with all their ambitions to "recover him and keep him tame." When Stephano and Trinculo cower at the mysterious sounds of Ariel's playing, Caliban reassures them:

> Be not afear'd; the isle is full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices
> That if I then had waked after long sleep,
> Will make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming,
> Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked,
> I cried to dream again. (III.iii.140-8)

Stephano's response to these astonishing noises, once his fears have been allayed, is typically cast in the language of will: "This will prove a brave kingdom for me, where I shall have my music for nothing" (III.iii.149-50).

But his natural superiority to these Europeans notwithstanding, it is important not to sentimentalize Caliban. He, like Sebastian, like Stephano, like Prospero, seeks to inherit this island. While his critique of Prospero's own pretensions to the island carry poignant weight, Caliban's own language is no less possessive: "This island's *mine*, by Sycorax!" he bellows at Prospero. Or to Stephano, Caliban pleads his property rights: "I am subject to a tyrant, a sorcerer, that by his cunning hath / cheated me of the island" (III.ii.45-7).

Just as earlier Prospero had attempted to create a series of narratives imposing both a meaning and a memory onto the island, so Caliban does here. And just as Prospero's stories fail to sustain their hold on the island, so Caliban's self-willed tale dissolves, partly in Ariel's voice, partly in the

mocking echoes of the conspirators' own language of mutual mistrust: "Thou liest!" (III.ii.48).

But the island also provides the occasion for a different kind of linguistic response. This is the language of Ariel, of Miranda, of Ferdinand, of Gonzalo--and, finally, of Alonso and Prospero himself. Tentative, characterized by questions, or prayer, or service, or sympathy, this is a language that seeks not to subsume the other within itself, but genuinely to connect. Further, such submissive language prepares these speakers for a new kind of memory: not to impose a memory on the island but to receive one from it, to be surprised by memory. So Ferdinand, allowing the strange music to lead him where it will, discovers:

> This ditty does remember my drowned father
> This is no mortal business, nor no sound
> That the earth owes. (I.ii.406-8)

Or Alonzo, submitting before the thundering judgment of the harpy, acquires both a language and a memory:

> Methought the billows spoke and told me of it
> The winds did sing it to me; and the thunder,
> That deep and dreadful organ pipe, pronounced
> The name of Prosper; it did bass my trespass.
> (III.iii.96-99)

So Ariel teaches Prospero--surprises him out of the self absorption of judgment and vengeance into a communion of responsibility and suffering. Prospero's prisoners, Ariel tells him, are:

> Confined together
> In the same fashion as you gave in charge,
> Just as you left them--all prisoners, sir,
> . . .
> They cannot budge till your release.
> . . .
> Your charm so strongly works 'em,
> That if you now beheld them, your affections
> Would become tender. (V.i.7-9,11,17-19)

Ariel's words are marked by the generosity, the compassion, the selflessness that touch his every expression. It is only the slightest pressure on the second person pronoun that provides even a hint of bassing Prospero's trespass.

Prospero is spell-stopped:

> Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling

Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,
Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?
(V.i.21-24)

Further, when Ariel gives Prospero his cue for compassion, he recovers for Prospero a memory--not the learned memory of injustices that he had been nurturing for "twelve years since" but an instinctive, even epiphanic, memory of human fallibility. He is, after all, "one of their kind."

The play ends with a last attempt by Prospero to speak. Powerless, penitent, once again he finds himself exiled "in this bare island." He looks across the dark expanse of imaginative distance between his world and ours and attempts a connection. He does not narrate, or command, or curse, or even enchant:

And my ending is despair
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardoned by,
Let your indulgence set me free. (Epilogue.15-20)

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Randall Kenan: A Voice to Be Reckoned With

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Over a half-century ago a southern writer named William Faulkner emerged writing novels and short stories set in a Mississippi county and town created mostly from his imagination. He populated his county with hundreds of people, black, white, and Indian, belonging mostly to a half-dozen or so families all of which traced their ancestry to pre Civil War time. He wrote sixteen novels and over seventy-five stories, and the world learned the geography of his county and the geneology of his residents. Many regard him as America's greatest novelist.

Randall Kenan is a southern writer, thirty years old and he has published two books of short stories, which he populates with a handful of families of his own creation, all living in or around a community named Tims Creek, North Carolina, also of Kenan's creation. Why immediately draw connections and comparisons with Faulkner? Why claim that Randall Kenan is a "writer to be reckoned with?"

Perhaps it is a matter of shared themes. One theme involves the ownership of the land in and around the fictive community. Tied to the theme of the land, in Faulkner at least, is a moral philosophy akin to the Hindu concept of *karma,* holding that today is the sum total of yesterday; and that if Grandpa cheated blacks or banks or Grandma, someone still has to pay to settle the score; if not the grandson, his sons or grandsons.

A second theme, always interwoven with the first, involves race relations. Blacks can and do own land in Tims Creek; so who tries [and often succeeds] to cheat whom out of some land in Kenan's novels? Generally speaking, whoever doesn't have it [the land] tries to cheat whoever does have it. Whether the targeted landholder is black or white makes little difference.

Kenan's third theme, and the one I propose to explore most extensively is that of the dysfunctional family. In eight of the twelve stories, dysfunctional families are central to the story.

I also hope to convey some idea of the technical virtuosity that Kenan brings to bear on his material, though never as an end in itself.

In the first story, "Clarence and the Dead," Kenan catches the reader's attention immediately. There is a hog named Francis that, according to its owner, can talk. Born on the same day as the hog is Clarence, described as being mildly retarded until he gains the power of coherent speech and clairvoyance at the ripe age of three. Clarence dies unspectacularly at age five, and on the same day the hog, Francis, is alleged to lose its powers of speech. These bizarre effects transcend mere theatrics. They serve to establish the book's main theme: of the gods who battle with the demons who

will defeat the gods; of the dead who will break out of their tombs and walk the earth; and of the reality of such myths as these.

It is in the third story in the book, "The Foundations of The Earth," that Kenan begins to blend his themes successfully. Ultimately, the story is about an old lady, Maggie McGowan Williams, the foundations of her faith shaken first as the grandson she raised and on whom she has placed all her hopes and aspirations is killed in a car wreck; second, as she learns that her grandson was a homosexual who lived with another man, not just any man but a skinny unattractive white man.

The theme of the dysfunctional family is present as the grandson's lineage is told: Maggie's husband, a workaholic, a philanderer, and a highly successful businessman, father to one son, "whose only achievement in life was to produce Edward [the Grandson] by some equally brainless waif of a girl, now long vanished." When confronted with Edward's homosexuality, like a typical parent, Maggie wants to know where she has failed. Finally, "she understood that she was being called upon to realign her thinking about men and women and men and men, and even women and women. Together...the way Adam and Eve were meant to be together." A statement by Kenan, no doubt. The meaning of the statement is very difficult to ascertain, ultimately a matter of individual interpretation.

Following a short story involving another grandmother dealing with a grandson who is the product of another dysfunctional family, a well-written story inoffensive enough to be anthologized in a ninth-grade reader, Kenan removes any doubt that he may be conventional in terms of either theme or technique.

Written in 12 numbered sections in an engaging, extremely personal first person point of view, "Cornsilk" is quite explicitly about incest. The narrator, son of a physician, himself highly educated and economically successful, had his first sexual experience with his sister and, totally, even frighteningly self-aware, desires sex with no other. Of his father, he says, "I don't hate my father, I'm just scared to death of him. This is the honest truth." Of the Freudian nature of his predicament, he says, "...not Freudian in its intent, though perhaps in its execution....Not Freud, Okay? Not in his symbolism or in his interpretation. Jung, perhaps. An archetypal fuck-up, a consciousness of sin. But Freud, much as I respect him, has nothing to do with it." Again the theme of the disfunctional family, this time the result of an overpowering father figure. This pattern will recur, more than once.

Within the larger fabric in "Cornsilk," Kenan weaves the theme of the land itself. The narrator is a product of Tims Creek, and his atitude towards it is ambivalent. At one point, he even says, "I hated Tims Creek at first, but not as much as she did and not as long. She still hates it, she tells me...I cant hate it now. Its become a part of me." Quentin and Caddy Compson, this time consummated.

From this point on, Randall Kenan is in full stride. His technique is dazzling. His imagination is unlimited. His themes move in and out of the

stories in a manner always intriguing, sometimes almost horrifying, sometimes very disquieting, often quite humorous.

The very next story, "The Strange and Tragic Ballad of Mabel Pearsall," is told from a very odd, third person progressive point of view. "Mabel going down the road. Mabel in her car. Mabel's mind like Mabel's car. Racing. Down the road. Down, down, down. Mabel!

Mabel. Mabel. Thinks....

A deer leaps in front of Mabel's car. Magical. Graceful. Lithe. From the woods. From the blue. Like a sign from God. Mabel gasps."

Somehow, this story sustains itself for 23 pages. Mabel is pressured by her job, obnoxious children, and an adulterous husband. She also has high blood pressure, headaches, and is badly overweight. Her physical problems lead up to a fatal attack of some sort. The concluding paragraph:

> Mabel's mind a field of lilies. Not a sound in
> Mabel's mind. Only sweet light in Mabel's mind.
> Sing a song for Mabel. Washed in the Light of the Lamb.
> Sing a song for Mabel. Mabel. Mabel. Mabel.

In the following story, the principal character is Booker T. Washington. He is paying a visit to old classmates from Hampton, Elihu McElwaine and his sister, of Tims Creek, N.C. The point of view is 3rd person, limited omniscient. We have access to Booker T's thoughts, and he is self-doubting. As one progresses through these twelve stories, I don't think they are likely to immediately notice these themes I have discussed. Kenan is a writer of considerable subtlety, and he does not stress them. What a reader does notice, however, is Kenan's technical virtuosity.

This overall perception changes when the last story is read. Whether the reader has read the stories in the book in order or not, whenever the title story is encountered it will overpower all others, and its theme will become the dominant theme of the book. Just as "The Bear" stands both within and independent of *Go Down, Moses*, "Let the Dead Bury Their Dead" is at the same time part of the collection of stories and independent of it.

"Let the Dead Bury the Dead" has its own title page, author, dedication, and introduction. The alleged author of the story is the Right Reverend James Malachai Green, a fictitious character allegedly killed in a car wreck in 1998. The introduction is written by one Reginald Gregory Kain, who edited the work after the death of Rev. Green and published it in 2005. Following this information are three authentic quotes which establish paradigms within which the story will operate. The first is by Thomas Hobbes, from *Leviathan*, and deals with the dichotomy of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan.

> *Besides these Soveraign Powers,* Divine *and* Humane, *of which I have hitherto discoursed, there is mention in Scripture of another Power,*

Atta'boy

Jo LeCoeur
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Lions growl. Broncos paw the earth. They charge, butting heads, spit flying. The Broncos' record is spotty. They are leading by one point and fighting desperately not to let the Lions score in the few seconds remaining. In the bleachers, parents and girlfriends cheer and moan, nails cutting into palms, knees jiggling. Mac McKavett looks back over his shoulder at the high school band struggling through "Stars and Stripes Forever." "Aw, give it up," he calls to the band. Beside him, his wife leans so far forward that she is not really beside him. Her chin is cupped in her hands, her elbows propped on her knees. Vi is such a small woman she appears to have been swallowed by the big fur coat Mac gave her two years ago when she found out about that woman. Mac had pretended it was for their anniversary, her birthday and Christmas, joking that he was killing three occasions with one coat. Each time she wears it, she reminds herself that she would have thrown the coat back in Mac's face except for the boys.

An oboe squawks causing Vi to shiver involuntarily.

"Cold, Hon?" a note of irony in Mac's voice; he is in his shirt sleeves. It is warm for November in central Mississippi.

Vi pulls her coat overlapping. She does not take her eyes off the back of their son's jersey. Roy is the only senior still sitting on the bench. The game's almost over, and he might get a chance to play.

Vi glances up at the scoreboard and then back to her boy. Roy is frail like the Wingates, the powerful McKavett structure having gone to her first-born, Mac Junior. Vi turns the large diamond on her finger thinking how, judging by appearance, Roy might almost have been cloned from her, missing out on all the McKavett genes.

When Hap Davis, the announcer calls "GAME," Vi cheers--the Broncos have won, but her heart is not in it. She is thinking how hard it must be on Roy having to sit out game after game, while his big brother, Mac Junior, plays on scholarship at State.

The next afternoon while Roy is watching T.V. and Mac is taking his Saturday afternoon nap, Vi puts on her new white wool skirt and matching sweater, takes the pins out of her hair, combs it and fixes her face: blush, mascara, eye shadow to play up her green eyes, the works, but blended subtly, the way she'd been taught in high school Home Ec.

She wraps waxed paper around a plate of the peanut butter fudge she'd made that morning and drives into town.

Vi eases her Chrysler into Coach Johnson's driveway as he cuts off the hose. He's been washing his new white Ford pickup, and though pushing forty, looks like a kid in his cut-offs and tank top. "Mary's inside," he calls

and begins drying the cab of the pickup to let Vi know he's not going to run the risk of waterspotting while he stands around chit-chatting.

Vi shades her eyes at the thousands of tiny suns reflected in the water beaded up in great globules on the hood's waxed white surface. Should she offer to help? No, even a hint of desperation might be prejudicial to her case. Better she thinks to play from a position of strength. "There's mine when you get through," she laughs.

He glances at her approaching, slowly peeling waxed paper back from the plate of fudge she holds out to him as though it were her offering to God. "Roy's got two games left," she says. "For the whole rest of his life, he's got two chances left to play." Coach sighs and slings the towel over his shoulder. He eats while he dries and talks to Vi telling her how on the first day of scrimmage, he picks his biggest players from the year before, has them line up on the fifty, drop into the three point, and show teeth. "Most of the frosh get real white when I yell at 'em to run out and pick a big 'un to chew their ass."

Coach has dropped down on his haunches and is rubbing away at a spot on his hubcap, but he looks up for Vi's reaction. Her high heels sink into the lawn as she backs away pretending to be put off by his language. She does not like herself very much right now for her pretense, but she has observed that men like it when their language makes women back up. Something to do with their illusion of superiority she supposes, reminding herself that she will stoop for her children where she would not for herself.

Coach stands up, telling how some of the rookies give up and head back to the lockers. He dramatizes how they walk away, shoulders slumped, head hanging in the scared rookie look. Suddenly he whirls to face Vi. "But not Mac Junior's little brother. He runs out yelling at the top of his lungs, 'WHOOOOOO-EH!' He takes his three point. Facing BEAR SIMPSON!"

Vi has never been face-to-face with a man in this particular position. Coach is crouched on his toes, elbows on his knees, right knuckles on the ground, left fist in his stomach. "I holler out and tell him he don't have to prove nuthin' to nobody. But your boy just sticks his chin out, looks ol' Simpson in the eye, and yells, 'This is good. YEAH!'"

On the word, yeah, Coach springs forward toward Vi. She puts her fist to her mouth and widens her eyes, thinking she would have made a great actress. Coach takes another piece of fudge. "Vi, I admire grit." His tone is so serious all of a sudden that Vi knows she is not going to like what she is about to hear. "But not enough to play him." Coach shakes his head then meets her eyes. "You know as well as I do what losing means in this state."

The following Friday night, the band consists only of percussion: the bass drum and a snare drum played by the two senior boys who hitchhiked on when the band bus broke down outside of Pelahatchie. Despite the loss of moral support customarily provided by the full band, by the last quarter, the Broncos are scalping the Chiefs 13 to zip--a comfortable enough lead, Vi feels, for Coach to let Roy play. Sitting with Mac in their customary place near the front on the fifty yard line, she is giddy with anticipation. It is a

cool night, but she can feel her temperature rising with the level of her excitement. She takes off her fur coat, folds it with the lining on the outside and lays it across her lap. She just knows something big is getting ready to happen.

Sure enough, when the Broncos score again, Coach slaps Roy Wingate McKavett on the shoulder, and Vi's heart revs up even faster. She squeals and leans forward, sloshing a little of her drink on the lining of her fur and the toe of her shoe.

Mac cuts his eyes at her. "Watch it, Hon." He takes out his handkerchief and dabs at the spot on the lining of her coat. "And that ain't Green Label you're wasting neither," he whispers.

Vi makes a show of ignoring her husband. She narrows her eyes into slits and leans forward even further, elbows on her knees, chin in her palms, focused on her son galloping onto the field, his shoulder pads bouncing.

Every time Roy and some other Broncos throw themselves against the Chiefs, Vi cringes. When she can stand the isolation of her posture no longer, she leans back, grabs Mac's arm just below his shirt sleeve and squeezes. But not once does Hap Davis, the announcer, mention Roy by name. Credit goes to the star "and other Broncs." Vi wonders what is wrong with Hap. Can't he see that her Roy is giving over one hundred percent? Why, all Hap has to do is just take one look at Roy's uniform. Vi is sure that she has never seen Mac Junior's jersey quite as filthy. When Roy gets dog-piled, Vi gouges Mac's palm with her nails, but Hap credits "several linemen."

Though the Broncos win 19 to 13, Vi is not happy. She is pleased that Roy got to play, but she feels cheated that he got no credit for his contribution. She is careful not to let her misery show, nodding to friends, congratulating Coach Johnson on the win, complimenting Roy and other Broncos on how well they all played. She smiles big all the way to the car, but says hardly a word to Mac on the long drive home. She thinks about the freedom of choice she will have when her younger son gets old enough to make it on his own, strong enough to withstand the brunt of scandal.

Vi believes in mental strength. She thinks of herself as setting a good example for Roy when she puts on a cheerful face the next day and spends the afternoon making buttermilk pies. While Roy has a piece of warm pie and a glass of milk, she reminds him that if he wants to be successful in life, he must learn to be tough mentally to make up for the Wingate build.

Sunday morning, Vi is kneeling at the altar before taking communion. She is praying silently. There is only one game left in the season, Roy's last game forever. Vi prays that next Friday night, Roy might get a chance to know what it feels like to be a winner. Vi believes in prayer. And in buttermilk pie.

That afternoon while Roy is studying for an algebra test and Mac not yet back from deer hunting, Vi wraps up a couple of pies. Hap Davis, the announcer, has never married, and so is more formal in his reception of Vi than he would have been with a wife present. Rather than sitting casually

at the kitchen table, he brings a knife, forks, saucers into the living room. While he opens the curtains over his picture window, Vi notes how awkwardly he moves, how uncomfortable he seems to be in his own body. They sit at opposite ends of the sofa in full view from the road, their saucers balanced on their knees.

Hap pushes his black hair, just beginning to go gray, back from his forehead, takes a small bite of pie, smiles approval, swallows and asks Vi what she's heard from her sister. Vi has heard nothing since the Christmas card from California almost a year ago, but she smiles and says, "Doing fine, just fine."

Hap talks awhile about what a beauty Rose Marie was. Finally he sighs and stares out the big window, his angular face in profile. It is almost as if, Vi thinks, he is looking not just through the window but back in time to when they were all in high school together. "You know, Violet," he says putting down his fork, "your sister was the most beautiful girl I have ever seen. She was robbed. Rose Marie Wingate woulda' been Miss Mississippi if the judges hadn't been blind. Or in somebody's pocket."

Vi stares at the blank screen on Hap's television set in the corner of his living room. She is replaying that night, the family driving over to a neighbor's to watch the pageant on T.V., herself sitting there on the neighbor's linoleum floor wearing one of Rose Marie's hand-me-downs, feeling fat in the too tight green dress, staring at her sister's image on the neighbor's T.V. screen, hating the fake beauty-contestant-grin on her sister's silly face, praying that Rose Marie would not win.

Now Vi reminds herself how over the years she, Vi, has matured, even forgiving Rose Marie her beauty when she got her first divorce. But Vi is aware that, though it would match her eyes, she has never, ever from that day to this, worn green.

Vi looks at Hap. "Rose Marie would have been Miss Mississippi all right," she sniffs, "--if she had only had a talent." Vi looks down then and tugs her skirt smooth over her stomach. "But Hap, I've been wanting to ask you," she laughs trying to sound casual, "if you thought my son Roy's name was 'and other Broncos' or 'several linemen'?" She laughs again, though it registers with her that her laugh sounds a little too shrill to be convincing.

Hap looks blank a minute. Still lost in the past, Vi figures. But then her words seem to reach him. His eyes focus on her face and he laughs, "He's a good kid, that one. Of course he's not another Mac Junior. But you must be proud of him, too." Hap takes another bite of his pie and stares out his front window.

Vi lets herself out. She has another pie to deliver. To Coach Johnson.

All week Vi prays. First thing in the morning, last thing at night, and every time she thinks about it in between.

Friday night. The last game ever for most of the seniors, including Roy Wingate McKavett. Vi sits with Mac two rows from the front on the fifty. The young couple in front of them don't seem to mind that Vi is leaning forward, her fur spilling over their shoulders. Vi is concentrating on the

game, crediting a miracle of prayer and that a lot of the Bobcats are out with injuries for the fact that the Broncos are winning big again.

By the last quarter they are skinning the Bobcats, 40-27, and Coach Johnson gives Roy the nod. Vi's heart swells when he gives her a quick look back over his shoulder pads before charging the field.

But while the cornets and the trombones are waging war on the "Washington and Lee Swing" in the bleachers, out on the field, the Bobcats score, make the extra point, and Coach sends most of his starters back in. Whether by oversight, some streak of perversity, or his weakness for buttermilk pie, Coach allows Roy to remain in the game. Vi crosses her fingers and hardly dares to breathe.

The clock is running down when it happens. On the Bronco 25, the quarterback turns around, checking his halfback's position. The center snaps the ball. It squirts up in the air. The lines mesh. An enormous Bobcat noseguard grabs the fumbled snap, tromps a few startled Broncos and runs for glory, runs fast for someone his size.

But God has mercy. Roy is right behind him. And though Vi is still seated, her feet are running too, her two-inch heels stomping out a rhythm on the wooden planks.

Roy is small, but he is fast. Vi is on her feet and running there in the bleachers. Running in place.

Roy is gaining. Vi whoops, "WOH-WHOO-EH!" drops her drink and jumps down in between the couple seated in front of her. Mac grabs at her. Too late. He is holding her fur coat, but she is gone.

Roy makes a flying leap. Vi grabs the iron railing around the front of the bleachers. She swings out under it and down onto the ground.

Roy, his arms wrapped around the huge Bobcat's waist, is trying to slow his progress down the field toward the goalposts. Vi runs along the sidelines with the regulars, the same men and boys who trot up and down every game along that magic cable that separates ordinary dirt and grass from "field."

Roy's weight has slowed the big Bobcat down to a fast walk. Other Broncos catch up and pile on, bringing the Bobcat down on the five yard line. They are getting up slowly when the whistles screech. The loudspeaker vibrates, "GAME!" "BRONCOS 40! bobcats 34."

Vi is jumping up and down, grabbing one man after another, hugging necks.

"That winning tackle," Hap's voice booms over the speaker, "was made by Rose Marie Wingate's sister's boy."

Vi is making plans to poison Hap Davis when she catches sight of Roy and is absorbed in the vision of her son atop his teammates' shoulders, powerful lights reflecting off his sweaty face. "Hey, Mom," he shouts to her, his voice deep and resonant with happiness. And Vi notices for the first time that there is a certain fine strength in his jaw.

Old Impulses, New Expressions: Denise Levertov's Thomas Didymus Poems

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In 1975 an anonymous critic for the *Ohio Review* charged that with her protest poetry Denise Levertov had become a failed lyricist whose politics had "obscured her poetic insight" (128). This assessment was typical of the disparagement of what many saw as a change of direction for Levertov. With later volumes like *Life in the Forest, Candles in Babylon, Oblique Prayers, Breathing the Water,* and *A Door in the Hive,* Levertov appears to have shifted again with poems that are more meditative and even Christian. Her career as a whole, however, has a surprising unity derived from impulses which underlie all her work: her innate sense of celebration, her agony over suffering, and her questioning of how these apparently contradictory impulses can be reconciled.

Levertov's sense of celebration is manifested most obviously in her early poems, which Ralph Mills calls "poetry of the immediate" (128). The tone of a voice overheard on the street in "February Evening in New York" from the volume *With Eyes at the Back of Our Heads* is typical of Levertov's exuberance as the speaker says: "You know, what I'm telling you, what I love best/is life. I love life!" (31). Levertov's awareness of suffering is most apparent in protest poems like "Life at War," from *To Stay Alive,* which begins, "The disasters numb within us/caught in the chest, rolling/in the brain like pebbles" (13).

Many of Levertov's poems, however, attempt to reconcile these two impulses which seem contradictory. Aware of both joy and suffering in "Terror," also from *With Eyes at the Back of Our Head,* Levertov tries to understand the relationship between the two. She has seen the agony of another person: "The grip/of anguished stillness.//Then your naked voice, your/head knocking the wall, sideways,/the beating of trapped thoughts against iron." Then she asks: "Am I/a monster, to sing/in the wind on this sunny hill//and not taste the dust always,//and not hear that rending, that retching?" (36).

Two of Levertov's more recent poems reveal her innate tendencies and find a new kind of reconciliation. Although Levertov has written many poems with religious imagery and tone, "Mass for the Day of St. Thomas Didymus," from *Candles in Babylon,* is her first Christian poem--not orthodox, but Christian nonetheless. In a 1985 interview with Lorrie Smith, Levertov states that she began the poem as an agnostic experimenting with the mass as a structuring device. "In the process of writing it," she added, "I moved somewhere" (603). She does not specify where "somewhere" is, but more overtly Christian poems follow this one, suggesting that the mass does signal a change. Yet in examining the poem, one can see a clear link

to the body of Levertov's work: She celebrates, she is troubled by the pain she sees in the world, and she asks again how she can reconcile these apparently disparate impulses. The conflict also leads her to examine the longing for faith and the tendency to doubt.

For a poet who has struggled to understand the relationship between celebration and suffering, Christianity is a fitting subject because it is the ultimate reconciliation of the two: Christ died to atone for the sins through which we cause each other suffering, but after His death comes the joyous triumph of the resurrection. Furthermore, the mass is an appropriate vehicle through which to acknowledge the reconciliation because it is an act of remembrance of Christ's suffering and a celebration of His triumph. As Levertov writes her mass, however, one feels the tension between the traditional orthodox Christian structure and her more pantheistic beliefs. One can also witness her discovery of the importance of the incarnation of Christ to the conflict between joy and suffering, a discovery that may be what she meant when she said she moved somewhere while writing the poem.

Following the usual structure of the mass, Levertov begins in the "Kyrie" by asking mercy, not of the customary "Lord," but of the "deep unknown," which she calls "a guttering candle,/beloved nugget lodged/in the obscure heart's/last recess." In agony like that expressed in other poems, she makes clear why she asks for mercy:

> We live in terror
> of what we know:
> death, death, and the world's
> death we imagine
> and cannot imagine,
> . . . . . .
> We live in terror
> of what we do not know,
> in terror of not knowing
> of the limitless, through which freefalling
> forever, our dread
> sinks and sinks,
> or of the violent closure of all.

Although the unknown brings fear and by implication the suffering which accompanies it, Levertov also sees hope in the "deep, remote unknown" from which or from whom she seeks mercy.

The second section of the mass, the "Gloria," is a hymn of celebration saying not "Glory to God in the highest," but instead praising first "the wet snow/falling early," "the shadow/my neighbor's chimney casts on the tile roof," "the invisible sun burning beyond/the white cold sky." With her celebratory images of common objects, Levertov is again the poet who finds

joy in the immediate, but she also praises "god or the gods," which she now identifies as

> . . . the unknown,
> that which imagined us, which stays
> our hand,
> our murderous hand,
> and gives us
> still, in the shadow of death,
> our daily life,
> and the dream still
> of good will, of peace on earth.

Her purpose here is to glorify, but her image of "our murderous hand" shows that she has not forgotten the suffering human beings inflict.

In the "Credo" Levertov affirms her faith, not in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but in the pantheistic divine spark which her Hasidic background had taught her was in all creation: "I believe the earth/exists, and in each minim mote/of its dust the holy/glow of thy candle." Even as she expresses belief, though, she acknowledges doubt, appropriately in a mass named for the doubting disciple: "I believe and/interrupt my belief with/doubt. I doubt and/interrupt my doubt with belief" (110). She knows that faith does not come by witnessing the dramatic power of the broken atom: "the poisonous/luminescence forced/out of its privacy,/the sacred lock of its cell/broken." Of course, this metaphor is a reminder of the destructive force humankind has discovered and used. Faith may come, however, if she can see something as simple as the transformation that occurs when "common dust" glows "in ancient sunlight." The image of dust in sunlight is reminiscent of her early poems of celebration, while the "poisonous luminescence" evokes other protest poems like "Overheard in S.E. Asia," where another agent of destruction, white phosphorous, is a "whisper of sequins" which "seek the bone" (*Footprints* 8).

The "Sanctus" is usually sung as "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord, God of Hosts./Heaven and earth are full of thy glory." In section four of the mass for St. Thomas, though, Levertov says "hosanna" to "all the gods . . . that Imagination/has wrought . . . to give to the Vast Loneliness/a hearth, a locus." The reference to "all the gods" plays on the "Hosts" of the original version, which can mean both "multitudes" and "angels." The gods which "send forth their song towards/the harboring silence," she realizes, are more than "the deep unknown" with which she began the poem. They become "the multiform/name of the Other, the known/Unknown, unknowable." These three lines near the end of this section resonate. First, the word "multiform" subtly reminds the reader of a well-known phrase from Luke, "a multitude of heavenly hosts." Second, the primary reading of the lines makes "the known/Unknown" an appositive of "the multiform/name of the other," with "unknowable" is an adjective qualifying both, but the punctua-

tion of these three grammatical units makes them seem equal on another level, suggesting three names for the deity, like those of the Trinity: "the Other," "the known/Unknown," and "[the] unknowable."

Levertov's explicit examination of the conflict between celebration and suffering comes in section five, the "Benedictus." Instead of the traditional "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," she begins: "Blessed is that which comes in the name of spirit,/that which bears/the spirit within it." Again with a kind of pantheism, she sees spirit in many diverse things: "woodgrain, windripple," "moss and moon," "blood, bone, song, silence,/very word of/very word." But aware of a contradiction she questions whether spirit is also present in "infliction/upon the earth, upon the innocent,/of hell by human hands." Not seeing how the spirit can exist in both, she asks, "Is the word/audible under or over the gross/cacophony of malevolence" and "Can it enter the void?" The only answer she can find at this point is in the incarnation ("The word/chose to become/flesh"). But the full meaning of the incarnation is not yet clear. The section ends: "in the blur of flesh/we bow baffled."

In the traditional mass the "Agnus Dei" is addressed to "the Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world." In section six, however, Levertov explains her confusion to the reader by suggesting the ineffectiveness of the lamb as a symbol for Christ. Although a lamb is a "leaper in air for delight of being," sheep are also "afraid and foolish, and lack/the means of self-protection." Considering what the lamb's weakness implies, she wonders that we had sought protection in God and now sees He is "defenseless" since "[o]mnipotence/has been tossed away, reduced/to a wisp of damp wool." Hoping for God to solve our problems, she suggests, we "frightened, bored" human beings want to escape so that we do not have to deal with suffering. We want "only to sleep till catastrophe/has raged, clashed, seethed and gone by without us" and "then/to awaken in quietude without remembrance of agony." In "shamefaced private hope," she says, we "looked to be plucked from fire and given/a bliss we deserved for having imagined it." But she sees no escape. If the Lamb of God is defenseless, she asks, "is it implied that *we*/must protect this perversely weak/animal, whose muzzle's nudgings/suppose there is milk to be found in us?" She retains the traditional Biblical symbol of Christ, the Lamb, but associates new qualities with it. To answer her question, Levertov ends the mass with the recognition that we must bear the responsibility for the suffering of the world and make the light of Christ stronger:

> So be it
> Come, rag of pungent
> quiverings,
> dim star.
> Let's try
> if something human still
> can shield you,

spark
of remote light.

The metaphors "dim star" and "spark of remote light" evoke the opening metaphor for the diety, the "guttering candle" which seems about to go out. But the "spark" also suggests the divine spark which she finds in all creation. Although dim and remote, that spark can be protected, but we must do the protecting.

Seeing the divine spark also in Christ, Levertov has learned that faith in Christ does not mean escape, protection from trouble, or joy without pain. Faith does in fact involve responsibility. Or, as she tells Smith in the interview, Christianity involves what is implied by the incarnation: "the cooperation of man" (603). As Levertov finds in the incarnation a way to reconcile celebration and suffering, the ending of the mass becomes a hymn of hope in human potential to make a better world.

Although Levertov reaches a kind of resolution in the "Mass," she continues to explore the conflict between joy and suffering as well as doubt and faith in later work. Especially interesting is a poem which has as title and speaker the disciple whose day was celebrated in the "Mass," "St. Thomas Didymus." Here the disciple's doubt also serves as a metaphor for Levertov's struggle. In the first half of the poem Thomas describes a scene he witnessed in which a father brings his son to Jesus to be healed. When the father cries, "Lord, I believe, help thou/mine unbelief," Thomas (called "the twin" in some translations) acknowledges the father as his twin, knowing that the father raises his "tightdrawn question":

> Why, why has this child lost his childhood
> in suffering, why is this child who will soon be a man
> tormented, torn, twisted? Why is he cruelly punished
> who has done nothing except be born?

Levertov's arrangement of these lines without the generous spacing of those which precede reflects the label "tightdrawn" that Thomas gives them. The repetition of "why" and "child" and the "t" sounds of "tormented, torn, twisted" help convey the father's anguish.

The second half of the poem dramatizes Thomas's struggle with doubt that is sketched in John 20:24-31. Retaining a "flash of kinship" with the boy and his father, Thomas describes his spiritual torment after Golgotha as "the same convulsed writhings/that tore the child/before he was healed." His doubt too is like that of the father:

> And after the empty tomb
> when they told me He lived, had spoken to Magdelen,
> told me
> that though he had passed through the door like a ghost
> He had breathed on them

the breath of a living man--
even then
. . . . . .
my heavy cry was the same: *Lord,*
I believe,
help thou mine unbelief.

Levertov makes Thomas's story vivid with images that force the reader to visualize Christ's wound and Thomas's actions. Since sight of the wound does not convince Thomas, he touches it:

. . . my hand
led by His hand's firm clasp
entered the unhealed wound,
my fingers encountering
rib-bone and pulsing heat. . . .

With touch comes belief, and the image of light, which appeared in the "Mass" as a "guttering candle" and "dim star," reappears with all its power to show Thomas's epiphany:

light, light streaming
into me, over me,
filling the room
as if I had lived till then
in a cold cave, and now
coming forth for the first time,
the knot that bound me unravelling. . ..

The "cold cave" of the simile evokes Christ's tomb; the unravelling knot, his burial shroud. As Christ has been freed from these, so Thomas is freed from doubt.

The poem ends with another kind of reconciliation, not with answers to Thomas's questions of why people must suffer or why pain exists, but with awareness that the torment of Christ fits into "a vast unfolding design lit/by a risen sun." The image of the "risen sun" repeats the light imagery, again showing strong bright light. "Risen sun" is also a pun reminding the reader of the resurrection of Christ. The cave, the knot, and the sun all function together to stress the importance to Thomas of Christ's rising. Although the poem began with the father's anguish over his son's pain, it ends with the death and resurrection of Christ as a way to make sense of suffering. Christ's agony is not dismissed, minimized, or even explained, but after confirming for himself that Christ in fact did suffer and die and live again, Thomas serves as a witness to all who cannot see or touch for themselves. Thomas sees the crucifixion and resurrection as part of "a vast unfolding design," and with that insight he understands the relationship

between suffering and joy. The poem which began with agony over the pain of another ends with triumphant celebration that results from reconciliation. And once more Levertov has brought to resolution the two impulses she so often finds contradictory.

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Home, Apartheid, and Natural Disaster: Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather*

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Home. The word, the concept, is at least as ancient as we have been able to trace our civilization. Its Sanskrit root means a village or homestead, a safe place to live. Even in Old Norse, a home *(heimr)* is both the house and the world in which we live comfortably. It is the place where we feel we belong, where our affections are centered, and where we find rest, refuge, and satisfaction (OED). Home, then, is an abstraction rooted in the concrete, an abstraction so concrete that for many of us it represents the foundation upon which we define ourselves, center our souls, our values, and our sanity. But what happens when this center does not hold? Without a home, with the barbarians already "inside the walls," what have we before us but the difficult task of making a new home, a new world for ourselves, of molding the "rough beast" that is our future, guiding its development as it "slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?" It is in this context that I would like to introduce you to an exceptionally fine African novel, Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather*. And since context is crucial to the interpretation of any text, let me begin by putting the title into context.

The novel is set in 1965 in what was then the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland, approximately one year before Botswana became an independent nation. In the final stages of transition from colony to nation, the Batswana people were involved in a political struggle to mold the new nation into what it was to become. 1965 was also the second year of a very serious drought which had ruined crops and had resulted in the deaths of over 600,000 cattle (*Gesture* 46), a number slightly larger than that of the human population of the country. Though many of us associate the gathering of rain clouds with misfortune, the ominous beginnings of a torrential storm, I can personally attest, having lived in the Sahel during the horrendous, deadly drought of 1972-73, that the gathering of rain clouds after thirteen months of absence is meant to signal not the beginning, but the end of a long and deeply felt communal depression. This attitude toward rain is especially true for Bessie Head for whom agricultural reform was an integral part of the world in which she wished to live. Without rain, neither Golem Mmidi, the town in which the novel is set--its name is Setswana for "to grow crops" (Campbell 82-3)--nor Bessie Head herself would be able to grow and prosper. Thus the gathering of rain clouds in the semi-desert world of the novel, a world dependent on agriculture, as Joyce Johnson has

observed, is symbolic of the hope that a new day is dawning, a new season, a real springtime in a world whose lands have eroded. The rain clouds signal the possibility of beginning anew, of life improving (57). This is the optimism of Bessie Head that is reflected in the title. As Mma-Millipede, the wise-woman of the novel, says, "all good things and all good people are called rain. Sometimes we see the rain clouds gather even though not a cloud appears in the sky. It is all in our heart" (*Rain* 168).

But *When Rain Clouds Gather* is more than just an extended agricultural metaphor; it is the story of an epic quest undertaken by the most ordinary of people, by the most mundane of heroes. In Bessie Head's work, as in her life, as in Botswana itself, to paraphrase an early English missionary to the region, nothing happens that is *not* political (*Serowe* 26). Racialism, tribalism, and all the evils of South African *apartheid* loom ever-present in the novel, like the drought, ready to destroy human lives, or with the proper rain, to be eliminated (Uledi-Kamanga 21). *Apartheid*, as South African poet Mongane Serote contends in his poem "For Don M. -- Banned," has created "a dry white season/but seasons come to pass." Bessie Head's contention, expressed throughout her work, is that the dry white seasons of social desiccation will only come to pass, a new social and economic reality will only be created, with the hard work of a multitude of individuals working together to form a community of inclusiveness.

Bessie Head's intimate relationship with the quest to re-establish a home denied by political and economic forces is the direct result of the lack of that center in her own life. Bessie Head was born in 1937 in the Pietermaritzburg mental hospital in South Africa's Natal province. Her mother, a well-to-do white woman, had been deemed obviously insane for wanting to have the child of the black man who took care of the family's stable of racing horses. At birth, Bessie, now legally considered neither black nor white, but colored, was immediately put into foster care. Writing in 1982, Bessie Head lamented:

> I have not a single known relative on earth, no long and ancient family tree to refer to, no links with heredity or a sense of having inherited a temperament, a certain emotional instability or the shape of a fingernail from a grandmother or a great-grandmother. I have always been just me, with no frame of reference to anything beyond myself. (*A Woman* 3)

In her early twenties, Bessie Head became a journalist and soon found herself becoming quite active in anti-apartheid politics, contributing articles to important publications such as *Drum*, *The New African*, and *Transition*. At the same time, she made her first attempt to establish her own home, marrying fellow journalist Howard Head and giving birth to her son, Howard. The entire project ended disastrously. Her husband Howard turned out to be an abusive bi-sexual philanderer and her political work soon gained the attention of the South African police. In 1964, she fled with

Fortunately, in Serowe, the refuge from apartheid was able to find the place where she finally felt she belonged, where she was able to center her affections, find rest, refuge, and satisfaction, a place where the rivers are contained inside the soul and "all good things and all good people are called rain" (168).

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Shylock and the Deconstruction of Christian Piety

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While deconstruction may have as many definitions as practitioners, for the purpose of this paper it will be defined as identifying those elements that subvert what is ostensibly the main thesis of a work. Such elements can give a work a complexity that more closely approximates life than would a superficial reading that denies such elements. It is not necessarily the role of deconstruction to determine whether this complexity was the plan of the author or unintentional. When dealing with an author of Shakespeare's calibre, one may feel comfortable in suggesting that it is the former. When referring to "the play deconstructing this-or-that," one may thus reasonably substitute "Shakespeare subverts the audience's expectation regarding this-or-that." When dealing with the whole of Shakespeare's corpus, it is difficult to come to any other conclusion.

This subversion is nowhere more obvious than with the comedies. The audience may attend expecting a lighthearted romp and leave wrestling with the deeper and darker issues of human nature. It was as if Shakespeare could not leave his audience with less. So it is with *The Merchant of Venice*. If the main thesis is taken to be Christian mercy contrasted with Pharisaical justice, the main subversive element is Shylock, whose characterization is (though some will feel this anachronistic because of its post-Dachau connotations) simply anti-semitic.

Shakespeare cannot be so simply excused for the words he put into the mouths of his characters. Though in his socio-cultural context it would have taken a herculean effort to hold any other opinion of Jews, the indictment stands and the evidence is damning. If "The Jew, my master, who God bless the mark, is a kind of Devil" (2.2.24-25), then by informing the audience of this, Launcelot panders to their own prejudice. His rhetoric not only depersonalizes Shylock into an ethnicity but the speaker into the audience. "Certainly the Jew is the Devil incarnate" (2.2.28) because there can be no counter to the claim; in speaking for everyone, the clown says nothing. "As the dog Jew did utter in the street" (2.8.4), so is Salanio's recounting of the nameless villain's despair turned into comedy.

In all of this, however, it becomes clear that the simplicity of the anti-semitism becomes the first element of its own deconstruction. In the famous "Hath not a Jew eyes" speech, Shakespeare effectively deconstructs a Christian piety that tolerates prejudice and fails to recognize that all men are created in the image of God. As is his habit, Shakespeare subverts

audience expectations by putting the profoundest truths in the mouth of his worst villains. The lack of insight into their own prejudice on the part of the other characters reinforces Shylock's judgement. They proceed in their simplistic prejudice, unchanged by truth. Perhaps most shocking is how they confound his villainy with his Jewishness.

Shylock starts out as a stock villain, an archetypal figure needed for the comedic genre. He is not a real person but a construct of the collective expectations of generations of theater-goers. Surely, anti-semitism is not the issue, indeed cannot be when anything attributed to the character is attributed to a phantasm. Shylock's incidental Judaism, however, progressively does become central, inasmuch as Shakespeare cannot resist fleshing out his archetype into a character that must be wrestled with.

The other characters do not simply disparage his archetypal villainy but his flesh-and-blood Jewishness. "What's harder?--His Jewish heart" (4.1.80) or the adamantine racism justified by such turns of phrase? If Jessica "is issue to a faithless Jew" (2.4.38), there is no doubt that there could be any other kind. No one denies the apposition of "misbeliever, cut throat dog" (1.3.112) because Judaism is equated with something the Devil himself can only aspire to: "Here comes another of the tribe/Another cannot be matched unless the Devil himself become a Jew" (3.3.81). The issue is no longer villainy. Were Shylock to "relent and sigh and yield" or "bend low and in a bondman's key," still "[Antonio] hates our sacred nation" (1.3.49) just as "He scorned my nation" (3.3.58) because the hatred is not based on any metaphysics or ethics outside of language itself; the prejudice is fashioned out of its own self-deconstructing rhetoric. "The fact of the matter is," as Robert Alter has pointed out, "that every Christian in the play, given half a chance, is happy to call Shylock dog and would clearly do so even without the excuse of his insistence on his terrible bond."

These attacks incorporate stereotypes of miserliness. Stereotypes, by their nature, deconstruct their own legitimacy and the piety of those who resort to them. If Shylock be characterized (by the playwright or the audience) as a tightwad, this cannot, in reality, have to do with his Jewishness. John Gross is acutely and accurately dismissive of this notion: "Needless to say, the notion that Judaism has an inadequate grasp of the concept of mercy is a travesty ... endless exhortations to deal mercifully can be found in the writings of the Rabbis." Mercy, after all, is spoken of by the Christians in basically economic terms. Mercy is equated with not charging interest and the 'forgiveness' of debt, as when the Duke urges Shylock to "forgive a moiety of the principal" (4.1.26).

On the contrary, the indictment is turned back on the Christian society that forced the Jewish community into money-lending by barring them from other areas of commerce. Since Christian-European piety did not allow itself to lend money with interest, they pharisaically found a loophole: the Jews could have the position they would simultaneously be criticized for holding. This deep societal and ethical contradiction is exploited in the

play by the numerous examples of Christian generosity. There is, however, something profoundly subversive in all the examples given.

Bassanio has the reputation for giving "rare new liveries" (2.2.16) but we must ask with E.A.J. Honigman, "who pays?" As Honigman points out, "Bassanio, a young gentleman from the upper reaches of society, must have inherited his 'estate,' and squandered it; he now owes 'great debts,' a second fortune, also squandered; and he goes on to ask for a very large loan, a third fortune that he proposes to shoot away in 'pure innocence' (as he puts it), a final throw of the dice."

Gratiano's position is no doubt similar to Bassanio and their fortunes (or lack thereof) seem inextricably tied. While he expresses the willingness to "play with them the first boy for a thousand ducats" (3.2.216) we must ask "whose ducats?"

Antonio's generosity is not in question, yet his business sense is in supposition. Would any merchant have all his ships out at the same time, with no liquid assets? Is his generosity pure, or is it, as Shylock claims and as Antonio finally admits, motivated by a desire to ruin someone else's business (cf 3.3.21-24 with 3.1.56-58)?

The guilt accompanying Jessica's stolen fortune is implicitly mitigated by her generosity towards her new husband, a generosity no doubt related to her conversion. By the end of the play, the "unthrift" lovers are "starved people" looking for manna (5.1.294).

The contrast, then, is not between Jewish parsimony and Christian generosity, but between fiscal responsibility and irresponsibility, not between conflicting religions, but between the wise and foolish servant.

Shylock's characterization as a villain and a Jew is repeatedly conflicting and self-defeating. This same tension must be felt with the characterization of all Christians. Their roles as heroes and heroines are ever so relentlessly undermined, most centrally in their relation to Shylock. This is most clearly seen in the trial scene.

The court scene operates at many levels of irony. The dramatic tension centers on whether Shylock will get to exact his horrible justice. The audience however, knows they are watching a comedy and it would be no comedy if Shylock were to murder Antonio on stage; in fact, there is no such threat present for the audience, and hence no real dramatic tension. Within the play itself, it may be argued, the characters are faced with truly dire circumstances. But are they? Would there really have been the danger of any Christian court allowing Shylock to carry out his sentence? Unless this is no longer a comedy but a fantasy, there is no real tension for the characters themselves. So what is Shylock doing?

Reductionistic readings are easily deconstructed by the above considerations in conjunction with textual evidence. The monetary motive fails to realize itself when offered six times the amount; even though he had fallen on hard times (he was not even able to come up with the original sum but had to borrow it from Tubal) and had subsequently lost more when Jessica fled, he refuses a monetary settlement because it is not the issue. The

motivation of hate disappears in the complexity of Shylock's character. As when Shylock tells Gratiano that he has not wit enough to pray the right prayers (4.1.127), he suggests that Gratiano's (and the audience's) understanding of his motivation is too simple-minded to effect a change; it also implies that there is a possibility of relenting, revealing that his oath in heaven is not to murder someone (an absurdity not worth deconstructing), but something deeper.

The ideological tension between mercy and justice is the only real tension, and Shylock plays both ends masterfully. Can the court claim to be just when justice is meted out so selectively? They demand mercy of the Jew for the Christian; would they demand the same for another Jew or a Moor? Can the Jew or Moor realistically expect justice from such a system? Shylock's critique is correct: there is no justice if justice is not for all; there is no mercy if it is not for all. This "Christian" court is neither just nor merciful.

In the context of the play, Shylock's only victory could have been the admission from the court that they were not fair. This is everything that Shylock's argument builds up to. Knowing that they could not allow him to carry out the contract, they would have to deny their own legitimacy. After his own treatment throughout the play, Shylock knows this, and for those around him to admit it would have been the sweetest victory.

In this context, it becomes clear that his conflict is not with one merchant about a pound of flesh, but with Venice itself. "No, not for Venice" (4.1.228) is the cry for the integrity of his soul; Antonio figures very small indeed. After obfuscating his intentions with discussions of gaping pigs, exploding bladders and lodged hate, his reason becomes clearer as his argument becomes more emotional. Bachelor Antonio is no longer the audience when Shylock addresses those that should marry their heirs to slaves (4.1.97). Antonio is too small a receptacle for Shylock's hatred when it is Christian Venice that has stolen his daughter. A pound of flesh is too small a retribution for the abuses he has known. In addressing the hypocrisy of slave-owning Christians, he addresses the convenience of the law and inequity before the law.

The admission of injustice is a realizable goal inasmuch as the Duke admits he can arbitrarily dismiss the court (4.1.104). The consequences would be the downfall of the proud city state, as Antonio knew "For the commodity that strangers have with us in Venice, if it be denied, will much impeach the justice of the state" (3.3.26-29). He understood the havoc Shylock could wreak was more deadly than any forfeiture he could claim with a knife. "He plies the Duke at morning and at night and doth impeach the freedom of the State if they deny him justice" (3.2.280ff). It is no empty threat he wields when he cries, "If you deny it let the danger light upon your charter and your city's freedom" (4.1.38-39) but one that threatens to bring Venice to its knees, as the court understands all too well. The double entendre that he was following a "losing suit" (4.1.62) acknowledges not

only his awareness that they would never award him the forfeit, but that in losing the case he would have won the greatest victory.

Again, this was not a realistic outcome for a comedy, even though the entire play conspires and cries out for such a conclusion. The audience demands the defeat, not of its own mores, but of the archetypal villain, no matter how correct his argument. To the "rescue" comes a fabricated interpretation of the contract and law, an interpretation whose legitimacy rests solely on the ethos of the esteemed doctor of the law. The fact that the audience knows that the lawyer is a fraud and that any judgement based on his/her opinion is equally fraudulent and illegitimate makes a bricolage of any attempt to derive an ideological center for the goings-on here. Is justice just that requires an artificer to bring it about?

Christian piety that requires chicanery and allows for prejudice does not fare very well in The Merchant of Venice. Its hollowness does not afford a comfortable comparison with Judaism. We are warned, "Unless your righteousness exceed that of the pharisees...." and in this play, and perhaps in the Christianity that Shakespeare as a whole knew, we are hard pressed to say that it does.

When Shylock is forced to say with horrific irony, "I am content" the audience is confronted with an anti-semitism as profound as any in Dachau. To force someone to deny their soul, the core of their being and their relationship with God is to deny all those things for oneself. Yet blithely, in the comedic framework, this is all accepted as the better choice, even though the play has successfully deconstructed any superiority of Christian piety. In order for Shylock to ensure his daughter an inheritance, he had to accept Antonio's terms or else the Duke would recant the pardon and any chance for Jessica to receive his estate (4.1.391-392). This decision is made easier by the compromise of his soul that had already taken place in giving up his oath to see this through without taking the money or principal. His faith had been stripped earlier in the form of the turquoise ring, and was a facade by the time he reached the court. He awaits the vindication that does not come. In destroying Venice he would have destroyed himself, but in so doing would have expiated himself as when Samson destroyed the Philistine temple, and is that not what the Venetian court is? When the strength does not come to unhinge "well-deserving pillar[s]" (4.1.239), it matters not whether he signs the deed or not, claims to be a Christian or not; "I have a daughter" (4.1.295) is his only claim. It supersedes his faith in the law. It is what he will die a spiritual death for and no doubt give his physical life for once he signs the deed.

The incongruities between Shylock's villainy and his Judaism have already been noted. What is confirmed when he "converts" is that he was not evil because he was Jewish, but because he failed, in the length of the play, to be a Jew. His failure to say the shema as he is led away to a sacrificial death indicts both him and the Christianity that would deprive him of that. We are right to feel uncomfortable when this is put in a comic context that contrasts it with a hypocritical Christianity.

It would be going too far on the other hand to suggest that Shakespeare was disestablishmentarian or that the play deconstructs the principle of Christianity. As has been said, Shakespeare inevitably raises more issues than he resolves, so that while a theme is developed, a specific polemical stance is not discernible. What is on trial here is not Christianity, but its practice by the characters and the disparity between that practice and the principle. Again, Shylock is not evil because he is a Jew, but because he fails to be one; all others fail not because they are Christian but precisely because they are not. And from the bricolage, are we given the tools to construct a piety that worships God in spirit and in truth?

Marth Meas
Houston, TX

As Alpha

Near the beginning of the trip,
we noticed an opaque sheen in the watery sky.
As difficult as alpha is to recognize,
the light seemed to have always been there.
The haze romanticized the way we saw
objects edge into and through the air.
Monet colors shimmered on the other side
of obscurity. Orangevity double-rippled
on the water. We knew the sunset
by its change. Our ship's voyage had been begun
late in the day when waters were calm.
At junctures along the passage, the air cleared
or seemed to. Objects appeared defined,
had properties assigned, took on form.
We were relaxed, our answers open.

Then the eighteen foot waves hit;
knocked some of us down, altered significantly
the steps of others. As we rocked from one wall
to another, our feet stuttered. We understood
lurching, lunging, intruding on another's space.
Some stayed in their cabins; others sat below deck,
called up dry land; a few took shots when seasick pills
refused to work. Lucky ones learned to enjoy rolling.
Although the wind whipped up the waves,
the ship was spared a storm. Still thoughts of the Titanic
roused sequinned patrons, gave them pause.
Someone tittered, "Did you hear that the whale
in Moby Dick was just a whale to Melville?"
Some of us did not succomb. We
kept on leaning, scanning the sea for Moby.

The brilliance of the tropics was unprepared for.
Our ship waded into Carribbean repose.
Waving sails greeted our entrance to the harbors.
Pastel paint radiated from sunlit houses hugging
hillsides, presenting color echoes as island gifts.

In Roadtown, Tortola, on island time,
we thought of how Columbus, sailing on Spanish hours,
found the beauty of this land and Virgin Gorda
different from what Spain had been looking for.
We became more accepting of what is.
Reducing the tropics to pieces of Batik,
we carried some home, stretched it over frames,
adorned stark rooms with distilled island messages.
In the evenings, we still looked for places of sunset,
tried to rise early for glimpses of silent rays.

As the image of waters receded,
West Indes flora faded. We tried
not to dwell on now drained colors,
accepted hues, worked within muted pigment wheels.
Dolphins still called to us in the evenings; slow mornings
belonged yet to those flying fish
and phosphorent rainbowe surfing in the wave of memory's curl.
We remembered the strident marks of magenta
in brilliant sunshows running like watercolors
over daylight's D'Arched sky, of perfect weight.
In our dreams, we pursued pinks.
Becoming partial to land again, damp or dry,
required weeks of renegotiating the ground,
regauging the earth for what it was,
rejecting...then accepting the sea's omega.
Atlas, Gummed

He stands at the entrance of the station,
Holding back with insouciant feet the flow
Of those heels hurrying to subway's door.
As I edge around his bulk, I wonder
At his charmed immobility, his stance
With eased hands in pockets of loose jeans,
His eyes crinkled from seasoned laughs and stands,
His ponytail rectifying America.
Jostling through the aisles, I again stare
At his grey hair through a window, partitioned
Just small enough for glimpses of 'the real thing'.
As the train pulls away, he remains there,
Like an old smiling cigar-store Indian
Or a small boy sanguinely stuck in gum.

Painting "The Red Model" by Rene Magritte

Magritte's feet still stand there,
laced up the extensor proprius hallucis,
foreboding in the sun,
casting shadows.
  The body that is
not there looms from the shade as if it had
dissolved into darkness,
leaving the essence of one
hard farm day--tired feet, so
oblivious to boots. Aching,
perennial toes break with their
leather uppers the horizontal
line of red soil, silhouette boot straps
against Wyeth wood which,
upon inspection, suggests
water or perhaps even
Renoir bathers.
  Geometrically,
nails lend a vertical line to the right,
balance asymetrical knotholes.
Cezanne might have said the artist
had gotten the underlying wood 'right'.
Who'd have thought wood grain resembled water?
A still-life of motion.
Magritte's humanity shows
below. Beneath these leather legs,
his revelation of toeskin moves us
beyond boots. Fence refractions
suggest mirrors in the feet,
reflections of movement in standing toes.
Flat leather hugs the dry,
digit-sensing landscape. No escape.
No small feat to imagine,
to impose on a literal world.

Thomas Percy's Role in the Rise of Romanticism and in the Emergence of Modern Ballad Scholarship

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I intend to examine the life and work of 18th century scholar Thomas Percy. Percy's chief work, a pioneering study of traditional British balladry entitled *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (first published in 1765), figured significantly in the rise of European Romanticism and in the emergence of modern ballad scholarship. Today, however, Percy's important contributions to literature and folklore are too often unrecognized.

> The year 1765 was . . . a memorable one in the history of literature. The current ballads which were bawled in the street, or sung in the alehouse, were so mean and vulgar that the very name of ballad had sunk into disrepute. It was therefore a revelation to many to find that a literature of nature still existed which had descended from mother to child in remote districts, or was buried in old manuscripts, covered with the dust of centuries.
>
> --Henry B. Wheatley (Percy xc)

> These were signs that a revival was at hand. At last the time came when, tired out with the dreary and leaden regularity of the verse writers of the day, the people were ready to receive poetry fresh from nature. The man who arose to supply the want (which was none the less a want [though yet unrecognized]) was Thomas Percy, a clergyman living in the country though occasionally seen among the literati of the capital [London].
>
> --Henry B. Wheatley (Percy lxx-lxxi)

> Few books have exerted such extended influence over English literature as Thomas Percy's *Reliques*. . . . [M]any authors have expressed with gratitude their obligations to the bishop and his book.
>
> --Henry B. Wheatley (Percy xci)

When *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* was first published in February, 1765, its author, Thomas Percy, had no idea that his book, a collection of lyrics taken from traditional British ballads, would revolutionize English-language poetry. At the time of the book's appearance, English poetry was dominated by poets like Oliver Goldsmith, William Cowper, and Thomas Gray, whose language was stilted and overly formal--Wordsworth later termed it "poetic diction." In employing this type of diction, 18th century poets were repeating the aesthetic stance begun by mid- to late-17th century poets like Milton and Dryden, who countered the rising prominence of the novel by favoring a poetry that bore little resemblance to prose.

The first English Romantic poets to reject 18th century "poetic diction," of course, were Wordsworth and Coleridge. In his 1802 "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*," Wordsworth stated their reasons for rejecting the poetic strategies of 18th century poets. They desired to abstain "from the use of many expressions, in themselves proper and beautiful, but which have been foolishly repeated by bad Poets till such feelings of disgust are connected with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to overpower." (Wordsworth 251). To illustrate the weaknesses of such 18th century poetry, Wordsworth in his "Preface" analyzed Gray's "Sonnet on the Death of Richard West." Asserting that Gray's sonnet possessed only five worthwhile lines and that these lines were the only ones in the sonnet that did not contain poetic diction, Wordsworth stated that these five lines, while being the most prose-like, were ironically the most truly "poetic." This observation led Wordsworth to propose a new poetics: according to Wordsworth, English poets should utilize a less "poetic" language, a language more like the language "really spoken by men."

In his "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*," Wordsworth expressed his desire that his own work be read as an example of the kind of poetry possible under his proposed poetics:

> [I]n these Poems I propose to myself to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men. . . . There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; I have taken as much pains to avoid it as others ordinarily take to produce it; this I have done . . . to bring my language near to the language of men. (Wordsworth 250-51)

To fully rejuvenate English poetry from its 18th century doldrums, Wordsworth felt that he and his contemporaries needed not only to transform the language of poetry, but also to broaden and deepen its subject matter. Wordsworth openly attacked the shallowness of 18th century poetry when in his "Preface" he ridiculed Dr. Johnson's parody of a traditional ballad entitled "Babes in the Wood." Although acknowledging the cleverness and skill with which Dr. Johnson had imitated the traditional ballad stanza, Wordsworth criticized the elder poet's lack of "sense," and he

condemned the parody for its lack of meaningful subject matter: "[T]he matter expressed in Dr. Johnson's stanza is contemptible," he wrote (Wordsworth 270).

Having rejected the sophisticated triviality of 18th century poetry, Wordsworth in his own poetry chose themes remarkably similar to those found in Percy's traditional ballads. As Wordsworth put it in his "Preface":

> The principal object then which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to make the incidents of common life interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Low and rustic life was generally chosen because in that situation the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language. (Wordsworth 244-45)

For an example of poetry which explored "the primary laws of our nature" by discussing "the incidents of common life" in "a plainer and more emphatic language," Wordsworth turned to the ballad lyrics collected in Percy's *Reliques*. Wordsworth once acknowledged the extent to which Percy's masterwork had influenced his poetry, as well as the work of other Romantic poets:

> I have already stated how much Germany is indebted to this work, and for our own country, its poetry has been absolutely redeemed by it. I do not think there is an able writer in verse of the present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligation to the *Reliques*. I know that it is so with my friends; and for myself, I am happy in this occasion to make a public avowal of my own. (quoted in Percy xci)

Percy's *Reliques* not only influenced English poetry, it also drew the attention of its readers (who ranged from British artists and intellectuals to German writers like Goethe and Herder) to the oral traditions which had infused so much pre-Renaissance European literature. Because he advanced his contemporaries' general understanding of oral traditions, Percy was in many respects a pioneer folklorist.

Percy's *Reliques* was not the first compilation of traditional song or ballad texts, however. The first printed collections of folk songs were published in Scotland in the 16th century, while the first printed collection devoted to traditional ballads was the three-volume *A Collection of Old Ballads, corrected*

from the best and most ancient copies extant, with Introductions historical, critical, or humorous, published in London between 1723 and 1725. In 1724, the Scottish poet Allan Ramsay published two anthologies which were comprised largely of ballads: *The Evergreen, being a collection of Scots poems wrote by the ingenious before 1600* and *The Tea-Table Miscellany: a Collection of choice Songs, Scots and English.* Meanwhile, a group of Glasgow printers known as the Foulises published Scottish ballads in large-type, quarto-sized editions.

Ramsay's anthologies started a trend repeated in many subsequent 18th century ballad collections: the filling in of missing stanzas by the editor (Percy lxix). Ramsay doubtless thought he could improve the narrative flow of certain fragments of traditional ballads; unfortunately, however, other 18th century ballad compilers began to take considerable liberties in rewriting the texts of ballads. Percy put an end to much of this pseudo-scholarship. What distinguished his *Reliques* from previous collections of song and ballad texts was Percy's insistence on thorough research. According to scholar Henry B. Wheatley, Percy "collected his materials from various sources with great labor, and spared no pains in illustrating the poetry . . . [with] instructive prose" (Percy xc).

Compilers before Percy included in their collections forgeries and fraudulent ballad texts in large part because they knew little about the oral traditions in which the ballads were created. When Percy realized that he had inadvertently included a few forgeries and frauds in the First Edition of his *Reliques,* he promptly revised the book to correct the problem.

By setting a new standard for ballad scholarship, Percy not only discredited the work of every previous compiler, he also virtually single-handedly established academic standards for the study of traditional ballad studies. Modern ballad scholarship can be traced back to Percy.

Wordsworth had chronological distance from which to attack the poets of the 18th century; Thomas Percy had none. Perhaps as a result, Percy championed both the traditional ballads of the British Isles and the poetry of his contemporaries--the very poetry that Wordsworth later disdained so vehemently. For example, Percy championed the poetry of Oliver Goldsmith, perhaps the most prominent poet of his day. Although Percy's tastes in poetry were eclectic, he was, socially and politically, very much a man of his era, as a short biographical sketch demonstrates.

Thomas Percy was born in 1729; his father and grandfather were grocers in Shropshire. After graduating as a commoner from Christ Church, Oxford, in the mid-1750s, Percy accepted a position in a Northampton vicarage, where he would remain for 25 years; while in Northampton, he married and had six children. Shortly before his marriage, Percy achieved his first brush with literary fame. A song he had written for his fiance--"O Nancy, wilt thou go with me?"--was included in the sixth volume of James Dodsley's *Collection of Poems* (1758). Soon afterward, James Johnson, the first editor of *The Scots Musical Museum,* changed some of that song's lyrics

and passed his version of the song off as an authentic Scottish folk song, a fraud that Robert Burns corrected when he became an editor for the latter book (Percy lxxii-lxxiii). Percy's first two published books were collections of Chinese literature in English translation: the four-volume *Hau Kiau Chooan* (1761) and *Miscellaneous Pieces relating to the Chinese* (1762); his next three books, all published in 1763, were *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry*--translated from the Icelandic Language, his translation of the Song of Solomon, and his interpretation of the New Testament. In 1764 Dr. Johnson invited Percy to join the prestigious Literary Club, an offer that Percy accepted.

The 1765 publication of *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* sealed Percy's literary reputation. Interestingly, the original idea to write the book was not his--poet William Shenstone originally proposed the idea to Percy. In a 1761 letter to a literary colleague, Shenstone wrote:

> You have heard me speak of Mr. Percy; he was in treaty with Mr. James Dodsley for the publication of our best old ballads in three volumes. He has a large folio MS. of ballads, which he showed me, and which, with his own natural and acquired talents, would qualify him for the purpose as well as any man in England. I proposed the scheme to him myself, wishing to see an elegant edition and good collection of this kind. I was also to have assisted him in selecting and rejecting, and fixing upon the best readings; but my illness broke off the correspondence in the beginning of winter. (Percy lxxv)

Reliques established Percy's literary reputation, winning him the patronage of the Duke of Northumberland. In this role, Percy produced the influential *Household Book*, a genealogy and family history of the Northumberland lineage. Soon he was offered the chief editorial position at *The Spectator* and *The Guardian*, which he was forced to decline because of his obligations to the Northumberland family (Percy lxxvi). Then, in 1769, Percy was assigned to work as a chaplain for George III. At this time, he translated Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*, thereby introducing English readers to the myths of the Eddas (Percy lxxvi).

Percy graduated with a doctoral degree from Cambridge in 1770. In 1778, he became Dean of Carlisle, while in 1782 he was installed as Bishop of Dromore. Throughout this period, Percy continued to study the British ballad tradition, which led him to revise *Reliques* three times. Although Percy died in 1811, his masterwork, the Fourth Edition of the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1794), lives on.

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"And See That He Does Not Go Crazy": a Psychological Theme in a Sociological Novel

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Long before Kevin Costner danced with wolves in Michael Blake's politically correct cinematic history of the American West, Dustin Hoffman furthered his acting career in Thomas Berger's playfully revisionist western *Little Big Man*. The similarities between the two films are apparent to even the most casual movie goer, to whom the most memorable distinction may be that the star of the one exposed his posterior while the star of the other declined to bare even so much as a stunt-butt.

But anatomical theatrics aside, it can be argued convincingly that the Hoffman film far exceeds the Costner endeavor in thematic richness. But movies are one thing and novels are another. And even the most careful adaptation of text to screen necessarily sacrifices many subtleties in the transformation. In the case of *Little Big Man*, one component of the text obscured by the translation to film is the potent theme of insanity. Never clearly defined, this powerful force is nevertheless an energizing element in the plot, often directing the actions of the characters and influencing the relationships among them--and, ultimately perhaps, shaping the history of the American frontier.

Although the sociology of the novel may be more or less straightforward, focusing on the cultural absolutism of the characters and thereby encouraging the reader to feel superior by adopting a relativistic view, the psychology is much less obvious. Sociologically, the Native Americans may be superior to the white newcomers, but psychologically neither can claim much advantage since Jack Crabb, the novel's eccentric protagonist, states plainly that Indians are simply "born crazy" (46) and repeats the charge frequently with respect to individual natives throughout the story. And the same may be--and is--said of the whites.

The novel's first reference to insanity appears in Crab's passing memory of his father, a barber turned preacher who sometimes combined the two professions when trimming his children's hair. And "I tell you," Crab remembers, if the spirit come over him at such a time it was indeed a scaring experience: he would holler and jump and like as not take a piece of your neck flesh with his scissor just as soon as he would take hair" (2). This reminiscence, amusing in retrospect, not only foreshadows the gruesome practice of scalping, which Crab later witnesses frequently and practices

practice of scalping, which Crab later witnesses frequently and practices occasionally, but also crystallizes Crab's recollection of his father: "I realize now that my Pa was a lunatic" (2).

This recollection suggests what becomes increasingly apparent as the story progresses that insanity is somehow connected with violence, directly or indirectly.

The American West through which Jack Crabb moves--sometimes purposefully as if on a quest and other times aimlessly as if merely drifting--is unpredictable but is always filled with unremitting violence. This turbulence is itself at times patterned and at other times random, but it is never absent. There is so much violence, in fact, that it becomes the defining feature of the environment. Crabb refers to this quality of the setting when he describes the prototypic town of the Old West: "All you had to do to make an enemy in Dodge was to be seen by another human being: he immediately loathed your guts" (337). Since the town exists in a state of perpetual bedlam, it is no surprise to Crabb when he is shot in the back by an unknown assailant there.

Crabb survives, of course, and escaped Dodge only to encounter the murderous and maniacal Johnny Jump, a homicidal outlaw by any standards, who offers an ironically judgmental description of a subordinate gang member who "ain't got all his buttons," a defect Jump is willing to overlook since the man "is real useful at killin' and stealin'" (274). Jump's addiction to indiscriminate mayhem is balanced (at least in Crabb's eyes) by a fondness for composing maudlin poetry. In a fit of sentimentality after reciting a verse about his mother, Jump shoots his button-deficient comrade and the slumbering third member of the band. After firing several shots into the bed roll where he presumes Crabb to be asleep, he lies down himself and drifts peacefully into unconsciousness (274-76). Emerging from his hiding place, Crabb contemplates dispatching the somnolent killer as a favor to his future victims. That he does not do so testifies to his relative sanity.

When he is talking about violence, then, Crabb is talking about madness; for the two are, finally, inseparable. But the relationship is not so obvious that it can be depicted as a simple formulaic ratio--the more violent, the less sane. Though this equation is frequently the case, it is not always so. Spontaneous violence as a more or less immediate response to a provocation is, in Crabb's view, only normal but the protracted commitment to violence, transformed through time from an impulse into an obsession, stretches the boundaries of normalcy to the breaking point. As Crabb explains, in the simple eloquence typical of his narrative, "unless a man is a lunatic, violent feelings taper off after a while" (338). So ultimately, Crabb constructs--for the reader at least, if not self-consciously for himself--an understanding of sanity as a resistance to the preoccupation with violence which pervades his world. As evidence of his own sanity, he offers the diminution of his desire to kill Custer: "unless I get revenge within a reasonable length of time after the offense is committed, I can't keep up an

active hatred for anybody." But Crabb is hardly boastful of this pacificism: "I reckon that's a weakness of my character" (338).

This ambiguity has already had profound consequences when Crabb rejected an earlier opportunity to assassinate Custer. Later he reflects that his failure to carry out his plan on that occasion "changed the course of history" and attributes his failure to either a lapse in courage ("maybe I simply lost my guts at that moment") or a refusal to betray the "trust" he claims to hear in Custer's voice at the critical moment (270). Readers, familiar by this time in the narrative with Crabb's abundant adventures, certainly reject the former explanation (and with it his invitation, "Call me coward") but are probably also skeptical of the latter (Crabb hardly seems soft-hearted). Instead, they may be more inclined to explain his inaction as a commitment, however tenuous and unpremeditated, to sanity.

Crabb's own uncertainty about his motivation is explicable in terms of the confusion which resulted when the U.S. Government, with rare good intentions, hired Quakers to administer "the Indian Bureau, but that had not worked out on account of most other people believed that brotherly love was cowardice and the Indians thought it was insanity" (350). Crabb, no Quaker but certainly very much frontiersman *and* Indian, naturally wonders whether his decision to spare Custer stems from cowardice--or whether he has succumbed to the insanity of "brotherly love."

That Crabb is keenly aware of the extent to which insanity has influenced or even determined his life from an early age is evident in his nostalgic speculation "If my Pa hadn't been crazy, God knows what I would have been. I guess everybody toys with ideas like [that]" (235). But Crabb is not one to brood over idle hypotheses of what might have been: the future is more urgent than the past; madness remains a forceful mover of events, and one who is inattentive may be swept in dangerous directions.

The relation between insanity and violence is re-affirmed time and again from character to character and episode to episode, though these occurrences serve more to complicate than to clarify that relation. For example, the most successful perpetrators of violence become legends rather than lunatics--Wild Bill Hickok, Wyatt Earp, George Armstrong Custer, Kit Carson, Calamity Jane-- and incite the envy of others. Crabb's amazonian sister Caroline, in fact, so much admires Calamity Jane that she seeks to appropriate the identity and the accompanying notoriety, a challenge that can be settled only by violence, of course (341-344). So Caroline Crabb and Jane Canary fight to claim the coveted role of "Calam." The conflict is resolved when the original Calamity thoroughly trounces the aspiring Calamity. Thus, Crabb's sibling, hailed earlier by a worshipful saloon crowd as "a real two-tit wonder" (190), is vanquished and proves to be as mentally fragile as she is physically formidable, lapsing at this point into insanity as the crowd's acclaim turns to derision (348). But the reader might pause to wonder whether she is really any more demented than her triumphant rival--or whether perhaps madness is only more discernible in defeat.

Crabb's notion of insanity is not clinical, of course, but intuitive and is expressed in colloquial terminology, sometimes euphemistic (speaking, for example, of a "home for the mentally defective" or of one who "has gone out of himself"), other times dysphemistic (as when he describes his father as a "lunatic" and Indians as "born crazy" or Caroline as belonging in a "booby hatch"), and--on occasions--comically metaphorical ("her mind had definitely sprung some bad leaks").

Anecdotal references to the mental state of those around him are common in Crabb's narration: his friendship with Wild Bill Hickok acquaints him with the paranoia which "warps the minds of gunfighters" (285); at the Little Bighorn he says pointedly, "Oh, I knowed it for sure by then....Custer had lost his mind" (395); desperate in his effort to persuade Old Lodge Skins to escape to safety during the battle at the Washita, Crabb pleads, "Grandfather, have you lost your wits? (246). Thus, the sanity of almost all the major characters (white or Indian) and many of the minor ones as well is challenged, at least in casual remarks, which more often seem conversational insults than serious accusations. However, the cumulative effect of these plentiful comments eventually solidifies rather than trivializes the theme and, finally, defines the environment of the Old West. After all, when the inmates rule the asylum, lunacy becomes normal since, as the Emily Dickinson poem proclaims, sanity is only a matter of popular agreement: "'Tis the Majority/ In this, as All, prevail."

In fact, Crabb suggests the metaphor himself when he commits Caroline to the Omaha asylum, which he describes as a "gloomy home for the mentally defective, run by people who you would have took for the patients had they not been wearing uniforms" (349). If nothing more than their uniforms protects the keepers from being confused with the lunatics, the distinction hardly seems significant. That sanity and insanity are so nearly indistinguishable invites an inference which escapes Crabb but may occur to the thoughtful reader: George Armstrong Custer wears cavalry garments and Wild Bill Hickok dandified attire of his own design. Perhaps nothing more substantial than these customized "uniforms" earns for these colorful but ruthless denizens of the frontier a secure place outside the asylums.

Crabb's plentiful references to sanity (or its absence) might, for the most part, be dismissed as whimsical were it not for the occasional episode which demonstrates an obviously genuine concern. The most conspicuous discourse on the subject--and the only one self-consciously directed at the topic involves Caroline. Following his sister's humiliation by Calamity Jane, Crabb muses, "I'll tell you something about that gal: she was losing her mind, poor thing. I should have seen it coming years back" (347). His suspicion that "her mind had definitely sprung some bad leaks" (348) is confirmed when Caroline announces that she and Wild Bill Hickok are to be married.

> Right then is when I realized she should be put in the booby hatch, though I didn't go right out and look for one then. But I should

> have, for...she...was pathetic enough, for I had to lock her up in her room so as not to be embarrassed by a crazy sister in front of the other people I had got acquainted with in Cheyenne. (348)

Since there is no "nuthouse" in Cheyenne (except insofar as the town itself is one, in which inmates and attendants/keepers are indistinguishable), Crabb heads for Omaha "with a loony sister in tow" (348).

Left behind by the receding frontier, Omaha is settled enough to have an institution catering to mankind's inclination to discriminate between the sane and the insane and to separate them. Perhaps this condition implies the most functional definition of civilization: the point at which a society successfully delineates between the mentally competent and the deranged. The frontier which Crabb and his fellow misadventurers inhabit is not yet so evolved.

That Crabb himself takes the whole matter seriously is evident in his admitted reluctance in later years to speak openly of his presence at the Little Bighorn because the tale always provokes skepticism from his audience, and Crabb is not fond of "the look [that] come into their eyes": clearly they doubt more than just his story. And "what with being related to my Pa and Caroline, I am right sensitive to reflections on my sanity" (429).

Not only behaviors which are violent but also those which lead to violence are associated in Crabb's narrative with craziness. For example, the novel's initial violence, the massacre of the wagon train with the Crabb family, results from the misguided hospitality of the immigrants in offering whiskey to the Indians, whose impaired rationality leads to the carnage that follows. Being out of their minds, the Indians excuse themselves from responsibility for the slaughter since, as Crabb explains, "an Indian figures no white man in his right mind would give them liquor unless he had a running start" (8). That these Cheyenne lost their minds temporarily was, from their point of view, the fault of the whites who were not in their right minds.

The complexity of the theme is indicated by another dimension of madness, mentioned briefly but not developed--professional insanity. Crabb's complicated and ambivalent relationship with Custer results, at one point, in an appointment to the position of "official jester to the commander of the Seventh Cavalry" (382), a role which Crabb describes as that of "authorized idiot" (382). But this facet of insanity is necessarily left unexplored, for it occurs on the eve of the fatal encounter at the Little Bighorn.

It is a truism that final words, especially dying words, are weightier than even the same remarks uttered in a less dramatic context. The reader is impressed, therefore, to notice that the last words of both Old Lodge Skins, whose statements conclude the narrative, and Ralph Fielding Snell, whose epilogue ends the text, allude to Crabb's mental state. Old Lodge Skin's dying words are a moving oration to the Everywhere Spirit closing with a last request, almost an afterthought: "Take care of my son here . . . and see that he does not go crazy" (437). Snell's last, uncertain judgment is that Jack

Crabb's tale may be only a fabrication, but if so, a fabrication so elaborate that its inventor is no mere perjurer but a "liar of insane proportions" (440).

To summarize the theme of madness in the novel is indeed difficult. The narrative's attitude---as well as Crabb's--toward sanity is neither clear nor consistent, more kaleidoscopic than focused. At times, Crabb is convinced that excessive violence is symptomatic of insanity; at other times, he appears to regard violence, paradoxically, as the norm and therefore the defining condition of normalcy. So violence is, on the one hand, "normal" --relative to the frontier setting. But perhaps Crabb senses a more nearly absolute standard, that of an uncorrupted world in which violence is rare or even unknown. He is too much a realist, however, to put much stock in such an Eden. In the "Editor's Epilogue," Ralph Fielding Snell concedes that Crabb "must be seen as a product of his place, time, and circumstances," worthy of admiration as one of those "men who carried our frontier ever westward" (439-40). But he squeamishly dissociates himself from Crabb's "apparent approval of violence," which Snell denounces as "deplorable." The very civilized Snell, secure in his moral superiority, believes "that reason must eventually prevail" and the "the lion *will* lie down with the lamb" (439). Crabb, however, has a cynical rejoinder to this inflated optimism: "That's O.K., son, so you add fresh lambs now and again" (439).

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Silhouettes

W. N. Prather
Fiction Read at Cleveland Conference

The old man grasped the flask of whiskey. He'd pulled it from a pocket of his overalls and from time to time he drank from it as he talked with the boy. Meanwhile, distantly, monotonously, a tractor chugged. Following the contours of a low hill, it towed a clanking hay bailer that forked in the spaghetti-like windrows of sun-browned hay. Periodically, as if leaving a trail of excrement, the machine dropped behind it a tightly packed bundle of forage. Beyond this bulked a fencerow overgrown with trees, the silhouettes of their trunks like slender columns of stone, their underlimbs branching up like the tracery of a vault, an image stark against the flare of sun.

Malcolm sure do a good job, the old man said, one hand shading his eyes, his gaze following the trajectory of the tractor. Always acts like he's half asleep, but he sure can read a field.

The young boy nodded and then returned to the subject he had dwelt on all day. Pappy, he said, looking up at his grandfather, are you really gonna take me squirrel huntin?

The man lifted his hand and set it gently on his grandson's nape. You think you ready for it, Burley?

The boy felt the weight of the hand, the rasp of callous that ridged its palm. Usually as stolid as a field of emerging beans, the old man seldom spoke, seldom touched anyone. Wonderingly, as his grandfather shifted away, the boy studied the bottle of whiskey. I sure do, Pappy, he said. I wanna go more than anything. He glanced at the man's face, the spikes of gray hair stiff on his jaw. Are you really gonna let me shoot the gun?

Well, now, you figure you stout enough?

I guess so. I ain't ever shot one before.

The old man tugged a faded blue bandanna from a side pocket, wadded it, and then, lifting his straw hat, used the cloth to mop a gauze of sweat from his forehead. It's gonna kick like a mule. You know that.

The boy fidgeted, slapped at a worrisome sweat bee. He knew what a mule was. It didn't take much to imagine what it'd be like, catching a hoof in his chest.

You just gotta get holt of it. Snug the butt-end against your shoulder.

The boy shifted his weight on the running board. His tennis shoes hung loose, inches from a patch of clover. Slowly, he kicked at several mauve blossoms. Hey, Bones, you hot?

The collie whined softly but didn't move. The boy eyed its flanks and back, a pattern of paper-white and sienna, its narrow muzzle, its jet black nose. Bone's a pretty dog, ain't he?

The man pondered the dog couched in the hay, its muzzle nestled on its overlapping paws. Come here, pup, he said.

The dog lifted its head. Its tail, a wispy swatch of white and rust, thumped rhythmically.

Here, Bones. Here, pup-dog.

The dog, which had come with the boy from the house earlier that day, hoisted itself up on its feet, yawned lazily and ambled over to the truck.

Good dog. Bone's a good dog. Tenderly the man stroked it's muzzle, then its nape and finally the thick hair atop its rump. Bones a good dog, ain't he? he said and buried his fingers in its rump-hair and scratched.

The boy watched the man's hand, observed the hand whose skin didn't resemble skin, whose many cuts and scrapes were slow to heal.

He really likes you to scratch him. Look here, Burley.

The dog whined in pleasure and the boy leaned toward him and cooed.

The man's fingers had discovered a cocklebur embedded in the hair on its flank. He set the whiskey bottle down on the running board and then used both hands to work on the burr.

Aint Sarah says he's the prettiest this side of Biggs. The boy was stroking the collie's ears.

Good pup, his grandfather said, vising the burr between two fingers. Now he was using his other hand to pick the white strands of irregularly kinked hair from the spikes. Now, now. Just stay put. I'll get it loose.

The dog stood beside the truck, its tongue lapping, the curve of its lips signaling its apparently delirious enjoyment. Occasionally it licked at the boy's hand. Extravagantly it switched its tail.

Well, now. If you ain't your Aint Sarah's dog. She's sure not liable to cart bad about you. The man stroked the dog's fur. He said, Burley, you ever seen them pictures of Old Joe?

No, Pappy, I sure hadn't. Who's that?

I'll show em to you when we get back to the house. But, lord, that sure enough *was* the handsomest dog this side of Biggs. Any side of it for that matter. He shook his head. He had the cocklebur free now. He slung it over the dog's back and into the pasture. Then he picked up the flask of whiskey and unscrewed the cap. Momentarily irritated by a slant of sun, he blinked. Then he turned up the bottle and drank. Meanwhile the dog had staggered around so that its nose was buried in the boy's groin.

Did he look like Bones? Was he the--uhh! Bones, stop it! Bones was licking at his thighs. Back up, Bones!

Old Joe? The man shook his head. Hell, no. He wadn't no yard dog at all. He was a hunter, that dog. A setter. He screwed the top back down on the bottle. He had some fine hair, Burley. When it was brushed up and the sun caught it, it looked plumb like copper. Or a basket of winesaps maybe. And he could hunt too. Why, he could smell a mess of birds a mile away--and that with the wind gustin at his tail.

The boy eyed his grandfather. Fall was coming up and he'd not yet been on a quail hunt.

And listen here. I ain't talkin bout them damn skinny mexcan quail you keep scarin up hereabouts. No, I'm talkin bout them big quail. Them bobwhites.

Distantly, a clanking. Like one large metal plate falling atop another. Yet a hollowness. Then the tractor's motor stopped and suddenly it was quiet. A faint breeze carried the smell of burnt gas and oil. Then it cleared away and again the air was sweet and clean with the scent of freshly mown hay. Distantly, the dark machine bulged, beyond it the fencerow, beyond that the orange-red sky.

Was he your faverite?

The man hesitated. Lord, yes, he was my faverite. And I always treated im kindly. Well, cept for once. And I'm cursed to think about that once ever time I recollect him. You know, you shouldn't ever mistreat an animal. It'll all come back to you if you do.

Their songs skirling like a blend of mouth harp and twanged bedspring, a rivulet of blackbirds sluiced overhead, the whoosh of their wings as crisp as the darkening sky.

You see, we was huntin one day. T'other side of the old bridge there. He motioned with his left arm. Winced. He always did when he raised it past a certain point. They was lots more honeysuckle down there then than they is now. And I's already all hot and mad enough to raise a stink. See, I'd spooked a covey out from under some sumac and they'd pitched in the thickets. I knew it was gonna be hard, but, hell, it was like hackin through jungle. Suckle, briar and then--to beat all--Old Joe just up and sits on his rump.

The boy listened intently. At the same time, he conjured an image of the terrain on the far side of the bridge. Like every square inch of the surrounding land for miles, he knew it well. He and Bones had explored it all, in every season, had been lost and found, had jumped mallards and geese on the old river, had hogged carp and buffalo in the sloughs. And his grandfather was right. The wooden bridge spanned a deeply eroded ditch that remained dry nearly year around. Thickets of threading bramble and greenbriar dominated its banks, the stands of honey and black locust. The occasional sycamore or cottonwood. Honeysuckle was rampant, whelming up and over everything, sometimes stifling briars and small trees. A perplex of sorts. A confusion. Vines tearing and twisting around your feet. He guessed that if he'd been a quail--mexican or otherwise--he would have gone for cover there too.

And, Burley, the old man went on, there was Joe. Just as pretty as you please. Squattin on his haunches and breathin heavy. Come on, Joe. Come on, Joe-pup, I said. Hell, I must of called him a dozen times. But, lord, he wouldn't come. I purely thought he was tuckered out--or just didn't relish goin in them thickets.

Finally--

Wooooooweee! Malcolm yelled, advancing across the hayfield.

The old man's hands twisted on the bottle. He raised it and waved back. Finally, he began again. I went back to where he was sittin. Joe, I said. Now I ain't gonna tell you but one more time. Let's get up and get after them birds. But he just sat there, Burley. Like a knot on a log. Pantin, whinin. Hell, I don't know. Something just come over me. I can't explain it now. And I just hauled off and kicked him. The man lowered his head. It was as if he'd dropped something in the grass and clover. Had dropped something in the shadow of his legs and the running board. Like he'd lost something precious and was trying to catch a glint of sunken sun.

Damnit, I don't know why I did it. I ain't that kind of man. I ain't. He shook his head. I seen lots of men who are. Who take it out on their stock. Who beat their milk cows or horses when times is bad or they having it poorly. And I ain't like that. I just ain't. But, hell, Burley, I kicked him. And he commenced to yelpin. Lord, lord, course he yelped. Cause I was mad and I kicked him hard.

Burley watched Malcolm bend to retie a bootlace.

His grandfather snorted. Half a laugh. He said, Then was when them birds flushed. Three of em. They couldn't of been ten foot from where Old Joe had squatted. Lord, Burley, he had em pointed. Pointed all along. That's what he was aimin to tell me will all that whinin.

Malcolm neared them now. Short and heavy set, he had a huge knot behind one ear that reminded the boy of an oak gall. His voice was lazy-slow, coarse. Pappy, you got arry whiskey left?

His grandfather groaned as he stood up off the running board. Startled by the sudden commotion, Bones sprinted away, daring someone to run after him. He bounded over the rows of stubble and then into a margin of uncut hay, his coat shimmering in shades of copper and white.

The rest is yours, he said, handing Malcolm the bottle. That is, if the boy don't want none. The man winked at his grandson, the features of his face softened by the tempered sunlight.

Faintly embarrassed, the boy considered his grandfather. Maybe it was the sun or maybe grit had blown in the man's eyes. Burley turned and watched Malcolm uncap the bottle and begin to gulp. Burley didn't know what to say. He walked slowly toward the rear of the truck. Usually he rode in the open bed, where he could feel the wind as they drove home.

Malcolm, did you recollect to cover that distributor?

Yeah, Pap, he said. She'll work like a charm in the morning. Then he tossed the empty bottle into the back of the truck and the men paused. For a moment they stood motionless, apparently awed by the view of the sunset, the stealth of approaching night.

Pap, Malcolm said, finally, as they started to climb into the cab. You reckon that eatin place in Biggs is still open?

The old man had adjusted his straw hat, was fingering its brim. Why, I reckon it is, Malcolm. You gettin hungry, are you?

No, but I was thinkin about the boy. We could chip in and get im a nanner split. Burley was standing on the bed of the truck. You want a nanner split, son? You sure was a good hand today.

The boy smiled and nodded. He thought, though he would never say it, that he could eat two.

Come on, Pap. Malcolm clapped his hands and swung up inside the truck. Let's go get im one.

His grandfather's overalls were partially unzipped and the boy could see the grizzled hair on his chest, a vee of sunburned skin. Just make sure you don't tell your mammy about it, he said. And you better look hungry at suppertime—whether you are or not.

Burley sat down on the wooden bed and hung his legs over the lowered tailgate. As the truck motor roared, he picked up the hickory shaft that stayed in the back of the truck, the pole he habitually used to beat at the road and weeds, at whatever else, as they rode over fields and through gates and down country roads, kicking up clouds of dust that wafted slowly, yellowing rows of tasseled corn and ranks of waist high beans. Middle of August, days still hot, doves whistlewinging in groups through the dark dusk. And what he thought was, a star is already out in the east over the river bottom.

The lane was rough and occasionally the truck bucked, throwing him inches off the bed. He pretended the highest weeds were enemy and the end of the hickory shaft a bayonet.

Minutes later, the truck jerked to a halt and he watched Malcolm get out to open the gate. Meanwhile Burley thought about it again, his grandfather's face, whether it'd been the sun or not. Then the truck moved, rolling through the gate, halting. The boy dusted straw off the spare tire, a twist of bailer twine. Next stop Dewgin's Diner! Malcolm shouted as he passed.

In thick, choking clumps, honeysuckle flourished around the gatepost and the boy hefted and held his hickory rod over one of the arching vines. A grand butterfly, a monarch, hung from it, investigating a blossom, the dark veins in its panes of wing like silhouettes of branching stone against a pulse of sun. Burley considered lashing down at it. For no other reason than effect. To see if he could hit it. To see perhaps what bruised blossom and shattered wings looked like. Still and steady he held the bayonet aloft, threatening. Then, suddenly, the truck lurched and began to edge slowly down the lane. From the rear of the truck he stared at the arching vine and pendant butterfly. Finally, he dropped the shaft. And he sat there, humming and making up songs and imagining how good the frozen milk was going to taste.

The gently rolling land flowed past, field after field, corn and then sorghum, sorghum and then beans, then the Zeller house, its lights already glowing in the dusk, then the outskirts of Biggs. When they slowed to cross the GM&O tracks, he turned and studied the ghostly ruins of an old hotel. In days gone by, when passenger trains connected Biggs and New Orleans, it had served a prosperous clientele. The boy thought about those prosper-

ous guests and the days gone by and then he heard Malcolm. He had poked his head out the window and he was shouting. Next stop Dewgin's Dinner! he yelled again and violently he slapped the side of the truck. Burley gripped the end of the wooden bed and held on tightly as the truck, its tires spinning, slinging pebbles and roiling dust, left gravel, hit asphalt, and sped up.

"I am guiltless here": Rape, Repression, and Blaming the Victim in Wordsworth's "Nutting"

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The critical history of Wordsworth's "Nutting" has been almost as devious as the poem itself in summoning up the image of rape only to empty it of its literal meaning, allowing textual play with the *idea* of rape only to suppress the real occurrence of the violent, nonconsensual sexual assault of women by men. The tendency of many psychological interpretations of the poem that examine Wordsworth's eccentric use of the metaphor of rape to describe a boy's nut-harvesting expedition in the woods has been to abandon the subject of rape as quickly as possible: Alan Grob and Harold Bloom, for example, retreat almost entirely from the sexual implications of the metaphor and subsume the boy's ravaging of nature and subsequent remorse under a generalized Wordsworthian plot of human development from infantile, narcissistic, self-interested love of nature to the mature, benevolent "dialectic of generosity between Man and Nature" (Grob 139-47; Bloom 128-31).

Other psychological studies have remained truer to the overt sexual meanings put into play by the rape imagery--finding the realization of frustrated Oedipal longings, a screen memory for masturbation, or the castration of the threatening phallic mother (Schapiro 106-7; Arac 44-5). However, no one yet has disengaged the vehicle of the rape metaphor from its tenor and examined how the rape operates as *rape;* criticism of "Nutting" on the whole has tended to address the poem ahistorically, ignoring the impact of contemporary social and historical constructions of gender on its representation of rape.

But poets do not write in historical vacuums: we must assume that when Wordsworth writes about rape, he enlists the particular idea of rape that was understood by the culture in which he lived; the image enters the poem hauling a certain amount of ideological freight. And, in fact, examined in light of late 18th- and early 19th-century popular and legal discourses on rape, "Nutting" not only reflects prevailing popular attitudes about rape at Wordsworth's time, but also reproduces ambivalences which troubled contemporaneous legal definitions of rape, particularly in regard to the issues of agency and consent.

An examination of the literature of the time reveals that Wordsworth's choice of rape as a metaphor is perhaps not as extraordinary as present-day critics have assumed: court reports from not just London but also the rural northern counties of England document that rape was a prevalent crime in Wordsworth's era. In her exhaustively documented study, *Women's Silence, Men's Violence: Sexual Assault in England, 1770-1845,* Anna Clark depicts

England in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as a world in which the treatment of women as objects to be possessed, often violently, for men's pleasure was regarded as somewhat routine (16). Newspapers printed detailed reports of rapes in order to increase their circulation; ballads and broadside literature continued to glorify the aristocratic libertine who seduced or raped women for his amusement as a hero of popular culture. This "heroic rake" ethos, which reached its height of popularity in the 18th century but lingered well into the 19th, was supported by an ideology which presented rape as a natural male urge, the sometimes inevitable and therefore excusable outgrowth of men's uncontrollable animal passions (21-3). This belief in the natural animality of the male meant that in spite of a woman's claims that she had been assaulted, even in spite of the physical evidence her torn and bruised body might present, it was very hard to get a conviction for rape; the man who raped simply was not seen as guilty of a crime (Clark 6).

While aristocratic rogues were subjecting women to their uncontrollable urges, the standard for feminine behavior was sliding toward the opposite pole, especially for the middle class. Partly as a reaction against libertinism, the newly-empowered middle class founded its identity upon the reformation of public morals, and its women became the figureheads of this campaign (Clark 110-11). The rise of industrial capitalism and the consolidation of the bourgeois values of industry, sobriety, and purity in late 18th- and early 19th-century England, saw the emergence of a new construction of womanhood whose two dominant, mutually supporting pillars were the "doctrine of separate spheres" and the "cult of female innocence." These two ideals would ultimately cooperate to take the blame for the crime of rape off the men who raped and to put it on the women who were rape's victims.

The doctrine of separate spheres meant that while a man's proper place was the public realm, the world of work, a woman's proper place was the home. The world outside the home, the contaminated city streets where money was pursued, was considered a "fallen" world too dangerous and corrupt for middle-class women to occupy (Ellis 3-15; Clark 10-11). According to the ideology of the day, the separate sphere of the home, where the woman presided, was a haven of piety, harmony, and domestic bliss to which the hardworking husband could escape at the end of each workday to renew and purify himself.

But for the middle-class woman, the domestic haven could seem more like a gilded prison. The "cult of female innocence," which made chastity, purity, and obedience to one's husband or father the ideals for feminine behavior (LeGates 23-8), worked in tandem with the idea of separate spheres to cloister women in their homes. To leave the safety of the home, especially for a woman unaccompanied by a male guardian, was to willfully risk corruption in an impure world about which the truly feminine woman could neither have nor desire knowledge. Ultimately, purity and domestic seclusion became so closely associated that merely being out on the street alone for any reason could brand a woman as corrupt. The logic by which

the cults of purity and domesticity fostered attitudes which worsened women's position with respect to rape is discernable in the following 1785 newspaper editorial on the character of the ideal woman:

> True gentleness, like an impenetrable armour, repels the most pointed shafts of malice: they cannot pierce through this invulnerable shield, but either fall to the ground, or return to wound the hand that shot them.A truly meek spirit will not look abroad for felicity, because it finds a constant banquet at home; its excellence is further evinced by its disposing the mind wherein it resides, to the practice of every other virtue. ("The Moralist")

Several insidious notions appear here: that a *truly* virtuous woman simply cannot be attacked--along with its inverse, that a woman who *is* attacked was never truly virtuous--and that the woman who seeks happiness in doing anything outside the home is not virtuous either; she is asking for trouble. Such beliefs led to the pervasive practices of denying that rape ever occurred and of blaming the victim for rape.

From the late 18th to the early 19th century, the courtroom determination of whether or not a rape had actually occurred came to rest more and more on perceptions of the victim's character rather than on physical evidence (Clark 56-7). A woman regarded as unchaste could not hope to prosecute her rapist and win: a woman was regarded primarily as property, the rape of a woman as a crime against the property of her husband or father, the man who owned her. However, if the property had already been damaged, then no rape had occurred (Clark 47). This classification of an unchaste woman as damaged property could alternately be translated into an issue of consent: a rape victim's previous sexual experience, or the mere perception of her bad character, was the same as her consent; in other words, the woman who said "yes" to one sexual act relinquished the right to say "no" to subsequent sexual acts.

This paradigmatic equivalence between the definitions "rape victim as damaged property" and "rape victim as woman who has consented once and forever" is an example of how the issue of rape exposes fissures in the ideology of female subjecthood. Examining the relationship between legal definitions of rape and subjectivity, Frances Ferguson points out that "The issue of consent itself reflects a question about who or what counts as a person who can consent, whose consent is significant" (88). Since property can neither grant nor withhold consent, the dismissal of rape through the definition of victim as damaged property conflicts with the dismissal of rape through the definition of victim as person who has given eternal consent. Ferguson notes how in Richardson's famous novel about rape, *Clarissa*, Lovelace's declaration immediately following his violation of Clarissa that "The affair is over. Clarissa lives," becomes "a bizarre kind of birth announcement," a covert suggestion that his raping of her has *created* Clarissa (101). Lovelace's implication that raping a woman can launch her into

subjecthood is the same kind of strained resolution to the property/consenting subject discrepancy that Wordsworth's narrator will employ in "Nutting."

The broadening of the definition of consent and the consequent repression of sexual assault were the indirect consequence of another tenet of the cult of female innocence: the belief in female *passionlessness*, the denial of sexual feeling in women that became a centerpiece of Victorian ideology (Spacks 27-30). If women were truly passionless, by logic any sexual act between a man and a woman would involve an element of coercion. This notion that the truly womanly woman never submits to sex willingly, that she always requires a little bit of force, led to a blurring of the distinction between rape and seduction, resulting in further ambiguities around the issue of consent. Legal writings about the problem of rape use the expression "forced consent" and, because of the common association of normal intercourse with violence, doctors and magistrates would validate in official discourse accused men's claims that their victims had "consented to rape" or "consented to violence" (Clark 67-72).

While men accused of rape were apparently free to use language as cavalierly as they pleased in their defense, the cult of female chastity's rules were so strict that it became impossible for a victim of rape to come forward and tell her story without being judged impure and thus incapable of victimization by rape, for they extended to a taboo against women's speaking about sex acts (Clark 47, 59). If she sought prosecution of her attacker, a violated woman had to speak in public about rape; this speech act itself would be deemed a sign of her unchaste character and therefore her consent. The raped woman couldn't win: she was always retroactively demonized as a corruptive and contaminating presence simply by virtue of the fact that she had been sexually assaulted (30-1). In addition, the example of this ruined woman could then be deployed by the guardians of patriarchal privilege to reinforce the doctrine of separate spheres, to convince women that venturing from their proper domestic realm was a rebellious act with potentially harsh consequences or even that rape was the appropriate punishment for women who moved about freely in public (Clark 110).

Thus by the early 19th century, when the threat of sexual danger was increasingly being used to control women's behavior, efforts to promote lawfulness and public decency focused not on curbing and punishing male violence, but on keeping women confined to the home under protection of their male guardians. Rape restricted the freedom of its potential victims rather than its perpetrators; Clark describes a law force that was more inclined to banish women from the streets than to impound their assailants (51). In fact, by making women fearful of leaving their homes, rapists were in a sense serving the interests of the patriarchal order which demanded the strict separation of male and female spheres; both rapist and male protector were in the business of controlling women's private lives.

"Nutting" reflects much of late 18th- and early 19th-century rape ideology, but most significantly the poem comes dangerously close to betraying this collusion between the rapist and the father, the husband, and the judge--and its near-exposure of this ideological fissure may have bearing upon the poem's textual history. Originally written for inclusion in the *Prelude*, but in Wordsworth's own words "struck out as not being wanted there" (Wordsworth 504), "Nutting" was first published in Wordsworth's 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, but a slightly different version of the poem appears two years earlier in a letter to Coleridge, where Wordsworth introduces it as "the conclusion of a poem of which the beginning is not written" (504). However, Wordsworth is not being quite honest here: he had written and discarded a beginning section for "Nutting" which if restored to the existent poem would double its length and make much more obtrusive its engagement in the politics of rape.

In the published version of "Nutting," the boy who goes "sallying forth" (l.5) from his cottage, "Tricked out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds/ . . . More ragged than need was" (ll. 11 & 15), is a sort of rural version of the libertine rake; that he speaks of this day as "one from many singled out" indicates that this ravaging of nature is a habit with him. In describing the tempting bower of hazelnuts as "A virgin scene" (l. 21), the narrator invokes a common variation upon the heroic rapist theme: the "defloration mania" that swept England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, making virgin girls the preferred victims of ravishment (Simpson 192). Wordsworth's familiarity with this phenomenon is perhaps hinted at in another poem about rural female innocence in jeopardy. In "To a Highland Girl," the titular maiden's youth and purity put the speaker in mind of the kind of violation from which he hopes her rural abode will shield her: "Here scattered, like some random seed/Remote from men, Thou dost not need/The embarrassed look of shy distress,/And maidenly shamefacedness" (ll. 29-32).

The "virgin bower" of "Nutting" initially inspires the narrator to engage in what seems an act of mutual lovemaking between himself and the landscape:

> And--with my cheek on one of those green stones
> That, fleeced with moss, under the shady trees,
> Lay round me, scattered like a flock of sheep--
> I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,
> In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
> Tribute to ease. . . . (ll. 35-40)

However, when in mid-line he announces "Then up I rose,/And dragged to earth both branch and bough, with crash/And merciless ravage" (ll. 43-5), the abruptness of his transition from quietly luxuriating in nature to violently destroying nature suggests that he is in the grip of an uncontrollable urge. In addition, the ravaged hazel trees seem to excuse the boy's behavior

as they "patiently g[i]ve up their quiet being," and so do the various critics who, naturalizing the boy's behavior as an inevitable and necessary part of his development, unwittingly accept the libertine ethos of excusable rape. The way the poem changes so swiftly from a narrative of almost gentle foreplay to one of brutal assault also recapitulates the blurring of the distinction between seduction and rape that was occurring in many courtrooms of the day; similarly, the hazels' surrender becomes a version of "forced consent."

This "consent," however, may be retroactive. Immediately following his report that the hazels "patiently gave up/Their quiet being," the narrator submits his conclusion, qualified by his confession that his memory may be faulty:

> unless I now
> Confound my present feelings with the past,
> Ere from the mutilated bower I turned
> Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
> I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
> The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky.--
> Then, dearest Maiden, move along these shades
> In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand
> Touch--for there is a spirit in the woods. (ll. 48-56)

The poem's spotlight at this point on the vagaries of memory, particularly memory's capacity to superimpose present perceptions on past events, is more than casually tied to the issue of rape: the poem significantly duplicates the retroactivity associated with legal definitions of consent in Wordsworth's age. In the speaker's mind, the hazel grove metamorphoses from a piece of insensate property, or "wealth" (l. 51) to be snatched from a possible "rival" (l. 24), into a feeling subject or "spirit" (l. 56), only after it has become *damaged* property, a "mutilated bower" (l. 50). The vaunted moral theme of Wordsworth's little pastoral, that the boy comes to realize the kindred spirit or subjectivity of nature in the very act of violating nature, closely resembles Lovelace's solution to the quandary of his having raped the unconscious and therefore nonconsensual property of another man: "Clarissa lives." In "Nutting," nature has no voice and no consciousness until *after* the boy has violated her: through memory, he confers on the bower a retroactive subjectivity so that the bower may "consent" ("patiently gave up" [i. 47]) to his ravage and thus exonerate him.

The conclusion of the published "Nutting," in which the narrator turns to a female companion who has not heretofore been mentioned and instructs her to "move along these shades/In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand/Touch--for there is a spirit in the woods" (ll. 54-6), has puzzled critics. Harold Bloom claims that "In a touching displacement of responsibility for his act, Wordsworth transcends the directly sexual element of the poem" (130), but once we are familiar with the gist of rape discourse in

Wordsworth's culture, a warning to a "dearest Maiden" against sexually violating the woods, even metaphorically, sounds an awful lot like blaming the victim, or at least like policing female behavior to solve the problem of male violence. In the rejected first section of the poem, it is the narrator's female companion, Lucy, who is caught breaking hazel branches, making the ideology of victim blame even more explicit; in fact, the narrator marks his moral superiority by declaring "hand of mine/Wrought not this ruin--I am guiltless here--" (ll. 26-7). Lucy's transgression earns her a lecture on the correct treatment of nature, one that begins with a warning assessment of her appearance and demeanor:

> If I had met thee here with that keen look
> Half cruel in its eagerness, those cheeks
> Thus flushed with a tempestuous bloom,
> I might have almost deem'd that I had pass'd
> A houseless being in a human shape (ll. 8-12)

The expression "houseless being" is significant, for it connects Lucy to the supernatural and makes her into a witch-like figure somewhat like Geraldine of Coleridge's *Christabel*, another woman whose unseemly wandering abroad has resulted in her demonization. "Houseless" is also a reference to Lucy's at this moment belonging to no house, her resistance to proper domestication, and as the narrator's lesson on the calm, quiet appreciation of nature continues, it becomes clear that the nature he addresses is but a version of the domestic haven that should cloister the virtuous woman and ministers to the work-weary man:

> Amid the concentration of your groves
> Restore the springs of his exhausted frame
> And ye whose general ministry it is
> To interpose the covert of these shades,
> Even as a sleep, betwixt the heart of man
> And the uneasy world.... (ll. 43-48)

The bower the speaker describes reproduces the ideal home which restores him to plentitude, anticipating the "frugal Dame" (l. 11) of the published half of the poem who "husband[s]" (l. 10) household goods even while the narrator seems bent on wastage. This bower also resembles Lucy, or at least Lucy as the narrator would have her be: "s[u]nk into a dream/Of gentle thoughts, protracted till thine eye/Be calm as water when the winds are gone" (11. 16-18). The speaker seems to want Lucy to both occupy and *be* the bower, to become identified with the quiescent, gentle nature that soothes him, revitalizing his poetic powers.

Now it should be clear why the two halves of the poem will not fit together: in the first half the narrator essentially instructs Lucy to give up her free, hoydenish ways and to accept the domesticated tranquility nature

offers, in a union with nature that is peculiarly identical to her resignation to the protective custody of woman's "separate sphere." But in the second half of the poem, the bower that sustains and teaches also gets raped: even though Wordsworth may have originally intended this part to function as a story about rape told by a man to a woman in order to control her behavior, to keep the poem intact would be to equate the deployer of rape narrative with the rapist, and thus to reveal the complicity between the guardians of feminine virtue and the destroyers of female selves.

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Moral Theory and the Practice of Composition: How Weak Moral Thinking Can Lead to Weak Writing

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In this paper I want to focus on only one feature of our students' writing - their moral statements and the moral conviction behind their statements. For some time I have been trying to understand why my students can sometimes write very strong moral arguments and why at other times their arguments are disorganized, contradictory, and/or lacking in moral conviction.

Two Types of Weak Papers

I have a file of papers in which students have written convincingly about capital punishment, AIDS, or television violence, and then finished with wishy-washy conclusions. One recent paper concluded with this statement, "But remember, everyone has their own opinions about everything." Another student concluded, ". . . because I believe in God it doesn't make what I think right. It's right to me but, to some it could be wrong." A third example is the student who made a strong case that "abortion is wrong and it should be illegal." In the very next sentence, that student negates that claim with the statement, "There are a lot of things that happen in the world that are right and wrong, because what I think is right could be wrong to others. There is no right or wrong answer about anything that happens in the world today." These students and others are trained in a knee-jerk way to think that people taking strong moral stands are imposing their beliefs on others. Students, thus, use conclusions which nullify the strong points they have made. Implicit in these conclusions is the idea that all beliefs and all actions are equal, regardless of the evidence.

A second problem are those papers which lack moral conviction throughout. The students writing these papers are stripped of any power to even state their beliefs. These students write that AIDS can be viewed in both positive and negative ways; that some people love TV and some people think TV is dangerous; that capital punishment is wrong, but it is also helpful to society; or some other variation on the theme that life is filled with unresolved, opposing viewpoints. Though I agree that some issues may never be resolved, I want my students to think about the issues as carefully as possible and try to come to a reasoned conclusion that they are not ashamed of. My concern is that we should not let our students hide

their lack of commitment or lack of thought behind a veil of neutrality and relativism.

One Way to Have Papers with Moral Conviction

In considering these issues, I have also tried to understand what makes some students successful in their arguments. One way for students to come up with good moral arguments is for them to adopt a thesis that follows an already established model of moral thinking. Such models are often found in the media, but models can also be found in their parents' political perspectives, the feminist movement, the environmental movement, or their religious background. When we give our students assignments which follow such well worn paths, and when our students are willing to simply submit to established opinions in the media or some other source, they can come up with fairly good moral arguments. They are repeating the moral convictions of others.

Those students who do not try at all will submit weak papers regardless of the assignment. But sadly, those students who are most creative and try to think for themselves about the environment or educational reform, may also write weak papers. This last group is truly thinking; they are rejecting the models offered by their environment, but they lack the sophistication to develop strong arguments. This situation makes me feel very uncomfortable. I do not want to give higher grades to the students who repeat the moral convictions of others and lower grades to the truly creative thinkers.

If our goal in composition courses is to narrowly focus on our students' skills in grammar and spelling, we might do well to have them write papers on subjects in which they can follow the worn paths of other people's thoughts. But an essential feature of my composition classes is critical thinking. I want to get students engaged in ideas that they have never thought before. I try, therefore, to be careful about the types of writing assignments I give them. I try to avoid established topics like saving the panda bears, censorship, or gun control. Lately, my Comp. I students have been reading a philosophy textbook (Davis). This unique book has short stories about topics such as freedom vs. determinism, the nature and origin of evil, and metaethics. In courtrooms, we try to find an open-minded jury, one that does not have preconceived ideas about the particular case. In a similar way, I try to pick important issues, but ones not generally discussed in our culture.

Four Steps Toward Strong Moral Arguments

My idealism has put myself and my students into a dilemma. I want my students to confront moral and philosophical issues on their own, without prepackaged media answers in the back of their minds, but I also want them to write with conviction. The very nature of my assignments keep the students from following well established models. The problem is that I need to help them develop confidence in these new areas of thought and

debate. I have come up with a list of four things I need to do to boost their confidence.

Weak Conclusions and Too Much Humility

The first thing is to help students avoid two temptations. One is to "wimp-out" in the conclusion and say that both sides of the argument have equally good points. This is a prepackaged way of concluding any controversy; the news media and the talkshow hosts do it all the time. The second temptation is to succumb to the feeling that, as mere college freshmen, they have no hope of contributing to the resolution of a dispute upon which brilliant minds still disagree. I try to remind students that brilliant people are sometimes wrong. I also point out that they are adults with the rights and the responsibilities of developing their own opinion.

Understanding Tolerance and Relativism

Second, I need to help students understand the concepts of tolerance and moral relativism. I firmly believe that we need to continue our cultural tradition of respecting people who are different from ourselves. But we sometimes think that if a little tolerance is good, and more tolerance is better, then absolute tolerance of everything is best. This line of thinking is faulty. Tolerance is good, but some behavior is bad and should not be tolerated. For example, we should respect people's rights to live as they see fit. But I will not respect the right of a person to follow a life style of murder, a life style of child abuse, or a life style of belittling others. We have to draw the line somewhere; we cannot tolerate everything.

On the positive side, the morals people hold are not as different and as conflicting as we sometimes think. Yes, there are some differences between individuals and between cultures on moral issues. There is, however, a core of common morals that we can all agree on. For example, most religions promote some form of the Golden Rule. Across centuries and across cultural differences, wise people have agreed that it is good to treat others as you yourself would like to be treated. I also believe that all humans, regardless of cultural or historical setting, want to be told the truth, and not lies; want to be given love, and not hatred; and want to have freedom, and not slavery. Of course, humans often fail to live up to these ideals, but that does not negate the fact that humans do share certain moral principles. We also need to realize that many of our moral debates are not created by conflicting morals. The debates are based on disagreements of how to prioritize our shared morals or on how to apply our common ideals to particular situations. My point is that everything is not relative. Some things are wrong and some things are right.

Students will never write with conviction if they follow the popular idea that everything is relative. They cannot write strong papers if they feel that they must tolerate everything. We should respect people with whom we disagree. However, students do not need to be ashamed or feel that they

are being intolerant when they condemn the evil or the lies they see in the world.

How to Use Qualifications

Third, I need to show students how to qualify their statements. In the above three paragraphs, I qualified many of my points, because I did not want to seem like an extremist. I wanted to balance respect for others with our need to write with moral confidence. In spite of my qualifications, I made my point. Often qualifications can actually strengthen an argument. Students need to understand these dynamics.

Taking Time and Effort to Find Moral Conviction

Fourth, students need to understand that writing thoughtfully developed papers requires time and study. My students cannot write a good paper about free will and determinism the night before it is due. The arguments are complex and not readily available in the TV files in the back of their heads. Time is required to understand the arguments and to come to some sort of personal conclusion. To help my students spend more time on the issues and to come to a careful conclusion, I assign readings, small group discussions, rough drafts, papers, and rewrites of papers over a period of four to six weeks.

The teaching of composition is a complex task. Not only do we want to cultivate the reading and writing skills of our students, but we want to push their critical thinking skills to higher levels. My particular concern is that our culture is hindering the development of young people's critical skills in the area of morals. We are so afraid of imposing our values on others and afraid of appearing intolerant, that we are discouraging students from rationally engaging in extended moral thinking.

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Fiction

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The following is an excerpt from a novel entitled *Lizzie*. It is set in Mississippi in the early years of this century and grew out of historical research on the suffrage movement in the South. In this passage Lizzie, thirteen years old, is caught between the politics of her father, Stephen, and her best friend's mother, Meems Clark.

Lizzie (1915)

When Mama called me at 4 o'clock the morning of the state fair, I was already up and dressed. It was cold and I was shivering so hard I could hardly get my stockings on. Mama said the shivers were probably part excitement. "Why don't you come with us?" I asked her.

"I don't like crowds," Mama said.

"Miss Meems and Kate went yesterday. Miss Meems goes lots of places."

"We're different," Mama said. "Turn around and I'll button you up. Besides somebody needs to stay here and see about things."

"What things?" I said. "Genesis sees about everything."

"Hold your braids up so I can reach the top button," Mama said. "You and Daddy will have fun."

"Looks like you would want to hear his speech and see the ones he'll have to run against."

"Take it all in for me, Lizzie."

"Did they have state fairs when you were little?"

She laughed and said, "I'm not THAT old. Of course."

"Did you ever go?"

"Once," she said, "with your Grandmother and Grandfather Marshall and your Uncle Leroy. We rode the train to Jackson, like you and Daddy will. I had cotton candy for the first time, and your grandfather bought me a pretty handkerchief with "Mississippi State Fair" on it. It was a lovely trip." She finished buttoning my dress and then patted my shoulders.

"Where is it?" I asked.

"The handkerchief? Oh, goodness, that was years and years ago."

"Seems like you would have kept it," I said.

She looked off out the window for a minute and then she looked back at me real sadly, her eyes like a little girl's.

"I had forgotten until you brought it up, but Leroy threw my handkerchief out the train window as soon as we left Jackson."

"That was mean," I said. "Did Grandpa whip him?"

"I don't think so," she said. "I cried and cried."

"I would have socked him, if I had been there."

"Young ladies don't sock people, Lizzie," Mama said. "Now come on and eat your breakfast."

So she stayed home like she always does, and Daddy and I caught the 6 a.m. train and came all the way to Jackson. The towns along the way were red and gold with fall leaves, and everybody on the train was happy because they were going to the fair. My favorite part of the ride was the dining car where we ate roast beef and ice cream and Daddy let me drink coffee.

We spent the night at the Hotel Royal because it's halfway between Union Station and the fairground. It's the most beautiful place I ever saw. Crystal lights and floors that shine. I felt like I didn't sleep at all, but Daddy said I probably slept more than I thought. Then the next morning we went to North State Street to watch the parade. So much to see I didn't know where to look first. Bands, men on horses, motorcars, wagons full of children who had come in from the country for the day, floats with all kinds of characters like Uncle Remus and the Old Woman in the Shoe. I was waving at the Old Woman and her children, and didn't see the next group until they were almost even with us. Six women in white dresses were marching, and they were carrying a big blue banner with words on it. The banner said 'Mississippi Woman Suffrage Association.' One of the women was Miss Meems.

"Miss Meems," I called out. "Hey there!"

She looked around and smiled. She couldn't wave because she was holding the banner, but I could see her lips say, "Hi, Lizzie. Stephen."

I was so excited to see her in the state fair parade that I was dancing around and waving and saying to the people around me, "She's our neighbor back in Holly Springs."

"Hush, Lizzie, you're embarrassing me," Daddy said and so I stopped.

"Miss Meems' club got to be in the parade," I said. "Isn't that wonderful?"

"Meems Clark is more of a crank than I thought," Daddy said, "out here making a public spectacle of herself." This surprised me. I had been imagining myself and Kate next year in white dresses carrying a banner.

"Her club is good," I said. "Kate told me about it. Woman suffrage is about women getting to vote and straightening out the government."

"I know what it's about," Daddy said. "And it's about a lot more than women voting."

"What?" I said.

"It's about values, the family, our way of life, but this is no time to explain the complexities of suffrage." So we watched the rest of the parade, and then we went into the fair ground. I got a candy apple on a stick, and we started down the fairway to see the exhibits.

I told Daddy I wanted to bring Mama something from the fair and to be on the lookout for handkerchiefs. "Why handkerchiefs?" he said.

"Because Uncle Leroy threw hers out the train window a long time ago when they came to the fair."

"Oh," he said. "I never heard that tale."

"Why doesn't she ever come with us anywhere?" I asked. "She never has any fun."

"She rather stay home with a book," he said. "She could come with us if she wanted to."

Up ahead, I couldn't believe the good luck, I saw Kate standing at a booth with a lot of ladies. She was handing out little pamphlets to everyone who came by. The sign on the booth said "Votes for Women." Miss Meems was standing on a bale of cotton making a speech to a crowd of people gathered around. "Look, there's Kate," I said and started to run toward her. But Daddy caught my arm and turned me around the other direction.

"I don't have time to get mixed up with them," Daddy said.

"I just want to say hello."

"My speech is in exactly an hour, Lizzie. I want to get to the grandstand in plenty of time."

"Maybe I could go see Kate, and then we could both come down and hear your speech."

"Absolutely not, I won't let you out of my sight in a crowd like this."

I would have nagged some more, but he seemed grouchy, and I guess he was worried about his own speech. Over my shoulder I could see Miss Meems talking to the crowd and making gestures with her hands. I wished I could hear what she was saying.

We went by the animals next, and I liked seeing the pigs and cows, except that the barns smelled bad. On the stalls that had blue ribbons I tried to figure out why the judges had thought they were the best, but I never could. The Fain Seed Company had a cage on display that a lot of people were gathered around. We stopped to see what was in it, but even when I saw I didn't understand. In the cage was what looked like a rooster, but he was taking care of some baby chicks. He was gathering them under his wings just like a hen would do. A sign on the cage said "Votes for Women." Everyone was laughing.

"What's so funny?" I asked Daddy. He was laughing too.

"He looks like a rooster, but he's not really. Something's been done to him."

"What?" I said.

"Never mind," Daddy said.

"Is it a joke?"

"The whole suffrage business is a very bad joke. Don't waste your time worrying about it."

So we went on to the platform for Daddy's speech, and he was the best one by far and got the most applause. After that he had to shake hands with a lot of people, which you have to do if you run for an office. I shook

a lot of hands too. Then we saw exhibits of everything in the world--canned tomatoes and jellies, and pumpkins and corn and apples and peaches and cakes and pies and embroidery and crochet and on and on like that.

We were halfway back to Holly Springs before I realized I had forgotten all about buying Mama a present.

Meems Clark 1915

"The bottom rung has got on top." I can hear Mother say it now if she knew Stephen Dunbar was running for Governor.

She never liked him, and I don't either. All his talk about log cabins, humble beginnings, following a plow over red clay hills. I don't have any hard facts about his background, but I don't believe for a minute the past he has created for himself. You can look at his hands and tell he's never hit a lick at a snake. You can look in his eyes and see nothing at all. Those two things alone are enough to make me suspicious.

To this day we know no more about where he came from than Father did when he took him into the business 20 years ago. Stephen learned quickly. He did his work. Father was not one to judge, not even when he heard from one of his former Tulane classmates that Stephen had been washed up here from a scandal in New Orleans, something involving his whole family and precipitated by greed and bad faith. "People can change," Father said.

"At least keep him away from the money," Mother said.

One evening Father brought him home to dinner. I was returning from a suffrage meeting, though Stephen didn't know that, didn't know my politics. My spirits were high. I wanted to test him. "What do you think about all the suffrage talk, Mr. Dunbar?" I asked, trying to keep my convictions out of my voice.

He considered the question carefully, polite to the letter. "Perhaps," he said, stirring sugar into his iced tea, "a higher law is at work in that case."

"Oh," I said. "And what law might that be?"

"Natural law," he said. "Law that ordains women as mothers to the children and angels in the home, that created women's spirit purer and truer than man's."

"Nonsense," I said, "in other words, women are too good to vote?"

He laughed at that, but it was a strained humorless laugh, his upper lip taut above his perfect white teeth. He was clearly startled to find a country girl with political opinions.

"Stephen may have a point, Mimi," Father said. "Biological differences have determined the roles, and maybe Nature's way is not all wrong."

"Oh for goodness sake, Father," I said in amazement, not realizing then that your own father may turn against you in the company of other men, "I'm to be forever disenfranchised because I have the capacity to bear children? That biological fact has not affected my brain."

"Something clearly has," Mother said, "Can't you see our guest is in need of a biscuit?" I passed the biscuits, wondering at the skill with which Mother invariably diverted attention from any issue that can cause conflict. "Now tell me, Mr. Dunbar," she went on. "What is your general impression of Holly Springs?"

This question was more down Stephen's alley, giving him the chance to tell my parents exactly what they wanted to hear, that it is a lovely town, a model progressive community, one that anyone should be proud to live in, that when he followed the mule those years on the family farm, he dreamed always of a better life in Holly Springs, etc., etc.

Lizzie came over today for help in writing a campaign speech to give at the Neshoba County fair. Ironic, since I don't think I can support Stephen in this race. That depends on his position on suffrage, but my guess is that he will neatly sidestep the issue, unless having a daughter has changed his mind. I agreed to help her with the speech anyway, not for Stephen's sake but for her own.

She brought a draft with her, and I was amazed at how politic it was for a child. She has listened well to the rhetoric swirling around us. She understands the conventions of the political speech and what her audience wants to hear. My criticism was that it had nothing of substance about the issues. I made some suggestions along those lines -- nothing about suffrage, knowing Stephen would veto that--but compulsory school attendance, increased funds for education, and child labor laws.

Lizzie plans to surprise Stephen with the draft. She left her in high spirits. The campaign will be good practice for her. And if justice is possible in our political system, someday she will be a candidate for office herself.

Stephen 1915

Just like Meems Clark to try to get at me through Lizzie. How Henry Clark lives with her or why I will never understand. I guess he's given up the fight, poor fellow, and lets her wear the pants without question.

I had settled down with the newspaper late this afternoon when Lizzie burst in with a speech she wants to give for me. I was touched by the idea. She's the only one in this house who's shown any interest in the campaign. Certainly couldn't hurt to have a pretty child like Lizzie speak in your behalf.

"Want to hear?" she said.

"Fine," I said, folding the paper and settling back. She stood in front of the fireplace, straight as a poker, lifted her chin and began to speak. She had the speech essentially memorized already. Her clear young voice rang through the room with such feeling that tears came into my eyes. Then she came to a part about child labor laws.

"Wait," I said, "hold on a minute. Go through that part again."

She repeated the paragraph, and I said, "Who told you that?"

She looked at the floor and didn't answer.

"Come on, I know you didn't think that up on your own."

"Miss Meems helped me, but just a little."

"You can't make promises like that, Lizzie."

"But you're for those things aren't you? Better schools and more children in them?" She walked over to my desk and sat down with the manuscript of her speech in front of her. She cupped her chin with her hands and stared at it.

"Well, yes, but Meems Clark oversimplifies. For one thing this is a very poor state, and more money in education means more taxes."

"Miss Meems says we need to raise taxes."

"That's the reason she'll never be elected to anything, thank God."

"It doesn't cost money to keep little children from having to work so hard does it?"

"Lizzie, this is a rural state. Farm families depend on all the members pitching in, and besides, hard work never hurt anybody. When I was a boy--"

"Miss Meems says--"

"Meems would have the government meddling in everything and to hell with individual freedom."

Lizzie gave a deep sigh and came over to me, sat down on the arm of my chair. "I wanted you to like it," she said, putting her arm around me and resting her head on my shoulder.

"Honey, I do, I do," I said, patting her hand. "It's fine. Just take out the campaign promises, and the rest is good."

"But then it doesn't have anything about the issues."

"Trust the issues to me, Lizzie. Don't worry your head about them. Look, here's all we have to do." I walked to the desk, took my pen, and made an x through the part Meems had coached her on. "Now, I'll be honored to have you make this speech for me." She brightened up and hugged me and ran off down the hall to practice on somebody else.

When I let myself think about Lizzie's birth, which is almost never, I can't help wishing that a healthy male body could have had Lizzie's mind and spirit. As it's turned out, with Miranda so inept, I've been the parent, and I'm not sure I've been the best one for a girl. If she were a boy, I would know exactly what to teach her, how to direct her. As it is, the best I can do is try to leave her some property and hope to heaven that she makes a decent match.

Women Reading Calvino Reading Women

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Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler* is a metafictional novel in which the narrator addresses a Reader directly and refers to the production of the text itself. The novel contains both a primary "story," if we can call it that, and a series of narratives which are supposed to be excerpts from other books referred to in the primary story. The primary story involves the Reader (who is male) and the Other Reader (Ludmilla, a female) searching for endings to books they are reading, books which are incomplete for various reasons. In this search, other characters are revealed: Lotaria, the Other Reader's feminist literary critic sister; the Non-reader, Irnerio, a friend of Ludmilla's who makes postmodern artworks using books; Marana, the copyist of novels who is on the run from the publishing company; and Silas Flannery, an irish writer who is suffering from writer's block. There is a parallel "plot" in the primary story involving the Reader's romantic/sexual pursuit of the Other Reader. Additionally, the embedded narratives are stories themselves, with a wide variety of settings and characters. The embedded narrative chapters, unlike the chapters of the primary story which are numbered from 1 to 12, each have a different title. Together, the reader discovers at the novel's end, the titles of the embedded chapters form a paragraph.

The novel is notably untraditional in many respects and is, in this sense, very progressive. However, an analysis of the way that gender is constructed in the novel reveals the novel's more conservative foundation. Some readers of Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler* suggest that the novel is not a confirmation of sexist ideas, of Woman as objectified Other, but is, instead, a parody of traditional (sexist) representations of women. However, the question which arises in response to this viewpoint is this: at what point is Calvino replicating and reinforcing the sexist representations of women he is (possibly) attempting to parody? Actually, I do not believe that Calvino is consciously developing a parody in this sense. (If he is, he fails, in my opinion.) Rather, I propose that although Calvino is attempting on many levels to undermine modernist ideas of literature, the pervasive sexism of *If*... greatly diminishes the effectiveness of his postmodern effort.

In *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, Teresa de Lauretis discusses *If*... in the essay, "Calvino and the Amazons: Reading the (Post)Modern Text." She outlines the novel's metafictional characteristics:

> To say that *If on a winter's night a traveler* is a self-reflexive text would be a gross understatement. It is a novel about novels, a story about storytelling, a book about the reading and the writing of books, whose characters are only readers and writers. . . . In short, this is a text about textuality, a piece of writing about the process of writing; and we are never for a moment allowed to forget that we are, at that very moment, reading it. (74)

De Lauretis also discusses Hal Foster's distinction between two types of postmodernism:

> Indeed, Foster himself sees a "basic opposition" in cultural politics today between a "postmodernism of resistance . . . which seeks to deconstruct modernism and resist the status quo" and a "postmodernism of reaction" which repudiates modernism only to celebrate the status quo. (*The Anti-Aesthetic*, xi-xii, qtd. in de Lauretis, 73)

Clearly, Calvino's metafictional text "seeks to deconstruct modernism." Yet, in light of Foster's discussion of postmodernism, Calvino's novel is ultimately an example of a "postmodernism of reaction" in its "celebration of the status quo" in terms of its sexism. Although Calvino employs a radical form, he does not include a content which is equally radical. And it is precisely this conservative, oppressive representation of women in *If . . .* which undermines its subversiveness.

In her essay, de Lauretis attempts both to document the sexism in Calvino's novel and to place it in a theoretical context. Although her analysis is insightful on many levels, I believe that there is a fuller analysis of the novel's sexism to be made. De Lauretis says of the novel:

> It manifests itself as a textual practice whose strategy is to "rewrite" modernism: not simply to oppose it or to reject it, but to open it up, to deconstruct it, to challenge its assumptions, and to show its historical limit, that is to say, its non-universality, its being located in a precise socio-historical situation. The question to be asked here, then, is, Where does Calvino's text fit in this model? For I think that the model does fit, perhaps with a few wrinkles here and there. (73-74)

However, modernist assumptions include sexist ones. Thus, it seems apparent to me that from this angle, Calvino's novel has more than "a few wrinkles" in its attempt to challenge modernism. I think de Lauretis is dismissing the relevance of the novel's sexism to assessments of its "success" in terms of its postmodern status and in terms of resistance. I would like to further investigate these dynamics.

In chapter six, the narrator says to the Reader, who is perusing the correspondence of Ermes Marana, "You see . . . female figures appear and disappear" (126). In a sense, this sums up the treatment of women in the entire book, beginning with the actual female reader of the novel (i.e., me). In chapter two, on page 29, I (the actual reader) discover that the Reader being addressed in the novel is male. Ironically, Calvino says, "Who you are, Reader, your age, your status, profession, income: that would be indiscreet to ask. It's your business, you're on your own" (32), when he has taken the bold and obnoxious liberty of determining the gender of the Reader. (Although he specifies the Reader's gender, he does not reveal other characteristics of the Reader, such as his occupation.)

In other words, particularly in setting up the dualistic opposition between the Reader and the Other Reader, between Male as the Norm and Female as the Other, Calvino is guilty of providing traditional, sexist representations of men and women as described by John Berger in *Ways of Seeing:* "Women are depicted in a quite different way from men--not because the feminine is different from the masculine--but because the 'ideal' spectator [the r/Reader, in this case] is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him" (64).

As a female reader, "I" have disappeared. If "you" is male, and "I" is also male (i.e, the narrators of the stories as well as Calvino himself), then I (and females in general) am neither. The female reader of the text (me) is rendered nonexistent. The female reader *in* the text is called the "Other Reader," to denote her status as different from the norm, which is, of course, Male. The Other Reader is not addressed as "you" until page 141, but after a few pages Calvino returns to addressing the Reader. In his reassurance of the Reader, Calvino makes the audacious remark, "Who would dare sentence you to loss of the you, a catastrophe as terrible as the loss of the I" (147). He obviously has no such qualms in reference to females, who have been silenced on both the second-person and first-person levels. Somehow the stakes of losing voice are much higher for the (male) Reader, as indicated by Calvino's apparent need to reassure him. De Lauretis comments upon this dynamic: "to reimburse [the Reader] for his temporary loss of narrative status, the text gives him a bonus: when the Other Reader comes home, shortly after, he succeeds in getting her into bed" (79). Thus, the man is reassured by his ability to objectify the woman.

In addition to the sexism within the novel's exclusion of a female reader (subject) or voice, the content of the novel is riddled with sexist ideas. This sexism can be grouped into three general categories: woman as object, woman as evil temptress (the "Eve" syndrome), and woman as consumer/man as producer.

Woman as Object

Men Study Women

In this novel, men study women. From the first mention of any woman (including the Other Reader), the "female shadow" of Madame Marne whom the narrator of "If on a winter's night a traveler . . ." investigates, women are the objects of men's study, often as objects of their gaze. The first time the Reader sees the Other Reader, Ludmilla, he notes her "Huge, swift eyes, complexion of good tone and good pigment, a richly waved haze of hair" (29). (Men are rarely physically described in the novel; they are not parallel objects of the gaze.) The narrator then goes on to tell the Reader, "And so the Other Reader makes her happy entrance into your field of vision, Reader, or rather, into the field of your attention" (29).

There is a parallel between the constructions of gender in this novel and the constructions of gender in film. Contemporary film theory tells us that contemporary (particularly Western) films are most often constructed in such a way that the spectator is male, the point-of-view is male, and the objects viewed are most often women. This novel is constructed in a similar manner. Furthermore, just as the woman in mainstream Hollywood films is animated into existence when she enters the man's field of vision, so too does the Other Reader exist in *If* . . . only after she enters the Reader's field of vision.

Perhaps the best example of woman as the object of man's gaze in *If* . . . is the woman in the deck chair (Ludmilla) with whom Silas Flannery is obsessed. In chapter six, Marana's correspondence tells us:

> . . . from the terrace of the Swiss chalet, Silas Flannery is looking through a spyglass mounted on a tripod at a young woman in a deck chair, intently reading a book on another terrace, two hundred meters below in the valley. "She's there every day," the writer says. "Every time I'm about to sit down at my desk I feel the need to look at her." (126)

Silas Flannery's diary reveals the status of this woman. She does not talk; she is watched, her every movement scrutinized and interpreted:

> . . . I write the sentence hastily, get up, go to the window, train my spyglass to check the effect of my sentence in her gaze, in the curl of her lips, in the cigarette she lights, in the shifts of her body in the deck chair, in her legs, which she crosses or extends. (170)

Silas Flannery is, in this example, looking at the woman to gage the success of his own writing. Yet his looking at her serves him in a larger way--she is the only thing about which he can write. He says, "Perhaps the true book is this diary, in which I try to note down the image of the woman in the deck chair at the various hours of the day, as I observe her in the changing light" (181). Thus, the woman in the chair becomes the object of his study.

There are other instances of woman as object of study in the novel. For example, Marana's letters in chapter six describe an experiment performed

in New York City on a woman reader by a male experimenter (128). She is electronically monitored while she reads, because it is her "natural condition" to read (129).

Woman as Unattainable Love Object

Another way the novel's representation of women parallels that in film is through the theme of pursuit, of woman as the unattainable (love) object. Reminiscent of film noir, women in this novel are unattainable (at least until the end when the Reader "gets" the Other Reader), mysterious, and elusive. For example, the narrator in "Outside the town of Malbork," says in reference to his attraction to both Brigd and Zwida: "I try in vain to clasp those female ghosts that vanish in their unattainable difference" (39). The idea of woman-as-ghost is also found in the primary "story" of the Reader and the Other Reader. When he realizes she has "appeared" in the professor's office, he asks himself, "is she an apparition summoned by the spell released through the words of the professor-sorcerer?" (70). This theme resurfaces later when the Reader is confronted with evidence of Marana's presence in Ludmilla's apartment:

> The pursuit of the interrupted book, which instilled in you a special excitement since you were conducting it together with the Other Reader, turns out to be the same thing as pursuing her, who eludes you in a proliferation of mysteries, deceits, disguises .... (151)

Towards the end of the "story," the Reader encounters Lotaria whose identity is concealed beneath layers of identities and disguises. One final example of this theme occurs in chapter ten, in which the Director General tells the Reader, "And every evening I, too, abandon myself to reading, like that distant unknown woman ..." (240).

Woman as Victim

Another element of women's objectification in the novel which is also prevalent in contemporary films is the theme of woman-as-victim, who of course needs to be rescued by a man. In "In a network of lines that enlace," the narrator becomes alarmed that the phone call he hears is directed at him, that something has happened to Marjorie, one of his students (with whom an "embarrassing situation" (138) took place in which he came on to her). He is aware of his role as rescuer:

> Yes, I would not want this uneasiness now reawakened in me by the name Marjorie to keep me from intervening to help another Marjorie, whose life is in danger .... Here is 115. The door is open, I climb the stairs, I enter a room in semidarkness. There is Marjorie,

tied on a sofa, gagged. I release her. She vomits. She looks at me with contempt. (138-139)

In "In a network of lines that intersect," this theme is repeated. The narrator's mistress, Lorna, is victim in a double sense. She is the victim of a kidnapping, bound and gagged. Furthermore, the kidnapper is Elfrida, the narrator's wife. The narrator's actions have put his mistress in danger, and yet he comes to "rescue" her, only to be trapped and killed.

Another male who defends a female is Faustino Higueras in "Around an empty grave." He has come forward to confront the narrator, Nacho Zamora, for attempting to seduce his sister, whom he regards as property to be defended: "'What gave you the right, Nacho Zamora, to lay your hands on my sister?'" (233) He then initiates a fight with Nacho.

Men Sexualize Women

Perhaps the most pervasive manifestation of the objectification of women in the novel is the stereotypical representation of men sexualizing women. The theme of man as the sexual conquerer first occurs when the Reader and Other Reader are introduced. During their first conversation, the Reader reveals his desire for "conquest" of the Other Reader:

> "Let's hope," you say, "that we've got a perfect copy this time, properly bound, so we won't be interrupted right at the climax, as happens . . ." (As happens when, how? What do you mean?) "I mean, let's hope we get to the end satisfactorily." . . . "Listen, why don't we exchange telephone numbers?" (This is what you were aiming at, O Reader, moving around her like a rattlesnake!) (31)

The comparison to a rattlesnake reveals the Reader's conscious effort to lure the Other Reader into a space in which he can "strike," that is, one in which he can have her sexually. Throughout the primary narrative, the Reader sexualizes the Other Reader. For example, the Reader fantasizes about the Other Reader when they are in Professor Uzzi-Tuzzi's office:

> But you are no longer listening to anything, the two of you. You have also disappeared, flattened in a corner, one clinging to the other . . . . (Even if your embrace--confess it--occurred only in your imagination, it is still an embrace that can happen at any moment . . . .) (71-72)

And while reading Marana's correspondence, the reader once again has sex on his mind, ultimately sex with the Other Reader, with whom he is obsessed:

> Are you also dreaming of the petroliferous Sultana? . . . You cannot help giving the faceless lady reader evoked by Marana the features of the Other Reader whom you know . . . you have followed from letter to letter the transformations of the woman reader, as if it were always the same person. But even if they were many persons, to all of them you attribute the appearance of Ludmilla . . . . The image of her naked under the equatorial sun already seems more credible to you than that of her behind the Sultana's veil . . . (125,128)

In the description of the Reader and Other Reader's first sexual encounter, the narrator first says, "Ludmilla, you are now being read" (155). Although he does go on to tell the Other Reader that he, too, is being read, these narratorial remarks have different implications. This episode underscores one of the primary assumptions of the novel--that a woman is a text to be explicated. The Reader's goal in this story is not only to find the endings to the novels he reads, but also, and more importantly, he is trying to figure Her (the Other Reader) out. Everything she says, everything she does, her possessions, the way she arranges her furniture--these are all clues to who she is, and furthermore, clues to what his chances of "winning" her are. The Reader must construct an image of the Other Reader in order to determine her availability to him:

> Observing your kitchen, therefore, can create a picture of you as an extroverted, clearsighted woman, sensual and methodical . . . It could be an important feature to be added to your portrait: your mind has interior walls that allow you to partition different times in which to stop or flow . . . And yet the sight of the books in Ludmilla's house proves reassuring for you. Reading is solitude. (143,146-147)

The Reader's relationship with Lotaria, Ludmilla's sister, also sexualizes Woman. In the initial stages of their sexual encounter, the Reader rips off the layers of Lotaria's clothing, in a sort of mock-rape. She then takes over the job of taking off her remaining clothes. Then, "A pair of breasts appear, firm, melon-shaped, a slightly concave stomach, the full hips of a *fausse maigre*, a proud pubes, two long and solid thighs" (218). Two important points can be made in relation to this scene. Although women's appearance and women's bodies are described several times in this novel, men are not similarly described. (There is no "a hard, elongated penis appeared" type of logic.) Secondly, women are described as parts, as in the above example, or as in "Lorna's mouth when that sentence escaped her, Elfrida's gaze as if pondering some inexorable calculation of hers..." (163). One final example of this trend occurs in "Without fear of wind or vertigo," in which the female character Irina's body is described in detail:

> ... the atmosphere impregnated with the odor of our naked bodies, Irina's breasts barely protruding from her skinny chest, the dark areolas that would be more in proportion on a more swollen bosom, the narrow, pointed pubes in the form of an isosceles triangle (the word "isoceles," once I had associated it with Irina's pubes, is charged for me with such sensuality that I cannot say it without making my teeth chatter). (88)

Although the men in the scene are naked, too, their bodies do not receive a similarly detailed description. Note, too, the comments upon the lack of proportion of her body parts; the part that receives the most recognition and praise, her pubes, *is* in proportion, perfection being the standard by which women's bodies are measured.

One weakness of de Lauretis's essay is its neglect of the sexism in the narrative stories embedded in the text. The story "On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon" exemplifies the idea that men are sex addicts who cannot control themselves, and women exist to be sex objects for men. The narrator constantly sexualizes Makiko and Madame Miyagi; he stares at them and is turned on by parts of their bodies (i.e., the nape of Makiko's neck) or by physical contact with their bodies. When he finally is sexual with the mother, he presents it as an act into which he accidentally stumbles ["one of my hands slipped in confusion between Madame Miyagi's kimono and her bare skin and found itself clasping a soft and warm breast, elongated in form" (206)] and from which he cannot stop himself. Even after Makiko and the father are watching them, he is unable to disengage from Madame Miyagi, and as he climaxes with the mother, he sexualizes the daughter: "'Makiko! Makiko!' I moaned in Madame Miyagi's ear, associating convulsively those instants of hypersensitivity with the image of her daughter and the range of sensations incomparably different which I imagined she could arouse in me" (209).

The narrator in "Around an empty grave" exhibits a similar tendency to sexually dominate women. He attempts to coerce his "cousin," Amaranta, into sex with him until her mother interrupts them: "'You're hurting me,' Amaranta says as I press her whole body against the sacks and feel the tips of her budding breasts and the wriggle of her belly" (228). When he is told he is the son of the wealthy landowners, his first thought is that he is truly master over Amaranta, which gives him the literal right to force her to have sex with him: "I proclaim to Anacleta, grabbing her daughter by a braid. 'Then I am your master, the master of your daughter, and I will take her when I please!'" (229).

Romantic Triangles

Corresponding to the pervasive idea of women as sexual objects, there are several romantic triangles in this novel, triangles of two types: two women and one man, and two men and one woman. In the first type of

triangle, the theme is usually the man's confusion in choosing between the two women. For example, in "Outside the town of Malbork," the narrator is torn between his desire for Brigd and his desire for Zwida: "I headed toward Brigd thinking of Zwida: what I sought was a two-headed figure, a Brigd-Zwida" (40). In "In a network of lines that intersect," the narrator is married to Elfrida, but also has a mistress, Lorna. His goal is to conceal his "true mistress" from his wife, so he has a lot of "false mistresses" to throw her off the track (164). As alluded to earlier, the narrator in "On the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon" is also involved in a triangle with two women: Makiko and her mother, Madame Miyagi. He looks at them both with sexual interest, but his deeper attraction is for Makiko. Nonetheless, he ends up having intercourse with Madame Miyagi (as Makiko and her father watch--now there's an interesting incestuous scenario), although he thinks of Makiko while doing so.

The second type of triangle, in which two men vie for the same woman, is much more common in the novel, and develops another of the novel's central themes: jealousy. This theme first occurs when the Reader encounters the Nonreader: "you ask yourself what bond there may be between Ludmilla and the Nonreader, and suddenly it seems to you that it is their very distance that keeps them together, and you can't stifle a feeling of jealousy" (49). Later, the reader searches for "signs of a man's presence" (140) at Ludmilla's apartment. Upon Irnerio's arrival at Ludmilla's, the Reader is anxious. The Reader is told, "If you are able to win his trust, Irnerio will reveal to you the secret that intrigues you, the relationship between the Nonreader and the Other Reader, Ludmilla" (150). Clearly, the Reader's jealousy of the Nonreader consumes him. Finally, the Reader realizes that although the Nonreader does not read, and thus the Other Reader and the Nonreader do not share reading as a source of bonding, there is a closeness between them. "You have little cause to rejoice, Reader. The secret that is revealed to you, the intimacy between the two of them, consists in the complementary relationship of two vital rhythms" (150).

After the Reader begins to feel less threatened by the relationship between Ludmilla and Irnerio, his jealousy of Marana's relationship with Ludmilla escalates. As de Lauretis points out, the Reader never meets Marana but is consumed with "burning jealousy" of him (75). He is trying to construct their relationship between Marana and the Other Reader from the clues in Marana's letters and in Ludmilla's apartment, and when it becomes apparent his suspicions are not unfounded, "jealousy grips [him] relentlessly" (151). Upon learning from Irnerio that Ludmilla has been involved not only with Marana but also with Silas Flannery, the Reader confronts the Other Reader with his jealousy when she arrives home. Interestingly, this confrontation leads them into bed (153+).

There are other manifestations of the two-man-one-woman triangle in the novel in addition to those involving both the Reader and the Other Reader. In "Without fear of wind or vertigo," the narrator ends up in a tryst with Valerian and Irina, the woman with whom they are both obsessed. In

"Looks down in the gathering shadow," the narrator has been involved in a triangle with Jojo and some other woman, as well as in a triangle with Jojo and Bernadette. In chapter six, Marana writes about his relationship with the Sultana, and is caught up in a triangle between the Sultana and her husband. Silas Flannery creates a triangle (in his mind) with the woman in the deck chair and the "author" of the book she is reading (who is, of course, male, as all authors are in this book) (126). Silas Flannery, in his diary, provides us with another example of this type of triangle when he writes about two (male) writers who try to gain the approval of a female reader. The woman reader is once again sexualized; she is the object of two men's desire. She must choose between them, the winner being the one whose book she most enjoys (174+).

Woman as Evil Temptress

Another primary theme in the representation of women in *If*... involves the casting of woman as the evil temptress, with shades of Eve in the Genesis myth. Mary Daly, in *Beyond God the Father*, describes the impact of this myth upon the cultural consciousness:

> The story of the Fall of Adam and Eve is not given serious weight in the modern consciousness... The fact is, however, that the myth has projected a malignant image of the male-female relationship and of the "nature" of women that is still deeply imbedded in the modern psyche .... The myth undergirds destructive patterns in the fabric of our culture. Literature and the mass media repeat the "temptress Eve" motif in deadly earnest, as do the rationalizations for social customs and civil laws, such as abortion legislation, which incorporate punitive attitudes towards women's sexual function. (44-45)

In this novel, women are untrustworthy; they entrap men and tempt them, especially sexually. Men are unwilling participants, unable to help themselves to resist the lure of women. The Reader, upon seeing the Other Reader, is told, "you have entered a magnetic field from whose attraction you cannot escape" (29). Later, he is told, "your only course is to follow her" (47). This is a quest which he is powerless to abandon. Throughout the novel's main story, the Reader is suspicious of the Other Reader, afraid to trust her.

The Other Reader's appearance, too, is like that of Eve in Genesis. The man, Adam/Reader, exists first, and Eve/the Other Reader is a necessary spinoff. The narrator says to Ludmilla: "You appeared for the first time to the Reader in a bookshop; you took shape, detaching yourself from a wall of shelves, as if the quantity of books made the presence of a young lady Reader necessary" (142).

The temptress/Eve theme also appears outside of the relationship between the Reader and the Other Reader. Irina, in "Without fear of wind or vertigo" has power over the narrator and Valerian, and she coaxes them into an untraditional sexual engagement. In "Looks down in the gathering shadow," the Genesis imagery is even more explicit. The narrator of the chapter relates that his wife, Vlada, had sent a tub of crocodiles to him. The narrator elaborates:

> Vlada had caught up with her daughter, and through Sibylle she again had me in her power, with the capacity only she possessed for rousing in me the fiercest aversion and the darkest attraction. Already she was sending me a message in which I could recognize her: that roiling of reptiles, to remind me that evil was the only vital element for her, that the world was a pit of crocodiles which I could not escape. (114)

Women have power over men, power to entrance men and make them become obsessed. As in the Genesis story, women are blamed for the foolish actions of men. Silas Flannery says of the woman in the deck chair/Ludmilla, "Perhaps it is always and only she who is at the source of all my problems" (192). And the Director General says in chapter ten of Marana: "His driving motive was not money, or power, or ambition. It seems he did everything for a woman, to win her back or perhaps only to get even" (238).

Another example of this theme is in the final "story," embedded in chapter eleven: "'Only you were missing,' the maiden says, 'you are late'; and she invites him to sit on a cushion at her side. 'Noble sirs, you have sworn to obey me blindly, and now the moment has come to put you to the test'" (257). This maiden them proceeds to have the men draw one each of eight pearls, one of which is black. The drawer of the black pearl must kill a man and bring her his head. The maiden exemplifies the representation of woman as evil temptress, with the power to corrupt men.

De Lauretis makes much of the negative portrayal of Lotaria, the book's radical feminist, and while many of her points are right-on, her focus upon Lotaria obscures the way in which Ludmilla, too, is presented as Eve-like, luring the Reader through novels and countries alike. (This part of Ludmilla, though, her mysterious, temptress side, is, significantly, canceled out by her marriage to the reader in the end. We are never given an explanation as to why she gave in to his desire from them to be a married couple, as to why she ended the pursuit.) Nonetheless, Lotaria provides an interesting example of the evil temptress in *If* . . . .

In chapter nine, the Reader is confronted with a woman, who he ultimately discovers is Lotaria, who assumes several identities. She is the deceptive woman who is not to be trusted. Eventually, this woman and the Reader face off. He initially rips off her clothes (a point overlooked by de Lauretis), but then, according to de Lauretis's reading, she "attempts . . . to rape him" (77). She continues, "In short, Lotaria, the bad sister and mirror

image of Ludmilla, is the negative image of woman . . . . the woman reader we shouldn't be" (77). However, in my opinion, the most striking thing about this encounter between the Reader and Lotaria is its echoes of the Eve/evil temptress ideology and the way in which "the body" plays into this theme.

Sheila/Lotaria first attempts to be subversive by declaring that power resides in the body:

> "The body is a uniform! The body is armed militia! The body is violent action! The body claims power! The body's at war! The body declares itself subject! The body is an end and not a means! The body signifies! Communicates! Shouts! Protests! Subverts!" (219)

However, the subversiveness of this declaration is undermined by the fact that (a) the body gets linked with violence in this passage and (b) Lotaria uses her body sexually to try to dominate the Reader. This woman is not to be trusted: "Watch out, Reader; here everything is different from what it seems, everything is two-faced" (219). This woman, like Eve, is an evil seductress who will betray you, the narrator is saying to the Reader. The body of a woman is not an instrument of social power but of sexual entrapment. In order to get his power back, the Reader has to "win" the Other Reader, has to escape the clutches of the radical sister.

Woman as Consumer/Man as Producer

De Lauretis notes that in this novel, "the Writer or the Author is only and always male" (74), which points to the final sexist theme in the novel, and perhaps the overarching one structuring the text, that is, the idea that men are producers and women are consumers. As de Lauretis recognizes, there are no female writers in this novel. Ludmilla, she says, "positively refuses to have anything to do with writing" (79). We are inundated with the names of male authors: Ermes Marana, Silas Flannery, Bertrand Vandervelde, Italo Calvino, etc. [The one woman who writes, as de Lauretis acknowledges, is Lotaria. Significantly, she writes academic non-fiction and is portrayed very negatively.] Both of these dynamics contribute to the overall message that women are not to be writers. In the words of de Lauretis: "Writing thus presupposes possession of the phallus--symbolically speaking, of course; and for a woman to write is to usurp a place, a discursive position, she does not have by nature or by culture" (80)] All of the narrators are male; it is males who tell their own stories, which are consumed primarily by women.

And, although there are male readers in this text, notably the Reader as well as the male readers who discuss literature at the novel's end, they are different from the female readers in the novel in that they are given a voice, while the female readers are acted upon, as outlined above. (Ludmilla, it is true, does at times voice her opinion. Yet her varying accounts of what she

prefers in a book result in a portrait of her as vacuous and wishy-washy.) The "I" in this book is most certainly a male.

That women are consumers is reflected in the Reader's perusal of the Other Reader's apartment. The narrator, addressing the Other Reader, says, "There are countless things that you accumulate around you" (143). However, the role of the woman as consumer is not separate from the man's role as producer. Rather, woman-as-object/consumer animates the man as subject/producer, as Silas Flannery reveals in his conversation with Marana: "'it's now, only now that I write, since I have been watching her. I do nothing but follow the reading of that woman . . . I read in her face what she desires to read, and I write it faithfully" (127).

The ultimate instance of man-as-actor and woman-as-acted-upon occurs in the novel's ending, when the Reader and the Other Reader are married. As de Lauretis explains, Ludmilla is in the end attained, captured, and safely married off to the hero. . . Whether intentionally or not, I do not know, Calvino appropriates the famous ending of *Jane Eyre*, 'Reader, I married him,' and rewrites it to fit his plan: 'Reader, you married her'" (78).

Yet even amongst those of us who recognize the sexism in this novel, there is a tendency to want to minimize it or excuse it. This is the pitfall to which de Lauretis succumbs, in my opinion. In the preface to *Technologies of Gender*, in which her essay on Calvino appears, she states that her close readings of Eco's *The Name of the Rose* and Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler* are "readings which engage the texts to test the intriguing allegations of a possible love affair between feminism and postmodernism" (x). It occurs to me that possibly she is so enraptured with the idea of bridging these two philosophies that she overlooks or minimizes their points of conflict.

In her essay, de Lauretis says of Calvino and his novel:

> . . . it is this very display of the signs of writing, the signs of the labor of writing which, Calvino has said over and over, is a labor of love--it is this labor of love that seduces us and draws us to him even as he will not grant us equal access to writing; even as he waves the specter of Lotaria the android before us, women who read and write, and who love to write as much as he did. (82)

She seems to place the postmodern agenda, i.e., its obsession with the sign, above that of a feminist one. Ironically, her language itself relies on sexual, sexist imagery: "that seduces us and draws us to him" (82). This logic reflects internalized sexism. It is as if she is saying to Calvino, "Charm me enough, and I'll excuse your sexism." My position is not as forgiving. Although I appreciate Calvino's skill with words and storytelling, I am not willing to overlook the novel's sexism and its alienating effect on me, the female reader. The postmodern radical agenda should include liberating women from sexist representations (and men, for that matter). Likewise, feminism should incorporate the useful elements of postmodernism with-

out failing to critically examine its oppressive elements, including sexist ideas.

Michael Gilbert's Melchester Chronicles

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Michael Gilbert, in a career that has spanned five decades, has worked in a variety of genres--spy stories, police procedurals, mystery-adventure stories, courtroom dramas, and, perhaps most successfully, the traditional British mystery. In two novels at opposite ends of his career, *Close Quarters* (1947) and *The Black Seraphim* (1984), Gilbert's use of the same setting, the cathedral close of the fictional Melchester, offers us an unusual opportunity to measure the shape and direction of his experiments within the form of the classic English detective novel--an evolution which also mirrors changes in English life and institutions. While *Close Quarters*, set in the archetypically closed system of pre-World War II, small-town England, seems to embody the highly ordered conventions of the detective novel of the Golden Age, *The Black Seraphim*, set more than forty years later, deconstructs those conventions as it explores a world in crisis, struggling to define itself against the resonance of tradition and the demands of the present.

In the tradition defined by W. H. Auden's 1948 essay "The Guilty Vicarage," *Close Quarters* depicts--with a real self-reflexiveness--a pre-war, small-town England of apparent placidity. After a round of anonymous letters and pranks aimed at Head Verger Daniel Appledown unsettles the Melchester Close, the Dean calls in his nephew, Sergeant Bobby Pollock of the London C.I.D., for an unofficial investigation. The subsequent murder of Appledown, however, exposes the corruption beneath the apparent sanctity of the cathedral community. The official investigation by Pollock and his boss Chief Inspector Hazelrigg (a character Gilbert uses in later novels) uncovers a scheme of systematic blackmail and leads to further murder and death. Their solution of the crime, however, as Auden suggests, restores the community to a version of moral and psychic health.

Auden's essay defines both the appeal of the detective novel--its cathartic representation of the dialectic of innocence and guilt--and the elements through which that catharsis is achieved: the milieu, the victim, the murderer, the suspects, and the detective. Auden suggests that the best setting for this plot is a society characterized by an elaborate ritual, "the sign of harmony between the aesthetic and the ethical" (18). In a cathedral close Gilbert has available England's Established Church made manifest, its spiritual values figured in its geographic, social and aesthetic representations: the cathedral itself; its ancillary buildings (including choir school, theological college, and houses assigned to its functionaries); its social organization (its ranks of canons, vicars choral, vergers, and schoolmasters); and the beauties of its fabric, its music, and its religious ritual. *Close Quarters*, measured according to Auden's model, depicts a closed society, in spatial, occupational, and even social terms. Coming after the gates are

locked for the night, the murder occurs in what is effectively a locked room. The inhabitants, as the Dean points out, "don't visit much outside the Close" (26). "The wolf was indeed within the fold" (2).

The social space of this novel is reflected, as it is in many Golden Age novels, in a variety of maps and diagrams, lists, and, less typically, a crossword puzzle. The maps diagram the Close itself in three different versions: the first indicating the traditional allocation of houses by the foundation; the second (Pollock's) indicating the present occupants; the third (Hazelrigg's) plotting his estimate of where the male members of the community were at 8:00 p.m., Tuesday, September 28, 1937 (the supposed last sighting of Appledown before his death). A list of the "Householders of Melchester Close" prefixed to the novel introduces the cast of characters in terms of their educational, professional and military history and their dependents. For Auden, such maps and timetables (also essential to Gilbert's novel) are part of the ritual of space and time, the moral outlines of the world figured in the physical. Gilbert's crossword puzzle, existing in three incomplete versions--unsolved, partially solved, and almost fully solved--represents a similar kind of ritual. Through the crossword which Canons Trumpington and Prynne find between the pages of Boswell's *Tour in the Hebrides*, Gilbert images the ritual of intellectual space: seemingly pure language--anagrammatized, divided, torn from its intentional moorings--is placed on a grid. Directions to "Solve empirically" (194, 195) four words identify the location of a letter--held unwittingly by the Dean--which explains a motive for the murder. The epigraph Gilbert provides to the chapter "Crossword Puzzle" defines the pleasure of solving the crossword as "The love of things begun and done / In welcome symmetry // The piecemeal pitting of the wit / Against the wide unknown" (188). That "welcome symmetry" opposing the chaos of the "wide unknown" succinctly depicts the shape and intention of the classic detective novel as well as the order it implies.

Gilbert's principle characters in *Close Quarters* also conform to Auden's definition. The only exception Auden admits to his rule that the victim be both a bad character (inviting murder) and a good (requiring guilt) is the case of the blackmailer. Appledown is described as "a very popular man" but, as Prynne suggests, "too complete, too benevolent, and too benign. In fact, altogether too good to be true" (106). The letter which reveals him as a blackmailer describes "this benevolent white haired old man, walking sedately about the cathedral Close," as "a venomous snake" (212). The murderer, for Auden "a rebel who claims the right to be omnipotent" (19), seems confident and apparently frank, yet he "reaches," as Hazelrigg puts it, "a state of God-like detachment" (255) that leads him to murder a twelve-year-old boy to cover up his crime. The suspects, the other members of the Close, are guilty too: of secrecy that covers up crime, vice, and other sources of shame, and of what Auden terms "the *hubris* of intellect" and "the *hubris* of innocence" (20). Finally, the detectives (in this case plural) include both official representatives of the ethical (Pollock and Hazelrigg) and the

individual in a state of grace (Prynne), a character who is both outsider and insider in the Close community and whose analytical mind and intellectual honesty help him penetrate some of the thickets protecting the murderer's identity.

But even as Gilbert helps in *Close Quarters* to define the guilty vicarage, he also demonstrates an inclination to test the boundaries of the form he inhabits. He parodies the form he has chosen throughout as characters--including his detectives--refer to detective novels and "the rules of fiction" (239). In another kind of parody of the highly ritualized form, the murderer exploits the timetable much as the detective novelist does, creating and canceling alibis. Even the figure of the detective seems poised between two generic definitions. Bobby Pollock is "no kindly nephew . . . but a modern police officer" (18): consanguinity is diluted by his identity as representative of the law. And yet, he is recognized within the criminal justice system and allowed to participate in the murder investigation because of the old boy network: official procedures are neatly dispatched by the old school tie. (Outside the novel Gilbert does something even more daring: he kills Pollock off before his next novel and situates that death in the background of *He Didn't Mind Danger*.) Finally, while the chapter entitled "The Real Work" provides the familiar rehearsal of the crime for the assembled community, there is no complete clarification: the secrets which lead to the murder are never revealed. The "real work," the chapter implies, is the "sorting, listing, and docketing" (255) of the papers that will make the case, not the elucidation of the motive for the crime. Gilbert's epigraph to the chapter, from Conan Doyle--"he had not the supreme gift of the artist, the knowledge of where to stop" (239)--defines the murderer's flaw, but its cautionary voice seems also to warn the novelist to respect the boundaries of his form.

While *Close Quarters*--these loose ends not withstanding--finally contains its challenges to the form it inherits, *The Black Seraphim* seems almost to parody Auden's formal archetype, while retaining most of its essential tropes. Dr. James Pirie Scotland, a young London pathologist specializing in "the toxic properties of everyday things" (2) and suffering from work-related stress, visits Melchester for an extended vacation. But Melchester, far from maintaining an island of calm and stability amid the encroachment of supermarkets and factories, is revealed as a battleground where canons' thunder punctuates questions of faith, institutional stability, and the role of the church in the modern world. The primary conflict is waged between the Dean and the Archdeacon, and when the Archdeacon is poisoned at the Friends of the Cathedral luncheon the suspicion is focused on the cathedral community in general and on the Dean (and his daughter Amanda) in particular.

The Melchester Close of *The Black Seraphim* presents a much different character than that of *Close Quarters*. Even in appearance, this is no pre-lapsarian garden: this world cannot begin even to claim innocence. Indeed, the landscape of the Close has perceptibly changed: houses have been

re-assigned, the river seems now to run through the Close. While the pre-war cathedral close was a closed system, now its boundaries are permeable: its walls can be scaled, the river forded. Although it clings to its traditions--"living chess" games, recorder parties in the West Canonry garden, the medieval separation of town and gown--it is threatened by development, trade unions, a changing social milieu. The forces of business, the legal system, medicine, the press, all impinge on the cathedral community, reflecting and intensifying its internal stresses. The issues the novel raises are made more complex because individual characters may hold opposite sides of the same issues. As Canon Lister points out to James Scotland: "you mustn't make the mistake of supposing that what we have here is a simple case of the good against the bad. It's more complex than that. It's a case of two different versions of the good in conflict with each other" (66).

While the milieu of *The Black Seraphim* represents a move away from Auden's definition of the mystery novel, the characters ring more subtle changes on the form. The victim, the Archdeacon, is Auden's simultaneously bad and good character. Intellectually ruthless in his pursuit of what he knows is right--"blessed, or cursed, with an analytical mind" (66)--he uses opportunities and other people to move toward his goal. The murderers (here plural) are not Auden's rebels claiming omnipotence but self-excusing and fearful of exposure. While Auden argues that the murderer must have no future (and so must either be executed, commit suicide, or go mad), one of Gilbert's murderers is never brought to justice. She must live with the guilt, but she remains part of the community. The suspects, in this novel members of the Close, are guilty--not so much of secret crimes or vices (there is more crime covered up in Melchester at large than there is within the Close), or of Auden's *hubris* of the intellect or *hubris* of innocence. Instead, these characters are guilty of a *hubris* that their individual truth is all that matters; as Dr. Scotland sees it, this is "a world peopled by men and women motivated by childish animosities and raw emotions" (195).

As the detective, James Scotland is, as Auden requires, both a stranger to the community and an official representative of the ethical. But the world has changed since 1948. In 1984 the ethical is represented not by the Church or by the Law but by Science. While Auden remarks that the detective should have some weaknesses to provide aesthetic interest and suggests eating, drinking, or boasting as minor vices, Scotland's weakness is the opposite: a lack of attention to eating and drinking. And while Auden admires Sherlock Holmes as "the exceptional individual who is in a state of grace because he is a genius in whom scientific curiosity is raised to the status of heroic passion" (21), Gilbert's scientist detective complicates that characterization. While Scotland shares with Holmes commitment to "the neutral truth" and "a need to escape from his own melancholy" (22), the novel makes problematic the notion that truth can be neutral or final. Auden compares Holmes's technique to that of the chemist or physicist: "If he chooses human beings rather than inanimate matter as his material, it is because investigating the inanimate is unheroically easy since it cannot tell

lies, which human beings can and do, so that in dealing with them, observation must be twice as sharp and logic twice as rigorous" (22). But while the inanimate does not lie, it also may reveal partial truths. As the novel suggests, scientific investigation is only as good as the mind of the investigator and the instruments it has to work with. Even when the poison has been determined, the allocation of guilt is inaccurate. Gilbert's detective is no longer precise in his solution of the crime; justice is outside his powers.

But it is the novel's ending which most clearly marks the distance that Gilbert has travelled. Here the novel's form underscores differences between knowledge and truth, between conclusion and resolution. The detective never possesses the complete truth about the murder. There are questions that are never resolved. In contrast to the end of *Close Quarters* where secrecy was acknowledged, in *The Black Seraphim* these questions are not raised. Further, solving the crime does not bring to justice the real villains of the piece, the men who run the town, although they do lose some of their power. What is at issue in this novel is the nature of Truth. In a conversation with James Scotland about the process of scientific investigation, Canon Lister cautions him against the *hubris* of moral certainty: "As long as you don't arrive at an imposing-looking building labeled 'The Pavilion of Truth' and when you go through the door you find it's one of those constructions on a film lot, all front and no back, there's nothing behind it at all. You step out onto a piece of wasteland, full of nettles and rusty tins and the messes left by passing dogs" (68). The novel's final chapter suggests that--at least for Dr. Scotland--resolution brings only the end of summer, a cathedral "shrouded" in mist (214), a sense of the unreality of the "play" (214) he's acted in, "streets that seemed unnaturally empty" (214). In the epilogue, however, formal harmony is restored: the river runs sweetly, Indian summer looks forward to Easter, marriage is projected, some justice has been effected.

Although the epilogue seems to suggest a return to the Golden Age, the novel's final image sharply undercuts the possibility of return to that more innocent form. That image--the Dean watching "with affection" (216) a "cannibal trout" which lurks in the weeds of the river--seems an apt comment on the novel's resolution. For though Melchester is restored to a kind of stability, it is the quiet where cannibal fish cruise the waters in search of prey. The wolves--to return to the first Dean's metaphor--are in charge of the fold. The novel's parting gesture--this cannibal epilogue swallowing the larger work--is fitting: it re-forms its own shape as it has already re-formed the archetype.

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Christianity's Slain God and *Sanctuary*'s Apocalypse

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While reading Thomas McHaney's great piece on *Sanctuary's* relation to Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, readers wait in vain for comment on Popeye's association with the slain god of Christendom, even though McHaney's piece is rich in implication, associating Popeye with Frazer's "priest-king" (79) and with rituals designed to remind worshipers that their god "gave his life to feed the people; [that] he died that they might live" (87). McHaney even suggests that Lee and Ruby's baby will be "a wretched second coming" (90). But McHaney has another agenda to pursue and does not comment on the implications of his use of a myth as Christian as it is classical.

The novel itself goes much further than McHaney: it associates Popeye with the Christ very explicitly. Throughout the novel and especially in the final chapter, when Popeye curses he repeatedly uses the name of Christianity's slain god: "Jesus Christ," he exclaims, and "For Christ's sake" (7, 70, 94, 302, 304, 306). He thus invokes a "corn-god, priest-king," who like Popeye was arrested and prosecuted without resistance and executed for a crime he did not commit. When the novel reveals that Popeye was born on Christmas day, his exclamations move from mere associations to a kind of identification. In light of such connections, the novel compels us to consider what insight the sacrificial god-king of Christianity adds to McHaney's depiction of *Sanctuary* as a wasteland of Greco-Roman myth.

Sanctuary begins Popeye's identification with the Christ in its introduction of the jailed man awaiting execution. This man is Popeye's double. Both men are black, the jailed man racially and Popeye in apparel, bearing, and symbol: Benbow calls Popeye "that little black man" (105), thinks he "smells black" (7), and senses he brings a "black presence" to the Old Frenchman's Place (116). Temple refers to him as "that little black man" (40, 44). Both men have committed crimes of violence against women. The jailed man's association with the Christ comes through references to the "heaven-tree" just outside his cell (122). The name of the tree suggests the "tree of the cross" and the hanging of the Christ upon it, as if the two black men and the Christ are somehow startlingly linked.

Yet the mind almost revolts: in what sense can *Sanctuary* want readers to see a malevolent figure like Popeye as a sacrificial victim, not only like the black prisoner but also like the dying gods of myth and the Christian god/king? Whose sins could Popeye possibly be bearing? And if that can be answered, could this malevolent new scapegoat be a kind of anti-Christ whose death is the beginning of a reign of terror? Or does Popeye merely prepare the way for one greater who is to follow?

Sanctuary's children answer some of these questions. The novel presents three children with significant roles--Popeye as a youth, the baby of Lee and Ruby, and Uncle Bud, Miss Myrtle's nephew from Arkansas, with her at Miss Reba's social. (The novel largely ignores one other child, Benbow Sartoris.) Lee and Ruby's baby and Uncle Bud, in their similarities with Popeye, do much to explain his relationship with the Christ in his sacrificial role.

Lee and Ruby's baby seems nothing so much as one upon whom the sins of another generation are being visited, perhaps one who will die for those sins: he is near death throughout the novel, even Temple recognizing that "He's going to die" (60). The novel suggests the sacrificial nature of his approaching death in its portrayal of him "in the attitude of one crucified" (131), leaving readers on their own to ponder the degree to which his father's promiscuity, his mother's "jazzing," their fringe existence as outlaws, and the participation of larger society have contributed to this infant's crucifixion. Regardless, as a "crucified" child he is a sacrificial victim both of his parents and of those who contribute to the character of his parents' lives, each party no more than murderously innocent.

Uncle Bud, a "boy of five or six" (242), brings the case home. By the end of chapter twenty-five, this boy is suffering from alcohol poisoning: "Limply he dangled, his face rigid in a slobbering grin.... he began to vomit" (252). Without question, Uncle Bud is in this state because of the drinking he sees around him continually, his aunt and her friends just having finished off any number of beers and gins, and because of the sanction such habits give him: the ladies' insistence that he "come out from behind there and play" (246) has as much moral force as a self-indulgent proprietary class's demands of "honest toil" from workers. Their comically elaborate manners, in the meantime, suggest the niceties of the proprietary class, the class whose covert desires to drink and gamble and philander create places like the Grotto and Miss Reba's, as well as jobs for moonshiners and bootleggers, gangsters and whores. So just as Uncle Bud's life is being nipped by these "ladies'" habits, the lives of these "ladies" and others in their world--including Popeye--are being sacrificed to the proprietary, middle-class world of Narcissa Sartoris, Eustace Graham, Gowan Stevens, Clarence Snopes, and even Horace and Belle Benbow. The children of *Sanctuary*, then, finally reveal Popeye as a scapegoat only half like the Christ. On the one hand, the corruption of the powerful makes possible a degraded life unlike the Christ's, rewarding its pursuit; on the other hand, the powerful seem eager to sacrifice him (or his substitute Lee Goodwin) to maintain the illusion of their innocence, seeing the evil as entirely his, nothing of their own, in this manner making Popeye (and Lee) very much like the Christ.

Indeed, the connection between the proprietary world and its victims fills the novel. In Oxford they are represented by Temple, on the one hand, and the town boys, on the other. Both Temple and Gowan use the town boys led by Doc for their amusements--for dates, on Temple's part, and for moonshine, on Gowan's. The town boys recognize and resent their place

in the social system, striking out at both Temple and Gowan in the broken glass spread in the street and in their mocking words--"My father's a judge" (30) and "Son bitch.... We don't drink rotgut at Virginia" (32). In Memphis, the two worlds come together at Miss Reba's, the proprietary men and the girls they seek amusement with. As Miss Reba testifies to Temple:

> I've had some of the biggest men in Memphis right here in this house, bankers, lawyers, doctors--all of them. I've had two police captains drinking beer in my dining-room and the commissioner himself upstairs with one of my girls. They got drunk and crashed the door in on him and found him buck-nekkid, dancing the highland fling.... He knew me. They all know Reba Rivers. Spent their money here like water, they have. (139)

If, in contrast to Doc and the town boys, Miss Reba seems unresentful, it is because her own status as proprietor makes her a member of the proprietary class, as her pretensions so comically suggest and as her reference to her girls as "these here common whores" (141) makes clear enough. But surely her girls feel as used and discarded as do Temple's town boys, good enough for casual amusements but no more fully human to their users than an empty bottle of whiskey. Can the elite who frequent whore houses and drink moonshine be morally distinguished from the purveyors like Miss Reba and Popeye, any less responsible for harlotry and bootlegging? Listen to critic Linton Massey: " . . . no one is wholly innocent in *Sanctuary*" (196). Or better yet, listen to Douglas Cole: "the evils incarnate in Popeye and Van and the drunken Goodwin are shared by the so-called supporters of law and order" (293). Or best of all, listen to *Sanctuary*'s Miss Myrtle: "They make us what we are, then they expect us to be different" (247). In *Sanctuary* those inside the law create outlawry. Then they kill the outlaws, their scapegoats.

Yet the mind still revolts: if *Sanctuary* portrays Popeye as a scapegoat only partly like the Christ, the question still remains: why must he be like the Christ, Christianity's great scapegoat, at all? After all, as McHaney reminds us, the world had dying gods aplenty before the Christ. The answer to this question brings readers deeper into *Sanctuary*'s understanding of the nature of the sacrifice of Popeye (and Lee) as scapegoat: the novel compares Popeye to the Christ in order to suggest how utterly opposite his sacrifice is to that of the Christ and thereby to portray a world not cleansed by sacrifice but made all the more culpable by it. Its vision begins to become apocalyptic.

The New Testament book of Hebrews, Christianity's great exposition on the sacrificial death of the scapegoat Christ, explains the role of the scapegoat in Judeo-Christian thought. Whether under the old covenant or the new, sacrifice is to lead to change, to purification and redemption. Since "almost all things are by the law purged with blood" (9.22), under the old covenant "the blood of bulls and goats" served in "purifying the flesh" (9.13),

while under the new covenant, "the blood of Christ" (9.4), who "was once offered to bear the sins of many" (9.28), serves to "purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (9.14). The sacrificers hope that the purification, the purgation, will free them, change them, set their lives in new directions. Hebrews goes on to argue, however, that the sacrifices under the old covenant failed to bring such purification, such change, and thus had to be repeated over and over again, fruitlessly: "the law . . . can never with these sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (10.1-2). On the other hand, Hebrews argues that the sacrifice of the scapegoat Christ does bring the promised purification, the change of life, and is thus "once for all" (10.10).

In this context, to which *Sanctuary*'s Christian allusions inexorably send readers, Popeye's sacrifice (and Lee Goodwin's for him) represent a turning away from the new covenant promise of true purification and back to the old covenant's fruitless forms and observances under the ineffectual law. One after another, the law sacrifices the black prisoner, Goodwin, Popeye on and on without end because the sacrifices bring no purification; or indeed they don't even seek it. The law certainly dominates *Sanctuary* as it does no other early novel in Faulkner's canon; it is filled with jails and courtrooms, lawyers, policemen, judges, and even a legislator. And the law errs repeatedly, convicting Lee Goodwin of Popeye's crime on perjured testimony, allowing Lee's lynching, executing Popeye not for his own crimes but for another's. It is surely in response to such willful error that "the heaven-tree shuddered and pulsed monstrously" as Horace left Lee's cell (120). The tree shudders because the proprietary class controlling the law is interested not in truth but in appearances, that class being represented by proprietors like the Jefferson hotelier who expels Ruby, like Miss Reba, like even Narcissa Sartoris, all more interested in what people think than what the truth may be: "That's what people in town think," explains Ms. Sartoris. "So it doesn't matter whether it's true or not" (179). In particular, Judge Drake and Eustace Graham, in whatever accommodation they have made with each other and with the Memphis lawyer, have substituted legal forms for truth, have sacrificed the convenient Lee Goodwin not for justice but for propriety, for the pretense that the only outlaws are the already recognized ones, that good girls do not voluntarily live in whore houses, that good boys do not seek out moonshiners. Why was Gowan Stevens never called to testify even though his wrecked automobile was at the murder site? "You've got the law, justice, civilization," intones Horace. "Sure," says Lee (127).

The point of sacrificing such scapegoats under the law, then, is not to change--not at all. The point is to be able to keep on as usual, to persist in the habits that the law has sacrificed one scapegoat after another for enabling. Horace Benbow's driver back in Kinston makes the point clearly enough. A former planter whom greed and gullibility have left with only

"a good, powerful car" in place of a plantation, the driver makes a pronouncement that, like Miss Myrtle's, resonates through the novel: "We got to protect our girls. Might need them ourselves" (291). What revelation lies in this pronouncement: Lee Goodwin's death changes nothing. The man who raped Temple so brutally--be he Lee or Popeye, it matters not--is no different from anyone else. The next rapist is already preparing, among us, one of "ourselves."

Popeye's sacrifice and Lee Goodwin's for him differ from that of the scapegoat Christ, then, in perpetuating evil rather than purging it. The allusions to the Christ suggest difference, not similarity. Popeye is a kind of anti-Christ, living that others might die and dying to perpetuate impurity. The mind comprehends, and then turns to final matters.

The final scene for the scapegoat Christ is his return as the triumphant Lamb to rule over a world completely purified at long last: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9.28).

Although this vision is akin to the vision of a new priest-king renewing the land, discussed by Frazer and McHaney, it differs in a most important way. The mythologies discussed by Frazer and McHaney are cyclic, tied to vegetative and astronomical cycles. The Christian myth, on the other hand, is essentially linear, envisioning movement toward an apocalyptic transformation and an end of time. *Sanctuary* has its choice, then, between alternate endings, between a classical cyclic vision of pending rebirth or a Christian linear vision of apocalypse. The novel offers the latter, choosing the Christian myth over Frazer.

In choosing the Christian myth, *Sanctuary* allows neither Lee nor Popeye to have any kind of second coming. As McHaney says, "*Sanctuary* depicts a wasteland without rebirth," with "no virile young priest-king who appears to reclaim the land from its barrenness and restore life to the world" (89). The murder of Red, in fact, eliminates the primary figure of virility from the novel, the man whose sole role seems to be to embody potency. Even his name--Red, the color of blood, of strength, of conflict, and of sexual power --suggests that potency. But impotence is too powerful, and no candidate for the role of "virile young priest-king" remains at the end of the novel. Lee Goodwin has been lynched, Eustace Graham is crippled, Horace Benbow is impotent, and Popeye is dead. No cycle of rebirth seems possible.

Yet the Christian myth remains viable, even if in an obscure way. *Sanctuary* provides a figure from Revelation, a rough beast to preside over a temporary world order following its perverse crucifixions. If the law sacrifices Lee and Popeye so that evil can perpetuate itself, who is a more fitting incarnation of the hypocrisy of the law than Senator Clarence Snopes? He is certainly neither purged nor purified; in fact, *Sanctuary* makes a point of his filth: when Horace meets him on the train, Horace notes that "his light grey suit had been pressed but not cleaned" (170), and later "the whole man" seems to have "been dry-cleaned rather than washed" (180). The novel seems to suggest that Snopes has not only failed to be

washed white in the blood of the Lamb but also that he will substitute a new initiatory ritual in place of baptism. Not cleansed but dry-cleaned in mechanical mockery of baptism, Senator Snopes makes the rounds from the Capitol building in Jackson to the brothels of Memphis, leering, insinuating, inveigling, an off-whited sepulchre. Eustace Graham and Horace Benbow will continue living by the law. Judge Drake can continue presiding over it. But Senator Snopes alone has the power to make it. He alone can say in Yoknapatawpha County, "L'etat c'est moi." Under the new covenant of Popeye's sacrifice, the rough beast whose hour comes round at last is not Ruby's baby, as McHaney guesses, but a Snopes. He is the beast of Revelation, doing the work of the anti-Christ, empowered to rule during a period of devastation preceding the second coming of the triumphant sacrificial Lamb.

In the final analysis, *Sanctuary*'s allusions to the Christian corn-god/priest-king in its depiction of Popeye shifts the novel's historical vision from the cycles of vegetative/astronomical mythology to the linearity of the Christian mythology. That linearity is not progressive but degenerative, leading to collapse and ultimately to apocalypse. The novel is thus all the bleaker about prospects for renewal in the short term. But in making its priest-king Popeye into an anti-Christ and in incorporating a rough beast like Clarence Snopes, the novel tacitly suggests an ultimate apocalyptic transformation and thus a kind of hope more transcendental than the hope Faulkner would suggest in his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech some twenty years later.

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