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After editing *POMPA* for nine years, the editors are relinquishing this happy duty as of the 2007 MPA meeting. As *POMPA 2006* goes to the printer, the process of selecting the next editors is underway, and we wish them well, whoever they may be. We also extend thanks to Dr. Jianqing Zheng of Mississippi Valley State University for his leadership in overseeing this transition.

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ESSAYS

Euripides' Terrible Mother: An Exploration of Divine Relationships in *Medea*

Sallye Sheppeard
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In his introductory comments for *Three Plays of Euripides: Alcestis, Medea, The Bacchae*, Paul Roche claims that "Euripides was obsessed with [women's] plight," noting that twelve of the playwright's nineteen plays are about women. In Roche's view, "[a]lthough he does not always portray them in the best of colors, [Euripides] is so much in their favor that at least two of his tragedies, *Medea* and *Alcestis*, are propaganda tracts for women's liberation" (vii). Roche goes on to say of Euripides that "when one of his women turns sour, be it a Medea or a Phaedra, it is because her man has let her down. And when one of Euripides' women turns sour, she turns savage, is eaten up with the passion to get even with her man and is driven to an animal fury that is all too human" (vii). However satisfying Roche's comments may be for contemporary audiences desirous of ferreting out classical gender parallels for modern times, they do little to explain the enduring power of Euripides' portrayal of one of classical literature's most disturbingly fascinating women.

Euripides' *Medea* takes place against the broad backdrop of an early Greek tradition comprised of many myths developed separately over time and finally drawn together into what contemporary audiences recognize as a familiar Jason saga. That is, much may be lost on an audience unfamiliar with the long "golden fleece" tradition, inclusive of Jason's familial history, his journey voyage to Colchis to claim the fleece, his relationship to Medea and her family, and the disposition of both Jason and Medea prior to their arrival in Corinth. Euripides' *Medea* is the Corinthian segment of the Jason and Medea saga that itself merely presages their end in later myths and legends.

Speaking in another context, Helene Foley remarks that "the myths on which Greek tragedies are based are products of earlier eras," and so "[t]he way that poets adapt them to tragedy" often is anachronistic in context (82). One may argue confidently that the myths emphasized in *Medea* were drawn from earlier times and that Euripides employs certain mythic anachronisms to good effect. That Euripides had access to a full complement of Medea materials within the tradition is evident, even though his primary interest is the Corinthian Medea. That his audience shared this traditional knowledge also seems clear. As the play opens *in medias res,* Euripides' Nurse needs but twelve lines to survey Jason's journey to Colchis to secure the golden fleece, his return with Medea to Iolcus, including the brutal murder of Pelias, and their subsequent flight to Corinth, where they

reside with their two young sons. Similarly, she needs only another five lines to shift quickly from Medea the exile who "has merited this city's good opinion" (13) by being "a wife who does not go against her man" (15) to Medea for whom "everything has turned to hate, / her passion to a plague" (16-17). Modern audiences may need footnotes, but Euripides' audience did not.

Medea's foreignness suggests itself as an intriguing if enigmatic area of investigation. Although Euripides acknowledges Medea's status as an exile, as one who has forsaken her native country, betrayed her father, and murdered her brother, his emphasis seems to be more on her having nowhere to go now that Creon has banished her from Corinth than on the previous deeds themselves. Whether Euripides invented or inherited the tradition of Medea as infanticide (Johnston 45), his emphasis on her as banished and displaced person still reflects the received tradition of who Medea is when the play opens, how she can slay her own children, and, consequently, who she is when the play ends. It is not this sense of Medea as exile because of heinous actions that interests me, not the Medea of tradition received since Euripides that fascinates me, attracts and repels me at once. Instead it is Medea as "barbarian woman," as "other." At the moment Euripides draws us into the action of his play, Medea is no longer simply an exile from her own country, family, and gods but from Jason's as well. Hers has become a double dilemma, hers a compounded "otherness" of a transitional figure who seems quite adept at manipulating shared elements from both cultures to suit her purposes.

At the outset, such an investigation, if one may borrow a phrase from Dylan Thomas, may "fork[] no lightning" (5) or, if it does, only such as may illuminate shape-shadows in the mythological darkness, only briefly, only for a moment. Such an exploration seeks neither to exonerate Medea nor to present her as a sympathetic character caught in a gendered world that cuts her no slack, although Roche and others may wish to do so. Part of Medea's unsettling attraction is that she cannot be exonerated for her actions, cannot be made sympathetic or explained away. Any attempt to do so is to deny her mythic and divine dimensions. Just as Dionysus cannot be contained by the Tyrrenhean pirates, or Apollo by Cretan sailors, for example, but "comes forth" in his divinity, so, too, Medea cannot be restrained by logical constructs any more than she can by being shifted from an early cultural context to another, reinvented for Jason only to be cast out once more in favor of Creon's daughter.

Its Corinthian setting notwithstanding, Euripides' *Medea* begins in Colchis on the eastern coast of the Black Sea, a country ruled by her father Aeetes. Although we see him first and always through Greek perspectives and hear of him through Greek stories, Aeetes' origins may be understood properly as pre-Greek. That is, said to be the offspring of the Titans Helios

and Perseis (Grimal 15, 190), Aeetes belongs to a time and people who sang of Helios rather than Apollo, of the Titans rather than the Olympians, all descendents of *hieros gamos*, the sacred union of Gaia and Ouranos that generates all the supernatural progeny in Hesiod's universe (Grimal 190; Hesiod 16). So in a very real way, Medea's story begins with Aeetes, whose siblings are said to have been Circe, Pasiphae, wife of Minos, and Perseus, King of Tauris, whom Medea is said to have slain many years later after he had usurped Aeetes' throne (Grimal 16, 190, 275, 359).

Throughout the tradition, Medea's ties to the realm of immortals are far stronger than to that of mortals. Although Medea is said to be a priestess of Hekate, for example, Hekate is sometimes said to be Medea's close kinsperson—an aunt, perhaps, even her mother. According to Marija Gimbutas, "Hekate in her multiple forms was descended from the Old European goddess of life, death, and regeneration. Through Mycenaean and Greek times she remained powerful and was worshipped with ecstatic dances." Moreover, Gimbutas continues, written evidence and artifacts indicate that Hekate "represented many phases of life: the birth giver and motherly protectress, the youthful and strong virgin, as well as the fearsome and dangerous crone" (155). As Gimbutas explains in a note to this comment, "Hekate was often depicted iconographically in triple aspect, facing in three directions. She was the threefold goddess" (223 n 4), and her triple aspects are also "analogous to the moon's phases—crescent, waxing, and full—and to the cycle of life, death, and regeneration. The writer Porphyry, in the third century A.D., tells us that the ancients called her the 'moon'" (155).

Pierre Grimal says that Hekate "slowly assumed different attributes," becoming known as a "deity presiding over magic and spells," one "linked to the world of Shades," and one who "appeared to magicians and sorceresses with a torch in each hand, or in the form of various animals, such as a mare, a bitch or a she wolf" (181). Hekate came to be regarded as the inventor of sorcery, Grimal continues, and "legends included her among the family of superlative magicians such as Aeetes and Medea of Colchis" and later claimed her as "Circe's mother" and thus as Medea's aunt. "As a magician," Grimal says further, "Hecate presided over crossroads, the best of all locations for magic. Here statues were erected to her, in the form of a woman with three bodies or three heads. These statues were very common in antiquity" (182).

To this thumbnail sketch of Hekate, whose characteristics seem strikingly parallel to those later associated with her priestess/kinswoman Medea, Timothy Gantz adds the intriguing possibility of either a fusion or "at least a very strong link between Hekate and Artemis" by the time of Euripides (27). Gantz correctly cautions that this possibility does not constitute proof of such a link, and, based on textual and linguistic evidence,

he notes both that "our evidence for Hekate as a by-form of Artemis in early times remains tantalizingly unclear" and that no one can say for certain when "Artemis became linked with the moon" or whether Hekate was so associated at all (27).

Nevertheless, this possible link between Hecate and Artemis inadvertently brings Medea one step closer to the darker, so-called foreign qualities that she exhibits in Greek tradition, in particular her relationship with children. Of Artemis, Marija Gimbutas says the following:

> The young and strong Artemis was goddess of spring, giving life to all nature. As in Crete, she was revered as mistress of mountains, forest, stones, animals, springs, and healing waters. She was especially worshipped in Arcadia (an [*sic*] region where Indo-European influence was less pronounced than in other areas of Greece), where she was known as *kallisto*, 'the most beautiful,' or *agrotera*, 'the wild one.' . . . She lived in the wild untouched forests, surrounded by stags and hounds: the lady of free, virgin, untamed nature. . . . (155-56)

Gimbutas emphasizes the birth-giving aspects of Artemis honored in Crete or Thessaly, for example, to the exclusion of her chthonic powers, with two exceptions that receive only minor attention: Artemis' association with hunting and also with regeneration, represented in myriad animal forms, "such as the bee and butterfly, or those animals associated with vulva, fetus, and uterus: frog or toad, hedgehog, fish, and hare." Gimbutas points out, too, "the goddess was worshipped as a toad in Egypt, Italy, and Lithuania. The toad has powerful qualities similar to those of the goddess: she can release a virulent poison that can kill people, but at the same time can heal." Gimbutas seems convinced of an actual Artemis-Hekate connection, noting at length a representative scene on "an egg-shaped amphora found in a Boetian tomb, dating from 700-675 B.C." Gimbutas says "[t]he two panels on the Boetian vase, dating just before the dawn of classical Greece, offer almost a full catalog of regenerative symbols familiar to us from the Neolithic era" (156-57).

Gimbutas cites additional, though certainly not conclusive, evidence that "[a]ncient Greeks considered [the bear and deer] as incarnations of Artemis, and other European folktales with deep prehistoric roots also connect the bear, deer, and birth-giving goddess" (12). Furthermore, Gimbutas argues for a link between Artemis and the ancient birth-goddess in Minoan Crete (139, 144) and notes, too, that evidence in Mycenaean Linear B tablets from both Crete and mainland Mycenaean cities includes Artemis Eileithyia among the deities they mention (151).

We should not forget that Artemis sometimes brings peaceful death and serves as a midwife and as a nurse to orphans. Generally, one wants to

say, our contemporary understanding of Artemis tends more toward her darker aspects, as Gantz points out in his discussion of this twin sister of Apollo, daughter of Zeus and Leto, born on the island of Ortygia, later called Delos. This more familiar Artemis moves through the Greek tradition itself as a huntress associated with the moon, and although Apollodorus includes the myth of her having tended her mother at Apollo's birth, she most frequently "showers down arrows," brings about the "sudden, inexplicable death of women," and kills a goodly number of mortals (Gantz 97). In the tradition transmitted to us from early Greek writers, Artemis is depicted as a goddess acting in anger, one who "does not hesitate to bring death to those who displease her" (Gantz 97). Greek myth also contains a record of her chothonic powers being directed at children, specifically Niobe's young daughters (Apollo kills the sons), to avenge Niobe's offense against Leto. Although Gantz identifies this myth as one among many warning of "the dangers of crossing this divinity, whose relationship with mortals is rarely supportive" (8), Sarah Iles Johnston reminds us throughout her treatment of Medea that child-nurturing divinities are by definition also child-killing deities.

These darker traits of Artemis and Hekate lend power to the dramatic portrayal of Medea not only as a foreigner but also as one whose anger may be whipped quickly into a fury that cannot be contained, a fury that is supernatural within the mortal world, a fury that dares transcend the "acceptable" bounds of murder by mortal women. Even if one cannot condone, one can certainly understand Clytemnestra's jealous murder of her husband, even Medea's murder of Creon and his daughter, for that matter. The sticking point about Medea for everyone is her calculated murder of her own children. For all its shocking displacement of blame from the Corinthians, enemies of Athens and usual culprits at the time, to Euripides' audience Medea's infanticide may have seemed more plausible, though surely no less heinous, because of her mythic connection not merely to Hekate and her "magic" arts but also to Artemis and her deliberate infanticide. The shadow of Artemis the infanticide intensifies the already dark image of Euripides' Hecate, "the goddess," Medea says, "who abides / in the shrine of my inner hearth— / the one I reverence most of all the gods / and have chosen to abet me" (395-97).

Themis is another arguably "foreign" deity with whom Medea is associated in the play. Specifically, Medea implores both Themis and Artemis to "[s]ee what my hated husband has done. / Grant me to watch him, at last, with his bride, / Palace and all, crumble in ruin" (162-64). Themis was "[t]he goddess of Law who belongs to the lineage of the Titans" (Grimal 443). With Zeus, Themis parented the Horae and the Moirae and, according to some, the Hesperides, among other non-Olympian deities. Grimal says that Themis served as an advisor to Zeus and was one of few 'first-

generation divinities to be associated with the Olympians and to share their life on Olympus," honors obtained because she "rendered to the gods by giving them oracles, rites, and laws" (444; Gantz 52-53). In addition to the tradition that Themis "taught Apollo the technique of prophecy, and [that] she possessed the Pythian sanctuary at Delphi before it came to belong to Apollo" (444), Grimal also acknowledges the tradition that Apollo usurped the Delphic oracle from Themis through the violent slaying of Python, the dragon who guarded it for her (47). Standing in the presence of the Chorus just after she seals her bargain with Aegeus to gain sanctuary in Athens, Medea cries out exultantly: "O Zeus and lady daughter, Justice, / O resplendent Sun! / And you my friends, / At last we are on the road to vengeance" (763-66). Earlier, however, when Creon has refused to reverse her banishment, Medea calls solely upon Zeus—Creon's arbiter of justice—to "remember / the author of this crime" (333-34).

Medea remains mindful always of her divine grandfather Helios who, according to Gantz, is one of the children "along with Selene and Eos of the Titans Hyperion and Theia," named clearly "in Homer and Hesiod as the sun god who travels across the sky" (30). Gantz says that "no source prior to the fifth century ever calls [Apollo] the sun (the latter is always Helios or Hyperion)," and that, in fact, "the first sure literary identification of Apollo with the sun occurs no earlier than Euripides, in a fragment of his lost *Phaethon*." It is unclear, however, "whether the innovation is [Euripides'] or something previously in circulation" (87). Euripides uses this heritage to good effect in the play, such as when Medea, having seized upon her plan to poison Creon's daughter and having whipped herself into vengeful anger declares: "Your father was a king: / his father, Helios the Sun . . . / be aware of *that*" (406-07). Euripides, too, remains mindful of this lineage and provides *deus ex machina* for Medea's appearance to Jason and her imperious exit in her grandfather's chariot drawn by dragons.

Throughout the play, then, Medea the foreigner seems to call upon either the gods to whom she may feel a closer kinship, perhaps even think of as her own, such as Hekate, Themis, and Helios, or on those that, in the case of Artemis or Zeus, may better understand the nature of Jason's offense against her because they are, at least to her, possibly "foreign." Depending on the circumstances, she may call upon both types simultaneously. One does not want to push the point too far, of course, for she also calls upon Hera, goddess of marriage, but one wonders whether Euripides may be emphasizing Medea's foreignness, her "otherness" by having her invoke divine assistance in some culturally synchronistic manner. Granted that the matter may rest ultimately upon its translation from Greek to English, one truly compelling instance of this possibility occurs when Medea insists that Aegeus swear an oath that he will help her no matter what when she comes to Athens. He says, "So, name your deities," and she names hers, not his:

"Swear by the Earth on which you tread. / Swear by the Sun, my father's dread, / Swear by every god and godhead" (746-48). Aegeus swears "by the Earth and the sacred light of the Sun" (752), naming for himself "[t]he penalty for sacrilege" (755) should he fail to keep his word. His oaths are answered by Medea's exuberant response, mentioned previously, "O Zeus and lady daughter, Justice, / O resplendent Sun! /. . . . / At last we are on the road to vengeance" (763-66).

Fritz Graf and Sarah Iles Johnston are among those scholars who discuss Euripides' use of traditional materials in the *Medea,* each scholar concerned with different aspects of Medea's supernatural qualities. On the one hand, after he evaluates the traditional view of Medea as sorceress, Graf argues that Euripides plays down much of the negative Colchian material found in other sources, the result being that "in Euripides' play Medea is in no way the witch that Ovid and Seneca later make her out to be" (30). In this respect, Graf emphasizes Creon's reference to Medea as dangerous and knowledgeable in many evil things rather than to specific actions recorded in the tradition, such as her murder of her brother, the dismemberment of Jason's uncle in Iolcus, or any particular instances of her expertise in the use of drugs. On the other hand, Johnston argues that "fifth-century authors inherited an infanticidal Medea from myth" but also that "the Medea whom we meet in Euripides' play developed out of a folkloric paradigm that was widespread both in ancient Greece and in other ancient Mediterranean countries—the paradigm of the reproductive demon—and that this paradigm is likely to have been associated with the Corinthian cult of Hera Akraia" (45). In the absence of compelling evidence, however, one may only wonder whether such a connection between Medea and this cult existed prior to the play.

Johnston points out that "most scholars agree that Medea was originally a goddess, whose cult was displaced by that of Hera and whose interests and character were similar to those of Hera. Frequently, the myths surrounding such figures set them in opposition to the deities who displace them" (61-62). In Johnston's view, "the Corinthian cult of Hera Akraia focused on nurturing children, which included protecting them from the manifold diseases and disasters that might befall them before they reached maturity." In contrast, she says, Medea gradually "became the mythic elaboration of a demonic force against which Akraian Hera was expected to protect her worshipers—she was a mother who had lost her children and who thus became, after her death, a 'reproductive demon.' Like other reproductive demons in ancient Greece and elsewhere, this Medea also became known as the killer of her own children in some versions of her myth" (65). Although the reasons and processes remain unclear, Corinthian Medea, the infanticide, became linked with Colchian Medea, the enchantress associated with initiation rituals, and this linkage gave expression to "a

larger idea that lurks behind the paradigm of the reproductive demon: she who gives life is also understood to have the power to truncate it before it comes to fruition." In Johnston's view, "[a]lthough mothers never actually threaten initiates in Greek ritual, we can glimpse the idea, perhaps, behind mythic figures such as Clytemnestra, Eriphyle, or Althaea, who kill or try to kill their adolescent sons" (66).

From such intriguing but nonetheless random lines of evidentiary circumstance, one must resist the urge to draw conclusions about Medea in relationship to divinity, must not be deluded by the seeming wealth of evidence collected in fairly recent times and thus forget about the vast amount of information that remains unavailable and may never be available to us. That is, suggestions have been made but nothing has been proved. In her discussion of the goddess, in particular Gimbutas' view of the Great Goddess, for example, Christine Downing challenges the notion of "ancient goddess-worshipping cultures" that were essentially "egalitarian, harmonious, and pacific" and thus centered on "all-nurturing, all-loving mother" goddesses. Instead Downing understands the Goddess "as truly the source of all that is, life and death, good fortune and bad and therefore . . . as the good mother and the terrible mother in one" (47-48). Although it has not always been true for me, I have come to understand the goddess in a similar way and to accept that if we relate to her or she to us, we must do so fully. One may glimpse a Medea who bore positive characteristics—the Medea displaced by Hera Akraia at Corinth, even of the Medea less evil in Euripides than in Seneca—but we cannot see her. Whether one recovers, indeed whether one can ever recover, a Medea fully complemented in all her aspects seems to me in many ways now quite beside the point. Sarah Iles Johnston agrees that the image of Medea "that has most fascinated authors and artists throughout the centuries is that of the murderous mother," no doubt because it so heinously assaults and utterly undermines our humane assumptions that "mothers nurture their children" (44) and that a mother who loves her children—and Medea does love her sons—would not, indeed could not, bring them to such harm. Medea is the dark mother, and perhaps our terrible fascination with Euripides' Medea is his sense of a divinely fashioned Medea, a mythic Medea who forces us to confront within ourselves a palpable psychic darkness more comfortably projected onto others.

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Taking up the Axe in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

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The circular narrative of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* projects an image of closure often misrecognized as complete. Traditional readings of the poem are restorative accounts of Gawain's reintegration into the court at Camelot. The major source of instability surrounds Gawain's own resistance to resolution, for he cannot wholly accept the reinterpretation of the girdle adopted by the Round Table as a badge of honor. Formalist critics have relied upon the order and circularity of the narrative itself as a resolution of an otherwise "ambiguous ending." Donald R. Howard, for example, argues the "elaborate parallelism" of *Sir Gawain* functions much like a Shakespearean comedy to soften Gawain's guilt (433). He explains, "The ritual balance of incidents does, in the end, what comedy always does—it purges extremes of conduct and brings the reader comfortably back to a norm; it restores the *status quo*. Gawain returns to the starting-place, and, however chastened, is greeted with laughter which dispels his sobriety" (433). The formal structure, however, never erects an entirely stable perimeter. In fact, the overarching historical cycle which opens and closes the poem by reflecting on "þe sege and þe assaut . . . sesed at Troye" (1), an image of the city burned to ashes, acknowledges that those borders can be breached.

Although the circularity of *Sir Gawain* suggests closure and (re)integration, the image of completeness it projects contributes instead to the destabilizing force of the narrative which undermines the process of identification. This analysis remains indebted to feminist and poststructuralist readings, which certainly contest the normative or restorative accounts of the poem, but these readings tend to offer resolution in the indeterminacy which permits infinite possibility and the plurality of identity. Poststructuralist and feminist projects overlap because in *Sir Gawain*, (masculine) identification and linguistic signification are inseparable, since Gawain's inscription into the (masculine) community requires negotiation of the sign of the girdle. The feminist move Geraldine Heng makes in interpreting the girdle as a sign bearing the "imprint of the female body" (505), which thereby destabilizes the masculine identity, produces much the same result as R. Allen Shoaf's poststructuralist reading of the girdle as an infinitely interpretable signifier. Both critics posit a postmodern plurality as an alternative to the exclusionary and ultimately inaccessible identity associated with the symbol of the pentangle, but their readings rely on reconciliation nonetheless. For Heng, the girdle resembles a signifying chain as an "imperfect knot" that can be tied, untied, and retied

in countless negotiations (508-09), but this reading is inconsistent with the way in which Gawain himself speaks of the girdle as a sign which cannot be removed, one that forever marks him. Postmodern plurality circumvents the crucial problem of resolution since it equalizes the discord between Gawain's interpretation of the girdle and the court's. While the value of such interpretations is that they expand the text's meaning and allow for multiple perspectives, in doing so they must sacrifice Gawain's own response, thus suppressing the trauma of the text. Gawain's dislocation, however, must remain essential to the meaning of *Sir Gawain.*

To address more fully the poem's failure of integration, a psychoanalytic approach becomes necessary. Feminist criticism slips easily into the realm of the unconscious and converges with psychoanalysis as it examines the instability of desire in *Sir Gawain.* This provocative area of research, however, also relies on a circular narrative within which to locate desire. The problem, as Clare R. Kinney suggests, lies in the dichotomy feminist criticism erects between center and margins. The marginalized figures of women that Heng and Fisher depict revolve around a masculine center-text which they subvert through "encirclement." Heng insists that when Gawain returns to Camelot, the girdle envelops him in a feminine subtext, which undermines his integration into the court. She describes the girdle as "a detail of encirclement bearing the mark of the body [which] becomes metonymically, in the course of the Lady's theater of seduction, a sexualized, desiring, feminine term. It is an object, moreover, that mirrors the concentricity of other encirclements mapping out the poem" (505). The strategy of encirclement, unfortunately, allows that the position of the center can be located and occupied by (male) culture. A Lacanian perspective might prove more useful in considering the way in which Desire functions as a structuring principle. The Center of the text, though it sustains the narrative, remains inaccessible—Other. Though it serves as a locus for the text's momentum, it is always beyond, for it is that which cannot be met. It is the stucture of language itself.

The circularity of the narrative in *Sir Gawain* exhibits a pattern of repetition symptomatic of the frustrated desire for integration. This is not a poem that ends where it begins; it is rather a circle that revolves around an empty center. When C. Stephen Finley describes the end of the poem as a "turning back of the text upon itself" (454), he exposes the poem's repetition as a breakdown in order which prevents closure. His description of the poem's pattern resembles the structure of the unconscious. He argues, the poem "provides the mysterious element of repetition, that confounding of linearity that many readers of *Gawain* wish to foreclose by their decisive readings of the end, although the poem . . . seems to insist upon the subversion of such readings, to remain knotted, repetitive, doubled back on itself, irresolvably tangled and complex" (451). Though Finley's reading is

not a psychoanalytic one, his analysis of the problem of closure as a component of the poem's own structure conveys the frustrated nature of Gawain's journey.

The psychological drama which Gawain enacts illustrates the problem of desire which disrupts the ego's integrity. Though Gawain's journey is a circular one, it does not allow for the possibility of a return, nor does it sustain a whole or stable identity. The circular imagery constructs rather a (w)hole which displaces Gawain, for the moment Gawain agrees to the Green Knight's terms in taking up the axe, he must undertake a quest in which he loses himself. He accepts entry into culture through an oral contract and is thus inscribed into an alienating narrative of loss. His journey occupies a borderland or liminal space, encircling an empty center or uninhabitable sphere. Language then situates Gawain around a center that remains forever illusory.

Gawain's final sorrow might be better understood by examining the psycholinguistic development of the culture portrayed in *Sir Gawain*, not because that culture conforms rigidly and definitively to a Lacanian development but because Lacan's psychology explains Gawain's grief as a condition of the basic structure of culture itself. The initial description of Camelot in Fitt I resembles the pre-linguistic, infantile stage in Lacan's developmental scheme. The New Year's festivities emphasize the newness and youth of a culture in its infancy. The narrator describes the court collectively as "fayre folk in her first age" (54) and refers to Arthur with the adjective "childgered," or "boyish" (86). In this world of completely satisfiable needs marked by an extravagant fifteen-day feast of lavish dishes, there was "no wont" (131), the narrator remarks. No need for language arises if no want or lack exists, but as even this initial description of the Arthurian court suggests, all experience is always already marked by desire, and therefore lack or loss.

In the opening scene of *Sir Gawain*, Arthur, surrounded by an elaborate feast, refuses to eat until he has heard some tale. Arthur's demand cannot fully be satisfied, however; the demand for story, a masked demand for recognition, is thwarted by the Green Knight's arrival when he refuses to recognize Arthur. Upon entering the hall, "Haylsed he neuer one bot heȝe he ouerloked. / þe fyrst word þat he warp, 'Wher is,' he sayd, / 'þe gouernour of þis gyng?'" (223-25). The Green Knight addresses no one, but instead looks "vp and doun" the knights for the "most renoun" (228-31). His eyes do not immediately rest upon Arthur when he asks, "Where is the governor of this gang?" The Green Knight projects an image which Arthur recognizes as his own Ideal-I, "Arthour I hat" (253). The Green Knight's hailing, however, results in an act of misrecognition in which Arthur is forced to name himself, "Arthur, I am."

Arthur's self-naming illustrates the entry into language which distinguishes the Imaginary and Symbolic phases. The sliding of the Imaginary, associated with the ego-fantasy of the misrecognized image of the "I," into the Symbolic, which deals primarily with language, occurs through social interaction. Once the subject becomes structured in relation to an other, when the specular I becomes the social I, Lacan argues, "It is this moment that decisively tips the whole of human knowledge [*savoir*] into being mediated by the other's desire, constitutes its objects in an abstract equivalence due to competition from other people, and turns the *I* into an apparatus to which every instinctual pressure constitutes a danger, even if it corresponds to a natural maturation process" (7). The Green Knight's challenge propels Arthur into language, for it becomes necessary to enter speech in order to assert his manhood. The court's initial reluctance to speak provokes the Green Knight's taunting response, "What, is þis Arþures hous?" (309). He asserts his masculinity when he overwhelms the onlookers "wyth a worde" (314). Adult development, it seems, is linguistic development. Shamed into participation in male culture, Arthur separates himself from the silent and "berdlez chylder" (280), "beardless children," by descending from the communal feast and receiving the Green Knight's axe. Taking up the Green Knight's axe becomes synonomous with entering the game of language.

The Beheading Game rests, after all, on a verbal agreement. In recognizing Gawain's translation of the physical act of his testing into a contest revolving around "*speech acts*," Kinney reveals that only language allows the hero to "embody" masculinity (49). The lack of physical descriptions of Gawain, in contrast to the lengthy descriptions of the Green Knight's body, suggests to her that Gawain represents a disembodied figure. "Arthurian heroes," she argues, "don't have bodies, or at least not while their power to articulate themselves on their own terms remains unchallenged" (49). In order to assert his masculinity, in order to be designated a body, Gawain must separate from the homogeneous communal body. The social development and entrance into language is also the Oedipal moment of desire. Gawain is more than once noted as sitting beside Guenevere. Gawain "þat sate bi þe quene" asks to leave his position by Guenevere, to quit the "benche" and "stonde" with Arthur—"And þat my legge lady lyked not ille" (339-46). If my liege lady dislike it not, he adds. Gawain's move to join Arthur situates him outside the undifferentiated communal body into the gendered space of individual acknowledgement, but it is also a move which replaces Arthur's postion. Gawain literally "takes his place" in the game, thus metaphorically enacting a sexualized taking of Guenevere.

The metaphor of the Beheading Episode appropriately conveys entry into the Symbolic as linked with Freud's castration complex. The ceremonial passing of the axe from the Green Knight to Arthur to Gawain

serves as a phallic exchange in which the recipient accepts the language of the father upon entry into culture. The Green Knight represents a father in so far as he represents a function of the linguistic system, i.e., the father's language functions as a structuring principle. For Lacan, the Father is not so much a person as the *nom du père* and the *non du père*. Participation in the game (of language) requires submission to the rules of the father. The axe marks the event as a rite-of-passage, for it operates as a governing symbol, given as a prize to the game's participant, but also as the father's reminder of the binding agreement. When Gawain takes up the axe, he must recount the terms of the agreement to the Green Knight. He must also name himself, thus solidifying his entry into the Symbolic.

Not only does the encounter result in violence upon the body and the trauma of a transgression which will result in a reciprocated blow from the father, but it also illustrates the trauma of separation by inscribing Gawain in the rotational pull of the other. The encounter compells him into a frustrated journey for desire to unite with otherness. Immediately after the moment of his naming, Gawain questions the Green Knight about how to find him. He begins:

> "Where schulde I wale þe?" quoþ Gauan. "Where is þy place?
> I wot neuer where þou wonyes, bi hym þat me wroȝt,
> Ne I know not þe, knyȝt, þy cort, ne þi name.
> Bot, teche me truly þerto and telle me howe þou hattes,
> And I schal ware alle my wyt to wynne me þeder" (398-402).

Gawain asks the Green Knight for his name in return, but the Green Knight here withholds it. Gawain travels far and wide throughout the borders of the country unsure of his destination, asking for any who know the way to the Knight of the Green Chapel. The cirularity of his journey reinforces the Imaginary ego-fantasy. Though the journey culminates in reaching the Green Knight's abode, the (re)encounter results in symbolic dismemberment which threatens the wholeness of the ego's self-image. That is, though Gawain completes his quest, the encounter with the other only serves to displace him further.

The Green Knight functions as a kind of imago for Gawain, both revealing his inadequacy and compelling him into maturation. For Gawain, the Green Knight, much like Arthur, reflects what he is not, and it is his awareness of this lack that forces him to stand. He must admit his own weakness, saying, "I am þe wakkest, I wot, and of wyt feblest, / And lest lur of my lyf, quo laytes þe soþe" (354-55). His only worth, he claims, is in that Arthur is his uncle (356). In responding to the challenge, however, he seeks his own legitimizing relationship with the world, hoping to synthesize his own self-image with the anticipated image of manhood. This mirrored development marks the inception of the ego's agency. Lacan explains,

> The mirror stage is a drama whose internal pressure pushes precipitously from insufficiency to anticipation—and, for the subject caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body to what I will call an "orthopedic" form of its totality—and to the finally donned armor of an alienating identity that will mark his entire mental development with its rigid structure. (6)

Because the ego identifies with a mirror image, one that can never become incorporated into the self since by nature it remains exterior, other, the ego's lack can never be fully resolved. The discord between the fragmented self and the fantasy of completion that the ego projects creates a tenuous relationship between the subject and its reality, one that is always in danger of disintegration.

Initially the ego sustains its illusion through fortifying structures, and, interestingly enough, Lacan describes these structures in medieval terms: donning armor and retreating behind castle-like walls. Gawain's elaborate arming scene undermines the stability of the ego through imagery of enclosure, supporting Lacan's notion of the ego as a circle with an empty center, often symbolized by a "fortified camp" or "stadium," or some version of a walled "arena" (7). Part by part the *Gawain*-poet describes the fragmented body of the hero encased in armor. His legs are "lapped in stel," knees "knaged wyth knotez of golde," thick thighs "wyth þwonges to tachched," and braces "vpon his boþe armes" (575-82). The polished exterior of his suit, however, reflects the illusion of completeness. Kinney interprets the arming scene as a metaphor for disembodiment, arguing, "Fitt II's lengthy account of Gawain's arming for his journey to the Green Chapel hardly fleshes him out for us: in the course of nearly a hundred lines he disappears into (or becomes the product of) his elaborate accoutrements and knightly insignia" (49). Likewise, the pentangle on Gawain's shield projects a fantasy of completeness, for it is an "endeles knot" (630). In his *Medieval Sign Theory*, Ross G. Arthur explains the pentangle as a figure of pure signification, which equates sign and referent since "the sign is merely the substitute in discourse for the object in the world" (11). Though modern linguistic theory denies the equivalence of sign and referent, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Gawain is meant to be taken as a perfect referent for the sign of the pentangle, according to Arthur. But because the pentangle (re)presents an "unrepresentable," perfection, the symbol also undermines identity. The performative effect of this sign, Kinney argues, sets Gawain up as the impossible figure of perfection as the Pentangular Knight. This is Camelot "speaking Gawain," she says (50). Heng, on the other hand, aligns the pentangle with the Imaginary because it sustains Gawain's "fantasy of identity" (504). For Heng, "The pentangle hypothesis is thus a metaphysical

statement of presence, the presence of a fully confirmed and locatable identity in a ground of ultimate reference" (504). The images of the armor and the pentangle which envelop Gawain in the arming scene alert these critics to compensation for an incomplete ego.

Similarly, the scenes in Bertilak's castle which occupy the middle of the text encircle Gawain in order to unman him. The narrative often portrays Gawain as an embowered figure in the scenes with the unnamed Lady. He sleeps enclosed in his bed chamber or associates with the women in the castle in contrast to Bertilak, who goes hunting outdoors. This section of the narrative most clearly evokes a psychological landscape which highlights Gawain's troubled dreams. The fabric of a dreamscape covers these scenes in which Bertilak's hunting is woven in and out of Gawain's sleeping and waking scenes with the Lady in his bedroom. Here also does Gawain's psychic split materialize in the form of an uncanny double. Gawain is greeted at a strange castle that seems to materialize out of thin air, where he is welcomed by a court in which he seems already well-known. Upon his arrival, he is undressed, his armor removed, and he is then redressed in "ryche robes" (862). Once removed from the ego's fortifying structures, Gawain is progressively dismantled. He is presented as vulnerable in his interactions with the Lady. Gawain's identity is confronted and contested by the Lady who accuses him of not being "Gawain." Alluding to Gawain's womanizing reputation, Fisher explains, "Here the sins that Gawain has not yet committed come back to haunt him. In Fitt III, Gawain stands accused of being someone he knows nothing about, to the point that both he and the Lady will agree, with some justice, that he is not Gawain" (132). The interactions with the Lady focus less on the threat of uncovering the female body than they do on Gawain's own fearfully clad form. Though her sexual temptations fail, the Lady will succeed in a kind of pyschological undressing of Gawain to the point that she must give him a mark of her own clothing to cover his more vulnerable, exposed body.

This psychic bedroom space inhabited by phantoms overlaps with Bertilak's hunting scenes, particularly the deer's disembowelment. Lacan exposes the imagery of fragmentation as indicative of disruption in the ego's illusion of wholeness. He explains, "This fragmented body . . . is regularly manifested in dreams when the movement of an analysis reaches a certain level of aggressive disintegration of the individual. It then appears in the form of disconnected limbs or of organs exoscopically represented, growing wings and taking up arms for internal persecutions that the visionary Hieronymus Bosch fixed for all time in painting" (6). Both the Lady and Bertilak then assault Gawain with reminders of his own disembodiment. After each hunting episode Gawain is presented with the disembodied animal carcasses—the deer's ribs, the boar's head, the fox's pelt. These excavated animal bodies present Gawain with a terrifying image of his own

emptiness, and though he doesn't consciously acknowledge this fact, the repressed fear presumably resurfaces and is the source of his troubling dreams, in which he must finally confront the inevitable obligation of his words (1750-54).

To become reembodied Gawain must face the Green Knight's axe and own up to the terms he has spoken. It is in this moment, Kinney argues, that "Gawain is most visibly a *mere* body" (53). If the cut from the axe marks him as a masculine body, it also scars him, both physically and psychologically. Heng suggests, "This cut may be read there as the vestige of a displacement, the trace of a symbolic beheading that is itself displaced from, and vestigially symbolic of, castration" (505-06). When this castration trial is complete, the oral contact with the Green Knight materializes in the form of the girdle which Gawain wears. David Baker explains the girdle is transformed in Gawain's wearing into "written" language (360). The girdle then marks Gawain as having entered into language, and, when the Knights of the Round Table appropriate it, as having entered into culture as well. Incorporation into that culture, however, does not offer a complete integration or resolution. It is a mark of separation; for the girdle, as Heng remarks, bears "the impress and memory" of the female body from which it has been separated (505). To be written in language, after all, is to be marked by loss. These are the terms in which Gawain himself speaks of the girdle, when he equates it with sorrow and loss. "þis is þe laþe and þe losse þat I laȝt haue," he announces (2507). He also speaks of it as sign which he will wear forever, for it cannot be undone: "For þer hit onez is tachched twynne wil hit neuer" (2512).

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Following Hapless Egeon: Casting the Wanderers in *The Comedy of Errors*

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One hundred and forty lines into *The Comedy of Errors*, in the midst of Egeon's long narrative of namelessness and loss, the Duke addresses Egeon by name:

> Hapless Egeon, whom the fates have marked
> To bear the extremity of dire mishap. (1.1.140-41)

It is the only time the Duke addresses Egeon by name. All his other direct addresses are to "merchant." In fact, in the Folio, the only early-modern edition of *The Comedy of Errors*, *all* of Egeon's speech headings and stage directions in this scene name only "merchant." Egeon himself will disappear from the play directly after he, for the first time, speaks his own name:

> Hopeless and helpless doth Egeon wend,
> But to procrastinate his lifeless end. (1.1.157-58)

Egeon will remain absent from the play, like a ghost, until well into the final scene, when first Antipholus of Syracuse and then Aemilia address Egeon by name, as if calling him back into being. Antipholus of Syracuse speaks first: "Egeon, art thou not? Or else his ghost?" (5.1.337). Then the Abbess, naming Egeon in the same breath as she names herself, manages to inspire into life not only these two lost individuals but, in Emelia's words, that "individual, incorporate" being that defines the mystery of their marital identity:

> Speak, old Egeon, if thou be'st the man
> That hadst a wife once called Aemilia,
> That bore thee at a burden two fair sons.
> O, if thou be'st the same Egeon, speak,
> And speak unto the same Aemilia. (5.1.341-45)

Egeon, although appearing in only two scenes in the play, 1.1 and 5.1, nevertheless contributes much to the mixed tones of *The Comedy of Errors*. Those tones, as critics such as Kent Cartwright and directors such as Tim Supple have shown, arise out of a strange alchemy, a union of the play's two identities. The lyrical, slow-moving narratives of two aged voices, Egeon's and Aemilia's, remembering the past, are set against the frenetic, present-tense quickness of youthful, athletic farce. We know that Egeon spends the duration of the play, like his son, wandering in illusions in search of a relation that will allow him to recover both his identity and his life. But not once do we see him until the play's last scene. We can hear distant echoes of Egeon's voice, despite his absence, in those moments where romance and farce *almost* meet. We might think of Adriana's long

reproach to Antipholus of Syracuse in 2.2, reminding him that he has of late been so *unlike* himself. The more particular her charges, the more riotous the farcical laughter, as the mistaken identities careen out of all limits. And yet in the midst of Adriana's errors, we hear the unmistakable lyrical voice of yearning, loss. In Adriana's words, as she compares their marriage to "a drop of water in the breaking gulf," mingled, undividable, incorporate, we almost hear the echo of a similar lyrical conceit uttered not by Adriana's husband but by his twin. Likewise, Antipholus of Syracuse's conceit, that "I to the world am like a drop of water / That in the ocean seeks another drop" (1.2.35-36), is itself evocative of his father's watery search for wife, sons, and himself.

What has become of Egeon and his hapless offstage wanderings throughout Ephesus? More to the point, what has happened to the actor playing Egeon—an actor accomplished enough to dominate the play's opening and closing scenes, to carry off the difficult challenge of reciting a long narrative to his single auditor, and who in fact has the sixth largest role in the play? Such an actor needs more employment. This essay, building on the help of the actors of Shenandoah Shakespeare, will trace out one *possible* route of Egeon's hapless steps throughout the play's middle acts as he wanders toward identity and our epiphany.

One solution might be to allow the actor playing Egeon to double as another character. There is, unfortunately, no single character available for more than the briefest lines in those middle scenes. But what if our actor could double as more than one character? There are, for example, two characters who, like Egeon, are merchants; one of whom, for the most part, is nameless. The other is Balthasar. Such multiple doubling, while not asking the audience to *identify* Egeon with either of these two merchants, might nonetheless release uncanny associations among the three in this play of nameless wanderers and mistaken identities. Merchant 1, for example, has only 14 lines in the play, all of them in 1.2, as he twice speaks to Antipholus S, first to offer the newly arrived Syracusian some valuable fatherly advice—"give out you are from Epidamnum" (2.1.1)—and then to explain his inability to accompany Antipholus because "I am invited, sir, to certain merchants, / Of whom I hope to make much benefit" (1.2.24-25). He will, however, meet Antipholus at 5:00, the very hour when the Duke will determine Egeon's fate after Egeon has spent the day hoping to "make much benefit" of the town's several merchants. Moments later, this merchant will take his leave, commending Antipholus to his own content. Those last words will provoke in Antipholus S a lyrical recollection of *his* search for a mother and a brother.

To double Egeon and Merchant 1 requires delicate timing. Because 1.1 closes with Egeon's words and 1.2 opens with the merchant's, the actor would have to exit through one door, move swiftly back stage, and re-enter

through the other door to greet Antipholus S, having deftly donned a merchant's coat and hat along the way. The actor would have to move at the velocity of farce. But if he did so, the audience might experience a fleeting moment of deja-vu, the slightest intimation of recognition. Then the merchant disappears, forever.

The next opportunity to detect the wandering Egeon might be in 3.1, when Balthasar makes his only appearance. Balthasar's function in this scene is, like the merchant's in 1.2, to give fatherly advice, in this case, about household matters. This time, however, the recipient is not Antipholus S but his twin, Antipholus E, whose intemperate public behavior toward his wife threatens to injure the reputation of both husband and wife:

> Have patience sir, O let it not be so!
> Herein you war against your reputation,
> And draw against the compass of suspect
> Th' unviolated honor of your wife. . . .
> Be ruled by me. Depart in patience. (3.1.85-88)

Again, doubling, tripling really, is tempting here. As before, the audience would be allowed the briefest, most unconscious of connections, a kind of rehearsal for recognition.

These two brief doubling moments offer something more than yet another ludic dimension of mistaken identity. Ephesus, it is important to remember, is a *community* of wanderers, where identity is momentarily gained and lost, where relation is defined more in terms of impersonal transactions than of the mysterious, sacred paradoxes of Adriana, Egeon, and Antipholus S. Many have detected, quite persuasively, hints of the new impersonal order of nascent capitalism. But these nameless wanderings and momentary connections also suggest a more spiritual dimension to these hapless quests, hints of both Plato and Paul, and even of Freud. The audience's uncanny awareness of a multiplicity of ghostly selves all striving for contention within Egeon's—and the actor playing Egeon's—body suggests a search for wholeness within the self that is both psychological and deeply spiritual. As Ruth Nevo has pointed out, "[t]ripartite divisions of the soul are common and frequently overlap conceptually, Freud's having often been shown to have more than a superficial resemblance to Plato's" (11). And long ago T. W. Baldwin had seen in the meanderings of Shakespeare's play an image of religious journey, particularly the missionary wanderings of St. Paul: "in *Errors* Shakespere's [sic] geography is almost completely that of St. Paul's travels" (118).

But would such multiple casting actually work in performance? I had the good fortune to stage just such an experiment at the Blackfriars Playhouse with the help of two gifted actors from Shenandoah Shakespeare, John Harrell and Bernard Bygott. These actors were especially effective in testing an actor's ability to exit, undergo a quick and limited costume

change, and re-enter as another character, all during the time allowed by the few lines of dialogue that framed the changeover. These same actors also tested the audience's reaction to these multiple re-incarnations.

At the beginning of the talk, I gave my jacket to John Harrell, who took it backstage. It was a prop he used brilliantly, wearing the coat in different ways for different characters—for example, backwards for Dr. Pinch, creating a kind of priestly cassock. He also had three baseball caps, each with a different company logo, minimalist signs to suggest each character. Meanwhile, the other actor, Bernard Bygott, who played Antipholus E, sat in my seat at the side of the stage (with the other presenters) throughout the talk. When John Harrell, as Balthasar, reproached Antipholus E, he could deliver his lines to Bernard. Later, as Dr. Pinch, John also gestured toward Bernard as he spoke to an unsuspecting female scholar seated nearby, who momentarily became a silent Adriana, listening to Dr. Pinch talk of her possessed son. John Harrell also very nicely blocked out the first doubling moment (Egeon/Merchant 1). As he read Egeon's final lines in Act 1, he exited through the stage right door, re-entering through the stage left door. As he did so, I kept talking, moving downstage, so that when I got to "velocity of farce," I had time to pull out a map of Staunton, Virginia, the location of the Blackfriars Playhouse, a second or two before John Harrell, as Merchant 1, pulled up beside me, put his arm around my shoulder, and gave me his advice. Such casting choices may or may not have worked in a full scale production. And, of course, they wouldn't have worked to ANY extent without the actors' invaluable blocking and voices.

Nonetheless, the very improbability of the multiple blocking, the very dizziness of the blocking traffic that would inevitably ensue, might well be consistent with the mixed tones of Ephesus. The sheer number of nameless wanderers in this play, *almost* recognizing both one another and themselves, mirrors the search of the estranged soul for *its* lost complement. Such a search is both farcical and the stuff of religious romance. Furthermore, the presence of a bewildered, multiply mirrored Egeon on stage through much of the play could serve to intensify this play's celebrated tonal balance. Searching for self and other in a world of illusions can only result in the wild proliferation of error and mistaken identity. The only *possible* response to such madness is laughter. And yet throughout this play we hear poignant appeals that are something like prayer, hopeless, hapless searches for lost drops of water that would require something like miracle. In the words of Antipholus S, "Some blessed power deliver us from hence" (4.3.45).

Hence my final suggestion for doubling, or, rather, quadrupling. There is only one other character who never appears on stage with Egeon. That character, of course, is Dr. Pinch, that master of exorcism. What if, for

just a few moments in Act 4, the actor playing Egeon took possession of the body of Dr. Pinch? If so, we might be offered a grotesque version of the miraculous recognition scene, wherein wanderer after wanderer will indeed recognize one another, as they at last see things face to face. But before that moment, along with Dr. Pinch, we would be required to look through a glass darkly one last time. When Dr. Pinch finally meets Antipholus E and his Dromio, two of the objects of Egeon's search, Dr. Pinch recognizes them both at once. Speaking to Adriana, Pinch concludes: "Mistress, both man and master is possessed; / I know it by their pale and deadly looks" (4.4.93-94). Dr. Pinch's powers of recognition conform exactly to those of his patient, Antipholus of Ephesus, who, one scene later, answers Egeon's joyful recognition of his son with "I never saw my father in my life" (5.1.320). These are, of course, moments of high farce. But only twelve lines later, our laughter will evaporate into wonder, as our wished-for deliverance finally occurs. Emelia enters with Antipholus S and Dromio S. As she does so, Dr. Pinch's ludic exorcism yields to *both* laughter *and* wonder, as we witness the recovery of so many lost souls who have spent the entire play, like Egeon, wandering in illusions. And like Egeon, the twin Antipholi and the twin Dromios repeatedly and unintentionally double for one another. Finally, the result of *all* that farcical error is the providential recovery, and discovery, of both self and other. The Duke's question is our own. "Which is the natural man, / And which the spirit?" (5.1.333-34).

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Frederick Irving Anderson and the American Literary Canon*

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Recurrent revisitations of the American literary canon neglect the author named in my title, whose writing career extended from the 1890s into the 1940s (and posthumously into the 1950s, when his sister, executor of his estate, permitted publication of stories in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*). "Magazine" figures unavoidably in context when Anderson is the subject because the earliest venues for his signed works were agricultural and technological periodicals, e. g., *Country Gentleman* (the forerunner of *Farm Journal*) and *Scientific American*. Moreover, his crime stories also appeared originally in popular magazines such as *Adventure*, *Harper's Weekly*, *McClure's*, the *Pictorial Review*, *Cassell's Magazine*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and, finally, *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. The *Post* was his major outlet for fiction from 1913 to 1932.

Anderson's writings encompass much that spurred interest in late nineteenth- early twentieth-century American culture, so there is no mighty wonder that they were published in mass-market magazines and newspapers. Scientific farming, electricity, the automobile, telephone, radio, airplane and other emerging technologies during the early twentieth century are important features in the Anderson canon, whether we find them in books like *The Farmer of Tomorrow* (which highlighted crop rotation as well as a back to the soil movement) or *Electricity for the Farm* (which advocated hydroelectric power to expedite agricultural work), in several magazine articles, or, in what really brought him renown, in the short story of crime. In many ways, Anderson was a pioneer environmentalist-preservationist. The opening chapter of *Electricity for the Farm* (1915), for example, informs readers how to create electric current from water power rather than coal or gasoline, thus conserving natural elements (and simultaneously minimizing costs). All these elements in his writings would have "spoken to" readers in his generation, whose work and outlooks took cognizance of ongoing cultural developments in the U. S. A. of their era. Anderson's scientific-technological publications reflect timely interests of the American public of his day; thus they provide windows for present-day readers into those times.

Anderson's reputation has languished, I believe, both because his stories have been classified as crime-detective fiction and thus have not been deemed sufficiently worthy for inclusion in academic anthologies, and because many of his stories—as well as his nonfiction writings—have remained uncollected from periodicals into volume form, thus keeping them less accessible than they might be in book format. Unlike the works of an

earlier "magazinist," Edgar Allan Poe, Anderson's have not been made convenient in collective editions. Three hardcover collections of crime stories, however, do exist: *Adventures of the Infallible Godahl* (1914), *The Notorious Sophie Lang* (1925, published only in England), and *The Book of Murder* (1930, reprinted in paperback in 1988). These books often command prices running into the thousands of dollars, when they are available from secondhand or antiquarian booksellers—and they are seldom readily available even via these outlets. Anthologists of crime stories occasionally include a single selection from among Anderson's many stories. Nevertheless, his fiction ought to reach larger audiences and be given greater study because of its affinities with much else that is admired as mainstream in the American literary canon.

Well before another Anderson—Sherwood—published *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), and preceding Edmund Wilson's late 1924 review of Hemingway's *In Our Time*, a screed credited with directing attention to the short story cycle or sequence as such (Wilson 340-41, 1-4; Nagel 259 n 1-2), Frederick Irving Anderson had created two clusters of stories that could easily be arranged as a cycle or sequence. In *Adventure* (1911-12), he included several stories about Mr. White, a detective, and, subsequently, in the *Saturday Evening Post* (1913-14), he published those depicting a winning rogue, the Infallible Godahl, who continually frustrated efforts at apprehension by New York City's police Deputy Inspector Parr, a professional detective, and Parr's sidekick, the fiction-writer Oliver Armiston.

The Godahl stories saw hardcover collection, as mentioned, in 1914, and, I contend, *Adventures of the Infallible Godahl* could rank in artistic terms with the best of many better known short-story sequences. Ditto *The Notorious Sophie Lang*, a book of stories—collected from original magazine outlets—that feature a female counterpart to rogue criminal Godahl. Sophie Lang must have had a striking appeal because during the 1930s Paramount made three films of her exploits. In addition to Godahl and Sophie, whose intriguing role-playing was maintained by means of literal disguises or shifting personalities, we repeatedly meet Parr, Armiston, and Parr's subordinates: shabby little Pelts, inconspicuous but attentive observer of criminal activities, and handsome red-haired Morel, who, rather like the rogues, adapts to various roles whenever occasion warrants those transformations (e. g., as automobile mechanic, grease-stained and dirty, if necessary; or adept automobile chauffeur; or suave, sophisticated man about town, his manners charming, his garb and mien suitable to that station in life). These figures contribute to the nature of sequential stories. Several other characters who reappear intermittently in Anderson's fiction strengthen a sense of his creating sequences: for example, wealthy socialite Mrs. Billy Wentworth, who appeared in the first Godahl story; or old Ludwig Telfen,

a jewelry merchant, whose wares are the quarry in several stories (for example, "TheWhispering Gallery," in which Sophie Lang manages to loot a costly jewel from wily old Telfen's seemingly impregnable vault); or members of New York's wealthy Trigg family. Such repetitions reinforce the concept of cycle or sequence possibilities at work in Anderson's creative imagination.

Moreover, unlike some better known American short-story cycles, Anderson's more tightly connect later stories with their predecessors. Thus one might easily read *The Notorious Sophie Lang* as a loosely structured novel, much like Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Just as Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* ends when George Willard—whose activities have constituted a strong thread of narrative unity throughout this book—leaves his hometown for a career in a city, Sophie continues to elude Parr and his subordinates yet again as *The Notorious Sophie Lang* closes. Both books consequently may also be contextualized as modernist literature because they highlight fragmented experiences and open-ended conclusions, thereby allowing for possible additional adventures to follow. The same might be said, for illustrative purposes, about two other contemporaneous books of like proportions, Edith Wharton's *Old New York* (1924) or Ernest Hemingway's *In Our Time* (1925).

Anderson published still other fiction that might contribute to cycles. For example, there are spy stories, usually with Panamanian or Canadian settings, which foreground the expertise of Facey, secret agent in the Washington, D. C., Intelligence Force, who sometimes interacts with already established characters like Parr and Armiston or else with Morel alone, as we discover respectively in "The Phantom Guest" and "The Dancing Man." Anderson's familiarity with the New York City theater and music worlds is borne out by linked stories centered in acting and other activities among another group of recurring characters. Why Anderson never attempted to reprint these pieces is not known. Their motifs of the stage, acting and masking, are undeniably elements used by other American authors in effecting characters' fluid identities and, often, con-man, or -woman, tactics. Clearly, in these, and in earlier clusters featuring Mr. White or in those involving characters from New York City arts circles, we encounter the potential for additional volume-length story sequences. Perhaps, had Anderson lived longer, he might have brought together such stories within hardcover form.

Yet another important cycle of stories relate activities of Jason Selfridge and Constable Orlando Sage, whose tactics in bringing down criminals take place mainly in rural New England, although Jason first appeared in a New York City crime story "The Golden Fleece" (*Post*, 4 May 1918), where he defeated a swindler, much as classical Jason ultimately defeated his antagonists, thus obtaining a literal golden fleece. Anderson

uses the term to signal an exquisite irony connected with attempted financial chicanery. Jason and Orlo, as he is called, are often brought into the company of Parr and Armiston, whose presence in rural New England is no coincidence—Armiston and his wife had bought a hideaway home in the vicinity. Jason and Orlo may at first seem like stereotype country hicks, but their acumen quickly dispels that notion.

Alternating stories centered in New York City with those set in New England rural communities, or even several in which foreign locales provided the settings, Anderson appealed to a broad spectrum of American readers who themselves might well have been involved with transitions from rural to urban life or vice versa. The stories set in foreign locales would have appealed on grounds different from those expedited by today's easy travel, along with indirect accessibility through media non-existent in the first half of the twentieth century. Anderson was himself the son of a tailor in a small Illinois town, East Aurora, but many members of his father's family were farmers, so he understandably knew the life of farming. His own move eastward, first to the University of Pennsylvania, then to employment for the *New York World*, then to freelancing, gave him breadth of outlook that figured significantly in his writings. Late in his life he turned to farming near the tiny hamlet of East Jamaica, Vermont, where he proudly showed the results of his manual labors, such as a handmade axe handle, and where no central heating warmed the farmhouse in which he and his sister, Mabel, resided until his death.

Anderson's stories (he also twice attempted serial novelettes) merit renewed attention—remember that he was publishing during the same era as better known writers like Wharton, Cather, O'Neill, Hemingway, early Faulkner—because he created far more rounded characters than we find in the general run of popular magazine fiction during the era. His prose style likewise far outdistanced that of many other writers, and he created excellent ironic humor. Both his New York City and New England works emanate from personal knowledge enhanced by creative imagination—precisely the qualities emphasized in many courses in creative writing today.

In his first detective story, "The Unknown Man" (1911), we encounter telling allusions to Gaboriau and Holmes and Watson, as well as resemblances to Poe's tales (Fisher, *Biobibliography* 15). The first master rogue story, "The Infallible Godahl," in the *Saturday Evening Post* (15 February 1913) reveals greater artistic subtlety. Oliver Armiston, crime fiction writer, portrays the character Godahl within a story detailing a jewel theft. Shortly thereafter Oliver is tricked by a clever criminal into divulging his fictional rogue's secret methods, which the criminal then follows to steal Mrs. Billy Wentworth's precious white diamond. Readers are never quite certain at just which point Anderson's and Armiston's stories fuse. As if his creator were intentionally promoting and maintaining these ambiguities,

Oliver in another story is asked by Sophie Lang, disguised as a wealthy society hostess, "Tell me, Mr. Godahl, are authors ever as clever as their characters?" (*Sophie Lang* 186). Here we confront not just uncertainties over character identities but F. I. Anderson's achievements in framing and metafiction long before the latter term came into widespread use among literary critics. Anderson's characterizations also gain psychological plausibility because of their fittingly transparent names. "Godahl," for instance, merges "God" and "all," indicative of the criminal's assumption of identities based on his own amusing ego and invincibility, the very qualities that made him popular among Anderson's early readers. Are not these same traits akin to those in more familiar American literary protagonists (though not necessarily criminal types), like Newland Archer, Jay Gatsby, Thomas Sutpen, Lavinia Mannon, and many others, who, however, do not triumph over their adversaries? In "The Infallible Godahl," the theft of Mrs. Billy Wentworth's jewel fosters another subtle transparency that bonds naming with action: the lady's "worth" has indeed "went." Appropriately, Oliver means "man of peace," and Oliver Armiston is instrumental in Parr's attempts to bring about peace in the wake of criminal perpetrations.

Like a growing number of other females in early twentieth-century American literature, Sophie Lang is neither simpering nor passive. Instead, she manipulates her male antagonists to the point of distraction by flirting with them or by resorting to other deceptions, functioning thereby as a fascinating con-woman counterpart to the many more familiar con-men in American literary works. Her name, from the Greek, means "wisdom." That her intellect exceeds that of her antagonists also ranks her with many other feminist characters in the canon. Her adroitness in role playing and the shifting identities connected with such performances make Sophie, like Godahl, a character who should be admired by those who concern themselves with instability and indefiniteness in literary characters. Like Nina Leeds—who "leads"—in O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*, Sophie knows how to dominate, to control a situation without seeming to do so.

A striking example of Sophie's identity-shifts occurs in "The Signed Masterpiece." There she has been enjoying being widow to wealthy Amos P. Huntington, last of an old New York family reminiscent of so many in Edith Wharton's fiction, and masquerades briefly as her own French maid. Thus disguised, she flirts mercilessly with Morel, whom she had taken into her employ as a chauffeur when he was acting the part of an auto mechanic in order to keep watch on her. Knowing full well that Morel has been assigned to shadow her, Sophie exercises a playfulness in keeping him where she can at close quarters observe *his* moves, while she simultaneously enjoys her deftness in getting the better of Parr. Once the maid is taken into custody because she is assumed to be Sophie herself, and the

Frenchwoman's actual identity is revealed, Morel is left puzzled about just who did lavish blandishments upon him, and readers are entertained by the unfolding comedy. This is the first Sophie Lang story, and she remains as elusive and devilishly annoying to Parr as she continues uncaught in "The Peacock," the final story in *The Notorious Sophie Lang*. The story is felicitously titled because Sophie struts like a peacock as she baits Parr and his employees and then, with the legendary pride of a peacock, she flaunts her cleverness in escaping from them.

Among Anderson's non-criminal characters Jason Selfridge is notable. Finishing technical college and returning to his New England farm, Jason might be descended from Washington Irving's Brom Bones, or he might represent a less austere rewrite of Edith Wharton's Ethan Frome. Just as Ethan's biblical first name means "endurance" or "strength," Jason's classical first name fittingly characterizes him because, like his literary ancestor, he succeeds where he is supposed to fail—in the outwitting of the criminal mind. The name "Jason" means "healer," and this Jason repeatedly restores balance and order to situations in his rural area that have been disrupted by criminal activities. The "Selfridge" surname gains dimension from Jason's evident self-reliance, of the Emersonian variety, which balances implications of individual realization with the "excite," "rally," and "connect" roots in the etymology of "reliance." The "ridge" suffix firmly emphasizes Jason's ties to the land, along with an ability to look outward, as one does when atop a ridge, so like Anderson's own inclinations to establish a farm home.

Jason bridges the Thoreauvian spirit in *Walden* and those of successive American environmentalist writers like Andrew Lytle, Wendell Berry, or Terry Tempest Williams. A man in the prime of life, Jason is solicitous of those who have lived the better part of their lifespans, like Aunt Ivy Cotton or Gran'ther Noah Seymour. These old persons are also transparently named. Aunt Ivy, like the plant itself, may be said to cling in her outdoor labors to the soil of her farm and to her family hopes and memories, just as "Cotton" denotes her simplistic indoor domesticity. "Noah" means "restful,' and the old man is indeed restful as against the greater labor of Jason, who assists him in the heavy work of hauling tombstones. Then, too, Gran'ther's surname hints at his ability to penetrate to the heart of problems, and of his abilities for imparting to Jason knowledge that the younger man had not learned in college, as the old man only too readily enjoys reminding him. Gran'ther's "learning" results from a long lifetime in synchronization with nature's rhythms and cycles, and his knowledge gained from such pursuits is indeed a kind not usually associated with the formalities of higher education. Such characters tend to remain memorable, even though they appear in short stories, because of Anderson's notable literary art. A deft phrase or two suffice to fix such personages in

readers' minds.

Andersonian humor recalls what had been typical in and devolved from frontier or Southwest yarns, witness the attempted hoax by a New England father and son, Ezra and Urial Beddes, in "Wild Honey." They discover a criminal's long-hidden stash and try to play false by firing a house to conceal the identity of a family corpse, that of Eben, Ezra's father, who had conveniently died just when they needed a legitimate benefactor to conceal their discovery of a fortune in the bee tree they have located. They burn down old Eben's house over the corpse of another man long dead and bury Eben in the vacated grave, intending to claim that Eben died in the fire and that they have recovered his hoarded money. Ironically, Eben's corpse is subsequently exposed by his dogs digging open the grave. Additional assistance is lent by Jason and Constable Sage (another transparent name), aiding visitors Armiston and Parr in exposing the fraud. The metal parts of an artificial leg discovered in the ashes of old Eben's house reveal the true identity of the corpse that Ezra and Urial hoped to palm off as Eben's.

These machinations are framed by the father and son's scheming to get rich quick. Their thinking originates when, tracking a bee tree, they discovered a long concealed fortune. The bee tree motif is reminiscent of those in J. F. Cooper's novel *The Oak Openings* or T. B. Thorpe's tale "Tom Owen, the Bee Hunter," wherein quests after honey trees are important. In "The Magician" Jason owns cows named Rosa and Clytie, and in "The Follansbee Imbroglio," a novelette serialized in the *Post* shortly after "Wild Honey" had appeared there, we encounter a "Dr. Sartoris." Given the confluence of these names, can it be coincidental that an attentive *Post* reader—attentive because he aspired to publish in its pages—may have derived no mean inspiration from Anderson's fiction? I mean William Faulkner, of course, himself first rate in creating irony in naming two of his female characters Rosa and Clytie and in using the Sartoris name. Moreover, just as frontier yarns and Faulkner's fiction display a humor often based on brutality and violence, another Anderson crime (but not detective) story, "The Ivory Hunters," concludes with a small-town man severely beating a former native, Sam Burnell, who had gone to the city to escape punishment for fraud in financial dealings (for which his father took the punishment). The former townsman returns aiming to browbeat locals into accepting a plan for bringing electrical power to the community at a financial rate that would benefit Burnell and his associates, but that would be ruinous to those who received electric power. The irony resides in the discrepancy between Burnell's imagining that he can outwit his quondam townsmen and those shrewd people turning the tables upon him to achieve their long awaited revenge.

We should also remember that Anderson's Godahl descends from Poe's Dupin and from Sherlock Holmes. The former link is attested in the

title of a Poesque story, "Beyond All Conjecture," in which Anderson subtly adapts a phrase from Sir Thomas Browne, which Poe had incorporated into "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." As in Poe's story, an atrocious murder is central in Anderson's, where motive for the murder remains obscure till the conclusion. Apparently Anderson had not forgotten his Poe in the seventeen years since he published "The Unknown Man." Here and in other stories, Anderson, like Poe, also blurs distinctions between supernaturalism and reality. In yet another story, "The Flame in the Socket" (*Post*, 26 February 1916), the parallels between humans and apes, most notably in relation to language, are reminiscent of similar linkages in Poe's renowned detective story.

The Holmes connection may be even more interesting. Depicting Armiston, Detective Parr's right-hand man, Anderson gave to the writer (an "extinct" author whom the police made cease publishing ingenious crime tales so criminals could no longer use his stories as blueprints for their own predations) far more astute, far less dunderheaded psychological makeup than Dr. Watson or the narrator in Poe's Dupin tales evince. The eerie nighttime wailing of a hound at the end of "Wild Honey," which momentarily strikes awe into those who hear, reminds one of the baying of the far more evil, aggressive animal in *The Hound of the Baskervilles.* In all respects, Anderson's stories stand as worthy descendants from those of Poe and Conan Doyle. Perhaps the depth in the characterization of Armiston resulted, however, because Anderson also enjoyed Henry James's fiction, as is attested in character creation and a richly-textured prose expression (but, then, Anderson also liked Dickens, Pope, Swift and Shakespeare, as his telling allusions to their works demonstrate). Anderson directly alluded in "The Wedding Gift" to James's *The Portrait of a Lady.* Many of Anderson's stories entice readers into a dream, or nightmare, world, eventually to awaken them to a sense that the surprises found in crime fiction may likewise understandably operate in everyday life.

As the paragraphs above imply, much of Anderson's fiction falls within the perimeters of literary Gothicism. There are, for example, the continual situations in which some mysterious unknown person or nefarious seemingly supernatural force threatens hapless characters. Anderson's Gothicism is, however, not of the crumbling castle, clanking-chain, ghostly varieties. Machinators are finally exposed as ever so human; rational explanations are provided for what seem to be ghostly agencies at work—for example, in the ghostly presence of Aunt Ivy's "son" in "The Dead End," the weird effects, mentioned above, in "Wild Honey," or the mysterious circumstances perpetrated by a long unrevealed villain in "Beyond All Conjecture." Mysterious events and persons have plausible origins, as we learn in the conclusions to most of Anderson's stories.

Godahl, to be sure, seems able to move through walls, and his

avoiding the snares set by Parr and his associates recalls villains in older Gothics who league with supernatural agencies to gain their wicked ends, which successes prove to be only temporary. In contrast, Godahl is indeed infallible. Sophie Lang, too, seems to have many attributes of a supernaturally-aided ne'er-do-well in earlier Gothics, as Parr's fruitless schemes to capture her indicate. The dark night setting in the opening of "The Magician," where eventually a mysterious stranger exposes two criminals in Jason's barnyard, or the baffling aura of gloom and death, also at night, in "The Door Key" furnish additional examples of Anderson's employing very realistic backdrops that nevertheless create fantastic impressions upon those amidst them. When he set his scenes in New York City, Anderson also imparted a quality of concealment and mystery to urban environs; witness the Amos P. Huntington home in "The Signed Masterpiece," which suggests the Gothic castles or abbeys that concealed dark secrets, or the use of chemical operations in stories like "The Fifth Tube" and "The Alchemists" that recall alchemy and its devotees from older Gothic tales. Mysteries often hover over issues of marriage and family identities—as they do in emphatic terms in "Beyond All Conjecture" and "The Dead End"—and murder often prevents the premature revelation of these marital and familial relationships. In "The Wedding Gift," an ironic title, Morel is largely responsible for the arrest of a pair of murderers, newlyweds, who have done away with the wife's former husband to claim his insurance. Here, instead of chronicling a villain's pursuit of innocents, Anderson turns the tables, in a sensational denouement, where a handsome, heroic type tracks and arrests the criminals. That is, this wedding gift is one of arrest and imprisonment, possibly leading up to a death sentence as a just "gift" to reward their murderous scheme. One might also ponder whether Anderson insinuated a subtle bit of wordplay wherein resonates the German *das Gift*, which means "poison."

In these and other stories Anderson was instrumental in domesticating the Gothic, so to speak, which places him in company with other American authors such as James Purdy and (again) Sherwood Anderson, who contributed to what Frank Baldanza has designated as "Northern Gothic," fiction where psychological underpinnings of transgressive behavior substitute for mere lurid thrills for thrill's sake. This same variety of Gothicism functions in the supernatural fiction of Mary Wilkins Freeman and Edith Wharton (and her *Ethan Frome* as well), to cite but two whose literary careers overlapped with that of F. I. Anderson (Fisher, "Transitions"). Notable similarities, allowing for certain changes wrought by time and place, might be found in the recent Scumble River novels of Denise Swanson, featuring sleuth Skye Dennison, a junior high school guidance counselor in a small, Midwestern, rural community, which seems to be rife with criminous happenings, or those of Caroline Graham,

an English author whose Inspector Barnaby mysteries have enticing psychological substance and richly textured prose that remind one of Anderson's works.

Often the Gothic in an Anderson story is evoked in terse expression. For example in "Dilatory Domiciles," a Sophie Lang story, in response to a query from his employer, Henry, the butler, "becomes suddenly visible like a wishing ghost" (*Sophie Lang* 176). Then Oliver's annoyance at missing Sophie, coupled with the inaccurate time registered on his watch, makes him wonder "what sprite from hell" could have caused his misfortunes (187). Still later in that same story, Oliver mentions a man whose interest in horologerie caused him to be "broken on the wheel by the Spanish Inquisition, as a necromancer" (189). These are a few among many similar stylistic touches in the Anderson stories, which carry along a heritage from antecedent Gothicism within a more contemporary realism. In such ways does F. I. Anderson modify Gothic tradition, which has long been a strong force in American literature.

Anderson's methods might be seen as anticipations of Grace Metalious' finely wrought Gothic in *Peyton Place* or, nearer our own era, that found in *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* or in the crime stories of Charlaine Harris or Larry McMurtry—for those who enjoy disclosures of horrifying secrets in small-town or rural life—or those urban thrillers of James Lee Burke or Meagan McKinney (in her novel, *A Man to Slay Dragons* [1996]), all of whom present ample intrigue and transgressiveness enveloped within verisimilar settings. The overlaps of villain with hero/heroine also constitute familiar characterization in American literature. These same elements may also be found, similar in kind, different in degree, from *The Scarlet Letter* and *Moby-Dick* to the fiction of John O'Hara, Truman Capote, Flannery O'Connor, Alice Walker or Tony Morrison.

Frederick Irving Anderson is no second-rate, negligible author, but one whose work merits revisitation and reconsideration as pertinent to many aspects of our national literature. His themes and characters resemble those in the American literary mainstream. Godahl and Sophie Lang, as well as several other characters in Anderson's fiction, harken back to Melville's Confidence Man, to Henry James's Osmond, and to some of Twain's figures who shift roles with ease and whose transformations enhance the writings in which they appear. The rich texture, often in the form of subtle irony, in Anderson's written expression is also unmistakable. The humorous and Gothic elements in his work share kinship with much else in American literature. Just as writings by so many other recovered names in the American literary roll call have been of late years revisited and acclaimed, F. I. Anderson's works invite a kindred reconsideration and a rescue from

premature, but too extended, burial in the pages of early twentieth-century magazines and rare book collections.

Note

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The Myth of Quentin Compson: Dealing with Loss and Fragmentation in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

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Despite the various narrative perspectives and the overpowering nature of Faulkner's main character, Thomas Sutpen, the story of *Absalom, Absalom!* belongs to Quentin Compson as the plot moves from past to present to mythology and as Quentin tries to cope with the lessons of the South that he has inherited. In an effort to understand these movements, the following will be, primarily, a discussion of plot as a series of narrative shifts seen in terms of Gothic constructs. These narrative shifts lead Quentin to understand his society, his family, and himself by changing the narratives of Thomas Sutpen from the incomprehensible past of his father and Miss Rosa Coldfield to a seemingly more manageable mythology that results, for Quentin, in an unacceptable moral dilemma. Elements of both traditional mythology and the Gothic are part of Faulkner's attempt to create a unifying new mythology for the new South that Quentin inherits.

At the philosophical base of *Absalom, Absalom!* there is a Gothic foundation that encourages a plot reading that recognizes the effort to create myth in the story. In her preface to *Ivy Gripped the Steps*, Elizabeth Bowen states that war causes a "violent destruction of solid things, the explosion of the illusion that prestige, power, and permanence attach to bulk and weight, [leaving everyone] heady and disembodied" (vii). This characterization is appropriate for both Faulkner and Quentin, the overseer of the narrative. The legacy of the Civil War was very present in Faulkner's time, and because of that legacy, there was a need to reconcile the two Mississippis that he knew: the pre-Civil War Mississippi passed to him in stories, and the post-war Mississippi in the midst of Reconstruction. Another quality of the Gothic, as Steven Bruhm suggests, is that it "registers a crisis of personal history" through which a character "is forced simultaneously to mourn the lost object (a parent, God, social order, lasting fulfillment through knowledge [and] sexual pleasure) and to *become* the object lost through identification and imitation" (268). This Gothic construct helps us see the process through which Quentin deconstructs the myths of his father and Miss Coldfield in his effort to construct a modern mythology that allows him to deal with his own inheritance.

As *Absalom, Absalom!* progresses, we witness Quentin's acquisition of his Self. Characters in the Gothic seek "autonomy of soul and ego, and personal investment in will and self-reliance [that] have all been shattered by the social and the ravages of the unconscious upon [the] ego" (Bruhm 269). The process that Quentin uses to regain this unity is signified by

Faulkner through the renovation of the stories about the past he inherits from his father and Rosa Coldfield into a comprehensive mythology of the South, through which he will be able to either accept or disavow that South. The fact that the story itself is pregnant with mythic and Biblical references and characters further serves to reinforce and encourage a reading in which history is transformed by the sheer weight of its moral implication in the destruction faced by the Sutpens, Coldfields, and Compsons. Lennart Bjork states that "Faulkner invites the reader to see nearly all the protagonists of the story in roles that are applicable to both the Greek and the Hebrew cultures" (197). Bjork also asserts that "in conveying his ideas to the readers . . . [Faulkner] employs both symbols and themes, of Hebrew or Christian origin, that will yield associations as universally comprehensible and meaningful as possible" (200). The obvious Judeo-Christian myth is the one suggested by the title. The Greek myth is represented on two fronts. The first is in the echo inherent in the Absalom myth, and the second is in the language Mr. Compson uses as he relates the story to Quentin in terms of Greek mythology. So, by simple allusion, the text carries powerful mythological weight, but for Faulkner and Quentin the mythology is embedded in the story as an undercurrent of pattern that leads Quentin through his search for meaning in the stories of his past. That is, Faulkner not only allows the mythology to work on an allusory level, but uses it also to signify that the myth itself is important, maybe more so than the narratives themselves.

The symbolic nature of mythology is used by Faulkner to help anchor Quentin's story. According to Patricia Tobin, "myth . . . is supposed to represent an eternal pattern. Although myth refers to events alleged to have taken place in the past, its operational value is that the specific model which it describes is timeless" (255). In the Davidic myth, Sutpen-David, Judith-Tamar, and Henry-Charles-Amnon-Absalom are a part of that Judeo-Christian myth of retribution, incest, and patriarchal power (Bjork 200). As Bjork indicates, quoting Faulkner, this is a story "of a man who wanted sons and the sons destroyed him" (200). The Greek mythic structure uses the tragedy of Agamemnon (Bjork 202), whose familial relationships are as confusing and uncertain as those of the Sutpens. The patterns are typical of myths in which sons/relatives are sacrificed in the place of a king for the benefit of the land or people. According to Sir James George Frazer, the ritual sacrifices were performed out of duty when a king was obliged to stave off disaster in both ancient Greek and Semitic mythologies (1. 336-41).

The Judeo-Christian pattern comes most forcibly through the recollection of Miss Rosa Coldfield. Her account of Sutpen and her connection to that dead family is couched in the terms of a woman raised by "one long invincible line of Methodists" (272). It is because of this strict Methodist upbringing that Rosa sees events in strong Old Testament terms.

For Rosa, Sutpen comes like a devil "out of quiet thunderclap . . . (man-horse-demon) . . . [with the] faint sulphur reek still in his hair clothes and beard" (4). In true Old Testament fashion, her family, because of their association with Sutpen, is doomed by some "fatality and curse" as if "God himself were seeing to it that it was performed and discharged to the last drop and dreg" (14). Not only, in Rosa's terms, does this doom extend to her family, but the entire South is cursed because of this man, and that is why "Heaven saw fit to let [the South] lose" (13). The obvious Judeo-Christian overtones in which Rosa couches her language are representative of the pattern of divine retribution that permeates Quentin's life and the consciousness of the entire South at that time.

As the son of the Compson family, Quentin also inherits the classical mythology of his father, "reader of the Classics and practitioner of elegant resignation" (Tobin 258). Mr. Compson's classical interpretation of history is at odds with Rosa's Christian understanding. For Compson, Sutpen is no "man-horse-demon," but a Greek hero "on a big hard-ridden roan horse, man and beast looking as they had been created out of thin air and set down in the bright summer sabbath sunshine" (23-24). Sutpen, himself, is a force of will who pitted "his own fallible judgment and mortal clay against not only human but natural forces" (41). Even Rosa does not escape these turns of classical allusion, and is described as "Cassandra-like" (47) by Mr. Compson. Quentin is caught between the Christian belief structures of Miss Rosa and the classical structures of his father. Both try to force their own patterns of understanding upon Quentin. For Rosa it is a matter of understanding the will of God in the punishment of a wicked people. For Mr. Compson the pattern is a romantic one that has been played out since classical times in the ebb and flow of humanity.

It is absolutely necessary that Faulkner uses the turns of perspective and figures of point of view in order to help Quentin establish his own patterns and understanding of his past. In a story about Quentin's reestablishment of a "self . . . shattered to pieces" (Bruhm 269), Faulkner must provide us with the patterns of mythology that Quentin can use to amalgamate his own understanding of himself and the place from which he comes. Mr. Compson has formed his understanding in classical Greek structures, and Rosa Coldfield's solace is in the Old Testament's God of rewards and punishment, but for Quentin these constructs will not work because they have already failed. The former fails because the classical structures cannot apply to a South established on "'a thousand homicides and a thousand copulations and divorcements'" (71) in which there is no discernable moral. The latter has failed because in the modern world, the one in which Quentin lives, God is not personal, but removed.

Quentin's major question is *Why*? Why must he know this story or be forced to tell it? Quentin must bear both mythic traditions. For Mr.

Compson, Quentin is part of the myth, part of a new generation that will keep the myth alive (7-8). For Rosa Coldfield, Quentin is a young evangelist who will go out and tell the story of the fall of the South as one disastrous parable (5). Quentin, however, does not care as his elders want him to; he sees the world differently. It does not matter "that the land or earth or whatever it was got tired of [Sutpen] and turned and destroyed him [because] it's going to turn and destroy us all someday, whether our name happens to be Sutpen or Coldfield or not" (7). No, for Quentin, there must be something more to this story for him to want it, something that explains and answers. Faulkner uses Quentin's and Shreve's narrative to lead Quentin and the reader into a new mythology of locality in order to meld those two parts divided by the Civil War, the Romantic South and the Reconstructed South, a mythology which holds personal, moral implications for Quentin and readers as well.

Quentin's new mythology begins to be realized at the Sutpen family plot. It is here—with "the quiet rain, the faint pearly globules, materializing on the . . . five headstones like drops of not-quite-congealed meltings from cold candles on the marble" (153)—that Quentin begins to understand the task that lies before him. Symbolically, the graveyard is the location where Mr. Compson's and Rosa's constructs fail and Quentin's new mythology begins to form. Mr. Compson's history fails because underneath the "headstones leaning a little awry" (153) and "both . . . flat slabs . . . cracked across the middle" (153) are the physical remains of that past. Mr. Compson's tragic heroes are dead and rotting, and their significance is only human. Rosa's history fails "in the faint light which the raindrops brought particle by particle into the gloom" (153) because here is her demon and his progeny, her curse and Old Testament made into a hide-away for "some small animal—possum probably" (153), and made real for Quentin. Now, Quentin understands. "Yes, I have had to listen too long" (157), he says to himself. He has become a passive listener to history, a history that does not work inside the world he knows, and he begins to build a new myth to explain the fragmented history he has learned.

The highly symbolic scene is where Patricia Tobin's argument that *Absalom, Absalom!* represents a dialectical transformation from myth into reality breaks down. Quentin's understanding is not the beginning of a "movement away from myth into history" (Tobin 261) for Quentin, who sees verification of the past in front of him in the cemetery, but the reverse. The past is proven, but the understanding of it needs to be redefined in the hopes that Quentin can "survive, not only physically but spiritually" (Bowen xi). Reading the story as Lennart Bjork does, as an amalgamation of Greek and Judeo-Christian mythology, also disintegrates under the "faint pearly globules" (153) because these myths are dead for Quentin, as dead as the Sutpens.

The reason these two arguments do not work is because they see the second part of the novel as either Quentin and Shreve joining the pantheon of Greek and Christian mythology (Bjork), or as Quentin and Shreve creating a new history out of the myths of the past. In modern or contemporary Gothic structures "what happen[s is] out of all proportion to our faculties for knowing, thinking and checking up" (Bowen xi). Quentin must now create a new narrative "to convince [himself] that the horror of consciousness is not [his], that it really comes from the outside" (Bruhm 271). Quentin creates a new myth to deal with the horrors he has experienced. The creation of new myth matches a modern world. In the Gothic, it is not the myth that becomes past or present; it is the present that becomes myth, made symbolic and iconic to help us deal with that place and time in which we live. This new mythology is very important for Quentin, whose fragmentation is so varied (Greek myth, Judeo-Christian Dogma; Romantic South, Reconstruction South; small provincial Jefferson, cosmopolitan Harvard; inheritor of dead stories, conscripted storyteller). It is imperative that Quentin create an individual mythology that places each character in the narrative into some legend, some order of symbolic significance, and removes all of them from the world of reality so that he can begin to grow into a relationship with the modern world.

It is in the second part of the novel, which is primarily the construction of Quentin and Shreve, where the creation of a modern mythology begins to take place. That it is Quentin's mythology, and not just a story he shares with Shreve, is evident in the control Quentin exerts over the narrative when Shreve attempts to trivialize it. When Shreve reduces the story to Sutpen's desire for male progeny (176), Quentin corrects him by supplying more facts for the myth with an "overtone of sullen bemusement, smoldering outrage" (177). Quentin then relates a story of the creation of "a man of heroic magnitude" (Bjork 196) who, in hopes of establishing a dynasty of his own, by sheer force of will left his garden paradise, traveled down to Haiti, and returned to the ordered lands of Jefferson to "overrun suddenly the hundred square miles of tranquil and astonished earth and drag house and formal gardens violently out of the soundless nothing" (4). Quentin relates this creation myth to remind Shreve that this an important story, not just for its narrative, but for the meaning that Quentin can get from it. Of the three people in the dorm room, Shreve, Quentin-Harvard and Quentin-South (4), only Quentin-South knows the story, and only Quentin-Harvard can couch it in the terms a "middle-class [Canadian] capitalist who finds no dignity in the material basis of life" (Tobin 262) can understand, terms of gain and loss, a tally sheet, so to speak.

However, there is more to the myth of Sutpen than gain-one-lose-two for Quentin. Thomas Sutpen represents a corruption through innocence (Bjork 203). His "moral degradation is gradual" (Bjork 203) because

"courage and skill" (200) are not enough to establish a dynasty on Earth; it takes connection to people, and Thomas Sutpen is not connected. In Quentin's time, connection is important, and someone without that connection is doomed, as Sutpen and his family are doomed. But it is more than connection. The myth is also about familial relationships and the proper role of individuals within the family and how they relate to one another in the world they inhabit. If these relationships are not fulfilled and the connections to each other and the world are not made, then there is only one possible outcome for this modern myth. In his mythology, apathy is the first moral; Quentin feels the apathy growing between him and his family as he begins to understand the stories he oversees. "Yes. I have heard too much, I have been told too much; I have had to listen to too much, too long thinking yes" (168), Quentin tells us, as he breaks away from the stories of his past and his family.

Quentin sees his disassociation from his family in terms of the Sutpens' fall. Henry, Charles, Judith, Clytie, and even Rosa must seek out new familial relationships in the disconnected mythological world of Sutpen's Hundred and create "a sacred social order to which [they] can pledge allegiance in good faith" (Bruhm 273). Judith, Clytie, and Rosa become, alternately, sisters, mothers, and daughters, while Charles, Henry and Judith become brothers and sister, brothers-in-law, and wife (Judith). This intermingling of familial obligation is the second moral for Quentin. Faulkner demonstrates this moral in the death of Sutpen. The end result of a disconnection with family is death. Sutpen tries for a third time to establish his dynasty, this time with the granddaughter of his onetime servant, Wash Jones, who in a moment of lucidity realizes "that he was right in the face of all fact and usage and everything else" (230). This statement is the declaration of the antithesis of the moral for Quentin, and for Faulkner the enunciation of the fall of the Romantic South. Quentin understands that the South was wrong because it is no longer a question of right or wrong in any Romantic sense.

As Quentin's myth becomes solid, and he begins to identify himself, Shreve, Charles, and Henry with each other (267), as a kind of mythological everyman, independent of the father, his understanding of the importance of the new myth begins to become more solid. At this point, Quentin meets the final part of the myth. Quentin enters "the bare stale room" and finds "the wasted yellow face with closed, almost transparent eyelids on the pillow, the wasted hands crossed on the breast as if he were already a corpse" (298). This meeting with Henry is a part of what Tobin calls "a paradigmatic pattern, a symbolic model for the present" (267). Faulkner uses this model not, as Tobin claims, for Quentin to "face [in order to] deny his own mythic south" (269), but rather so Quentin can do that which Shreve cannot—because Shreve was not "born there" (289)—so that he can

"understand it" (289). What Quentin understands now is that attenuation which so permeates the novel, that unraveling of meaning, of theme, from the real and fictional accounts of the history to which Quentin owes his self.

Quentin's understanding, however, is expensive. In this new mythology he cannot blame Agamemnon's tragic design or God or the South for the fragmentation of his ego. It is a modern mythology for a modern man, a man subject to all the fallibility of every man, and the individual must claim responsibility for the patterns in his own life. He will not be sanctified by the God who has allowed Miss Rosa Coldfield to be so hard in the face of the indignities suffered at the hands of Thomas Sutpen, nor will classical tragedy lead Quentin into the same resigned understanding of place and time that has comforted his father in the New South. Instead, Quentin must either accept his role or disown it. Quentin's choice seems to be reflected in his lament, "*I don't! I don't hate it! I don't hate it!*" (303).

The use of the Gothic structure helps Faulkner depict the splintering of the self caused by the Civil War, since, as Bowen states in her preface, war shatters the foundations upon which we build our ideas. In the post-Civil War South, those ideas of self were nearly eradicated. In *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner expresses the fact that even though these foundations were flawed to begin with, there must still be something upon which to begin rebuilding. Bruhm states, "The Gothic's basic investment in ravaging history and fragmenting the past, meshes with our own investments now as we attempt to reinvent history as a way of healing the perpetual loss in modern existence" (274). So we see Quentin's struggle, and Faulkner's, in the struggle for understanding that Quentin goes through in order to create a mythology that works in a modern world.

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The Discourse of Ownership in Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*

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In the novel *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, Paule Marshall not only examines the disparity of the post-colonial identity, but she also provides a means of reconciliation, a method by which an identity can be reestablished for the former colonized body. Since the colonial power oppresses those whom it is seeking to control, these subjugated persons often find difficulty in preserving the complexity of their identities and the sanctity of their manhood or womanhood. By exploring the aftermath of a person's subjugation, Marshall examines a crucial and compelling moment of post-colonial study; she shows how attaining physical property and emotional property can neither make the colonized person secure in his or her identity nor make him or her more of a man or woman. Although gaining physical and emotional property can bring power and authority to the colonized person, neither guarantees that a person will gain autonomy.

Presenting how the subjected person continues to experience oppression outside of the boundaries of the colonized land, Marshall elucidates the enigmatic struggle for retribution that follows colonization. Both Deighton and Silla Boyce, the protagonist's parents in *Brown Girl, Brownstones,* remain oppressed because their identities are based on accumulating physical and emotional properties that are exterior to themselves. However, Silla and Deighton's daughter Selina reestablishes her identity, not by acquiring possessions (physical property) or controlling another person (emotional property), but through the process of reconciliation that takes place within herself as she becomes a woman.

Understanding the constructs of the post-colonial identity is key to comprehending how Selena formulates her identity. According to Paulo Freire's text *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* for the post-colonial body to regain identity, the colonized must recognize that dignity is common to all human life. When this dignity is acknowledged, the oppressed must seek liberation as they struggle against those who have denigrated them. However, this struggle to regain their humanity most often leads those subjugated to similarly oppress others (Freire 26). Since their perception of themselves has become impaired due to their submersion in the reality of oppression, the colonized tend to identify with those responsible for their suppression, finding in the oppressor their "model of manhood or womanhood" (28). To achieve liberation, the oppressed must comprehend "the reality of their oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation that they can transform" (Freire 31). Freire's

model enables readers to better understand the characterizations in Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones* and to more fully appreciate Selina's progression toward liberation. Selina's maturation occurs as a process of self-awareness, an ownership of self, that she achieves by gaining knowledge from her parents. Selina develops initially by replicating and ultimately by refuting their acquisition of both physical and emotional property.

For Deighton Boyce, securing physical property makes him feel more like a man. By spending most of his money on clothing, Deighton desires to be perceived as successful. Often seen wearing a new silk shirt, suede shoes, and trousers, Deighton is accustomed to having nice things, having experienced a childhood in which he had been given all that his single mother could provide. During a conversation about Deighton's upbringing, Virgie Farnum confides in Silla, "That boy had everything coming up. Always with shoe 'pon his foot and white shirt" (32). Silla adds, "He was always dressing up like white people" (34). Deighton's dressing "like white people" illustrates how the oppressed desires to be like the oppressor. He mimics the white man's attire because in dressing extravagantly and spending money frivolously, Deighton feels that he can attain the power and respect that the white man receives. Deighton finds in the oppressor what Freire refers to as his "model of manhood" (28). However, as an oppressed man, Deighton experiences subjugation on multiple levels. Oppressed by his wife, he cannot be the primary provider for his family, and oppressed by the white employers who deny him entry into the job market, Deighton derives a wavering sense of self worth.

Deighton feels more like a man when he can walk with his head held high, knowing that he is dressed as well as any white man. As Deighton walks down Fulton Street on Saturday night, he witnesses men carousing in a bar: "Occasionally Deighton paused and watched them at a distance, jarred always by the violence in their coarse play, yet strangely envious and respectful. For somehow, even though they were sporting like boys, there was no question that they were truly men" (37). Deighton admires in these men a freedom that he does not have in his state of subjugation, but he does not recognize that his manhood can be "proved" by means other than these.

After Deighton's encounter with these men, Marshall adds to the narration, "But what of those, then, to whom these proofs of manhood were alien? Who must find other, more sanctioned, ways? It was harder, that was all . . . None of this ever crystallized for Deighton as he stood watching them, and he would turn away thinking only that they were somehow more fortunate" (38). In what he considers to be his less fortunate state, Deighton experiences insecurity in his manhood; however, he reclaims a sense of security, albeit a superficial and transitory one, by attaining physical possessions. Deighton, in all his expenditures, places his funds in investments that guarantee no returns. He cannot receive monetary gain

from his clothing because even when he dresses professionally, the employer turns Deighton away because of the color of his skin, thus leaving him feeling insecure.

Deighton experiences a reaffirmation of his manhood, however, when he receives the deed to the land in Barbados that his sister has bequeathed to him. This piece of land, an invaluable piece of physical property, allows Deighton to consider a possible future filled with hope. Viewing the land in a different light than he views the brownstone houses of Brooklyn, Deighton sees the land as a place he can call his own, a place where his manhood will no longer be threatened. The brownstones of Brooklyn he views more as a burden than a benefit: "Downstairs in the master bedroom, Deighton heard the rasping complaint of the pipes and muttered, 'These old houses is more trouble than profit'" (21). However, the home that he envisions in Barbados allows him to conceptualize all he desires. Analogous to his frivolous expenditures and failed investitures, Deighton does not look at the land in Barbados as something that can bring him financial stability or future profit; he views it as a place where he can live and gain respect. When Silla asks Deighton how much land they own, he responds, "A lot in a place that's only 166 square miles—and a lot for a colored man to own in a place where the white man own everything" (25). Donette A. Francis equates Deighton's desire to own land with his "self-actualization" and "self-authority" (22). Deighton refuses to sell the land because owning it means that he owns something the white man does not.

According to Freire, through identifying with the oppressor, the oppressed "have no consciousness of themselves as persons or as members of the oppressed class," and Freire further posits that owning land allows those formerly oppressed to become bosses over their own workers and provides them with a greater opportunity to replicate the actions of their oppressors (28). As a powerful landowner, Deighton foresees a promising future in which he becomes a man in control, but hopes of this future shatter when his possible reality changes into a dissolving dream. Deighton discovers that Silla has secretly arranged for the land to be sold, and he confronts disillusionment when he realizes the futility of placing his expectations in physical property, an entity now external to his control. When the envelope carrying the bank draft arrives at the Boyce home, Silla reveals what she has done: her correspondence with his sister, her mastery of his signature, her plea to have the sister sell the land. Silla accomplishes all these things without Deighton's knowledge because she cannot tolerate "owning" land without it bringing profit. Thus, Silla receives the bank note for $900, a bank note that will require Deighton's signature for payment. With the selling of the land comes the relinquishing of Deighton's aspirations: "His head dropped and he might have been inspecting his polished shoes, the crease in his trousers or the linoleum's gay pattern. But

really he was watching the slow dissolution of his dream" (115). With this dream denied, Deighton redeems the bank note and purchases frivolous gifts for his family with the money.

These gifts Deighton purchases reaffirm his emphasis on attaining physical property for the sole purpose of enhancing physical appearance since all purchases for his wife and daughters are extravagant clothing, worn to enhance their physical beauty. Nothing that he purchases can bring the family future wealth or financial stability as he strives to regain that manhood that he has lost. After his shopping spree, Deighton tells his family, "'I come in looking like I was somebody big . . . They look at me funny at first . . . But all I did was to start counting muh money . . . and I tell yuh they almost break their neck running to wait 'pon muh . . . Ha! Ha! I was never call so much of 'Sir' in all muh born days'" (125). Deighton justifies these expenditures by stating, "Now come Sunday you put on yuh fancy coat and one these pretty dresses and walk the streets with yuh friends like you's people too" (128). He believes that his daughters and wife are "better people" in the eyes of their society based not on the houses that they own, but on the outward appearance that they project. Deighton feels this way because he derives his identity and manhood based on his appearance, the physical property he values most.

Since his faltering sense of self-worth has largely been based on his appearance, Deighton regresses into a state of emotional vulnerability when his physical appearance is marred by the mechanical accident he experiences at his workplace. When he recuperates at the hospital, Deighton forbids his daughters to come see him. Silla states, "That's the only thing he said to me there in the hospital. 'Don let the children come here.' Those are the only words he had for me and then he turn 'way his face" (156). With the father's physical deformity comes his emasculation. The little pride that he had in his appearance dies like the nerves in his arm forever damaged from the accident. Silla understands how her husband prizes his appearance, and she admits to Selina, "You can't understand that with a man like your father, the last thing he would want would be for wunna to see him when he ain dress back and making like a big sports. Leave him, nuh. He got enough to bear without the look on your face when you see him in that bed" (157). When the father returns from the hospital, he is never the same. He spends his time on attaining emotional, rather than physical property. Emotional property becomes all those things in which he "invests" his thoughts, feelings, hopes, and even dreams.

Looking for anything in which he could gain acceptance, Deighton relinquishes his autonomy and wavering sense of manhood to the movement known as "The New Light." All of Deighton's thoughts and energies are placed into this emotional vacuum associated with Father Peace: "During those weeks he read only those newspapers and nothing beyond their pages

seemed important" (160). He is no longer the father Selina has known and loved; he is a man possessed by this "religious" order. Being in this religious group does not help Deighton regain an identity, nor does it help him reconcile the complications of his life. Michael L. Cobb argues, "Deighton is an extreme example of the ineffectiveness of religious belief, of adherence to doctrine that cannot adequately address the real problems circling him until his inevitable death" (633). When Selina goes to experience the "Peace Movement" with her father, Marshall describes the scene: "Selina was embarrassed for them. She felt suddenly old and terribly wise, while [the congregation] seemed to her like children being led by the piper into the sea" (166). Deighton is led into the sea because of his involvement with this group. Unable to stand seeing her husband succumb to this lifestyle, Silla reports Deighton for not being a naturalized citizen. He is immediately deported to Barbados, but he plunges to his death upon seeing the coast of his former homeland.

Deighton achieves defeat because he places his emotional investments in an entity that remains outside of himself. He is controlled by Father Peace, and when confronted with the possibility of returning home, a home in which he had invested all his hopes when he owned land there, Deighton realizes all that he has lost. He will have nothing; he will be despised, rather than envied. He understands the futility of his existence upon his arrest, and when confronted with his homeland, he knows he can never return to that life, a life apart from Father Peace, a life joined with his failures:

> He studied the policeman's face and in his shattered mind it became the white faces in the stores of Bridgetown long ago. Those faces, stippled red by the tropic sun, that had always refused his request of a clerk's job and thus turned the years at school, and his attempts to be like them in his dark wool English-cut suits (even in sodden heat!), and his face—clean though black—into nothing; that had utterly unmanned him before he was yet a man; that had stripped him of any possibility of self and then hustled him out. (182)

An emasculated man without dignity, Deighton plunges into the depths of the sea to rid himself of being subjugated by his society and oppressed by a religious order that has left him in a state of incompetence. He becomes symbolic of the self-depreciation that Freire argues is a characteristic of the oppressed, a quality that derives from an internalization that they are "good for nothing, know nothing, and are incapable of learning anything—that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive—that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness" (Freire 45). The "darkness" of his life apart from Father Peace and the New Light overwhelms him to the point of suicide. In

those capsizing waves, he views the rising and falling of himself, the loss of his identity and manhood.

While Deighton has invested all of himself into tangible and intangible things that have brought him no return, no monetary gain, and no sense of self worth, Silla Boyce does not base her self worth on her appearance but on the amount of property that she owns and the amount of money that she is able to receive from renting her brownstones to tenants. Silla's view of investments and expenditures is completely opposite from that of her husband. As Deighton spends every last penny he has on fancy clothes, Silla saves her every penny, trying to secure enough money to "buy house." Silla only desires to invest in those things that can bring her financial gain.

Silla's motivation for financial gain results from her upbringing in Barbados. Unlike her husband who never had to want for anything, Silla has worked for everything. Silla argues, "Not a soul ever give me nothing a-tall, a-tall. I always had to make my own luck" (29). Silla's childhood was characterized by hard labor. In describing the oppression of her childhood to Selina, Silla states, "The Third Class is a set of little children picking grass in a cane field from the time God sun rise in his heaven till it set. With some woman called a Driver to wash yuh tail in licks if yuh dare look up. Yes, working harder than a man at the age of ten" (45). Silla's childhood has made her a woman driven to attain financial security at any cost.

As she desires to attain financial security, Silla replicates the actions of the oppressor. Silla demonstrates the "strongly possessive consciousness" that Freire describes as an obsession in which her "consciousness tends to transform everything surrounding it into an object of its domination" (Friere 40). To achieve domination, Silla manipulates others. Her work ethic becomes corrupted, and her intentions in gaining physical property become conniving. Silla's possessiveness prompts her to make more money to the betterment of herself but to the detriment of others. Silla states, "If I could only make upstairs into smaller rooms and charge little more . . . But that old woman wun dead and the free-bee ain thinking about moving" (201). To decrease Miss Mary's time as an occupant in her home, Silla frightens Miss Mary, her old white tenant, and threatens to have the Board of Health come to "see all the dirt and get [Miss Mary] out of the way" (203). A few months after this distressing encounter, Miss Mary dies, and Silla begins renting that space to another tenant to make more money. Another boarder whom Silla treats unfairly is Suggie Skeet; Silla evicts Suggie as an "undesirable tenant" (210). Silla illustrates her obsession with material wealth by stating, "People got to make their own way. And nearly always to make your way in this Christ world you got to be hard and sometimes misuse others, even your own" (224). This sentiment echoes Freire's argument that "the earth, property, production, the creations of people, people themselves—everything

is reduced to the status of objects at [Silla's] disposal" (Freire 40).

Silla's misuse of others indicates how she understands that "owning house" represents one of the only ways that people in her position can get ahead. She represents what Freire describes as the "materialistic concept of existence. Money is the measure of all things, and profit the primary goal" (Freire 40). Thus, Silla views physical property as a commodity that will allow her to rise above her current situation, to achieve her goals of profiting herself. Silla states:

> Take when we had to scrub the Jew floor. He wasn't misusing us so much because our skin was black but because we cun do better. And I din hate him. All the time I was down on his floor I was saying to myself: "Lord, lemme do better than this. Lemme rise! No power is a thing that don really have nothing to do with color." (224)

Silla's view of "doing better" means having a home that she owns and having other properties that she can rent to tenants at a costly price. Financial stability and monetary gain motivate Silla to become the strong willed, autonomous woman that she is. Securing property makes Silla feel more successful and more respected among those in her society, but Silla's autonomy is threatened when her husband squanders the money received from selling the land in Barbados, the money she had plotted to gain for her own financial advancement.

When the financial growth from the selling the Barbadian land is denied to Silla, she experiences a loss in autonomy as the result of her investing her self-worth in physical possessions. Similar to Deighton's loss of identity because of his accident, Silla loses her identity because of Deighton's flippant spending of the bank note: "Each time he opened a box their eager arms shot up . . . After a time the mother appeared in the doorway and watched them with lifeless eyes, her rage choking her, and she was nothing in the midst of their gaiety" (127). At this point, physical property becomes more difficult for Silla to attain because she does not have the money from selling of the bank note, and after her husband's death, she does not have the little bit of income that Deighton provided for the family as a worker in the mattress factory. Therefore, Silla must find an outlet in which she can invest her emotional property.

In investing her emotional property, Silla again replicates the actions of the oppressor. According to Freire, the oppressed experience a duality in which they are simultaneously themselves and the oppressor whom their consciousness has internalized (Freire 43). For the oppressed, they feel "an irresistible attraction toward the oppressor and their way of life. Sharing this way of life becomes an overpowering aspiration" (Freire 44). Freire posits, "The oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors, to imitate them, to follow them. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in the middle-class

oppressed, who yearn to be equal to the 'eminent' men and women of the upper class" (44). By joining the Barbadian Homeowners Association, Silla can achieve this "overpowering aspiration." Being involved in a successful organization of her peers allows Silla to feel as "eminent" as her oppressor. Replicating their "way of life," Silla positions the Barbadian Homeowners Association as an outlet for an investment of her emotional property; her thoughts, her dreams, her feelings, and her desires become spent on this association. This organization represents all that Silla has worked so hard to attain, and it also represents how Silla defines life: "Life? Lemme tell you . . . It out here scuffling to get by. And having little something so you can keep your head up and not have these white people push you 'bout like cattle" (172).

Besides the Barbadian Association, Silla invests her "emotional property" into another entity, her daughter Selina. Silla wants to control Selina's future, and this control becomes a way in which Silla can reclaim the autonomy lost after Deighton squanders the money from the bank note. However, in her reclaiming a lost perception of self, Silla begins to mimic the degrading actions of the colonizer by becoming a source of oppression for Selina. After the death of Deighton, the mother approaches her daughter to comfort her, and Silla soon realizes that Selina is solely hers to control: "Despite the tenderness and wonder and admiration of [Silla's] touch, there was a frightening possessiveness. Each caress declared that [Silla] was touching something which was finally hers alone" (185). To possess Selina by dictating her actions, Silla strongly recommends that her daughter become involved in the Barbadian Homeowners Association. Selina does become involved in this group, but her reasons for doing so are deceptive.

In deceiving the members of the group, Selina participates in what Freire terms "a type of horizontal violence" in which the oppressed begins to indirectly strike out at her own comrades for the "pettiest of reasons" (Freire 44). Selina's "petty" reason in perpetuating this "horizontal violence" is to subversively become active in the group so they will provide her with a scholarship. She joins the organization not because she agrees with their purpose, but because she wants to utilize their charity for her own gain. When Silla realizes that her daughter's involvement with the Barbadian Homeowner Association has been a charade, Silla faces the same dark sea that Deighton has leaped into. Trying to control her own daughter, a force outside of herself, Silla fails to achieve security with her emotional property. To Silla, Selina is no longer the devoted daughter who can be controlled by her mother. When Silla's power over Selina ends, Silla faces a world without her daughter in it. Selina departs to live her own life, out of the shadows of both her father and her mother.

Before Selina can walk away from the shadows of her parents, she must first come to an understanding of "the mother," and this understanding

of the mother marks the impetus for Selina's departure: "Above all, she longed to understand the mother then, for she knew, obscurely, that she would ever really understand anything until she did" (145). Selina's understanding of the mother is the result of Selina's acquiring "the full meaning of her black skin" (289). After Selina's racially charged encounter with Margaret's mother, Selina realizes the reasons that her mother has invested so much effort in attaining physical property and becoming involved in the Barbadian Homeowners Association: "And [Selina] was one of the them: the mother and the Bajan women, who had lived each day what she had come to know" (293). Lisa D. McGill argues that the racism incident with Margaret's mother provides an understanding of the Bajan-American mother Silla, who was once seen as denying Selina her dreams (38). Selina's realization of her commonality with these women is the reason she cannot accept the scholarship from the Barbadian Homeowners, because if Selina were to accept the award, she would be exploiting these women in the same way that they have experienced exploitation from their oppressors; Selina cannot become a source of their oppression by dishonestly taking the money that they have worked so hard to attain. Selina has come to know the racial injustice of oppression; she identifies with her people because she has experienced the same oppression that would cause her mother to invest her entire life in providing for her family, trying to progress, and attempting to avoid feelings of inferiority.

Moreover, what Selina knows about both physical property and emotional property she has learned from her parents. She mirrors Deighton's actions with her view of physical property, but is more like her mother in regards to emotional property. Much like her father buying gifts to impress his family, Selina initially spends her money on gifts for Clive Springer, the person who becomes her outlet for both emotional and physical property: "She used her allowance to buy [Clive] paints, a new easel and a silk shirt, which he never wore" (249). Selina purchases this physical property for Clive, and he becomes the person in whom Selina begins to invest her emotional property as well. Although he is outside of the realm of her mother's control, Selina can replicate her parents' treatment of both emotional and physical property in her relationship with Clive; he becomes a testing ground in which Selina can gauge if her parents' use of property will work for her.

In investing her emotional property in another person, Selina replicates the actions of her mother: "At those moments, as transitory as they were a dim thought would stir amid her pleasure: in some way she was stronger than he, she possessed a hard center he would never have. Had Suggie ever felt this profound woman's strength?" (246). Selina realizes that she is the one in control of this relationship with Clive. Her emotional investment in Clive causes her to mislead the members of the association so

that she and Clive can have a life together: "That summer, caught in the momentum, she could not stop, and worked in an office, saving her salary for when they went away, took lessons in dance and gave her weekends to the Association and Clive" (275). She attempts to control his future just as her own mother is trying to control Selina's. However, Selina, unlike her mother, realizes that controlling another's future will not profit her, and she also realizes, unlike her father, that physical property cannot gain the affection of another person. She tries these approaches to emotional and physical property in her relationship with Clive, and she is left feeling unfulfilled.

Therefore, Selina begins to invest both her physical property and emotional property, not to manipulate others, but to gain possession of her identity. She witnesses the failures of her parents, and she decides that she will not be susceptible to that same defeat; she will gain autonomy for existence, rather than lose it. Her change becomes an internal one in which she decides that she must leave the life she has known to venture to Barbados. In Barbados, she will be dependent upon her physical body to bring her profit and success. When Selina tells her friend Rachel her plans to leave for the islands, Rachel assures Selina, "Once [Rachel's relative, a travel agent] sees you dance you'll get it" (308). Selina will get the job as a dancer, and this position will provide her with passage to Barbados.

The discrimination that she experiences with Margaret's mother prompts Selina's decision to become her own woman and allows her to come to a greater understanding of her own mother. Selina reacts to all that she has learned from her parents, and she decides to embark on a life that will be of her own making, stating, "I'll be going alone" (306). Through embarking on a new path that she will navigate, Selina experiences liberation from the oppression that she has experienced from Margaret's mother, her own mother, and even her father. In order to liberate herself from her oppression, Selina must attempt to regain her identity and dispel the false perceptions of herself as an inferior; she must dispel the illusions that her mother and father have always battled.

For the post-colonial subject to fully reconstitute an identity, an attempt must be made to restore the humanity of the colonized as well as the colonizer (Freire 26). Selina becomes the restorer of humanity in her relationship with Rachel Fine, a young white dancer who attends Selina's school. When Selina restores this humanity, both the colonizer (Rachel) and the colonized (Selina) begin to recognize the integrity of all human life. The dual recognition of their integrity as individuals comes when they dance together at the recital dress rehearsal. As they dance together, they become symbolic of the restoration of equality: "They both lingered, reluctant to leave the dark tent, knowing perhaps that their intimacy would end once they left, that the world would separate and drive each into herself again" (280).

The friendship shared between Selina and Rachel is an intimate connection, what Freire terms "an act of love," an expression that opposes "the lovelessness which lies at the heart of the oppressors' violence" (27); neither one of these young women uses physical property to impress or exploit the other, nor does either of them manipulate the other to make her "emotional property." Gavin Jones argues, "Selina's self is based on an interdependence of the races" (601); the friendship between Selina and Rachel shows how Selina progresses through her maturation to represent the one who can disavow the injustices and illusions of inferiority brought about by colonization, and Selina achieves this power by making a conscious decision within herself that she will no longer be an oppressor.

Selina's journey from adolescence to womanhood has been one in which she has sought to understand the discourse of ownership for the post-colonial identity. Paule Marshall illustrates not only the victimization of the post-colonial identity, but she also espouses a means of reconciliation, a method of reestablishing an identity. Throughout her maturation and observation of her parents, Selina becomes aware that physical property and emotional property will not make the colonized person secure in his or her identity. Neither Deighton nor Silla achieve liberation from their oppression. Both define their identities according to physical and emotional properties that are external to themselves. However, their daughter Selina reestablishes her identity, not by acquiring physical property or emotional property, but through the process of reconciliation that takes place within herself, as she becomes a woman who understands that dignity is common to all human life. Selina triumphs over the challenge Clive gives her as he states: "But I'm afraid we have to disappoint them by confronting them always with the full and awesome weight of our humanity, until they begin to see us and not some unreal image they've super-imposed . . . This is the unpleasant and perhaps impossible job and this is where I bow out, leaving the *field* to you, my dear sweet odd puritan Selina" (253). Selina emerges from the "field" victorious, proving her humanity, dispelling the illusions haunting her people, and possessing an ownership of herself: a dancer moving confidently to life's rhythm knowing that her own two feet are all that she needs to forge a future filled with uproarious applause.

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Waking in the Twentieth Century: Aubades by Stevens, Auden, Larkin, and Bishop

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The aubade, a poem set at dawn, traditionally associated with the fond parting of lovers, seems in the twentieth century to have become a vehicle for the expression of certain poets' most basic approaches to the terms of human life. For a few moments, at least, upon waking, the subject of the modern aubade is exposed to an immediate natural reality that is usually only seen through veils of self-consciousness and familiarity. A temporarily heightened sense of natural being is experienced, with a consequent purifying of emotions ranging from joy to terror. Around these waking episodes may linger the question of their relevance to the resumed daily identity and routine of the subject. Poets such as Wallace Stevens, W. H. Auden, Philip Larkin, and Elizabeth Bishop appear to be saying that we need periodic opening out to reacquaint us with the quickness of our creaturely existence. In turn, such dawnings might subtly suffuse our sense of the ordinary, countering capitulation to the mundane in our selves and circumstances.

In "The Latest Freed Man," written in 1938 and included in the volume *Parts of a World,* Stevens presents a doctor who "rose at six and sat / On the edge of his bed" (2-3). For eleven lines Stevens purports to let the doctor speak for himself, although his voice and the poem's voice are closely harmonized. "Tired of the old descriptions of the world" (1), the doctor immerses himself in the new creation of a day. The play of elements—color, mist, light—is enough. There is no need for an interpretation or "doctrine to this landscape" (4). The sun itself disperses the old descriptions, presumably including religious, romantic, and naturalistic ones.

Of course, this attitude of modern liberation owes much to the doctrine of Emersonian self-reliance. The doctor is the latest American Adam, spiritually unsponsored in the new century. He identifies with the sun, figure for "the strong man vaguely seen" (7). Together he and the sun rise afresh, glorying in the illuminated, phenomenal aspect of things. In other words, the doctor seeks "a change of consciousness that will purge all thought yet leave a quickened sense of being" (Bevis 114).

To be without a description of to be,
For a moment on rising, at the edge of the bed, to be . . . (15-16)

To experience this suspension "is to turn from analysis of the world to the presence of the world" (Doggett 150).

However, the poem itself is at some pains to describe what it is like "To be without a description of to be."

It was how he was free. It was how his freedom came.
It was being without description, being an ox.
It was the importance of the trees outdoors,
The freshness of the oak-leaves, not so much
That they were oak-leaves, as the way they looked.
It was everything being more real, himself
At the centre of reality, seeing it.
It was everything bulging and blazing and big in itself . . .
(23-30)

It is as if the poem were replicating the doctor's attempts after the fact to convey the momentary exhilaration of being ox-like: "huge, vital, mindless, and very much there" (Bevis 114). Memory and intellect cannot be suspended very long; we are creatures of history as well as presence, with innate mental urges to order and conceptualize the world. The abandonment of old descriptions implies the birth of new ones, even if they are recognized as temporary and, in Stevens' parlance, fictional. The strong man of the new day glimpsed by the doctor will turn out to be a relativistic hero of the imagination.

That the doctor is a stand-in for Stevens himself seems to be suggested by an item in his sun-magnified room, "the portrait of Vidal" (31). In Stevens' bedroom hung a painting of Anatole Vidal, who served as a Parisian art agent for him (Brazeau 27n.). According to the poem's closing line, Vidal himself may find no cause for rapture in ordinary things, but along with "The blue of the rug" (31) and "the chairs" (32) his portrait is radiantly itself at the break of this secular sun-day, this day for ploughing new ground in America.

While Stevens' sense of the Adamic might be described as neo-pagan, W. H. Auden's retains traditionally religious overtones of innocence and guilt. In his 1949 piece "Prime," which came to serve as the opening section of the poetic sequence *Horae Canonicae*, he traces emergence from the chaos of the unconscious, through a momentary stage of pre-volitional awareness, to the fully self-conscious, fallen state of waking activity. *Horae Canonicae* as a whole uses the canonical cycle of prayer as a structural means of meditating upon the central significance of the Crucifixion for humans as individuals and builders of society.

Regarding the form of "Prime," Monroe Spears has succinctly observed that "nine-syllable and seven-syllable lines alternate in sixteen-line stanzas with internal rime counterpointing occasional end rime" (317). Further, each of the three stanzas consists of a single sentence. The syntax of the poem's opening twelve lines is noticeably convoluted as Auden evokes the instantaneous shift from a dreaming to a waking state. This basic reorientation accomplished, the first stanza concludes with a smoother, culminating statement:

Recalled from the shades to be a seeing being,
From absence to be on display,
Without a name or history I wake
Between my body and the day. (13-16)

This is the precious moment of natural amnesia, brilliantly elaborated in the poem's centerpiece second stanza.

The speaker's consciousness is not yet self-centered, not yet deliberate, hence highly sentient. In a reversal of the Cartesian formula, this kind of being is lost through thinking. To become a self-conscious subject is to withdraw from the larger objective realm. For a moment, the distance between perceiver and perceived is minimized.

. . . next
As a sheet, near as a wall,
Out there as a mountain's poise of stone,
The world is present, about,
And I know that I am, here, not alone
But with a world . . . (19-24)

Underlying normal self-consciousness, here briefly suspended, is the will, which Auden seems to view in an Augustinian light as the agent of our fall. Before it awakens, the speaker is no particular man but "Adam sinless in our beginning, / Adam still previous to any act" (31-32).

That act may be as basic as drawing breath, the resumption of personal intent that turns everything, especially the body, into an instrument of the will.

. . . and the cost,
No matter how, is Paradise
Lost of course and myself owing a death. (35-37)

As Richard Johnson remarks, "Besides being the first canonical hour and the moment of waking, ["Prime"] is also that which is philosophically primary, that is, Being. . . . [T]he loss of Paradise is meant to stand for our loss of direct apprehension of Being" (187-88). In that sense the Stevens and Auden poems evoke a very comparable state of fleeting immediacy. However, whereas Stevens' doctor disposes himself to a *tabula rasa* experience, for Auden's speaker the paradisal moment is involuntary, hence arguably purer. His subsequent fall into everyday identity means resuming his "historical share of care / For a lying self-made city" (45-46). That loss seems necessary, allotted, as persons singly and collectively work out their hard approach to intimated Being.

Like Auden, Philip Larkin is known for his dry, ironic tones; unlike Auden, he could not bring himself to put any faith in religion, "That vast moth-eaten musical brocade / Created to pretend we never die" ("Aubade" 23-24). Not being is the topic of his "Aubade," set in the dark hours preceding dawn. As with the Provençal counterpart to the aubade, the alba

(Holman 40), Larkin's poem is a lament over parting, not from a lover but from life itself. A negative to the sunny exposure of the Stevens and Auden aubades, it shares with them a keen sense of creaturely quickness—here expressed in terms of mortal dread.

That dread of personal extinction is the more piercing for the level, controlled manner in which Larkin conveys it. The poem itself is formal, consisting of five ten-line stanzas of iambic meter with a set rhyme scheme, the whole mildly reminiscent of Keats' patterns in his odes. One is inclined to identify the speaker as Larkin himself. Appearing in December 1977, "Aubade" was one of his last published pieces. When he died eight years later, he reportedly suffered the terrible anxieties so starkly confessed in the poem (Brennan 37).

The poem's opening line, "I work all day, and get half-drunk at night," suggests that daily duties and alcohol normally screen awareness of movement toward an abyss. He admits as much later with the comment "realisation of it rages out / In furnace-fear when we are caught without / People or drink" (35-37). At four in the morning he is caught by "soundless dark" (2), unable to cling to a material world that is temporarily pulled back to reveal a semblance of the nothingness behind it. The only light at this unprotected time is the fearsome, glaring recognition that he will someday cease to be. Such a prospect is dumbfounding:

> . . . the total emptiness for ever,
> The sure extinction that we travel to
> And shall be lost in always. Not to be here,
> Not to be anywhere,
> And soon; nothing more terrible, nothing more true. (16-20)

Neither religion nor philosophy offers him credible consolation. All the satisfactions of creaturely existence are to be voided, along with the self once capable of internalizing them. The sense that one has a palpable hold on things is revealed as the merest, self-flattering delusion. And once the fact of having to die is squarely faced, without pretense of stoicism, it remains a peripheral "blur, a standing chill" (32) that saps resolve and vitality. The poem's very language consciously displays a "Hamlet-of-the-suburbs melancholy" (Whalen 7). In it Larkin seems to be uncovering a primary cause of his nearly depleted creativity.

Not until the final stanza, "added some time after the others had been written" (Swarbrick 152), does dawn arrive. Whereas in the Stevens and Auden pieces dawn brings sudden waking to a momentarily magnified world, in Larkin's poem it gradually offers the ordinary to one overwhelmed by oblivion. The closing lines extend the aubade's traditional definition as a love song at dawn by offering "a grim yet loving evocation of the working world come back in its reality again" (Everett 138).

> Meanwhile telephones crouch, getting ready to ring

In locked-up offices, and all the uncaring
Intricate rented world begins to rouse.
The sky is white as clay, with no sun.
Work has to be done.
Postmen like doctors go from house to house. (45-50)

When religion and philosophy fail to console, more local reasons to keep living will have to do: there are phone calls to answer, bills to pay, university libraries to run.

Most remarkable about Elizabeth Bishop's contribution to the aubade is the number of dawn or early morning poems that she wrote. A partial list would include such titles as "Love Lies Sleeping," "A Miracle for Breakfast," "Paris, 7 A. M.," "Roosters," "Anaphora," "Twelfth Morning; or What You Will," "Five Flights Up," and the piece to be considered here, "Electrical Storm." Among other reasons, Bishop was attracted to scenes at first light for the fresh, often skewed perspectives they offered. As a poet she was neither given to systematic generalizing like Auden, nor to aesthetic abstraction like Stevens. To a greater degree than all three male poets previously discussed, Bishop was able to carry over a waking sense of suspension into her everyday response to things.

The singular objectivity often noted in Bishop's work was largely the product of her personal reticence. This reserve is significant in "Electrical Storm" insofar as it is the only one of the four sample aubades in which the speaker wakes in bed with another person. Unknown to almost everyone when the poem appeared in 1960 were the personal circumstances underlying the poem. At the time Bishop was living in the Brazilian country home of her companion, Carlota Soares. Only in passing does the poem indicate cohabitation with the casual comment "We got up" (16).

A revealing antecedent to this poem is the unpublished piece starting, "It is marvellous to wake up together." Appearing in one of Bishop's Key West notebooks from the 1940s (Millier 177), and discovered by the critic Lorrie Goldensohn (558n.11), it anticipates the basic imagery of "Electrical Storm." However, the latter is a more discreet variation on the waking-with-kisses scenario of "It is marvellous," the import of which, according to Goldensohn, "lay too close to the bone for public exposure" because of its "cargo of openly sexual feelings" (39). For Bishop was anything but a kiss-and-tell writer.

A cursory reading of "Electrical Storm" might leave an impression of the world's sudden violence and the fragility of indoor life. Bishop, orphaned as a child and disinclined to enter into a heterosexual marriage, certainly was conscious just how transient domestic arrangements can be. (As it happens, her relation with Soares eventually deteriorated, leading to Soares' death by overdose in Bishop's borrowed New York apartment.) In that sense the parting-lovers aspect of the aubade rumbles somewhere in the

poem's background. For the time being, however, there is refuge from threat, which itself makes for an interesting scene.

> Tobias jumped in the window, got in bed—
> silent, his eyes bleached white, his fur on end.
> Personal and spiteful as a neighbor's child,
> thunder began to bang and bump the roof.
> One pink flash;
> then hail, the biggest size of artificial pearls. (5-10)

Lightning has even struck the house, downing all its lines to the outside world, but the poem's predominant mood is one of appreciation. Not everyone can awaken in such exotic surroundings. The elemental realm in all its dangerous, splendid combinations is at hand. To paraphrase a line from "It is marvellous," the experience is more delightful than frightening.

> The cat stayed in the warm sheets.
> The Lent trees had shed all their petals:
> wet, stuck, purple, among the dead-eye pearls. (19-21)

Goldensohn rightly comments that "the twinings of the warm bodies that heated those sheets are going to stay safely out of sight forever" (41). They are not our business. Instead, Bishop would have us open the valves of our attention upon a larger domain of exquisite encounters.

On a simple level, these four poems present wakings to various atmospheres: two to sunlight, one to darkness, and one to storm. Before identity is assumed for the day, a state approaching pure sentience is momentarily given. It reveals a reality beyond the district of action, beyond the province of thought. As functional persons we may only be able to glimpse this dimension, but if wakeful we may engage in doing and thinking under its aspect, mysteriously drawn between being and non-being.

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From the Other to the Subject: Tayo's Existential Journey in the Postmodern Age

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If there is anything uniform in the otherwise disunified realm of existentialism, it is a belief in the self. This self, however, is not a Cartesian type of "I think therefore I am." It is a determined individual who realizes that his choice and action, not thought, can make his being meaningful. Therefore, the existential emphasis on the individual in a concrete situation opposes Hegelian abstraction of humanity. Ironically, however, the way existentialists have described the existential situation and solution to it seems rather abstract. As a result, some rejected existentialism, saying that it was not concrete enough for their particular social condition, or that it was concrete enough only in a European context. For instance, in criticizing Richard Wright's *The Outsider* for making universal claims beyond race, Sauders Redding asserts, "[E]xistentialism is no philosophy that can be made to accommodate the reality of Negro life" (qtd. in Cotkin 169). Furthermore, because existentialism heavily relies on the self's ability to create meaning in a meaningless world, its romantic and humanistic view of the self was derided by postmodernists and poststructuralists (Edgar and Sedgwick 299). While Nietzsche said, "God is dead," their slogan is "The subject is dead." Questioning the possibility of a clear-cut division of the subject and the object, they also denied that the self could be unified and authentic (Selden et al. 153, 155, 202). Are these criticisms fair, or did they misunderstand existentialism? Can Euro-Caucasian existentialism still work for the specific kind of despair among racial minorities? If existentialism holds on to the ability of the individual despite the demise of God and the meaningless world, can it survive the wave of postmodernism that denies this ability of the self?

A first point to be cleared up would be the understanding of existentialism as Euro-Caucasian. It is true that existentialism has a European aura. The philosophers associated with existentialism are definitely European thinkers and writers such as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Kafka, Sartre, and Camus. However, the existential mode of thought is not limited to Europeans or the conventional existentialism. If one admits that existential philosophy addresses problems of "freedom, anguish, dread, responsibility, embodied agency, sociality, and liberation," one can see that existential philosophy is too big for just one continent (Gordon 7). It is in this more liberal understanding of existentialism that George Cotkin writes *Existential America*, arguing that even seemingly happy and unblemished Americans are capable of dealing with dark existential themes

such as dread, anguish, death, etc. In *Extentia Africana*, Lewis Gordon also opposes the idea of the Euro-Caucasian monopoly of existentialism, maintaining that

> [t]he body of literature that constitutes European existentialism is but one continent's response to a set of problems of anguish and despair. [...] Conflicts over responsibility and anxiety, over life affirmation and suicidal nihilism, preceded Kierkegaardian formulations of fear and trembling raised questions beyond Eurocentric attachment to a narrow body of literature. (6-7)

The question of the possibility of existentialism after the advent of postmodernism is more difficult to answer. As mentioned earlier, postmodernist derision of existential naïveté is centered around the concept of the self. However, James Bennett suggests that the accusation may be wrong. He argues that the problematic and seemingly conflicting concepts of the self within the existential tradition are due to a failure in distinguishing "entity-based and process-oriented views" of the self (136). Existentialists, despite their diverse understandings of the self, share the rejection of "entity-based" views of the self and advocacy of "process-oriented" views (Bennett 136). Entity-based views consider the being of the individual as simply given, regardless of his wishes or attempts. In contrast, process-oriented views hold that the authentic being of the individual should be achieved by himself: he may succeed or fail during this ongoing process. With this assertion of the self in process, the existential concept of the self is not an antithesis but a pathway to the postmodernist view of the self in process (Bennett 156). In this light, existentialism does not support "absolutist concepts of a unified self" as it is often understood by postmodernists who assert a "totally fictive self" (Cotkin 279).

What remains still, however, is the distinction between the existential belief in individual freedom and postmodern denial of it. In this light, Leslie Marmon Silko's 1977 novel *Ceremony* provides an interesting space for contest between existentialism and postmodernism, even if the main body of criticism on *Ceremony* neglects these philosophies. It seems that the critics turned away from universal or western existentialism and postmodernism; as a result, *Ceremony* has been understood mainly as a product of a Native American writer and culture. However, even though it is necessary to understand *Ceremony*'s cultural/mythic background, paying too much attention to its culture-specific meanings makes it remain in the margin as the Other. In fact, that is what the novel tries to overcome by making Tayo a subject and an agent rather than the Other and a spectator. During his journey toward wholeness, Tayo should redefine himself neither as a wretched mixedblood nor as a victim, but as a hero of the living Laguna tradition. Although Laguna understanding of the self is more communal, its

assertion of the individual ability and responsibility goes hand in hand with existentialism, which is in sharp contrast to postmodernism. Then, along with the admission of the divisions within existentialism such as French existentialism, American existentialism, and black existentialism, *Ceremony* can be viewed as an example of Native American existentialism.

Ceremony begins with the problems of the world and people living in it. If the dehumanizing warfare during the First World War painted the world bleak in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the Second World War with its holocaust and atomic bombs aggravates this already dismal picture. A six-year drought in the Laguna reservation dries up everything, making humans and animals suffer helplessly. Indian war veterans come back to their community that cannot believe the inhuman mass destruction of modern warfare. Traditional Indian ceremony to heal their souls turns out to be futile, and their sole comfort becomes alcohol.

Tayo is the one who suffers more than others. Even enlisting in the army was not his idea, but his white-world-yearning cousin Rocky's. During the war, he refuses to kill Japanese soldiers, and in one incident, he sees his uncle Josiah's face among them, which causes his temporary breakdown. This symptom is worsened after witnessing Rocky's death, and he returns to the United States, losing the belief in his substantial existence. In the Veteran's Hospital in L.A. he walks around like a ghost, thinking that he is empty inside like a white smoke. When a white doctor tries to dissuade him, he answers, "He [Tayo refers to himself in the third person] can't talk to you. He is invisible. His words are formed with an invisible tongue, they have no sound" (15). The only capability left in him is mourning for the destruction of the world: "He cries because they are dead and everything is dying" (16). This strong sense of death and destruction remains even after Tayo recovers from his almost suicidal denial of the self, and he feels guilty for the drought as well as Rocky's death because he thinks he caused it by cursing the rain in the jungles of the Philippines. However, diagnosed as mentally unstable, he doubts the sanity of his thoughts, and the ever-haunting tangled and disordered memories of the past prevent him from articulating his thoughts, let alone doing anything to cure himself.

This depressing condition of humans and the world is definitely in stark contrast to the harmonious and orderly worldview of Pueblo mythology. According to it, the world has a sacred center and distinct boundaries, and everything in the universe, animate or inanimate, has its own place. Because everything is connected, humans have a tremendous responsibility not to destroy this harmony and order (Owens 96). This worldview is evident in the metaphor of the world as a spider web. When the medicine man Ku'oosh comes to heal Tayo, he says, "[T]his world is fragile" (35). The narrator elaborates it further: "The word he [Ku'oosh] chose to express 'fragile' was filled with the intricacies of a continuing

process, and with a strength inherent in spider webs woven across paths through sand hills where early in the morning the sun becomes entangled in each filament of web" (35). However, because Ku'oosh does not know the world beyond the Indian one, Tayo finds it hard to explain what happened to him, how the sense of the world being centripetal, harmonious, and coherent can be destroyed by the white world.

Indeed, this contesting between the two worlds was inherent long before the war. The narrator recounts the confusion among the Indians when everything began to have two names upon arrival of the whites. This coexistence of two names and two different cultures can be compared to Du Bois's "double consciousness," a lucid illustration of the existential dilemma within blacks, a racial minority in America. On the one hand they are black; on the other hand, American. Racial and national identities conflict with each other because America is supposedly white America, in which colored people are slaves, enemies, or second-class citizens at best. This divided self causes problem when one asks, "Who/what am I?" because this question does not allow a paradoxical answer like "I am man and woman," or "I am black and white." As a result, "The American Negro [...] long[s] to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self, [...] wish[ing] neither of the older selves to be lost" (Du Bois 8-9).

This sense of "double consciousness" is more complicated in Tayo's case because he has white blood in him as well as Indian blood. Therefore, his alienation is twofold: he cannot be considered as a true citizen of America because he is not a pure white; he cannot be a true Native American in his community because of the white blood in him. While he served America as a soldier during the Second World War, he was treated as *the* American, though: when he was stationed in Oakland just before he was shipped to the Philippines, white men and women were friendly to him. However, after the war, the illusion is over. He realizes it was the army uniform that made him American. Upon his returning home as an Indian, his aunt continues to exclude him, thinking his mother and he are the shame of the family. His friend, Emo, thinks that he is condescending to other Native Americans because he is part white: "There he is. He thinks he's something all right. Because he's part white. Don't you, half-breed?" (57). While Tayo cannot claim to be either white or Indian in a biological sense, he can choose what mode of being he needs to follow among various options available to him. He can deny the Indian society and adore the whites' way, as Rocky did, which is scientific and materialistic as well as destructive. He can follow Josiah's traditional Native American way, which is eco-friendly, mythic, but seemingly doomed to be defeated. He can also indulge himself in alcohol and violence to soothe frustration as his friends do. Or he can find his own way.

In the early part of the novel, he oscillates among these options, not

completely satisfied with any of these. Neither the Veteran's Hospital nor the Laguna medicine man Ku'oosh succeeds in pulling pieces of him together and making him whole. White doctors try to deconstruct his communal identity, saying that he should only think in terms of "I," not "we." Ku'oosh emphasizes the intricate connection between Tayo and his community and the world, but he overlooks Tayo's peculiar suffering. Therefore, Tayo remains fragmented, uncommitted, and alienated. As if reflecting this state of fragmentation, the novel itself shows a mixture of different forms (poetic Laguna myth and prosaic western stream-of-consciousness narrative) and shifting narrative viewpoints, which are characteristics of postmodernist works (Laskowski 52). Indeed, the connection between the Laguna myth and the novelistic narrative seems vague in the beginning. However, as the novel unfolds, it becomes obvious that the myth functions as a center and reference. And the prosaic and poetic parts virtually merge in terms of contents as Tayo acts out his role as a hero and finally tells his story to the elders in the kiva, the spiritual center of the Pueblo. However, not until he is introduced to the unconventional Navajo medicine man Betonie can Tayo articulate himself or gather courage to act.

Betonie, who is mixed-blood like Tayo, believes that unchanging tradition is a dead one; he thinks that ceremonies should be revised to cure the new evils of the world. His ceremony, even though it is more an initiation of recovery than an instant cure, does heal Tayo's fragmented and alienated self. First of all, he makes Tayo tell stories, makes him articulate himself. He asserts that Tayo was not crazy to see Josiah's face in a Japanese soldier: Tayo simply saw the ancient connection between the two ethnic groups. He also affirms that Tayo has been a part of the story and he has a responsibility. What strikes Tayo most, however, is the story of an Indian witch who brought white people to this continent. Betonie warns against the simple dichotomy of Indians and whites; because Indians invented whites, they can deal with whites, and the only evil is the witchery that craves for hatred, death, and destruction. The witchery also wants to stop Tayo's ceremony toward wholeness of himself and the world.

Tayo returns with an awakened mind and a vision. Because the ceremony is not over, he has to continue it by acting out his role. However, his commitment to an authentic mode of being is often easily challenged by his drunken friends, his own self-doubts, and especially Emo's pernicious scheme against him. However, Tayo wins over the witchery by bringing the cattle and the rain back, overcoming the temptation to react to Emo's violence in a similar way, and finally by telling his stories in the kiva. He is now accepted as a part of the community, but that does not mean the loss of his individual identity. The mythic narrative also ends with the returning of the Corn Mother, the recovery of the world order, and the defeat of the witchery. Thus the bleak postmodern vision that dominated the early part of

the novel is superseded by a more harmonious vision of humans and the world.

It has long been said that existentialism is not a systematic philosophy that can be easily defined. Then it should not be surprising that existential philosophy can take various forms not only within canonical European existential literature, but also in (African/Native) American literature. If the message of Silko's *Ceremony* is that being mixedblood is not so much a source of alienation or despair as a source of strength and growth (Owens 91-92), it should also be said that various forms of existentialism serve as a source of strength that keeps existentialism alive even in the age of postmodernism.

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"The Obvious Analogy is With Music": Art and Music in Lyn Hejinian's *My Life*

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Lyn Hejinian is a representative member of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E movement that occurred through the 1970s and 1980s in America. This group of writers was greatly influenced by the work of Gertrude Stein and her insistence that words be written simply as words, not as signs to relay some deeper meaning. These writers were also influenced by the political climate of the late sixties Their writings, which have been described as a "disjunctive morass of phrases and sentences," challenge both political and grammatical authority in texts (Spahr, "Make It" 52). Lyn Hejinian's *My Life* challenges grammatical authority and seeks a new form of expression in various ways, many of which scholars have investigated. What few have noticed is that Hejinian's project is enabled by a comparison of writing to art and music. Many passages in the book compare these three art forms. Writing, particularly autobiography, has been bound to the narrative prose form; Hejinian seeks to show through the comparison to art and music that language actually better expresses the construction of reality when freed from strict forms.

Since it was first published in 1980, Hejinian's *My Life* has been under critical scrutiny. Many critics have read Hejinian's work as a romance and focused on the erotics found in it. Others have chosen to focus on examining her work in relation to its sociological sphere of reference. Juliana Spahr has written both an article and book chapter that discuss Hejinian's construction of self in *My Life*. In these works, Spahr shows how Hejinian denies authorial authority in the form of autobiography by inviting the reader to help construct the self or subject of the autobiography. David Jarraway also chooses to focus on the self concept and reality construction in Hejinian's work. In his article "*My Life* through the Eighties: The Exemplary L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E of Lyn Hejinian," Jarraway argues that *My Life* and its insistence on the importance of each individual sentence typifies and surpasses the theories professed by members of the language movement. He examines the ways Hejinian structures each sentence to break the traditional hierarchical nature of semantics, thereby challenging the authority of conventional language. He argues that Hejinian goes further than most of the language poets by suggesting that in challenging the notion of "reality" within a text, she is perhaps best representing it. I would like to add to Spahr and Jarraway's arguments the notion that Hejinian uses the comparison of writing to art and music to achieve these goals.

Two critics, Hilary Clark and Craig Dworkin, have found this art

and music connection. Clark's article "The Mnemonics of Autobiography: Lyn Hejinian's *My Life*" focuses on how Hejinian uses memory to relate her life's story in *My Life*. Most of the article examines how *My Life* challenges the traditional forms of autobiography, which have been chronological and which finish with an overall picture of the author as a fully realized being. In studying the unique way that Hejinian presents her memories, Clark notes these memories have a musical quality. Her work mostly focuses on this musical quality of Hejinian's prose-poetry to show how it helps in understanding the narrator's presentation and construction of memories. Her article focuses mainly on how Hejinian's work as a whole is significant to the genre of autobiography.

The critic who has come closest to what I will focus on is Craig Dworkin. His fascinating article "Penelope Reworking the Twill: Patchwork, Writing, and Lyn Hejinian's *My Life*" makes a direct connection between Hejinian's book and a particular type of art, quilt making. Dworkin shows how *My Life* is constructed and can be read much in the same way as the nineteenth-century pieced quilt. He compares the pieces of fabric, which are cut apart and put back together in unusual ways in quilts, to the narrator's memories in *My Life*. Both Clark and Dworkin examine the subject of music and art found in *My Life*. However, I extend their arguments to show how this connection to art and music reflects the narrator's construction and concept of self.

Hejinian makes this connection between her work and other forms of art quite clear. Two of the often-repeated chapter headings throughout the book are "Any photographer will tell you the same" (55) and "The obvious analogy is with music" (116). These two headings in particular draw a connection between the creative work of writing and that of art and music with the words "same" and "analogy." Also, many of the references to her father's painting show the connection between art and writing, such as "He was talking about oil paints, the body of the pigments, and the ground, with its distortions as they're actual, really seen. This is my portrait-bowl" (33). Her father creates with paint; she, with words. Hejinian then adds to this comparison the idea that all three of these fields express the human construction of reality with the line "Reason looks for two then arranges it from three: number, stutter, curvature" (132-33). She implies that "reason" looks for ways to explain the world. The three qualities it uses to do this come from music (number), language (stutter), and art (curvature). In this passage, Hejinian also questions the conventional modes of language. By using the term "stutter," which is not usually considered a positive language quality, she questions the ways we think about language. Other passages also question typical language conventions, such as "The things I was saying followed logically the things that I had said before, yet they bore no relation to what I was thinking or feeling" (48). Hejinian believes conventional

language does not truly express what people think and feel. Therefore, not only does she look to art and music for mere comparison, but also she shows how in some ways they better express the human thought process and construction of reality.

Throughout *My Life*, Hejinian makes many comparisons to principles found in art. One of the major principles of art is design. Artists think about the ways they want to compose their paintings, drawings, or photographs before they begin. Hejinian designed her book in much the same way. The book's structure of forty-five chapters with forty-five sentences each shows an attempt at a coherent design despite its seemingly incongruent structure, or, as she puts it, "A sorry mess, but well-framed" (82). Also, the placement of repeated sentences and phrases throughout the book provides a type of coherence found in the principles of design. Hejinian seems to anticipate her readers' questions about this placement when she asks, "Is it a pattern that we see or only a random placement of the stupid little tiles" (125). This very question suggests there was intent in her repetitions and her placement of these "little tiles." Hejinian also uses the artistic principle of color to add to her comparison, shading various moments yellow, purple, or green, such as the line "[t]he small green shadows make the red jump out" (74).

Hejinian's writing obviously compares to certain principles of art, but more specifically, *My Life* can be compared to two specific fields within art, photography and Surrealism. Hejinian notes the similarity of writing to photography in the aforementioned chapter heading "Any photographer will tell you the same" (55). A few pages later, the chapter heading "She showed the left profile, the good one" also suggests a connection to photography, as this sentence seems to refer to someone being photographed (61). While Hejinian alludes to photography, her writing can also be read photographically in several ways. First, she uses vivid visual imagery in some passages to create snapshots of her memories. Also, her use of fragmentation allows readers to view each sentence like a photograph. Each one captures a complete thought or idea.

The pages of Hejinian's work are filled with photographic snapshots of her life. Some of them call to mind vivid mental pictures:

> Now where on our long walks my grandfather had gone with his walking stick I go with my mace, to the hills behind Oakland, along paths where even in the abrupt absoluteness of the dark shadows which are characteristic of redwoods the air carries white and yellow motes of spinning visible light. There is tension in the connecting string. (156)

In this passage, the reader can picture the towering redwoods creating shadows which contain small particles of light and even see the invisible

string that connects these particles. Another passage which shares this quality, "Colored cattle were grazing on a California hillside, so much of a single yellow that from this distance and at this hour it was impossible to see any gradation of light and shadow," creates a perfect image of the hillside being covered in so many cows that it looked yellow (49). She describes events in such a way that the reader can see them. She writes about trying to stay awake on a road trip "until we had passed the town of Alviso, where the migrant workers lived, so that [she] could see the outhouses that lined the edge of the fields" (55-56). Even though her autobiography is not linear, she still allows the reader to see specific events from her life. When she writes about specific memories, the reader seems to flip through a photo album of her life because of her vivid and descriptive language.

While this passage and others like it create beautiful images, that is not the only way in which Hejinian's work is like photographs. As Juliana Spahr notes, "It is crucial to read this book as one that deliberately avoids big events and instead embraces observations" ("Make It" 68). Hejinian captures thoughts and minute observations much like an artist captures moments in time. In fact, she believes these fragments to be a more accurate representation of the way the mind remembers. She writes, "Only fragments are accurate," just as a photographer might argue his photographs are a more accurate way of viewing an event than a wordy written account. For example, the now famous, stirring photograph from *National Geographic* of the woman from Afghanistan with haunting green eyes captures viewers with its simplicity. Steve McCurry, the photographer who took this picture, has said, "This portrait summed up for me the trauma and plight, and the whole situation of suddenly having to flee your home and end up in a refugee camp, hundreds of miles away" (McCurry "Steve McCurry"). The readers of *National Geographic* do not need to read the article about this photograph to understand the sadness and defiance in this woman's eyes. So it is with Hejinian's sentences. In fact, the very decision to fragment these memories into scattered sentences makes them more poignant.

It is this fragmentation that allows Hejinian's individual sentences, even when they are not particularly visually stimulating, to be viewed as photographs. Clark notes this quality of fragmentation in her article on memory in *My Life:* she states, "When attention is centered on the sentence, the reading experience is fragmented, discontinuous. The reader rests upon each moment of perception" (322). Those moments of perception speak for themselves. As Hejinian asserts, "To some extent, each sentence has to be the whole story" (93). Just as a photograph can speak volumes on its own, Hejinian's sentences show "[a] fragment is not a fraction but a whole piece" (116). Each fragment of thought presents a whole picture of that moment because the reader adds to the image his or her own associations with it. A perfect example of this technique is the sentence, "It was cancer but we

couldn't say that" (96). In this one sentence, the reader gets a complete picture of the pain cancer causes a family. Hejinian does not even have to name the character who has this awful disease in order to create the emotions that go along with it. She does not allow overly emotional language to cloud this event. Her writing presents a more accurate way of showing how humans remember these types of events. By only showing a fragment of this memory of cancer, she allows readers to add their own memories of such events and, thereby, complete the picture. Another sentence that acts in this same way is "He looked at me and smiled and did not look away, and thus a friendship became erotic" (105). Readers do not need any more details about this moment to understand it and immediately to begin connecting it to their own erotic memories. Hejinian creates fragmented snapshots of memory, like photographs, so she can avoid blurring events with fallible language and, therefore, express the true way one remembers life.

Hejinian's work also connects directly with Surrealism, particularly the work of Salvador Dalí. Although not as explicitly mentioned in the text as photography, Surrealism plays an important role in *My Life*. Andre' Breton stated in his 1924 manifesto that Surrealists sought to "express [...] the real function of thought." This expression required "absence of all control exercised by reason and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations" (qtd. in Wood 11). The way that many Surrealists accomplished this task was through free association. Dalí, in particular, called his work "a spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based upon the critical and systematic objectification of delirious associations and interpretations" (qtd. in Wood 11). Certain passages in *My Life* follow this same pattern:

> The glass fixture in the kitchen was covered with grease and tiny black flies that had died in it. One enjoys the summer evening until the mosquitoes come out, pursued by bats. As for we who "love to be astonished," a moth has more flesh than a butterfly could lift. From the bus I saw the blind woman, whose seeing eye dog sleeps on her sweater while she sells tissue paper carnations on Geary Street. Lizards get their prey. (53)

In this passage, the sentences are connected by the winged insects at first: flies to mosquitoes to moths to butterflies. The blind old woman may not seem to fit this pattern, but she can be connected to the bats, which are often believed to be blind. The last sentence about the lizards connects back to the winged insects that are their prey and to the bats that are their fellow predators. This passage exemplifies what Dalí called "delirious associations." Both Hejinian and Dalí use this technique to show the way in which the mind moves from one thought to another when it is not bound to the idea of making sense. Many have felt this very sensation lying in bed

at night when the mind wanders over variously connected, but not logically connected, thoughts.

Dalí also used double images in many of his paintings to create associations. This technique can also be applied to Hejinian's chapter titles. Although Dalí often used mirrors or water to create these images, his double images are never exact copies of each other. For example, his painting *Swans Reflecting Elephants* shows swans standing in front of a pool looking at a reflection of themselves, but the reflection actually shows elephants. Likewise, Hejinian's chapter titles are often repeated throughout the text; however, they are never presented in exactly the same way. The best example of this pattern is the phrase, "As for we who 'love to be astonished'" followed by many phrases, including "McDonalds is the world's largest purchaser of beef eyeballs" (75), "there are fences keeping cyclones" (81-82), "money makes money, luck makes luck" (104), and "consciousness is durable in poetry" (140). Just as Dalí's pond connects elephants and swans, so Hejinian's repeated phrase connects beef eyeballs, cyclones, money, and poetry. These repetitions with different variations point to the way the mind works. The mind, when allowed to be free, will connect unusual and seemingly unrelated ideas endlessly.

Another way in which Dalí and Hejinian can be compared is through unusual compositions. Dalí warped common everyday items like ants and clocks to make them distorted and dreamlike (Wood 11). He also made Surrealist objects like *Lobster Telephone*, in which the aim was, as Bradbury states, "to surprise and confront the spectator by offering an alternative view of reality" (110). Dalí questioned humans' perceptions of reality by creating art that combined elements in unusual ways. Hejinian achieves this same goal through wordplay. She takes common clichés and alters them. A common phrase such as "in a manner of speaking" becomes "a manner of waiting" (9). "The shape of what's to come" becomes "The shape of who's to come" (25). The term "destiny" becomes "density" in the phrase "The desire for immortality is accompanied by a sense of density" (140). She even twists her own repeated phrases such as "A *name* trimmed with colored ribbons" which at one point refers to Julius Caesar's name but then later refers to a horse that has a "*mane* trimmed with colored ribbons" (17; emphasis added). Both Dalí and Hejinian use this technique to disrupt illusions about the way we think. As Hejinian states, "Such displacements alter illusions, which is all-to-the-good" (71). If the human mind is bound to thinking in stale words or images, then creativity and originality are lost.

Hejinian's *My Life* also contains many similarities to principles found in music. The first of these is repetition. Repetition in patterns such as the A-B-A form is easily found in even the simplest forms of music. Fleming writes that this pattern is simply "statement, contrast, and repetition of initial statement" (105-06). This repetition of statement is usually with

variation. In music, the variation of a theme both reminds the listener of a theme and also contrasts with that theme (108). Clark makes note of this musical quality in Hejinian's work when she writes, "The first sections, like the opening of a musical work, introduce themes; new sections then add new themes and repetitions or variations of old ones" (326). Hejinian's chapter headings best exemplify this principle. The first chapter heading, "A pause, a rose, something on paper," is repeated at various points throughout the work (7). Each time it is repeated, however, it is used in a different context. Sometimes this chapter heading joins with another phrase to make a new sentence, such as "I found myself dependent on a pause, a rose, something on paper" (28). Other times the phrase is written as a sentence by itself but seems to be connected to the sentence before it. For example, this variation is found in the sentence "I have been spoiled with privacy, permitted the luxury of solitude. A pause, a rose, something on paper" (41). The rose theme itself is varied even further when found in the following sentences and phrases: "rooms share a pattern of small roses" (7), "a peculiar mix of heavy interior air and the air from outdoors lingering over the rose bushes" (16), and "She cultivated [...] the rose garden (or rose bed)" (37). By allowing the word "rose" to go through these various transformations, she adds associations to it just as the meaning of a repeated chorus in a song is often made more poignant as each verse adds to its associations. Hejinian explains how this musical repetition works to create various associations in her essay "The Rejection of Closure":

> Repetition [...] challenges our inclination to isolate, identify, and limit the burden of meaning given to an event (the sentence or line). Here [in *My Life*], where certain phrases recur in the work recontextualized and with new emphasis, repetition disrupts the initial apparent meaning scheme. The initial reading is adjusted; meaning set in motion, emended and extended, and the rewriting the repetition becomes postpones completion of the thought indefinitely. (44)

In this passage, she clearly states that by using repetition she has opened her text. She not only creates new associations by repeating and varying certain phrases but also allows the reader to add his or her own associations to each phrase.

Repetition also performs another function in both music and Hejinian's writing; it is used in both to aid memory. However, just because something is remembered does not mean it is important. In fact, in some cases repetition happens so often words and pieces of music lose their meaning. Many times people sing the choruses of songs without knowing or caring about their meaning simply because they have heard the chorus so many times that it becomes a part of their subconscious minds. This same

principle occurs in language as Hejinian points out when she quotes commonly used phrases "she heard as a girl" (66), such as "He should have given us a 'hard right' instead of an 'easy left'" (54). People use these terms, "hard right" and "easy left," all the time without really thinking about their meaning. Hejinian's predecessor Gertrude Stein used repetition to subvert traditional ideas about how words function (Addonizio 152). Both Stein and Hejinian believe "so ever what one says over and over again" both loses meaning and "seems important" (23). Hejinian examines further how repetition distorts meaning in the following passage:

> the music brought these places "home" to me, the composition itself grew increasingly strange as I listened again, less recognizable, in the dark, as when one repeats a word or phrase over and over in order to disintegrate its associations, to defamiliarize it, and the man playing it amazed me with his assertion. (162)

Here, she makes very clear that music and language act to both disintegrate associations and create new ones when they are repeated over and over again.

The other characteristic of music Hejinian employs in *My Life* is rhythm. In his textbook on music, Fleming compares rhythm to the circulatory system to show how it animates a piece of music. He adds to this metaphor the idea that "rhythm [...] articulates the flow of musical time. Rhythm allows the listener to gain a sense of motion through time" (28). Usually, drums or other percussive instruments provide a musical piece with rhythm. However, rhythm can also be enforced through language by using percussive sounds such as the line from "Poor Man Lazarus" that rhythmically moves: "dip your finger in the water, come and cool my tongue, cause I'm tormented in the flame." The consonant sounds found in the words "dip," "finger," "water," "cool," and "tongue" provide this line with rhythm as it is repeated throughout the song. Addonizio asserts, "A repeated rhythm can be as powerful—sometimes more powerful—than the words themselves" (154). Hejinian insists language can create rhythm without the aid of music, for, as she says, "When you speak you play a language" (116). She uses several different techniques to create rhythm in *My Life*. The first of these is alliteration, such as in "The sky was studied with stars, he said, white, low, as heavy as stones" (72). The repeated "s" sounds in this passage give it a sense of movement. This rhythm also occurs when Hejinian repeats words within a sentence. For example, the sentence "We have to keep up the good work in order to keep up the good mood" repeats the words "up," "keep," and "good" for this effect (84). Finally, Hejinian uses rhyme to create rhythm. In the sentence "At noon, under no one's new moon," the rhyme of "noon" and "moon" creates a pulse in the phrase (40).

Just as Fleming compares rhythm to the beating of the heart,

Hejinian compares it to the pulsing of the mind. As she points out, "Such is the rhythm of cognition, and the obvious analogy is with music" (147). The sense of movement in her work is reminiscent of the movement through the mind of fleeting thoughts and ideas. Words combine to create patterns and rhythms, for, as Hejinian states, "Words [...]—there are no unresisted rhythms in one" (136). When thought of individually and in isolation, words have no rhythm, but when placed in unusual compositions in the mind, they become rhythmic and develop a pulse of their own. Life is shaped by rhythm, from the beating of the heart to the electric impulses of the mind. Hejinian cannot accurately represent the way the mind works without using rhythm in her writing.

Hejinian has one major goal in using various principles of art and music in her writing, and that goal is to express the real. While, as Hinton states in her work on romance in *My Life*, "Hejinian's works dissociate themselves from the historical mission of realism," they provide a more accurate interpretation of how the mind expresses the real (140). This point is made clear when Hejinian states, "Minute discriminations release poetic rather than cerebral effects. Listen to the sweet sound / of life death bound. Realism, if it addresses the real, is inexhaustible" (144). The inexhaustible nature of realism is seen in Hejinian's attention to all of the tiny details of life. Reality is not made up of merely big events as seen in traditional autobiography and novel forms; it is made up of small, everyday events.

In conventional forms of autobiography, language and the various forms of writing have not done enough to express reality. This lack is why Hejinian turns to other creative forms to find ways to express herself. Clark believes that language writers in general see language as constructing reality and believe that by "using and interpreting language in new ways, we may challenge dominant orders of thought—and potentially change reality" (315). Hejinian explicitly states she believes language constructs reality, but "[i]f reality is trying to express itself in words it is certainly taking the long way around" (149). Words are not sufficient when placed in conventional forms, and as Hejinian asserts, "So from age to age a new realism repeats its reaction against the reality that the previous age admired" (148). Just as the concept of reality evolves in art and music, it must do so in language. As she asserts, "Language which is like a fruitskin around fruit" cannot truly express reality when bound by conventional forms (58). This need to express reality is why Hejinian uses artistic snapshots, Surrealistic constructions, musical repetitions, and percussive rhythms in her work. By allowing language to conform to principles not always associated with narrative prose forms, she rewrites the form of autobiography to better express reality.

Hejinian wants not only to express reality but to show that the only reality is the one the mind creates. When defending her style, she states, "It

is a courtesy, a controversy—they accuse it of theory, they say it lacks feeling, where they want, instead, what they call 'singing' i.e. contagion. I too am a Calvinist—I accumulate conscience" (142). In these sentences, she addresses her critics who might discredit her work because they favor autobiographical forms that make linear sense and "sing" of the author's deeds. But as Hejinian asserts, her form also "accumulate[s] conscience" and, therefore, conscious thought. In his comparison to Dobyns, Beach states that Hejinian's writing does try to reflect reality and goes further to show how the mind recreates that experience (59). This meta-cognition is seen in several passages. She claims her writing is like thinking: "here I am thinking aloud of my affinity for the separate fragment taken under scrutiny" (71). She is conscious of the way the mind will view life in fragments. She also discusses how the mind rapidly refills itself once an idea is expressed:

> My relief at having finally written down that thought is enormous now I can forget about it; but it is not forgetfulness that takes its place as I begin to think of other things. I don't know what prompts this—the assertion of world (order) desired in a dream but I remember the pleasure with which my mother made her "time-and-motion studies" when she never wasted a trip upstairs by ascending empty-handed. (140)

In this passage, she shows the steps in her thought process. She writes down an idea, her mind begins to fill with other ideas, and she questions why this occurs. Before she can answer, her mind has moved on to another thought, one of her mother from childhood. Hejinian also points out it is not decorum or convention that allows her to speak her mind when she says, "It is not hubris but high spirits that makes me say so. Or it is a figment of involuntary imagination" (132). She finds she best expresses herself when speaking emotionally with "high spirits" or through a spontaneous jump of the imagination. Indeed, as Dworkin asserts, "the fragmentary text" with its jumps and leaps from one thought to another "serve[s] as a good model for consciousness, and one could read unconventional works such as *My Life* as highly realistic" (68). Hejinian presents her readers with the mundane, everyday reality expressed in the real way it occurs in the mind.

Hejinian wants to express this reality because she wants to share her experiences with her readers. As Spahr notes in her work on the reader-centered nature of *My Life*, language poetry seeks to "turn away from the self [...] and instead look hard at the collective" in order to connect to other people ("Make It" 86). Hejinian states, "Life is hopelessly frayed, all loose ends" (18). However, her work seeks to make connections and associations among those "loose ends" and, thereby, connect all of humanity: "I found myself dependent on a pause, a rose, something on paper. It is a way of saying, I want you, too, to have this experience, so that we are more alike,

so that we are closer, bound together, sharing a point of view—so that we are 'coming from the same place'" (28). She is dependent on writing, "something on paper," because she longs to connect the human experience by sharing her own. She also wants to explore "the incoherent border which will later separate events from experience" (9). She wants to examine what makes particular events solidify in the mind and create experience. In this examination, she must once again make the comparison to art and music:

> If there is a story at all, accounted for, a settled thing to have experienced, it's nothing of the kind. The obvious analogy is with music as with words. A sense of definition (different from that of description, which is a kind of storytelling or recounting, numerical, a list of colors) develops as one's sense of possibility, of the range of what one might do or experience, closes with the years. (128)

In this passage, she claims, "if there is a story at all" in human experience, it is not contained in conventional forms. Human experience is constantly redefined by other experiences. It cannot be contained in "storytelling," just as a painting is not contained in "a list of colors." As humans grow older and their possibilities for experience begin to close, then they can define their experience and, therefore, their lives.

My Life is an unconventional autobiography on many levels. Hejinian's ambitious project seeks to explain the ways the mind works to define reality and, therefore, a life. One of the many ways Hejinian achieves this goal is by borrowing certain principles that are found in art and music, which have done a better job of expressing consciousness than traditional modes of writing about life. Although the comparison seems strange, as Hejinian points out, all of these principles are connected through the process of association: "[t]he obvious analogy is with music. . . . I do love to compare apples with oranges" (152). Photographers expect people to make certain associations with a photograph in order to tell the whole story, just as Hejinian expects people to do with her sentences that must "be the whole story" (93). By borrowing Surrealism's free association and disjunction, she questions the traditional ways in which we make associations and creates new and unusual ones. She uses musical repetition to show how repetition both creates memory and allows humans to break down old associations and make new ones. Finally, she writes with rhythm to show how the mind moves through these various associations with a pulse or a beat. Her point is that humans think through association. However, when they bind themselves to traditional modes of association, they limit their ability to truly express themselves and, thereby, limit their ability to construct their reality.

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POETRY

Susan Allen Ford
Delta State University

Fragile

We broke two wineglasses this week.
Stems striped in blue and gold and green,
chosen that Christmas long ago,
that set of eight which years reduced to six
suddenly is four.

One the result of simple foolishness:
trying to make wine chill faster
you place it in the freezer.
Its tumble in almost
slow motion
spills and shatters
across the floor,
a risk too blithely taken, a lesson learned.
Philosophically we mop up wine, now cold,
collect the bits of glass we see,
move aside the refrigerator to find
curved fragments embedded
in dust. The next day
we tread carefully.

The other, mysteriously, passes
from my hands to yours, breaks apart
as you dry it.
What tiny flaw was in that glass
we grasped and drank from,
washed and dried?
How much pressure, precisely,
at that moment, or over how much time,
was enough to shatter it?
We set the glass on the counter,
gaze at terrifying shards,
evidence of hidden weakness,
fatigue.

We've forgotten what we know
about the chemistry of glass,
forgotten the duplicities of transparency,

of rigid form belying random fluidity,
the paradox of amorphous solid.
After melting, forming, annealing,
the elegant shape of stem and bowl
obscures molecules jumbled, irregular,
patternless. We've forgotten
until now.

Standing gracefully on its striped stem,
the glass from most angles seems whole,
breakage a dream.
I wrap it carefully in newspaper,
in the trash bin bury it deep.

Saint Agatha, Transposed

During renovation, seeking close connection
to sanctity, they lowered the saint
from her high niche, brought her down
to earth.

From afar they had admired
the eyes raised aloft,
the ease as she balanced
martyr's palm and red casket,
like that perhaps a Wise Man bore,
filled with gold, myrrh,
or frankincense.

Who remembered those legends
from darkest Roman Sicily?
Spurned proposals, confinement
in a brothel, breasts torn
with pincers, tongs, shears,
body pressed on bed
of sharp potsherds and live coals,
saint descending to heal,
earth moving in sympathy?
Who guessed the pain behind that lifted gaze?
Who could see that on a plate she held
two crimson mounds, stone cold,
of flesh?

Nearness to sainthood discomfits.
On that platter she bore a token
of the desire and punishment of female flesh,
its palpable excess
neatly sliced
and served.
The palm's fronds seemed feathers
beside the bloody mass,
her triumph less substantial than
stone incarnate.

Refitting her for intimacy, they placed her
in companionate tableau (Anne and Mary
tempering that defiant virginity),

repainted her in colors seemly,
sedate. Newly dressed in blue and white,
Agatha offers a decorous gift,
two alabaster forms,
those severed breasts appearing now as
two chaste loaves.

Robert Collins
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Red Giant

for Ed Ochester

Maybe you've met this sort of man,
just past middle-age, pausing oddly
at the curb as if to ponder a line or turn
of phrase, an image he's forgotten,
crimson-faced from years of sucking
Marlboro reds and gulping cans of Bud—
self-confident and self-propelled,
but bloated, overweight and paunchy,
after neglecting exercise for decades,
except perhaps to mow the lawn,
who seems to have read every great book
ever written and authored several
decent ones himself, a star of more
than average candle power, burning
distinctly if unspectacularly in a distant
area of sky till one day he suddenly
wheezes and gasps, runs out of gas,
flashes red and swells up larger
while his core implodes with a jolt,
and he becomes a red giant, vaporizing
everything in reach as his center cools
and inner fires bank, who can't believe
it's happening to him, that there's any
power in the cosmos greater than himself,
the lifeless planets orbiting around him,
pulverized, reduced to ashes, torched.

Going Home

Leaving Killarney behind we drive around
County Kerry for hours seeking the tiny village
where Jeremiah Flynn was born—seasoned horseman
and sire of our Irish clan burned in a stable fire
on Staten Island two thousand miles away,
back across the ocean where we've come from.

When we locate the crossroads of Bally Finnane,
the only unlocked door in any of the buildings
(and there aren't very many) lunges open stiffly
into the foyer of the pub we knew would be here
if we know one another and our family history
at all. It isn't much of a pub to speak of really—

except for well-stocked shelves of liquor—a few
rickety tables and chairs and a wooden counter
where spirits are bought with Euros, not punts,
more a flimsy excuse for having a pint with the lads—
not that either of us dreamed of a hero's welcome
or anything resembling the prodigal's return.

"Faith and begorra, here's two of Jeremiah's
boys come back from America at last and both
of them successful—the younger one a lawyer
and the older a college professor, having made
a name for themselves as we always expected."
Then singing and drinking for hours into the night.

Soon we sense we do want something more
than the few mute, shuttered houses we find
and photograph from every conceivable angle
as though if we take enough pictures the image
of some distant relation might suddenly emerge
as they're developed, a smudge on the film—

some identifying sign or shiver of connection
with this place our ancestors sprang from,
not just the broken man we find smoking alone
in the pub, which isn't open for business, surly,
taciturn, red-faced, no doubt one of our own,
too hung over or drunk to welcome us home.

Patricia Waters
University of Alabama

Lindos

The world ends where white buildings tumble to the sea,
rhetors teach their crowds of boys disputation, reason, memory.
Holy men live in the cave of their silence,
the terrible divine unsayable at last.
The girls of Caucasia smell of apricots and furs.
What life is possible here, far from the empire's furious heart?
Cyclamen, anemone, attar of roses from Persian deserts,
gold-squandering sun—
how accidental islands are,
scent of lemon trees pressed by fast reeling night,
its scattered stars, their random bright.
How sudden love is.

Home, June

I am a tourist here, driving in the night before,
still unpacking, a little hacked
by the noisy motorcycle from up the street,
wehrmacht-style helmet says it all. I make lists.
What time is cocktail hour?
Don't forget the post office, its odd hours.
People go to bed so early here, the street dark,
filled with the sound of insects,
that is poison ivy creeping from under the oak hydrangea—
whom do I call? Why is the light so hard at four in the afternoon?
I am learning the unfamiliar kitchen,
cockroach belly up by the refrigerator, ants in the sugar,
which store has organic chicken? Label says nothing about free range,
not to be confused with free will. Magnolias are in bloom,
their lemony scent cut with vanilla, their drowning milky cups
remind me of lovemaking. The grass is unmowed for weeks,
Sarah nextdoor worries about snakes. One is enough.
I write a letter every day. It is not like I know a lot of people,
but I rush to the post office on my bicycle to catch the truck
before it leaves for the sorting center, the world.
It is how I know I live.

Theodore Haddin
University of Alabama at Birmingham

The Leaves Are Turning

The leaves are turning
how they fade now
between the window frames
commanding all the sights
pink at first then yellow
an adagio to August suns
then orange and finally red
come winter when only
a few are left to sing
for now they look back
satisfied with summer
each leaf lifting gently
for the fall we know will come
staccato-like with the rain,
allegretto in the sun

Leaves

for Isadore Seltzer

The leaves rise up
in their own tornado
and like the driven snow
across the yard they go
hurrying to their landing place
in hedgerow and cherry laurel
birds huddle in what they know
heave and heave the wind begins
the way we watch the year's end
there's no momentary stay
against the howling up the driveway
that throws yellow and red and brown
a million times into the dark wood
behind the house and on the ground
these may lie still upon a roof
but in a moment lift again
for the drive that turns the world
and nails earth to Earth again and again

Jo LeCoeur
University of the Incarnate Word

Easter Fire

A hundred years of sunsets trail her
low clouds race her
a thunderstorm waits on her
to pitch her tent

and lie down.

Animal skin walls vibrate
a brilliant white now black as blindness
earth a kettledrum
her inside

buried under sleep-wake-sleep-wake-sleep.

Hearing her name
she works to stand
weight humped on one shoulder

rising when the sun does.

Easy as water seeking a low spot
she lets the high ground pull her
to a mound above the treetops
where a stranger sits
feeding her name to the fire
smoke rising white as river shells

to the sun.

To the Sun

we circle the silence
worry dead coals
to heat

stir up the ash
flecked white
with bone

breathe in
and in
swallow the burn

suns splinter
jagged as lightning
off our vision

a surge
through ash-dark air
meets our charge head on

the back draft
sucks her home

Jianqing Zheng
Mississippi Valley State University

Delta Snapshots Haibun

Life in the Mississippi Delta is as slow and quiet as the white clouds hanging over the cotton fields or reflected in the fishponds. One way of enjoying this slow, quiet life is driving around shooting pictures of whatever catches your eye. Later, when you open the album, the pictures may look strangely fresh and give you a memorable impression as brief as a haiku. In the flatland of Delta, sometimes even a closed road may have an old story that has been slowly forgotten.

One Saturday, after waking up to the late morning sunshine, my wife walked into the study where I was doing my slow writing on the computer and asked, "Go to Greenville for lunch?" "Sure!" I answered like a freed bird. Then she went to our son's bedroom to wake him up. In half an hour, we inserted our hungry bodies into the car and hit Highway 82 West. My son, who was old enough to drive, volunteered to be the chauffeur. After we passed Itta Bena, the small town whose name means "home in the woods" in Chickasaw, the next town was Morehead. The ten-minute drive from Itta Bena to Morehead was always as boring as the dull blue sky without a thread of cloud. On our way I noticed that my son looked into the rearview mirror and giggled. I looked back: my wife, who had been quiet in the backseat, was dozing. When we almost reached Morehead, I suddenly asked my son to

slow down!—
in the green rice paddies
hundreds of egrets

As my son pulled up on the gravel shoulder and my wife jerked from her doze, I rolled down the window to take a snapshot, but those white egrets began to fly up. They fluttered their wings slowly but rhythmically above the green paddies and landed farther away as if to protest our disturbance. We then drove on. On the left side of the highway were the catfish ponds reflecting the languishing sunlight, and we saw birds again:

Canada geese wobble
on the edge of a fish pond—
languish in sunlight

I remember one winter Sunday afternoon when I drove past Itta Bena, I saw hundreds of white birds in the distant fields covered with a sheet of thin water. I turned right to the gravel road leading to the fields and approached slowly. In order not to disturb the birds, I stopped my car about one hundred yards away. I stepped out with the camera in my hand and walked quickly to the birds, but they seemed alerted. One flew up, then another, then a few more. I quickened my steps, started running, and jumped over the ditch. One of my shoes was even stuck in the mud, but still

I ran to the fields—
snow geese honking off
into the cold sky

Birds are lovely because they are the wonders of nature and give pleasant surprises to dull life in the Delta. Another kind of bird that I have seen many times is the crow. Each time when I see a crow on a low tree, it reminds me of a famous Japanese haiku written by Matsuo Kinsaku, a haiku master in the seventeenth century who has been well-known as Bashō:

On the dead limb
squats a crow—
autumn night

In Japanese haiku, autumn night is associated with loneliness, and in Bashō's piece, loneliness is juxtaposed with the crow on the dead limb to intensify the speaker's feeling. Having lived a slow life in the Delta for ten years, I love to drive around and see birds, but I enjoy seeing the birds more in spring because the feelings I want to see, taste, touch or tell are pleasures, not loneliness:

spring twilight:
on top of a dogwood
perches a crow

When you take pleasures in seeing birds freshly, in seeing feelings freshly, and in seeing the slow life in the Delta in a fresh way, you are able to hear

on Sunday morning
over my neighbor's mower
a mockingbird's song

and see:

roadside puddle—
sparrows in the birdbath
quiver with sunset

These haiku record the momentary impressions of the Delta life through bird-watching. The power of nature can always reach you and offer you a chance to see its beauty in different forms.

Yvonne Tomek
Delta State University

Zebra

His eyes are far apart and
On his brow lies the Sahara.

Never a dune or a rivulet moves,
Like a planet cast in permanence
In an airless orbit.

It is there and always has been—
The heat between his eyes.

His gaze lowered by lashes, he
Contemplates the horizon.

He knows to draw from sand the
Right amount of heat and sun,
To draw from it the water in the
Sudden rains.

All his life is emblazoned thus
In between his eyes—
His outer flesh,
His inner thoughts.

And then to hide and camouflage,
Reduced to changing configurations
Of white and black as he looks upon
His own kind in endless turnings in
The running herd.

How his thoughts are about purity.
How then and again he loses himself
In the night of the coal black nothingness
Of the furrows of the dunes

Dreaming over the horizon of the shallow
Waters, and now and again,
Of the rising tides.

Joe Amoako
Delaware State University

The Morning Before School

Since there is no alarm clock
The crowing of the morning cock
Wakes my grandfather up
While I'll still be sleeping and snoring

But my children's dreams and snoring
Come to an end with the gentle voice
Of my grandfather calling my name

If his voice does not work
My grandfather will walk to where
I'll be lying on my stretched mat on the floor
To shake and wake me up
From my children's dreams and snoring

My grandfather's gentle voice will
Remind me of the chores I have to
Complete in the morning before school

Why are you still lying on that mat
Are you not going to look for cola nuts
Do you not know that there is not a
Drop of water in this house
Have you forgotten you have
To go to mass this morning

I know if you don't go to
Sweep and clean your school plot
Your teacher will not forgive you
I also know that your teacher
Will be waiting for you at the
School gate if you go to school late
And I know the marks on your skin
Remind you of the last spanking
You received from your teacher for being late

Waking up reluctantly from my dreams
And using my old cookie can as a cup

I'll flush my face with cold water and
With the water dripping down my face
I'll pick up my basket and cutlass
And head for the bush for wild cola nuts

I hear the morning dew on the leaves
Complaining for disturbing its peace
So early in the morning
But the morning music of the birds
Makes me know that I have some company
In the early business of the morning

If I'm lucky and my peers have not
Already roamed under the fruitful cola trees
I pick up all the cola pods that I can find
I sit somewhere in the bush and
Take the cola nuts from the cola pods

With a basketful of cola nuts and
With a beaming smiling face
I rush home because I have to
Make three trips to the small lake
To fetch water

Carrying the big kerosene tin on my head to
Fetch water three times from the small lake
One half of a mile away is not a big deal to me
What bothers me is that the three trips
May turn out to be five or even six trips

The path to the small lake is hilly and
The slopes are slippery since
Some kids may have already skidded and slipped
Spilling their water on the slippery slopes

How dare me go home with an empty kerosene tin
Hence if I slip and fall and spill my water
On these slippery slopes I'll have to tread
These same slopes until I am able
To fill my small empty barrel at home
With three kerosene tins of water

By the time I'm returning from the third trip to
The small lake the church bell will be tolling
This is the first of the four morning bells
Before the morning school

I may ask a friend whether
This is the first or the second bell for
Mass begins immediately at the end of the
Tolling of the second bell

At the end of the twenty-minute Catholic mass
We the children pick up our brooms
Which we leave in front of the church during mass
And rush to our school compound to
Sweep and clean the individual pieces of
Plots that have been allotted to us

We make sure we do thorough cleaning
Because inspection will be done by the
School prefect and the section leaders
Before classes begin in the morning
Being spanked in front of the whole school
For not keeping your plot tidy and clean
Is both shameful and painful

Children will always remain children
Playing becomes part of the cleaning and tidying
Of our plots until the third tolling of bells in
Our village begins to toll
This is the first and the warning bell
For our morning school

Like the antelopes who have heard the roaring of a lion
We disperse from the school compound and
Each of us rushes home to go and get ready
Before the fourth tolling of bells in
Our village begins to toll

Dressed in my well ironed stiff starched khaki school uniform
I eat my grandmother's roasted plantain and fish
While rushing to school barefooted
Before the fourth village bell which is
The second school bell stops tolling

Stephanie M. Eddleman
Harding University

Price Tag

Did you ever wake up in the middle
of the night, maybe just to go to the bathroom,
drowsy in the dark, slow and warm,
but not alone, never alone,
although sometimes you'd like to be?

You'd like to be in charge,
have a place for everything
and everything in its place,
have enough money to pay every bill
or not make a bill you cannot pay,
eat breakfast for supper
or chocolate cake and not one single
vegetable for lunch.

You'd like to make a plan
and stick with it,
no interruptions,
never watch a clock, or feel
the hurry up of someone always
waiting waiting for you to be
somewhere else when you're just
fine right here right now.

You'd like to watch whatever
you want on TV,
three straight hours of CSI,
and not one more Andy Griffith episode,
curl up on the couch with a book
read until your eyes hurt,
then take a really hot really long
bath and go straight to bed.

You'd like to

but a warm fire waiting
when you get home from work
and the magnanimous smile of
merged memories
are way too high a
price to pay.

Maura Gage Cavell
Louisiana State University at Eunice

Just Before it Rains

He lights her cigarette,
pours her martini,
watches her long
muscular legs as
she pulls away
and then steps lightly
towards him.
She undresses
slowly, piece by piece,
until she's naked
by the window,
the neighbors
just outside
the bluing sky—
clouds beyond the building
over the bridge like
intricate lace.

Randy Blythe
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Service Call

Probably '73. Off the weed for a while, I could
walk through a courtyard in the projects, sniff, and identify,
"Colombian, B grade." A dreary Southern winter.
Rain and sleet. Gray day and decade. The "Fuck It" generation.
"Plumber!" I called through the door, after I'd heard the woman inside
turn to the group and mumble "white folk" a little low.
Another woman, a couple guys—one of them in uniform—,
their smoke-bloody eyes, slacks, shirts, blouses
washed thin but not often enough, the bleary addle
of mid-day partying, traffic outside shearing in the rain,
the smell of greasy smoke and too many bodies and too much time
in closed-in apartments, cheap couch and chairs,
bottle of Thunderbird on the coffee table,
the screw top tossed next to the butt-filled ash tray
next to the baggie and papers and Bic and cigarette burns.
"I need to fix your face bowl. Supposed to have a leak?" I asked.
"Go 'head," she mumbled, and sat down.
The few steps to the bathroom, I heard that pause
I always heard in the drunk talk,
of caution, and resentment, barely veiled in those days,
like a furnace that lowers for a second, then the resumption,
the quiet drawl of conversation, the snippets of "job"
and "Lord, no" and a distinct "It was honorable."—
under the low staticky moan of Smokey's "More Love"
on the cheap turntable on the rickety stand
next to the woman who'd let me in; then their words
turned to vague sounds in my ears, "oh" and "eee,"
when I had trouble with the J-bend,
my cheek pressed against the cold porcelain front of the lavatory,
my arms straining to hold the pliers and trap in place,
then the guy in uniform—I could feel him lean in to his male friend—said,
"How many black folks *you* know been to Paris?"

Robert Bunce
Northwest Mississippi Community College

When It's Right

It is not like taking her back to the double-wide
Throwing her on the naughahide sectional
Ripping off her Hooters tee shirt and
Screaming Geronimo!

When I write a poem
I feel like an old fisherman
Sitting quietly beside the
Rushing current of a crystal
Mountain brook serene

Who when some curious
Passerby inquires how's
He doing He with a
Sprightly motion hoists
A sparkling trout from
Its bed of moss—
A holographic hieroglyph
Reflected in a pool
Of rainbow colored light

Robert West
University of Mississippi

An English Teacher's Dream

Most days, my ten o'clock flies by as planned:
I say what should be said, they write it down,
And I can count on Blake to raise his hand.

Today, though, things have gone awry, and
Amanda's smile has wilted to a frown.
It's only ten past ten, but what I'd planned

Already seems too dull, or, worse, too grand.
Even buoyant Claire's about to drown—
But I can count on Blake to raise his hand.

I goof up. Lines misquoted, badly scanned. . . .
The look on Anna's face says, *You're a clown.*
Half past, and I've abandoned what I'd planned;

My mouth is slowly filling up with sand.
When Ben slips into wig and evening gown,
I blink. And Blake has yet to raise his hand.

Ten forty-nine. On thing I understand:
I wear this headache like a thorny crown.
Lord knows the lesson's hardly gone as planned
But Blake will bail me out and raise his hand.

FICTION

Rehab

Rusty Rogers
University of Central Arkansas

Rabbit pulled the old Ford pickup to a stop in front of Ponton's foremost rest home, which wasn't saying much, since there were only two in town. Paint was peeling off the sign, blue letters on white, that read *Paradise Pines: Ponton's Premier Rest and Rehabilitation Center*. It oughta read Perpetually Peeing Place, he thought, considering the frequently incontinent state of many of its residents. He sat for a minute in the heat, dust from the unpaved parking lot swirling in the pickup's open windows and sticking to his sweaty face and forearms. He couldn't help thinking he could be wading up Boardcamp Creek, cool to the waist at least, catching bass and perch right and left. But Uncle Willie—his great uncle, actually—had taught him to flyfish after all, so Rabbit didn't really begrudge visiting him almost every afternoon. He owed him more than that. It was one of his favorite memories—a skinny 12 year old not much bigger around that the old bamboo fly rod he was flailing around with, slinging popping bugs into tree limbs and stumps and once into Uncle Willie's ballcap, Willie patient and calm, pointing to where the fish would be and both of them hoping Rabbit might get the fly to land there. Once in about 20 casts, the bug would hit the water, a fat green-yellow goggle-eye would smash it and hook itself. He'd holler, end up with line around his ears and neck and maybe catch the fish. Uncle Willie would just smile.

Rabbit was grinning himself, thinking about it. He was starting to stick to the plastic seat covers, so he opened the truck door and got out, being careful to step over the running board. It had rusted out so badly you could see through it. One good stomp and he figured his foot would knock it off. He licked his finger and ran it across the hood, making a dark green line where the faded lighter paint came off on his hand. Dang truck is just like the people in this place, he thought. One thump and they'd probably fall apart. "Well, hot damn!" He laughed. "Old Lady Bixler would croak. I've made a metaphor." But it wasn't really funny. He hated thinking about Uncle Willie like that. No getting around it though, Willie was showing signs of sliding. Still, he'd been going strong till 91, driving, hunting, fishing, sharp as the proverbial tack. During tax season he'd come over to Paradise Pines and help residents fill out their forms. Only the last couple of years had he started forgetting or becoming confused about things and slowing down physically, and then the little stroke last spring put him in the rehab center. He was doing better and would probably get to go home in another month, but it was a slow process.

Rabbit walked up the wheelchair ramp to the side door of the old red

brick building. No matter how he braced himself, he was never quite ready for that nursing home smell—the odor of medication, cleansers, and incipient decay. The insipid pale green walls didn't help much. Paradise Pines clearly had not subscribed to the modern idea of "bright paint, cheery residents." His cousin Sam was standing just inside the door. Sam was working as an aide this last summer before he and Rabbit graduated, and Rabbit could sometimes tell he was already developing a rather callous attitude toward the inhabitants of Paradise. "I ain't hard-hearted," he'd told Rabbit, "but if I don't get thick-skinned I won't make it through the summer in here." There were compensations, he admitted—actually a lot of laughs, if you just kept the right perspective on things. He grinned when he saw Rabbit come in.

"I figured you'd be by, if you could keep that fly rod out of your hand."

"Passed it up today to see Uncle Willie, but I'm going tomorrow unless Heath calls tonight and says I got to haul hay," Rabbit said. "How is he today?"

"'Bout the same," Sam answered. "He and his buddies are eating supper. Probably getting about half of it all the way to their mouths—less than that when it's green peas."

"Well, let's go see 'em," said Rabbit, "but don't mention peas. Might give their bladders a bad idea."

Sam wrinkled his nose. "Huh! I don't need any more of that."

They headed down the hall toward the dining room, right into another odor.

"Man!" Sam exclaimed. "It smells like crap!"

Rabbit looked into the room they were passing. "There's a reason for that," he said. Mrs. Yarborough was sitting up in her bed, her thin white hair floating around her head like the fuzz on a dandelion, staring down at her lap in surprise and embarrassment and maybe shame. A nurse came bustling toward the room and Rabbit turned quickly away before the old lady saw him watching.

"Man, that's sad," he said.

"Yeah, it stinks, alright," was Sam's cynical response.

Rabbit couldn't help smiling, but it didn't make him feel any better. He wasn't any more generally empathic than most kids his age, but Uncle Willie's condition was making him abnormally sensitive.

They turned the corner into the dining room. Uncle Willie and his two almost constant companions had their wheelchairs pulled as close to their table as possible while they ate. Sam was at least partially right—there was a good deal of food that had landed in unintended places. Rabbit thought they were a strange looking group, even if you discounted the wheelchairs. Uncle Willie towered over the others even sitting down. He

was 6'4" and still pretty erect, especially for someone his age. Uwin was enormous, as hugely fat as Willie was skinny. He'd had a bad stroke and was paralyzed on his right side, so he operated his electric wheelchair with a joystick on the left armrest. He talked slowly, his mouth coming open and his lower lip sagging down and quivering before he spoke, as it were warming up so it could work properly. There was nothing wrong with his mind, though, if you didn't mind waiting for what it had to say. Bob was little, both short and thin, and gave off a sense of vigor and vitality. Perky as a little rooster, Rabbit's mom had said. He called himself "Ring-tailed, bowlegged Bob," staring intensely into your eyes and talking as clearly and crisply as Uwin did the opposite. When he wanted to make a point, he'd point at you, although his arthritic finger ended up aiming at your feet. It had only taken a little listening, however, for Rabbit to realize Bob was rowing with one oar out of the water. As Uwin confided one day, "Willie and I have decided that Bob is just a little bit peculiar."

Rabbit liked to visit during supper. He knew the old men—even Uncle Willie—could get pretty down alone in their rooms, but they were usually in a good mood when they were together, and Sam was right; they had some strange and funny conversations. The last time Rabbit came by, Bob had been temporarily banished from the table. He often got into trouble for making suggestive remarks to the female nurses, so occasionally he'd be made to eat alone in his room until he promised to straighten up. His good behavior didn't last, of course, but this evening he was back at the table, which almost guaranteed some bizarre discussion.

"Hey, Uncle Willie," Rabbit said. "You doing ok?"

Uncle Willie looked up at him, smiling. He always smiled when he saw Rabbit. "I reckon," he said. "You not fishing today?"

"I was headed for the river," Rabbit answered, "but then I remembered where I could find three old suckers all together."

The three old suckers laughed out loud. They liked Rabbit kidding them the way they did each other, especially about their ages or health problems. Making fun of their troubles helped keep them manageable.

Rabbit pulled up a chair between Uncle Willie and Bob. "Bob, how come they wouldn't let you eat with these guys last Wednesday?" he asked.

"They said I threatened the nurses," Bob said. "But I don't think I did."

"I don't know, Bob," Rabbit couldn't resist leading him on. "I've heard you sound pretty violent about these nurses."

Bob leaned forward in his wheelchair and pointed at Rabbit. "I'll have you know I never hit a woman in my life!" he declared. He paused. "No, wait—yes I have, once."

"You never! Bob, I can't believe you hit a woman." Rabbit tried to sound shocked, but he wanted to laugh so bad he nearly choked.

"Well, she had it coming, but I did feel a little guilty about it." Bob did sound embarrassed.

Uncle Willie and Uwin were laughing outright. Uwin was shaking so much that the Razorback hog on his red Arkansas t-shirt was hopping up and down. "It's a good thing the doctors didn't know you were a woman beater," Uwin said. "They'd throw your skinny ass in Observation in a New York second. 'Course you'll probably earn your way in there on your own soon enough."

Bob glared at him. The old men joked about being put in Observation like they did everything else, but it was a fragile kind of humor. They couldn't really laugh about Observation. If you went in, you were locked in, because the doctors had decided you were too far gone mentally and had to be watched all the time so you wouldn't get lost or hurt yourself or somebody else. It was pretty much over if you got sent to Observation. The whole thing reminded Rabbit of the Dying Room in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which he'd had to read in Bixler's English class. It was the hospital ward where the wounded soldiers were sent to die. Nobody ever came out. He was careful never to even mention Observation himself.

"I don't know how you get off laughing at me, and talking about Observation," Bob huffed. "Anybody with a name like Urine has no business laughing at anyone else."

As usual, it took Uwin's lip a few seconds to go into action. "That's Uwin, not urine," he said. "U-w-i-n, Uwin, not urine—as you well know."

"A rose by any other name," Bob cackled.

Uncle Willie always laughed without making any sound, but the tears were rolling down his cheeks. He'd been a preacher for over fifty years, so he would never call Uwin Urine himself, but it tickled him when Bob did—and Bob did, nearly every day. If it had upset Uwin, Uncle Willie would never have thought it funny—Rabbit was afraid he might have anyway—but Uwin enjoyed the teasing himself. And he gave as good as he got, even though it took him longer to do his kidding. He kept challenging Bob to a race down the east hall, since he had a high powered wheelchair, and Bob had to push his himself. Bob kept begging off, claiming he was doing some physical therapy especially designed to get his arms in shape for racing.

Between eating most of their food and erratically dispersing the rest of it on and around their table, Bob, Uwin, and Uncle Willie finished the meal, and Sam started clearing the dishes. Rabbit pushed Uncle Willie out of the dining hall and down two halls to his room. He knew Uncle Willie didn't need the help, but he appreciated being allowed to do it. Actually, Uncle Willie didn't even use the wheelchair much any more. Most of the time he used his walker, which had had to be specially made since he was so tall, and he'd put two old yellow tennis balls on the front legs so it would

slide easily. He sat in the recliner next to the radio, and Rabbit hopped up on the edge of the bed.

He liked talking with Uncle Willie. He realized a couple of years ago that for some reason or reasons, Uncle Willie would talk to him about things he wouldn't discuss with anyone else, even Rabbit's parents. Rabbit thought maybe it was partly because he remembered people and events from way back in the past better now than he recalled things from the last years of his life, and that somehow made him feel closer to Rabbit's own age. And when he thought about it, Rabbit was surprised at how well he could talk to Uncle Willie. He was a preacher, for Pete's sake, and always dignified and gentlemanly, but not "stuffy," so he had never seemed intimidating to Rabbit. They discussed everything from baseball—Uncle Willie had played professionally to pay his way through seminary and quit when he graduated—to "heavy" issues that Rabbit never talked about with anyone else, even his best friends.

"Well, Uncle Willie, when does it look like you'll be headed for the house again?" he asked.

"Another couple of weeks, far as I can tell," said Uncle Willie. "I'm about finished with my physical therapy, so the doctor's kinda playing it by ear right now."

"I'm ready for you, and the crappie are getting there. They'll be starting to move back into shallow water 'bout when you get out." Rabbit paused. He noticed Uncle Willie seemed to be only half listening. "Uncle Willie," he said a little louder, wondering if he'd gotten confused.

"You might figure," Uncle Willie began, "that at my ancient age a fellow might just sit around thinking about being old, or wondering or worrying about dying." He stopped.

After a minute Rabbit asked. "Well, do you?"

"Almost never, thank the Lord."

"What do you think about then?" Rabbit often surprised himself with what he would ask Uncle Willie.

"Mostly what I'm going to do each day. And what I'm going to do next during each day."

They were both quiet for a while. Then Rabbit asked, "Uncle Willie, what's the toughest thing about being where you are? I don't mean being in the Rehab center, I mean, being your age, and not as healthy as you used to be, and all."

"Really realizing—not just in my head, but feeling it—that I can't get young again," he answered.

They were silent again for a few minutes. Once he'd started asking these kinds of questions, Rabbit couldn't stop until he'd asked one more. "I know you're a preacher, and so you've got faith—I mean, I know you truly do—but do you ever worry about dying, about what there is or isn't after you

die, about what'll happen to you then?"

Uncle Willie had been leaning back in his recliner with his eyes half shut, but he sat up and opened his eyes and looked right into Rabbit's. Then a smile came on his face. It started with his mouth and spread up through his eyes and over his face and then seemed somehow to go all through him. "No," he said.

They sat quietly for a bit. After a few minutes Rabbit saw Uncle Willie was getting drowsy, so he told him goodbye and left. When he went back through the dining hall on his way out, Bob was still there. "Hey, Rabbit," he called. "I almost forgot to tell you something important."

"What's that, Bob?" Rabbit stopped in front of the little man, peering up at him.

"You know I had this thing happen to my brain, so sometimes it doesn't work just like it should. Well, my son is coming in next week, and we're going to work on it."

"That sounds good, Bob," Rabbit said. "Are you going to figure out how to fix it?"

"Oh, we know how to fix it," Bob smiled confidently. "He's just helping me do it. See, he's bringing some air conditioning wire."

"Air conditioning wire?" What in the everlovin' world? Rabbit thought.

"Yep, it's gotta' be air conditioning wire. Only kind that'll work. Then we'll put it in through my right ear and run it out my left ear, hook it up to the electricity, and turn it on." Bob paused. "'Course, I'll buzz a little."

Rabbit pretended to have a coughing fit to cover up his laughing. It took him several seconds to catch his breath. "Well, Bob," he gasped, "I sure hope that fixes things. When is he coming?"

"I'm not exactly sure," Bob said, "but it'll be soon as he gets through jumping out of airplanes and rassling alligators."

That's it, Rabbit said to himself. If I don't get out of here I'll bust out laughing and hurt his feelings. Out loud he said, "Bob, I just realized I'm about to miss my own supper if I don't get home in hurry," and took off for the door. Sam was standing outside emptying a couple of trash cans. Rabbit hopped into the truck and started it, then leaned out of the window and hollered at him before he drove off. "Man, you were right. I feel like I've been in the middle of a TV *un*reality show."

"Told you," Sam said. "Come back anytime. There's a new episode every day."

As it turned out, Rabbit only made one more visit. Uncle Willie did well enough to be sent home after three more days, so Rabbit fell out of touch with Paradise Pines and its residents. Even though it hadn't been what he'd call pleasant to go there, in a strange way he actually missed the

experience, and he did miss Bob and Uwin for their own sakes. About a month after Uncle Willie left rehab, Rabbit decided to stop by for a few minutes. School was about to start, and what with that and football practice, he figured it would be his last chance for quite a while. He found Uwin alone in his room. He was in his wheelchair, of course, but he was just sitting there, not reading or watching TV or listening to the radio. They talked about the upcoming football season, how the team might do, and how much Rabbit would get to play. Uwin was so glad to see Rabbit it was almost painful, and he asked about Uncle Willie over and over. "I sure do miss my buddy," he said about five times.

"He misses you all, too," Rabbit tried to reassure him. "He's told me that several times, and he'll be coming to see you when he's a little stronger and can get somebody to drive him over. At least you've still got Bob. I haven't seen him yet. How's he doing?"

Uwin looked at him with a strange expression on his face. "I don't guess you knew," he said. "They put Bob in Observation."

"Oh,—well, no, I didn't know that." Rabbit couldn't come up with anything else to say.

Uwin's eyes slid past Rabbit and looked over toward his window, where the blinds were down and shuttered. "I haven't seen him since he went in." His lower lip seemed to quiver longer than usual. "I don't reckon I will see him," he said.

From **The Summer of Bill Moyers: A Fable of Finding**

Kay Stricklin
Delta State University

Bill Moyers. Bill Moyers. Bill Moyers. A little goes a long way. Ubiquitous sage. It's Thursday about 10 a.m. I am sitting on a fund-raising committee in Dallas. How imaginative we are. Always planning luncheons to benefit our favorite diseases.

"This year we'll have it at the Fairmont. Parking is easy," says our chairman, stacking her papers neatly, smiling at the crew gathered to "head it up."

"But who shall we have as our speaker?" asks the brunette at the end of the table.

"How about Bill Moyers?" suggests a woman with short, very current hair. "He's always a good draw and men like him, too." No other names offered. Heads nod. Wasn't I at this same meeting a month ago? I check my board notebook. No, different cause of death. Different chairperson.

I suggest that I know for a fact that another disease-friendly group has already planned to have Bill Moyers during the same program year. Blank stares. We are all challenged to come up with other names by our next meeting.

Tuesday, the following week. Starbucks. It's very informal. Six people. Exercise clothes, notebooks. 8:15 a.m. The kiddos have been dropped off. Now it's fundraising time for the arts. Focus on new local talent. The chairperson has decided on a gala evening. Book sales and signing. She hopes to have a nationally known author, also good presenter. Someone everyone loves. Always a draw. She's checking on Bill Moyers. All heads nod.

"Good God!" I exclaim. "Isn't there anybody else that Texans have ever heard of? Can't we be more imaginative? Sure, he's well known, but what's he going to say that we haven't already heard? And he'll be here for cancer in January! Push the envelope. Stretch the limits. Try Lyle Lovett. He can sign CDs. What about Willie Nelson?"

Silence. The chair clears her throat. "What about Henry Kissinger?" asks the chair. "Does anybody have an in with Kissinger?"

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Wednesday 3 a.m. A dream. I am in a car driving down the road. No, I'm riding. Who is driving? The car is out of control. I must have been asleep. The driver is slumped in his seat. I touch his hand to rouse him but

not startle. We could crash. I steer us straight. Are you asleep? I whisper. Are you all right?

I help him sit up. In that amazing dream way I know that this is my husband. I must help him. I am panicked. What is the matter? Gradually I coax the car to a stop on the shoulder and take his hand. I look up into his eyes. You'll be fine, I say. It's all right. I can drive now.

I wake. I am sitting bolt upright in bed in a cold sweat. Terrified. Bill Moyers! In my dream I am married to Bill Moyers.

Later that day I stop at Borders to pick up a book as a birthday present. It's in the poetry section. *19 Varieties of Gazelle* by Naomi Shihab Nye. As I pick it up I come face to face with an anthology. "Collected," it says "by Bill Moyers." I am struck stone still. I pick it up and open it slowly. There in the front is a small black and white snapshot of him with some of his subjects. He rests his head in his hand. A familiar gesture by a familiar figure. I weep, strangely moved. It is the same hand I held in my dream.

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Thursday afternoon, at the home of a fellow soccer mom, I have been invited to talk about some of my ideas for children's faith development. She is interested in my interfaith views. This has all come about very quickly so I am a little nervous. I want this to go well. It has been a very long time since anyone has taken my ideas as more than weird in this city of self-conscious conformity.

As I look over my notes her mother arrives with a friend in tow who is visiting from out of town. Her mother is intimidating enough; then I see the visitor—smiling, warmly greeting a suddenly very enthusiastic crowd. I am paralyzed. It is none other than Bill Moyers.

From behind I hear my friend say, "Come on, I want you to meet someone." I feel myself dragged by the elbow and planted squarely in front of a smiling Mr. Moyers.

Oh yes, delighted. So glad to meet you. My pleasure. What a wonderful opportunity. Thank you. Certainly. Anytime. Everyone is talking at once. Everyone is nodding and smiling and I am cold as ice. I can no longer hear anything but loud ringing in my ears. I may faint. Or have I already and just don't know it yet? Meanwhile everyone seems to have forgotten about me. Maybe I can leave by the side door and no one will notice.

****

Another coffee. Do I really go to this many coffees? I guess I must.

How empty is my life? Shouldn't I do better with my time? They seem to come in spurts, I rationalize. This is certainly a florid period.

The valet takes my dirty white minivan to be parked next to a zippy baby blue Ferrari convertible. That's why I'm invited. To be an equalizer. A token ordinary person.

I join the procession toward the house. Everyone is greeting everyone else.

This is actually a group of people I know well and the hostess has a reputation for good food. Of course nobody really eats any. Nobody in Dallas really eats. They just taste and exercise. Anyway this should actually be fun. Then I can still get my errands run before I have to go home.

So I dive in. Chit-chat. *How's your son/daughter, new puppy? Did you all have a nice summer? Hard to believe it's September already. . . . Nice to have a break in the weather. . . .What are you up to these days? That's nice.*

"Oh, there you are. I hoped I'd see you here. I want to ask you something."

I turn around stunned. Bill Moyers. I stare.

"Here, have another cup of coffee and let's go out on the patio. It's a wonderful morning."

I follow instructions, accept the coffee cup, and go out through the french doors. The patio is still damp, dew on all the furniture. So we stand at the low wall looking out over a lawn strewn with sculpture. This house is more of a museum than a dwelling. Built to house a collection of modern art, a private collection, privately housed, seen by invitation only. So what's Mr. Public Radio doing here?

I try to think of an intelligent art-critic comment, but before I have to worry about it too much, Bill speaks.

"Listen, is it true that you opposed my speaking at the heath and spirituality luncheon because you said I didn't really know anything about it? That I was just a gatherer of other people's knowledge, a secondary source?"

I choke on my coffee. I can't breathe and start to hiccup.

"Well, you're absolutely right. I turned them down for just that reason."

I'm stunned.

"That's how I found out you'd said it. The woman who called me was so taken aback by my refusal that she admitted that someone on the committee had said the same thing. I couldn't resist asking who. I didn't think she'd tell me, but she gave you up right away. I had to laugh. I'd expect no less from you." He's laughing now. "So I gave her the names of three or four 'primary resources' and said to tell them that I said to call. By the way, I'd watch out for that woman if I were you. She didn't hesitate to

finger you." More laughter. Shakes his head.

My eyes are filling with tears. He pretends not to notice and chats on about the art-filled house and how it's a shame for it to be privately owned and housed.

"Wouldn't it be grand to have the same quality of space in South Dallas or East Dallas and open to the people? Well," he says at last, "I have to be going. I'm glad we ran into each other. Say, is it true that you are a painter? I'd love to see some of your stuff sometime."

I look down at my hands, embarrassed, and then he is gone and all of the warmth and energy of the morning with him. I put up my cup and leave.

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This time I'm meeting him on purpose. I've asked him to breakfast. I'm already there before he arrives. I've grabbed a booth not too far from the door. Seated facing the entrance, I'll catch him when he comes in. Coffee is already on the table. There is the strong smell of syrup. This place is amazing. A Kosher diner. Truck stop food plus fresh bagels and blintzes. Can't beat it.

The waitress approaches my table. "Are you waiting for Mr. Moyers?" she asks hesitantly. "He called to say he won't be able to make it. He left a number for you." She hands me a torn piece of paper on which the info is recorded. I am crushed. How could I have thought he would actually come? I feel foolish and conspicuous. Hot-faced and shaking, I take out my cell phone and dial the number on the paper. "Hey," says the voice on the other end. "I am so sorry. Listen. I'm on my way to the airport. I've been called back to New York. Can we do this again sometime?"

"Sure, no problem. I hope it's nothing too serious."

"No, no some tape didn't record properly and I've got to redo it by Friday. That's all. Stupid really. I hope you understand."

"Oh, sure." I'm trying to sound casual and lazy about it all. Like, "No big deal besides I am so busy I could use the extra time. . . ." Truth is, of course, that I have nothing else scheduled for three days but carpools and homework.

****

On Friday I do something that I have been afraid to do. I tune in to watch him on TV. The sound of his voice being broadcast is a shock. There is a room full of people. His voice up to now had been just for me. I feel violated somehow, exposed. Why? Haven't there been millions of people to hear his voice? Wasn't I just one of millions?

He looks different as well. The experience of watching him is almost unbearable. Suddenly I am overwhelmed by a need to protect him from the comments and evaluations of others. He seems vulnerable. Pure. I can think of no one worthy to receive him.

****

Tuesday a.m. Dishes done. Laundry done. Carpool complete. Correspondence updated. I've looked forward to this time. No meetings. Time for my unconscious, for my soul to speak to me. But I am restless.

The yard is damp and cool. Autumn is here, or what passes for autumn in Dallas. Cooler, damper mornings.

"Do you believe in synchronicity?"

"Of course I do. How else would I have ever found you?"

"You need something badly enough and the universe provides it."

"Yes."

I drink in his face. Somehow I can never get enough of the crinkles at the corners of his eyes. He is at home in this universe. Wears the world with the ease of the well-worn tweed sport coat he has on right now. Grace. Pure and simple. Grace. I wish I had it. Instead I am edgy. Too edgy for my age. I should have grown out of it by now. I tell others to believe lots of things. Then live as if I'm not sure.

****

He comes into the room smiling. A cup of coffee cradled in his palm. Warm. Calm. Always kind. He looked into the large pot I was stirring. "What you cookin'?"

"Collards," I said.

"Good."

I study the lines of his face. Gentle relaxed grace. How could I have been so negative and cynical about this man? Standing here in my kitchen I find him overwhelmingly sexually attractive. No matter what seems to be going on, his eyes are intently focused on the subject of his inquiry. He laughs easily. Intense curiosity. Very sexy combination. Courtly manners, charm.

"What's that old story about?"

From the other room reality strikes. "Mom, Mom!" "Yes?" "Where are my tennis shoes?" "Look under the coffee table in the den. Did you find them?" "Yeah." I listen out for the door to slam as he goes out to play.

"Oh, where was I? Oh yes, the story about. . . .

Bill laughs. "Listen," he says. "I've been meaning to ask you. In

your Jungian frame of reference, am I a part of your personal unconscious, a constellation of your animus, helping to bring to awareness some of your innermost desires? An active imagination delving into the core meaning of your life, a projection of your ideals, aspiration, revealing to you truths of your own soul? Maybe a figure on the scope of Jung's own Philemon?"

I stare at him, spoon suspended above the collards. Intense, curious, nodding, he waits.

"Hell no. You're purely a sexual fantasy."

****

"Bill. . . . Bill." I wait patiently for a response.

"Bill. . . . Bill. Are you there?" I speak softly as this is the first time I've ventured into his realm and knocked on his door.

Then faintly, as if from a distance, "Yes? Is that you?"

"Did I wake you?"

"Only from my thoughts." His voice is warmed by the familiar chuckle.

"Well, that's what I wanted to talk to you about."

"Really!"

"Yes."

"Well then, you have my undivided attention."

He welcomes me into his space, smiling, a bit rumpled. Gestures for me to sit in a large, squishy chair. He sits in one facing me by the fire. He looks absently around the room looking for something. Then brings his eyes back to me and I observe his keen attention focusing in on my face.

For a moment I lose my nerve and my breath. Nothing. nothing feels quite like being grasped in that penetrating vision. Can he read minds? Probably not, but I'll bet he can smell a phony two states away.

"Now, tell me about my thoughts." Is he mocking me? Maybe, but without animosity and with just a hint of irony.

I start tentatively, anxious, glancing away from his face. "I read your speech," I say. "The one you gave at the LBJ Library last January." His eyes widen with amazement and I think not a little pleasure. "I'm not quite sure why, but I found it on the internet and just knew I had to have it. You know how that is sometimes. You just stumble on something and you know it's meant for you. Well, anyway, I downloaded it and read it and it terrified me."

He leans forward, frowning now, lips twitching, but does not speak.

"I cried as I read it. I could feel your tension and anger and frustration. I cried for you. I cried for me. I share all of that with you. It's as if you had read my heart and then verbalized it for me. But more than all that, I cried because of the passion and intellect and just old fashioned

knowledge in it. I marveled at how you can follow all that legislation and stay current and not lose hope. It took me back to my days as a Teen Democrat when I thought I really could change the world. For a moment I believed it all again, but I crumbled under the burden of that effort years ago. Too much Bread for the World. Too much Amnesty International. Too many letters to congressmen and too much CSPAN. I felt so guilty because years ago I just gave up. I felt this huge need to apologize to you personally for forsaking all those causes. It was as if by doing so, I had forsaken you. It was a marvelous speech. Cost me four nights sleep."

Tears are streaming down my cheeks now. The pain on his face is almost unbearable. Now I am sorry I brought it up. I've added to his already incomprehensible sense of responsibility, and I had come with the absolute opposite intention.

Before I can say another word, he fumbles in his pocket and hands me a cotton handkerchief, the sight of which just makes me cry harder. Is there anything more wonderful than a white cotton handkerchief? Unless it's one offered by a gentleman in a time of distress. His soft Southern drawl always says the right thing.

"Just like Scarlett. Never had a handkerchief in her life when she needed one."

He's smiling again but his eyes remain sad.

A true Southern gentleman. The perfect balance of wit and wisdom. A little light literary reference and a touch of humor. Southern grace at its best. Nothing like it. It works. I can't help but smile, too.

"That's part of the problem," I say. "I'm just still too much like Scarlett when I want to be Barbara Jordan."

He laughs out loud now.

"Yes, well, that is the tension of it all, isn't it?"

Big sigh, shakes his head. Changes back to the serious. "I'm sorry you were so troubled by the speech, but of course that was part of the point. To stir up the crowd. Motivate them to be more active as citizens. Remember our roots in democracy and social activism. There's a lot of work to do."

There is a long silence.

"I heard you say once that words could break down the barriers of race and class."

"Did I say that?" I nod.

"Well. I do believe it. I believe sometimes the hardest thing is to say what you really mean and truly feel. And sometimes, by putting it into words, just being able to articulate something you generate change. It's as if by making thoughts into words they become tangible and then they can have force in a tangible, material world. But maybe I'm just trying to justify spending my life as a journalist. As if to say, talking is doing something

after all. Say, listen to me. I talk too much."

"No," I say. "Keep going. I'm listening. And maybe if I can just follow along on your thoughts I'll find my way to wherever it is I am trying to get."

"What is it exactly that you are hoping to find?"

"I don't know, you see. But I know I'll recognize it if I hear it."

"Well, then. Do you remember the story about Percival?"

"Tell me."

****

I'm at Border's again. In the poetry section. I have a friend who swears she goes into bookstores and wanders around and books just fall on her. It goes without saying that they are inevitably what she needs to find, but they find her. She is, of course, walking around in that kind of liminal half-trance state that invites such serendipity.

I believe her because it has happened to me before. Once or twice at least. So I return to the scene of the visitation, hoping for a repeat performance. All the components must not be present.

I sit down on one of those short, squatty library stools and wait. Nothing. Lately, I've been reminding myself of that Zen saying: Don't just do something, sit there. It sounds more pop culture than Confucius, but it seems to be saying something to me. Still nothing.

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING **THERE**? Silly! Don't you remember what the professor says in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*? 'Of course you'll get back to Narnia again someday, but it won't be through the wardrobe the next time.'"

I start and stare about. Whaa! No one is there. Had I nodded off or did someone speak to me? I shiver. It is chilly in this corner of the store. I pull my scarf tighter around my neck. Where is the sudden draft coming from? I move the stool just slightly to the left so that the shelves will block the cold air.

"Come on then. No use in sitting here shaking. I'll buy you some coffee."

To my amazement there are now shoes and trousers standing right in front of me. I squint up into the face above. Bill extends his hand to lift me up off the stool. He looks rather somber.

No sooner am I on my feet than he turns and heads off toward the door. I dodge a small boy and an older woman as I hurry to keep up. Where is he going? What if I lose him in the crowd? I am aware of the increased population around me. Where did so many people come from? They are dressed in heavy clothes. Very dour bunch.

Bill is holding the door for me and motioning for me to come on.

Once on the sidewalk he takes off again. I head after him. Gosh, it has gotten chilly. How long was I in that store anyway? As I get my bearings I realize that I am no longer in Dallas. I am headed down 57th Street in New York after the back of a head that is getting farther and farther ahead of me in the crowd. And I am freezing. I elbow and shoulder my way forward. It's New York after all and I am adaptable. At last I catch up at the corner.

"Bill. For Pete sake. What's the hurry?"

"I need to get back to my desk. I left a huge stack of papers and unreturned phone calls. I didn't even tell anybody I was leaving. They'll wonder whatever happened to me. I never just leave. Plus I've been gone awhile. It took me forever to find you. I went to Church of the Heavenly Rest first. Got my signals crossed, I guess. Something about trying to recover important people from your past."

"Oh. I see. Wrong important past. But thanks for coming. I could use a cup of coffee."

Stops suddenly. "Oh, I forgot I offered." Frowns. This clearly doesn't fit the schedule. Looks around absently.

"Oh, for Pete's sake! I didn't call you so that we could just sit here and drink coffee. There are too many things to do. I need you to come with me right now."

"Wait! Wait! Did you say you called me? You called me?"

"Yes. How else do you think you got here?"

"Why, I don't know, I suppose. I'm confused. I thought I was the one doing the summoning. You've never called me before."

"What do you mean? Haven't I? I hadn't noticed." He's very distracted now. Not looking at me, pacing.

"No, I always did the calling. At least I think that's how it works. Conjuring."

"Oh." Furrows his brow, thinking long and hard. "You may be right. Still, you do always seem to turn up just when I need you. Only this time I couldn't wait any longer."

A hot-white thrill runs down my spine. Needed Me! Couldn't wait! I'd always assumed those sentiments were mine, unrequited. I always thought HE did the turning up.

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