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The *Hamartia* of Oedipus and Agamemnon

Pamela S. Saur
Lamar University

Aristotle's famous formulation, expressed in his "Poetics," praises the dramatic power of a tragic hero experiencing a tragic fall due to some *hamartia,* or human flaw or failing, a concept involving a complex and enduring web of fundamental issues of human existence, guilt and chance, fate and fortune. Legions of critics throughout the ensuing centuries have struggled with the various questions and concepts involved in defining the term *tragedy*, especially in such a way as to apply it to modern as well as ancient dramas. In *Principles of Tragedy*, for example, Geoffrey Brereton asserts, "A tragedy is a final and impressive disaster due to an unforeseen or unrealized failure involving people who command respect and sympathy" (20). While some scholars prefer such terms as "error," "mistake," "flaw," or "missing the mark" instead of "failure," many avoid these squabbles by continuing to use the Greek word *hamartia* in English texts on the subject. These debates have gone on for so many centuries and in so many languages that they cannot be limited to discussions of Aristotle's text and intentions but must take into account the richly complex tragic plays themselves and the diverse ways they have been interpreted and performed.

One can argue that a hero's transgressions stem from a single source, such as pride or *hybris*, his unique nature or his human nature, but *hamartia* in Greek tragedy is always multi-faceted. It is much more fruitful to explore the many dimensions of the tragic heroes than to try to arrive at a single absolute definition of the *hamartia* that leads to their tragic falls. A comparison of two heroes of classical Greek drama, Sophocles's Oedipus and Aeschylus's Agamemnon, illuminates both characters and their tragic life stories. Both display many failings in carrying out their royal duties to their families, their subjects, other human beings, and the gods, and both are severely victimized by divine powers, both prior to as well as during and after the events surrounding their tragic falls. However, Agamemnon is also guilty of blatant adultery, brutality, and impiety. The fact that Oedipus, by contrast, has committed his taboo actions unknowingly makes him more sympathetic and is also the key to the greater, more universal significance generally attributed to his unique tragic story. Moreover, Oedipus seems more innocent from the outset, for his parents' attempt to kill him as a baby and the prophecy he receives as a young man do not result from any misdeeds on his part. In contrast, Agamemnon, before the events of the tragedy, provokes divine disfavor by offending Artemis, according to one account by pridefully rivaling her, comparing himself to her as a hunter or archer.

Unfortunate as he is, Oedipus is actually more fortunate than Agamemnon in several ways. When Oedipus commits the taboo actions of killing his father and marrying his mother, he does so in ignorance, and he is thereafter permitted by the gods to remain ignorant for a period of years of happiness in his family and his kingdom, until the events begin, as the play opens, that lead to his downfall. He enjoys respect for the intelligence and bravery he demonstrated in answering the Sphinx's riddle, and his wife/mother Jocasta, too, enjoys good fortune, ignorant of her incest and marriage to her first husband's killer, and apparently not troubled by her involvement in the attempted murder of her child long ago. Agamemnon, in contrast, is burdened with too much knowledge. His downfall is due to a conscious decision. He knows that the goddess Artemis has placed a decision before him. He must choose between two goods, that is, two royal duties, namely, loyalty to his family, and loyalty to his army and subjects, and between two evils, either deserting his army or killing his own daughter Iphigenia as a sacrifice to gain the favorable winds needed for travel to wage the Trojan war. The unnatural act of killing his daughter also involves betrayal of his wife. Unlike Oedipus's fateful acts, which are committed unknowingly, Agamemnon's deeds, their causes, and their results are all overt. His wife knows of his actions and avenges them; and he suffers psychologically from the corrupting decision and deed and commits more crimes. According to Brooks Otis, "The necessity of making such a choice is said to have hardened and coarsened his whole nature. He becomes a cruel and ruthless general, at times reckless of gods and men, [an] unfeeling and haughty creature" (7). The corruption of evil is also seen in his wife Clytaemnestra, whose sorrow and anger lead her to adultery and murder of her husband during the grim play.

The heavy, ominous tone of the drama *Agamemnon* results from the playwright's emphasis on the curse on his family, the familial cannibalism in the past, and on the evil in and around Agamemnon. The family line of Oedipus also has a history of horrible crimes and an associated curse, but this receives much less emphasis in the play. Because Oedipus's individual fate looms larger, his *hamartia* is generally viewed in a more individualistic way. Also, he is more often seen as an Everyman and his *hamartia* representative of human flaws in general. The horror of the plague on his subjects brought about by Oedipus's taboo deeds is downplayed, overshadowed by Oedipus's determined actions to end it and save the people. In addition, the reign of the horrible Sphinx could be presented in a more disturbing way, but she seems more benign than Artemis; she functions as an instrument furthering Oedipus's glory and good fortune; through her riddle and defeat, his bravery, intelligence, royal glory and saving of the people are brought out. The portrayal of Jocasta, Oedipus's wife and mother, is generally positive, despite

her complicity in trying to kill her baby years ago. When the whole truth comes out, she kills herself rather than Oedipus, while Agamemnon's wife Clytaemnestra, besides being a victim of tragedy, a suffering mother and wife, is also a wicked adulteress and murderer who kills Agamemnon rather than herself.

In both plays, the enduring and provocative moral and philosophical issues are represented on the stage visually and physically. Oedipus's lame foot serves as a mark of his past, his unique nature, and his *hamartia*. His self-punishment by piercing his eyes and going into exile points toward many threads of significance in the play: issues of fertility and sexual penetration, wisdom, seeing and blindness, home and exile, parenthood, and incest. His lameness and blindness signify the lack of knowledge and power of all human beings, when compared to divine beings, thus lending his *hamartia* a level of universal significance. On the same concrete level, the audience sees Agamemnon's *hamartia*, here in particular *hybris* or pride, when Clytaemnestra convinces him to step on a red carpet, an action that comes dangerously close to suggesting that he is rivaling the gods. The person of Cassandra on the stage also symbolizes concretely his pride, impiety, adultery, and betrayal of family in a larger sense, including his slaying of his daughter. Just as Oedipus's fall is represented visually by the pins piercing his eyes and his cane representing humility and exile, Agamemnon's downfall is vividly portrayed when his treacherous wife covers him in a net. Agamemnon's tragic fall is his death, but Oedipus retains a certain pride and dignity in the meaningful self-chosen aspects of his fall and in the fact that he does not die but elects to carry the terrible tragic knowledge, previously denied him, of his own guilt and fate.

One particularly fascinating aspect of Oedipus's *hamartia* is the fact that he is often taken to represent the glorious capabilities and the limitations of human beings; the riddle on man's stages of life and other lines in the play encourage this interpretation. Once again, his ignorance of his own guilt has significance. If Oedipus had knowingly and deliberately killed his father and married his mother, he would still be Oedipus, symbol of extreme villainy, but he could not also serve as a universal representative of mankind, as Sigmund Freud also saw him (Cuzzort and King). Because of his ignorance, Oedipus has enjoyed good fortune and displayed his good intentions, allowing him to have a very noble side, to display admirable human qualities and virtues, and to live out his fate in such a way that his *hamartia* contrasts with his glory and can be interpreted as a cluster of generally human limitations. To some extent Agamemnon and his *hamartia* can also be regarded in a general way. Like Oedipus, he is singled out for victimization by divine powers; his torment, however, is not secret but comes in the form of the requirement to make an agonizing decision. The universal human situation he represents is

thus lack of freedom, which Oedipus's fate also signifies through its emphasis on fate and omen. Agamemnon's dilemma involving conflicting duties and loyalties is, to be sure, one that many people face at some time. His tragic fall also involves a concept not found in Oedipus's story, the idea of the progression of corruption; presumably this idea could be applied universally. This notion of a *hamartia* that grows, that effects a kind of moral fall prior to the fall of punishment is amplified by a *hamartia* of one individual within a dramatic environment of general corruption, the guilt of the war, of Helen and Paris, of Agamemnon and Cassandra, of the treacherous Clytaemnestra and her consort Aegisthus, and of the often-mentioned evil ancestors and curse on the house. Oedipus's ancestral history has its horrors, too, but they are more in the form of victimization by the gods than deliberate evil acts.

In the often-quoted passage in "Poetics" on the most artistic type of tragic story, the one that evokes the desired effects, Aristotle rejects permutations involving completely good or completely evil men. He goes on to say, "We are left with the figure whose place is between these extremes. Such a man is one who is not preeminent in virtue and justice, and one who falls into affliction not because of evil and wickedness, but because of a certain fallibility (*hamartia*)." Then he says that a tragic hero "will belong to the class of those who enjoy great esteem and prosperity, such as Oedipus, Thyestes, and outstanding men from such families" (44). It is significant that he actually mentions Oedipus here and Thyestes, Agamemnon's uncle. Aristotle steers attention from supernatural forces clearly operating in both men's falls to *hamartia* as individual qualities or behaviors of the men.

Both heroes are guilty of actions, in fact, that may be classified as transgressions in seven different areas. The seven can be applied to human behavior of any time or place, and they are even broad enough to serve as a fairly good equivalent of the seven deadly sins of Christian tradition. They include transgressions or betrayals of one's duties toward (1) religion, (2) family, (3) vocation, (4) one's own people, and (5) the broader human community. Also included are (6) violent behavior and (7) sexual misconduct. These seven realms may apply to human beings in general, but both tragic stories reveal that all of these tragic heroes' transgressions must be seen in light of their royal status. Public and private duty, family honor, duty to one's people, importance to the gods—all are magnified in significance and judged by different standards when the individual in question is a king.

There are seven aspects of the two kings' *hamartia* as identified above. First comes religious infraction. The goddess Artemis forces a terrible choice on Agamemnon; neither of the two options involved would violate her awful divine will. However, Agamemnon does step on the red carpet, and, while waging war against Troy, Agamemnon has not only been excessively

violent and destructive, but he "ground down" "the shrines of her gods and the high altars" (270); moreover, he violates and abducts the priestess Cassandra, an impious adultery emphasized in the play. Oedipus can be said to have defied the gods when he fled his foster parents' home to avoid carrying out his terrible fate. However, he has done so out of noble intentions. His rude accusations and refusal to listen to the prophet Tiresias are also offenses against divine wisdom and will, but very mild compared to those committed by our other hero.

The second realm, offense against family, is integral to Greek tragedy. One can defend Agamemnon to some degree for the slaying of his innocent daughter but not for his later blatant adultery and bringing his female war trophy into his wife's home. The name Oedipus likewise stands for family crime—the taboo actions of patricide and incest—but, once again, he is presented sympathetically because he commits these offenses in ignorance. Some critics, especially those with psychoanalytic inclinations, emphasize the family as an essential central aspect of tragedy itself. In his insightful *Tragic Drama and the Family*, Bennett Simon writes, "My definition of the tragic hero is as follows. First, he or she (or they) undertakes, more or less willingly (even though 'compelled') and independently of the consequences, to fulfill an ideal or virtue that is necessary for the preservation and propagation of the family. In the course of following through on the action deemed necessary, he or she risks consequences that might destroy the family's ability to propagate and continue" (57).

The third realm, vocation, virtually coincides, for a king, with duties to family and one's people, one's subjects, which constitute the fourth, both in terms of the people's honor and reputation and in terms of their prosperity and welfare. Agamemnon carries out his duty to his people and his family by his leadership in war, although his victory carries the stain of violent and impious excesses. All of his evil acts betray his religious, family, and royal duties. Bennett Simon points to the inseparable associations of these duties, asserting that by means of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, Agamemnon "starts to destroy his own household and actually destroys countless others—Greeks and Trojans—to implement an ideal of honor that is part of his essential definition of his house. To refuse to go to war is shameful; it places at risk his proper rulership and manhood, his worthiness to sire progeny and continue the house" (58-59). Oedipus, in contrast, serves his people by saving them from the Sphinx, then the plague, ultimately sacrificing himself in the process. When the truth comes out, his horrible taboo actions in the past are revealed to be offenses against religion, family, and kingdom, and in fact to have caused the gods to visit the plague on the Theban people, their land, and crops. However, the play places more emphasis on his good intentions and bold actions in trying to conquer the plague, which he ultimately does by his

own self-sacrifice.

A fifth issue—actions toward other people, strangers, enemies or people in general—calls to mind Agamemnon's actions against the people of Troy, and the play presents him as responsible not only for the appropriate military attacks on the armies of Troy but also for attacks on innocent people, unborn generations, and holy temples and people. Oedipus's actions toward strangers involve his confrontation on the road with the entourage of a man who turns out to be his father. Oedipus recalls that two of the men "were about to thrust me off the road—brute force" and a fight ensued. He says that he struck "in anger" and concludes, "I killed them all—every mother's son" (335). Here he acknowledges excess of anger and violence, a sixth element. The good intentions we can usually ascribe to him are difficult to attach to this killing.

Once again, we see how the seven realms are often intertwined for tragic kings. Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter and excesses of war are entwined with his royal and military duties; a private commoner would be unlikely to be called to lead armies and make decisions on military strategy or be prominent enough to be singled out by the gods in the way Agamemnon has been. By the same token, Oedipus's violent confrontation on the road must be judged in kingly terms; his very blood and nature made him proud and defiant and make his violence different from that of a common murderer.

Finally, the seventh element, sexual misconduct, clearly brings out salient differences between the two kings. Agamemnon's flagrant, impious adultery, committed with an unwilling woman he has taken slave, thus echoing the dishonorable and adulterous abduction of Helen by Paris, the very reason the Trojan War was fought, is quite different from Oedipus's unknowing incest in an apparently noble royal marriage that greatly benefits the people of Thebes for many years. Oedipus's good intentions can be defended, although one could argue that he should have been more cautious. After receiving the oracle about his fated crimes against his parents, he could have investigated his bride's age and background or refrained from marriage altogether, just as, in theory, he could have avoided killing any man, or any older man, to avoid killing his father as was prophesied.

As complicated as these two tragedies are, their stories are complicated further by the fact that both plays are also first plays of trilogies that continue their stories, a context that Aristotle and other analysts must set aside in order to regard the tragedies as complete stories in themselves, and to see the "tragic falls" as endings. Likewise, the events constituting the plots of the plays do not begin with the birth of their heroes, but have links to many other mythological stories in addition to direct connections to material involving the heroes' ancestors and relatives. It must be acknowledged that some contribution to the tragic falls of both heroes must have been made by

the fact that both of their royal houses bear a "curse" that existed before they were born. Even though the concept of *hamartia* centers on a human being's internal qualities and individual actions, external and supernatural causes always play a role in the lives of Greek mythological and dramatic figures. In the "Poetics," Aristotle asserts that the tragic fall of a great hero through *hamartia* evokes a certain combination of "pity" and "fear" (33), a reference to the audience's aesthetic and emotional experience in the theater. Much of the audience's response comes from gradually becoming aware of the causes of a hero's downfall, and realizing that, before the curtain falls, these causes will bring about events as terrible as they are inevitable. Analysis of the plays' texts explains in rational terms the complex roots of the "pity" and "fear" evoked by their performance and elucidates the plays' significant moral elements. These two tragedies are fraught with moral significance in terms of the enormous and overlapping duties of kings, and the consequences of violating those duties. Viewers of the tragedies who are not royal, and those from cultural milieus vastly different from those of the dramas' authors and characters, however, experience "pity" and "fear" in part because they sense that the *hamartia* and tragic fates of these ancient Greek kings are relevant as well to the duties and the guilt, the fortune and misfortune, the internal and external, rationally identifiable as well as inexplicable or supernatural forces operating in all human lives.

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"The family of Dashwood": The Effect of Wills and Entailments on Family Connections in *Sense and Sensibility*

Stephanie M. Eddleman
Harding University

Jane Austen never shied away from the subject of money. Her personal letters to Cassandra discuss money matter-of-factly: the amount received for Jane's pianoforte, their father's proposed income, the price of lodgings, Jane's earnings from publication. This is family business, of course, but Austen also straightforwardly informs her readers about the financial status of her characters. From Darcy's £10,000 a year to James Morland's proposed £400, from Miss Grey's £50,000 to the Dashwood girls' £1,000 apiece, yearly incomes and inheritances are included as an integral part of characterization. But wealth does not consist of pounds alone. Austen's eighteenth-century England was "an aristocracy, a hierarchy based on property; . . . class and money are givens" (Brown 2-3). Estates, the income they generate, and the social positions they confer were serious matters. Family was defined in a "traditional conservative and expansive sense: consist[ing of] members of a land-owning tribe (possessing a certain income and property) as its property is held from generation to generation, going from one male heir to another" (Doody viii). Obviously, Austen was aware of this definition of "family." But in *Sense and Sensibility*, we see Austen define "family" in a different way. Although wills and entailments *do* tie a family together legally through the succession of titles and lands, Austen illustrates that true family is connected by love, compassion, and emotional attachment.

Entailments and primogeniture have deep roots in English history, going back to 1066 when William the Conqueror won the Battle of Hastings, united England, and established the system of feudalism. "Under feudalism," critic and lawyer Luanne Bethke Redmond explains, "only one able to perform the feudal incidents [or duties] could inherit—that is, one who could bear arms" (46-47). Although legally "ownership could only be in a person, . . . in the minds and hearts of the landed gentry the family was the true owner" (Redmond 48), and entailment was used to keep land in the family.

Jane Austen establishes in the very first sentence of *Sense and Sensibility* how entrenched this view of family as a land-owning tribe is in English society: "The family of Dashwood had been long settled in Sussex" (1). Although we, as readers, will be concerned with the Dashwood family that contains Mrs. Henry Dashwood, Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret, Austen shows us that the society of that time would consider Old Mr. Dashwood and his heirs Henry, John, and little Harry to be the Dashwood family whose "estate was large, and [whose] residence was in the middle of their property,

where for many generations, they had lived in so respectable a manner" (1). In this way, Austen sets up very early in the novel that she will be contrasting two very different types of family: one defined by "the succession of the Norland estate" (2) and one defined by "constant attention . . . [and] goodness of heart" (1).

Austen proves in the first three pages of *Sense and Sensibility* that wills and entailments are very successful in keeping a family joined in the legal sense. By making Henry Dashwood the "legal inheritor of the Norland estate" and ensuring that Norland passed on whole to John and then little Harry, Old Mr. Dashwood guaranteed family connection, but it was a family connection that excluded the very women who had "from goodness of heart [given] him every degree of solid comfort which his age could receive [and] added a relish to his existence" (1).

John Dashwood, who "had not the strong feelings of the rest of the family" (3), illustrates the possible devastating consequences that family connection based on legal obligation alone can have. Although he is the Dashwood women's closest blood relative and therefore has the greatest moral responsibility to them, he is easily persuaded by his "narrow-minded and selfish" (3) wife that his father expected nothing as "strange and unreasonable" (9) as a gift of money towards the upkeep of his "mother-in-law and sisters" (3). Rather, Fanny convinces him that "looking out for a comfortable small house for them, helping them to move their things, and sending them presents of fish and game, and so forth, whenever they are in season" is all that "might be reasonably expected" (9) of him. After all, they are only "half-blood" (7). In accordance with their legal rights, Fanny "installed herself mistress of Norland; and her mother and sisters-in-law were degraded to the condition of visitors. As such, however, they were treated by her with quiet civility; and by her husband with as much kindness as he could feel towards any body beyond himself, his wife, and their child" (5). The Dashwood women are essentially homeless, yet John feels no ties of moral responsibility to them. Instead, he is comforted by the thought that he has "strictly fulfil[led his] engagements" (10) in doing all that is required by law.

In fact, Austen illustrates that large inheritances, rather than binding people together, can make them interchangeable commodities in the marriage market. Mrs. Ferrars plans for Edward to marry "the Hon. Miss Morton, only daughter of the late Lord Morton, with thirty thousand pounds" (196), but when these plans fall through, Mrs. Ferrars simply substitutes another son, Robert. When Elinor points out to John Dashwood the absurdity of the situation, supposing that "the lady . . . has no choice in the affair . . . it must be the same to Miss Morton whether she marry Edward or Robert," he is shocked: "Certainly there can be no difference; for Robert will now to all intents and purposes be considered as the eldest son;—and as to any thing

else, they are both very agreeable young men, I do not know that one is superior to the other" (259). To Mrs. Ferrars and John Dashwood there is only one criterion for choice—money.

Lucy Steele would agree. Because she both exchanges and is exchanged, she is in a unique position to judge from both sides of the issue. Mrs. Ferrars rejects Lucy as a bride for Edward and attempts to exchange her in favor of Miss Morton; for as Lucy's friends Miss Godby and Miss Sparks report, "[N]obody in their senses would expect Mr. Ferrars to give up a woman like Miss Morton, with thirty thousand pounds to her fortune, for Lucy Steele that had nothing at all" (237). And although early in the novel, when confronted with Edward's bleak financial prospects, Lucy asserts, "[F]or my own part, I could give up every prospect of more without a sigh. I have been always used to a very small income, and could struggle with any poverty for him" (126), when Edward is disinherited, she exchanges her engagement to him for marriage with the "now to all intents and purposes . . . eldest son" (259), Robert.

Austen demonstrates throughout *Sense and Sensibility* just how much inheritance and money have to do with the marriage market. Willoughby, who "had always been expensive, always in the habit of associating with people of better income," had run up huge debts and intended to "re-establish [his] circumstances by marrying a woman of fortune" (280)—Miss Grey, with her "fifty thousand pounds" (168)—despite his attraction to Marianne. His actions are not really surprising, for even Mrs. Jennings explains that "when there is plenty of money on one side, and next to none on the other" (168), romance can take a back seat to economics. Beauty could sometimes compensate for a lack of fortune, as Mrs. Jennings hopes when she claims that Marianne would be a good match for Colonel Brandon, "for *he* was rich and *she* was handsome" (31), but a loss of beauty moves one lower in the marriage market. Because Marianne has worried herself sick over Willoughby and, in John Dashwood's opinion, "destroy[ed] the bloom forever" (198), he "question[s] whether Marianne *now*, will marry a man worth more than five or six hundred a-year, at the utmost" (199). Thus we see families being formed, not on the basis of love and respect, but on inheritances, yearly incomes, and how much one is willing to pay for beauty.

This money-oriented view of family could make *Sense and Sensibility* a bleak novel indeed, but Austen also skillfully creates strong characters who feel compassion, practice kindness, and feel true emotional connection to others. Very early in the novel, Austen sets up Sir John Middleton as a foil for John Dashwood, and she emphasizes the comparison by giving both characters the same first name. Mrs. Dashwood, while "suffering under the cold and unfeeling behaviour of her nearer connections," receives a letter from Sir John Middleton, "a relation of her own . . . written

in the true spirit of friendly accommodation . . . earnestly press[ing] her . . . to come with her daughters to Barton Park, the place of his own residence" (19). Because she can no longer bear the "misery of continuing her daughter-in-law's guest" (20), Mrs. Dashwood accepts his offer, and their reception at Barton Park stands in stark contrast to the treatment they have received from John and Fanny:

> Their arrival seemed to afford [Sir John Middleton] real satisfaction, and their comfort to be an object of real solicitude to him. He said much of his earnest desire of their living in the most sociable terms with his family, and pressed them so cordially to dine at Barton Park every day. . . . His kindness was not confined to words; for within an hour after he left them, a large basket full of garden stuff and fruit arrived from the park, which was followed before the end of the day by a present of game. (25)

We see the "very exertion[s] to which [John Dashwood] had limited the performance of his promise to his father" (21) being performed by Sir John Middleton freely and with great enjoyment.

But Sir John Middleton is not the Dashwood women's only friend. Colonel Brandon and Mrs. Jennings, two characters without even a claim of distant relation to the Dashwoods, show kindnesses based on compassion and feelings of friendship stronger than John Dashwood's family feelings. Colonel Brandon, out of "general benevolence" to Edward Ferrars and "particular friendship" (247) to Elinor, offers Edward the living of Delaford as an attempt to make up for the "cruelty, the impolitic cruelty" (246), of Edward's own mother. Mrs. Jennings, a "motherly good sort of woman" (134), invites Elinor and Marianne to accompany her home to London. While in London, Mrs. Jennings is "invariably kind" (145), treating the distraught Marianne "with all the indulgent fondness of a parent toward a favourite child on the last day of its holidays" (167). By showing the benevolence of characters who are in no way related to the Dashwoods, we see Austen condemning even more strongly the lack of kindheartedness John Dashwood displays towards his female relatives.

But Austen's most effective illustration of what a family should be is demonstrated by the Dashwood women themselves. It is obvious that Mrs. Dashwood is aware of money and position, for we see her, "by [Willoughby's] prospect of riches, [being] led before the end of a week to hope and expect [marriage], and secretly to congratulate herself on having gained two such sons-in-law as Edward and Willoughby" (42). This attention to provision for the future, especially considering the precarious position of the single woman in eighteenth-century England, is certainly "prudent" (128), as Elizabeth Bennett and her aunt Mrs. Gardiner discuss in *Pride and*

Prejudice. But Mrs. Dashwood does not judge potential husbands by money and position alone. When Sir John points out that Marianne should try to "catch" Willoughby because he "has a pretty little estate of his own" and stands to inherit Allenham Court, Mrs. Dashwood replies that "Mr. Willoughby will [not] be incommoded by the attempts of either of *my* daughters toward what you call *catching him.* It is not an employment to which they have been brought up. Men are very safe with us, let them be ever so rich." She then expresses her pleasure that Willoughby is "a respectable young man" (38). When Edward and Elinor's attachment to each other comes to her notice, "it was enough for her that he appeared to be amiable, that he loved her daughter, and that Elinor returned the partiality. It was contrary to every doctrine of her's that difference of fortune should keep any couple asunder who were attracted by resemblance of disposition" (12). Thus we see that affection outweighs money in Mrs. Dashwood's eyes.

Both Elinor and Marianne also judge potential mates by character, not money. Although they disagree over the actual amounts of "wealth" or "competence" and feel that "without [money], as the world goes now, . . . every kind of external comfort must be wanting" (78), neither sister actually uses money as a yardstick for judging men. Elinor never even mentions money in her assessment of Edward, but talks of his "sense and goodness, . . . [t]he excellence of his understanding and principles . . . [,] his solid worth" and "pronounce[s] that his mind is well-informed, his enjoyment of books exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure" (16). Marianne is attracted to Willoughby's "good abilities, quick imagination, lively spirits, and open, affectionate manners" and finds "exquisite enjoyment" (41) as they read, sing, and talk together. Although the sisters may admit that money is a necessity, both find true pleasure only in an affectionate companion of intellect, taste, and integrity.

The Dashwood women's treatment of each other also illustrates the principles of love and compassion that bind a true family together. Elinor and Marianne, when invited to London by Mrs. Jennings, consider whether their "dearest, kindest mother" would be made "less happy, less comfortable by [their] absence" (133). The sisters' affection for one another is also obvious. When Marianne is hurt by Willoughby's defection, Elinor first protects her from the well-meaning Mrs. Jennings, then "took her hand, kissed her affectionately several times, and . . . gave way to a burst of tears, which at first was scarcely less violent than Marianne's" (157-58). In the same way, Marianne looks after Elinor. She is provoked by "ill-timed praise of another, at Elinor's expense" and warmly comes to Elinor's defense: "what is Miss Morton to us?—who knows, or who cares, for her?—it is Elinor of whom *we* think and speak" (206). And later, when Elinor experiences her own disappointment in love, Marianne comforts her with "tenderest caresses"

(230). Even after their marriages, Elinor and Marianne remain in "constant communication which strong family affection would naturally dictate" (335). Thus, by narrowing the focus to the intimacies of a nuclear family, Austen intensifies her portrait of what a true family should be.

Jane Austen knew that after the death of her father, she herself along with Cassandra and their mother would, like the Dashwood women, "be dependent on young men, all of whom had their own commitments and priorities" (Collins 230); the family politics played out in *Sense and Sensibility* must have resonated deeply. Austen, unlike *Pride and Prejudice*'s Charlotte Lucas, was unwilling to marry a man whom she did not esteem solely for the sake of security, and this attitude truly left Jane dependent on the mercies of her brothers and extended relatives. She *must* rely on her family's love and compassion, and it is not odd that she would expect it. Austen was, as Irene Collins points out, "a deeply religious woman" (xi), who, despite her own relative poverty, diligently practiced charity herself as a Christian obligation. She is expecting nothing of others that she has not practiced herself. Accordingly, in *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen examines the plight of the unattached female in eighteenth-century society who is disenfranchised by the feudal entailment system and illustrates that family is more than legal obligation and suggests this evil of society can be overcome by a single person armed with kindness.

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Lester Ballard as Savior? Representations of Christ in Cormac McCarthy's *Child of God*

Ashley Combest
University of Tennessee

In *Child of God* Cormac McCarthy creates a wasteland of snow and woods and caves. It is a desolate land where "nothing move[s]," a land of "dead and fabled waste" (158). The winter landscape is shrouded in death with trees "seized in ice each twig like small black bones in glass that cr[y] or [shatter] in the wind" (158). This world of "white crystal fantasies" (158), this winter wasteland, is colored only by blood. Lester Ballard finds strange beauty in the violence and savageness of nature. He watches a "ballet" of boar and hounds "tilt and swirl and churn mud up through the snow and watche[s] the lovely blood welter there in its holograph of battle, spray burst from a ruptured lung, the dark heart's blood, pinwheel and pirouette" (69). A hound's "bright ropy innards . . . folded upon the snow" (69) contrast with the whiteness of the landscape. The title of the novel, fitting for a world in need of salvation, would seem to offer a savior, but is Lester Ballard, a murdering necrophile, this "child of God" (4) as the novel suggests? He seems more animal than human, more devil than god. The book explores the strange nature of Lester Ballard and determines it not exactly anti-heroic; instead, he is "like some demented hero or bedraggled parody of a patriotic poster" (156). Religious undertones add to the complexity of his character. Though Ballard is not exactly a Christ figure or an anti-Christ, there is a dark parallel. He comes to be seen not merely as a crazed killer but also as the product of a damned world. Exploring a Ballard-as-Christ representation then extends the book from a case study of a psychopath to a statement on humanity's lack of salvation.

As Ballard becomes a murdering necrophile, he also becomes more philosophical and spiritual. Gazing at the stars, he wonders "what stuff they [are] made of, or himself" (141). He contemplates not only his own soul but also the order of the universe: "Given charge [he] would have made things more orderly in the woods and in men's souls" (136). He begins to think himself in control of the weather, telling the night, "Now freeze, you son of a bitch," and it freezes (103). Crouching near the earth, "he told the snow to fall faster and it did" (139). He creates his own world to rule and becomes a crazed god of it, a god of "disastrous wrath" (158).

What Ballard becomes is a god of the underworld. As William J. Schafer explains, "He descends from life into death as he burrows away from society into the endless limestone caves of the hills" (115). He creates a world in sharp contrast to the white winter landscape. Unlike the dead land,

ironically, this land of the dead seems alive. The caves are "organic" (135). As if some dark and moist primordial lair, they are "slavered over . . . with wet and bloodred mud" (135). They reflect the strange violence of Ballard's mind with their twisted, "soft looking convolutions . . . like the innards of some great beast" (135). The caves are a gateway to the world beyond. Bats emerge from their depths "like souls rising from hades" (141). Here the terrible is sanctified: "here in the bowels of the mountain . . . dead people lay like saints" (135). The murders become religious acts; the necrophilia, a sacrament. The religious and mythological associations legitimize Ballard as a dark and terrible god.

Why then is Ballard associated with Christ? Is he a representative for the world, a savior offering salvation? Ballard dreams Christ's journey to be crucified as his own journey. As Christ rode a mule over palm leaves through Jerusalem, Ballard

> could feel the spine of the mule rolling under him and he gripped the mule's barrel with his legs. . . . Each leaf he passed he'd never pass again. . . . He had resolved himself to ride on for he could not turn back and the world that day was as lovely as any day that ever was and he was riding to his death. (170-71)

The crucifixion imagery continues in the flood scene when Ballard says that "he has heard them in the night seeking him with lanterns and cries of execration" (156). He knows "they want [his] life" (156). But is he "resolved" to die for the sins of the world (171)? Like Christ, he seems to suffer the sorrows of mankind. Each leaf he passes "deepens his sadness and dread" (170). He contemplates "the diminutive progress of all things . . . and [begins] to cry" (170). But how can this necrophile murderer be a savior? Perhaps Lester Ballard is merely a symbol of the need for salvation.

He represents not a savior, then, but is, instead, the product of a doomed world, one of many. William Schafer describes him as "a representative, corruptible mortal" (115). After all, there are other Lesters in the world. An old man tells the sheriff, "People are the same from the day God first made one" (168). He tells about "an old hermit [who] used to live out on House Mountain" (168), and the description of long ago fits Lester Ballard. The hermit was "a ragged gnome with knee length hair who dressed in leaves," and people went by his cave, "throwing in stones on a dare and calling him to come out" (168). He tells about the Bluebills and the White Caps being "sorry people all the way around" (165). Pleas Wynn and Catlett Tipton were hanged for murdering the Whaleys. They "got em up out of bed and blowed their heads off in front of their little daughter" (166-67). A history of low-lifes, criminals, and crazy people can be recalled: Leland Ballard lying to get his war pension and his brother being hanged in

Hattiesburg (80-81), the "old boy" who "would shoot live pigeons" by stuffing them with firecrackers (58), "that Trantham boy" building a fire under his oxen because they would not move, and old Gresham singing "the chickenshit blues" at his wife's funeral (22). The world seems as bad now as it was then. When the flood comes, the looters come out and steal guns (162). "That's what they take," the sheriff says. Human nature seems not to have changed.

This world is one that allows Lester Ballard. Nature does not destroy him. He cannot swim, and yet the waters "will not . . . take him" (156). And do we not buoy him up? He is "sustained by his fellow men" (156). He "has peopled the shore with them calling to him" (156). Mankind is "a race that gives suck to the maimed and the crazed, that wants their wrong blood in its history and will have it" (156). As much as the novel is about Lester Ballard, it is about mankind. Consider the implications of the title. Ballard is "a child of God much like yourself perhaps" (4). Though we are, perhaps, not like Ballard, as readers we follow where others cannot. And if we follow Lester Ballard through his caves, are we not affected? Our reading then implicates us, connecting us to the doomed race of the novel.

This world of no salvation raises up its own damnation. Lester Ballard is no Christ or anti-Christ even. Schafer examines McCarthy's intentions, saying he "dwells carefully on Ballard, showing us not only his ghastly crimes but the possibilities for normality that underlie them. He is not an impossible monster—no matter what nightmare figure he transforms himself into" (116-17). Ballard does not save or damn mankind; he merely represents humanity. Just as his necrophilia is by definition a "dead" act, a non-procreative one, he offers no regeneration. He offers no sacrifice or act of any kind. He escapes his execution and turns himself in to the hospital. He eventually dies an uneventful death due to illness. He is "laid out on a slab and flayed, eviscerated, dissected. His head [is] sawed open and the brains removed. His muscles [are] stripped from his bones. His heart [is] taken out"—all with no miracle of resurrection (194). In fact, the "four young students" who examine his entrails find not salvation but perhaps "monsters worse to come" (194). As Schafer relates, "He recalls to us that the face of evil is, after all, a human face" (118). At most, Lester Ballard is an omen.

Child of God ends with an overwhelming sense of dissatisfaction. We gain nothing from Ballard's death. Instead of a resurrection, we find a terrible display of the dead, "seven bodies bound in muslin like enormous hams" (196-97). Any sense of a spiritual resurrection becomes a grotesque puppet show, contrived of ropes and corpses: "the rope drew taut and the first of the dead sat up on the cave floor, the hands that hauled the rope above sorting the shadows like puppeteers" (196). The woman "ascends," but she is "dangling" (196). We leave this world of the spiritually dead in a "new fell

dark" (197). We descend with the dead in their jeep "down the valley" (197). The ominous ending hangs over us—nighthawks rising in the dust "with wild wings and eyes red as jewels" (197).

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Suttree, Linguistic Chameleon

William C. Spencer
Delta State University

Suttree, like Shakespeare's Prince Hal, is a prince among paupers. Despite his intelligence, advanced education, and upper-middle-class upbringing—Suttree is able to fit in with and gain acceptance from the impoverished denizens of Knoxville's ghetto, McAnally Flats. His pass *key* into this societal otherworld is in fact a pass *word*, for Suttree is a master of suiting his language to his audience. He's a linguistic chameleon, a verbal Zelig, a dialectical polyglot. Put more technically, he is a virtuoso at what Basil Bernstein terms "code switching" as he shifts from the elaborated code of the middle class to the restricted code of the lower class. McCarthy clearly depicts his protagonist in the tradition of Prince Hal in *King Henry IV, Part 1*, since Suttree, too, can "drink with any tinker in his own language" (2.4.18-19). Throughout McCarthy's masterpiece novel, Suttree alters his vocabulary and even his behavior to adapt to the class, educational level, belief system, and geographical language quirks of his audience.

Frequently, Suttree's linguistic shape shifting is a simple matter of adjusting his vocabulary so that his listener understands him. When an old woman at a roadside store does not comprehend Suttree's request for "a paper bag," he immediately changes his diction to the more colloquial and asks for "a poke," and this time is obliged (303). Another time, when Suttree is mussel brailing on the French Broad with Reese's family, he betrays his relatively aristocratic background when he says to Willard, "How about casting off for us" (321). After Willard's blank response "Do what?" Suttree switches to working-class code and this time is understood when he asks, "How about untying us" (321). Perhaps a yachtsman casts off, but an Appalachian river kid with a rowboat unties. Another instance of Suttree's code switching talent is narrated when he sells his fish in two different venues. To Mr. Turner at the markethouse he refers to some of his fish as "carp" (67-68), but when he tries to sell these very same fish a few minutes later to a Black grocer in a poorer part of town, he calls them "buglemouth" (69). Suttree thus practices a type of language proficiency that demonstrates what Myron Lustig and Jolene Koester term "intercultural competence" (182).

Besides having Suttree skillfully adapt his word choice to his conversational partners, McCarthy also calls attention to Suttree's communication virtuosity in a surprising scene that shows the college-educated fisherman using sign language with a group of mutes at Comer's.

> A company of mutes were playing check at the rear table and some raised their hands in greeting. Suttree raised back,

> going to the wash-basin for paper towels. One of the mutes gestured at him, carving words with a dexter hand in the smoky air. Suttree was drying his face. He thought he had the gist of it and nodded and formed words with his own fingers, puzzled, erased, began again. They nodded encouragement. He fashioned his phrase for them and they laughed their croaky mute's laughter and elbowed one another. Suttree grinned and went to the lunchcounter. (234)

This scene, only one paragraph in a novel with almost 500 pages of text, could be easily overlooked, but it significantly reinforces McCarthy's positive characterization of his protagonist as a polyglot. Suttree knows sign language well enough to understand what is said to him and well enough to sign back a response. But what seems most remarkable is that Suttree is fluent enough, despite some false starts, to tell a joke in this "foreign" language. Usually, humor that the audience actually "gets" requires the cultural bond of shared experience, and therefore the communication is at a complex, sophisticated level. The bloopers caused by translation difficulties are well known, and yet here the mutes laugh and elbow one another and Suttree grins, so obviously the joke has succeeded, and Suttree has succeeded in crossing a cultural border by shattering a language barrier. The prince moving among his people.

McCarthy also involves Suttree in more complicated types of interactions that show off his incredible speech adaptability. Suttree repeatedly demonstrates impressive audience and context sensitivity as he responds to not only the language but also the mannerisms and biases of those around him. When Suttree attends a river baptism, for example, he stays one step ahead in a conversation with two old men witnessing the event. When one of the men asks Suttree if he has "been baptized," the Catholic-raised Suttree answers, "Just on the head" (122). Suttree has anticipated that the men will be dissatisfied with the style of his baptism, which indeed they are. One responds, "That aint no good. It wont take if you don't get total nursin. That old sprinklin business wont get it, buddy boy" (122). Suttree is so emboldened by his correct assessment of these men's theology that he ventures further conversation and inquires, "What do you think about the pope and all that mess over there?" (123). Suttree, raised Catholic, would presumably not ordinarily refer to Catholicism as "all that mess over there," but his terminology suggests that he has heard that phrasing many times from Southern Protestants and therefore intentionally uses the strangers' own language so that he will seem to be one of them. In this case, his phrasing is like a deceptive password or high sign that admits him into the group, that transforms him from outsider to insider. Despite Suttree's open confessions that he himself is neither Protestant nor saved, the two men continue to talk

to him and even invite him to "get down in that water" and to "come to the meetin tonight" (123-24). Even clearer evidence that Suttree has been accepted comes after a particularly violent and awkward baptismal dunking: "Suttree shook his head. The old man gave him a little crooked grin" (124). Seconds later "Suttree chuckled." Two women move away to show their disapproval of the laughter; however, "a man who was with them but was enjoying himself anyway turned and grinned. Boys he said, that ought to take if it don't drownd him" (124). Suttree wins acceptance into the circle of these men despite the pressure exerted by the disapproving women to keep him excluded. He accomplishes this impressive feat through his audience-sensitive language and through a shared irreverent sense of humor—bonds, this episode indicates, that can override even the cohesive power of a common religion.

Perhaps the most obvious and extended manifestation of Suttree's code switching genius occurs during his initial interaction with Reese and his family. Suttree's speaking style ordinarily is erudite and eloquent. A case could be made that though the novel is narrated in third person, much of the elevated voice of the novel is Suttree's voice. But even if that view is not accepted, Suttree's educated speech style undeniably emerges in a few passages where the point of view lapses into first person. After his oft-quoted reference to his "father's last letter" (13), Suttree describes in his own voice a dream he had about his grandfather: "I saw how all things false fall from the dead. We spoke easily and I was humbly honored to walk with him deep in that world where he was a man like all men" (14). Although the vocabulary here is not difficult, Suttree's words are eloquent and poetic, even including alliteration and the rhetorically effective, beautiful sound of "a man like all men." When Suttree then goes on to describe his nightmarish fears concerning his stillborn twin, he unlocks his word hoard and dazzles with his diction: "The infant's ossature, the thin and brindled bones along whose sulcate facets clove old shreds of flesh and cerements of tattered swaddle" (14). Once Suttree's usual voice is established, it becomes clear just how much he alters it in the interest of making less educated, less sophisticated people feel comfortable. He greets Reese's wife with "Howdy" and then says, "I saw you all come down the other mornin. I live cross the river" (307). He surely uses the countrified "howdy" and "you all" and clips the ending from "morning" and the beginning of "across" to put the Appalachian woman at her ease. In further conversation with Reese's family, the linguistic chameleon utters all of the following in the space of two pages:

"hidy" [for hello]

"The mister" [by which he means "your husband"]

"You all like catfish?" [omitting the auxiliary verb]

"I don't want nothin for it." [an uncharacteristic double negative]

"I got plenty."
"You welcome."
"How you getting along?" (308-09)

The evening's visit culminates in a celebratory meal after Suttree agrees to be Reese's partner in the "musselin" business. After Suttree serves his plate with such country delicacies as pork and biscuits smothered in gravy, beans, and sweet potatoes—he adapts to his surroundings even further, for we're told, "He gripped his fork in his fist in the best country manner and fell to" (313).

Suttree also shows his incredible sensitivity and control in conversations with Gene Harrogate and Byrd Slusser. During their first meeting in the workhouse, when Harrogate tells Suttree he has been shot, Suttree asks "Whereabouts?" but then realizes that the country mouse is likely to misunderstand so he immediately heads off the joke: "Yeah, I know. In the watermelon patch." Then he changes his question to "Where did you get hit?" (41). Thus, he anticipates miscommunication and adjusts accordingly. The exchange with Byrd Slusser is a little different, but again Suttree calculatedly evaluates the situation, assesses his audience, and chooses his words carefully to communicate a precise message. When Suttree defends Harrogate from Slusser's threats, the insult rhetoric escalates until Slusser crosses the line and suggests that maybe Suttree is a punk himself. Suttree responds, "Maybe . . . you've been pulling your pud too much" (52). Suttree's obscene, insulting rejoinder is not exactly upper-middle-class language; instead it's appropriate to the prison context and the situation of being intimidated. Though Suttree loses the ensuing physical altercation, he has already won the verbal fight. He has stood his ground bravely by returning insult for insult, and under the circumstances Suttree's retort is even funny, so he scores points for wit. He doesn't just say the predictable "Fuck you"; he catches Slusser off guard and stings him with a left-hooking comic jab.

Though Suttree is certainly the novel's master of language adaptation, he's not the only character to engage in this activity. McCarthy, in fact, depicts several characters increasingly mirroring the speech mannerisms of their conversation partners, seemingly as a symbol of growing group solidarity. The racist Harrogate after warming himself with Rufus's stove and with Rufus's whiskey quickly adopts the Beatnik lingo of his Black adolescent comrades. When one asks about Suttree, "Who is this cat?" McCarthy narrates, "He's cool, man, he's cool, said Harrogate, having fallen easily into the way of things" (177). Harrogate also falls easily into the way of Suttree's speech patterns. To indicate his different attitude about escaping from a hospital, Suttree says to Gene, "Well. That's you," and Gene replies, "That's me" (42-43). Only minutes later, Gene asserts that he won't be in

prison forever like the old man named Bromo has been:

> Well, said Harrogate. That's him.
>
> Suttree grinned. That's him, he said. (48)

This echoing technique is a common stylistic trait of McCarthy's, but here it also shows adjustment to a community through the forming of a linguistic bond, something akin to taking on the accent of those around you. In this case, language functions to forge a tighter community.

When Suttree is with Reese's family, this diction mirroring takes the form of a multiplying use of profanity. A stressed, frustrated Suttree orders Willard, "Well get your ass up here cause you're going again" (329). Although Willard reproves Suttree for his strong language—"They aint no need to cuss about it" (329)—within two pages he's calling his sister a "dumb-ass" (331). His mother's quick admonishment—swatting the boy sharply on the head and saying, "You mind how you talk to your sister"—makes it clear that profanity is not allowed in this household (331), but even so Willard has picked up Suttree's adult vocabulary. Suttree's profanity is even more contagious in one of the low-point scenes of his life as he begins to realize that Reese's allegedly valuable fresh-water pearls are worthless. Suttree explodes into profanity and sets up a chain reaction in Reese.

> What the hell is going on? I thought you said that big pearl was worth ten dollars?
>
> Shit Sut, don't pay no attention to him, he don't know the first thing about it.
>
> Suttree pointed toward the windowglass. He's a goddamned jeweler. Cant you see the sign? What the hell do you mean he doesnt know?
>
> He's just outslicked hisself is what he's done. He wants us to give him the goddamned pearls. I've traded with these cute sons of bitches afore. (334)

Reese answers Suttree's first "hell" with his own "Shit" and echoes immediately Suttree's "goddamned jeweler" with his own "goddamned pearls." Once Suttree signals that profanity is in order, Reese falls quickly into the way of things. As Suttree has previously answered Byrd Slusser obscene insult for obscene insult, he also answers his Aunt Martha dog joke for dog joke. Aunt Martha remembers, "They had one one time named John L Sullivan cause it was the fightinest little thing you ever seen," to which Suttree returns, "We had one named Jose Iturbi. Because it was the peeinest dog" (128) [with the pun on "pianist"]. Suttree proves he can rise to the challenge, matching his aunt both in sentence structure and wit.

Unquestionably, Suttree is impressively adaptable and can suit his phrasings to a context outside of his middle-class rearing. In pioneering work

on idiolects, British sociologist Basil Bernstein coined the term "elaborated code" for the language of middle-class speakers whose "syntax exhibits more variety and complexity" than working-class speech, which because he concluded was practiced in "more rigidly determined ways," he called the "restricted code" (Trenholm and Jensen 102). Hasan notes in the book *Class, Codes, and Control: Applied Studies towards a Sociology of Language* that "there exists the possibility that one and the same person may have access to both codes at once, using them in different contexts" (265); in other words, code switching is a possibility for some speakers, such as Suttree. After asserting that the motive for learning language in the first place is "the urge for identification and placement in a social system as a member of a community" (267-68), Hasan points out how codes might hamper social change since they coerce linguistic and therefore social conformity. Then how does any change in the society ever occur? Hasan asks (267). He answers this question by concluding, "A prerequisite of change in orientation to code is that the member may be enabled by some agency to perceive forms of relevance and meaning other than those to which he is sensitized by his own code orientation" (267). Hasan credits Bernstein with the insight that the ability to switch codes "entails no less than a change in . . . social identification" (267). This theory when applied to Suttree indicates that the son of the bourgeois businessman has developed the ability to cross class boundaries by changing his own sense of social class structure.

Joseph Porter's comments on Prince Hal's language talents further illuminate the significance of Suttree's code switching facility. Porter's analysis that the Lancastrian tetralogy evokes the Tower of Babel story equally applies to McCarthy's novel. The relevance of the Bible story in which the inability to communicate is a punishment for arrogance, presumptuousness, and pridefulness is clear. Porter perceptively argues that Shakespeare's plays show the loss of the "linguistic Eden" (140), which has been replaced by a fallen world of "proliferated tongues" (124). In reference to *2 Henry IV*, Porter says, "In the world of this play the fall of the tower, the variety of languages, is an accomplished fact, a necessity. . . . The most obvious way to meet the necessity is to become polyglot and to translate" (90)—which is exactly what both Prince Hal and Suttree do. Both characters can be praised for "facility with the very different languages of tavern and court [which] is perhaps the most obvious mark of [their] proficiency" (Porter 74).

McCarthy, then, characterizes Suttree as a linguistic and social chameleon, as a master communicator who is amazingly sensitive to his audience and who can adapt his language to the class, education level, and belief system of his listener. In the novel, language is shown to be a marker of class distinctions as well as a means of creating or enforcing community

solidarity. And, finally, the novel presents Suttree's code switching in order to spotlight his ability to move across class boundaries, creating social connections that didn't exist before. Suttree is an instrument of social change. He understands. He translates. He transcends.

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Literature as Literary Criticism: Derrek Hines' *Gilgamesh*

Paul H. Lorenz
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Translation is a curious business. If we accept the assertion of formal critics that *form is meaning*, then, as Jill Levine[1] has observed, all translations are doomed to be failures, or at most, "faint shadows of primary, vivid but lost, originals," for even in translations involving modern languages, "just as 'reality' has one form, and language another, so does *Boquitas pintadas* have one form and *Heartbreak Tango* another" (167). If, however, we accept a mimetic approach to the original text, the translator's job is to recreate the world presented in the original text as accurately as possible even if the world of the original text is so foreign to the translator's intended audience that it is essentially incomprehensible. From the genetic perspective, the translator's job is to communicate the original author's message as accurately as possible, but to an audience different from the one the message was originally intended to reach. Clearly, no translation can expect to please all of these critical expectations, much less recreate the thrill and vibrancy that the original audiences must have felt on encountering the text for the first time. The challenge of translation was one of the topics that came up when I met the poet Derrek Hines[2] a few years ago. At that time, Hines was working on a new translation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh,* which the London publisher Chatto & Windus was later to tout as a "powerful new version of the world's first epic."

Derrek Hines' *Gilgamesh* turned out to be no simple translation of the text like the other verse and prose translations of *Gilgamesh* that we are familiar with. It does not begin with the questions that present the physical evidence—the still extant walls of Uruk and Ishtar's sanctuary—to confirm the actual historical existence of Gilgamesh as the first tablet of the oldest Akkadian version does (40), nor does it reproduce the repetitive, formulaic language of the second Akkadian tablet that introduces the character of Gilgamesh, his skill in battle, his "unbridled arrogance," and his insistence on taking the virginity of "the nobleman's spouse." That, of course, is the reason why the goddess Aruru, the mother of Gilgamesh, decides to conceive a second hero, Enkidu, to confront Gilgamesh in order to transform him from a bully into a true leader (41-42). Instead, Hines begins his *Gilgamesh* this way:

> Here is Gilgàmesh, king of Uruk:
> two-thirds divine, a mummy's boy,
> zeppelin ego, cock like a trip-hammer,
> and solid chrome, no-prisoners arrogance.

> Pulls women like beer rings.
> Grunts when puzzled.
> A bully. A jock. Perfecto. But in love?—
> a moon-calf, and worse, thoughtful. (1)

This initial characterization of Gilgamesh is accurate enough; but "zeppelin," "trip-hammer," "chrome," "beer rings," "jock," and "moon-calf" (a term that calls to mind Stephano's characterization of Caliban in *The Tempest* [1.2.105]) are certainly terms foreign to the world of that ancient culture whose story is being told. So what exactly is Derrek Hines doing in this "powerful new version" of the story of Gilgamesh?

In his short introductory essay to his *Gilgamesh*, Hines anticipates the question I have just posed and offers this explanation:

> Each generation discovers and reinterprets the mysteries of past literature. Shakespeare reworked the Latin historians, Pope in the eighteenth century translated Homer; in our time Ted Hughes has written a version of *Ovid,* Christopher Logue the *Iliad*, and Seamus Heaney *Beowulf.* My poem is an interpretation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, but is in no sense a translation. While not changing the essentials of the narrative, I have added material in an effort to recapture for the modern reader some of the vigor and excitement the original audience must have felt. (ix-x)

While it is true that Shakespeare reworked his sources introducing anachronisms as he did in *Julius Caesar* or changing the historical record as he did in *King Lear,* and while it is also true that Pope interpolated eighteenth-century values into his translations of Homer[3], it is difficult to put Hines' poem into either of those traditions, for his poem does not employ either of these techniques. Furthermore, Seamus Heaney's *Beowulf*, despite its admitted slighting of "the appositional nature of Old English syntax in favor of a clearly readable modern English text" (xxix), is clearly a translation, nearly line for line, and Hines' poem clearly is not. His comparisons do not help us to understand his project, but his assertion that his poem is both an interpretation of the epic and an attempt to breathe new life into it for an audience more than four thousand years removed from the culture that created it deserves further investigation. Could Hines be following the lead of his neighbor in Cornwall, Judith Kazantzis, whose 1999 volume of poems, *The Odysseus Poems,* is a quixotic meditation on the events of the *Odyssey,* focusing on the relationships between men and women for the purpose of asking the eternal question "What do men want" (74)? Or, perhaps, could Hines' poem actually be a work of critical commentary designed to stimulate a critical response in a modern reader?

A quick overview of Hines' text provides some of the answers. Essentially, Hines has written fourteen poems in chronological order, each of which focuses on a different major event in the epic. "Beginnings" introduces Gilgamesh and Enkidu; "Shamhat of the April Gate" tells the story of the sacred harlot who humanizes Enkidu with her sexual powers; "The Meeting" describes the civilizing effect of Enkidu's challenging the arrogant Gilgamesh; "Gilgamesh's Hymn to Morning" describes the city of Uruk flourishing under a wiser Gilgamesh; "The Humbaba Campaign" tells the story of stealing the cedars of Lebanon for Uruk's gate from the bitter, sarcastic perspective of one of Gilgamesh's disgruntled soldiers; "Gilgamesh and Ishtar" explains why Gilgamesh refuses to marry the goddess of love by providing the historical background; "The Great Bull of Heaven" makes obvious the cosmological metaphor of Ishtar's angry, vengeful attempt to use the constellation Taurus to destroy Gilgamesh's world; "Enkidu's Dream" introduces the possibility of the hero's death in terms of cosmic justice; "Enkidu's Death" introduces the sudden emptiness of death by comparing Enkidu's death to the sudden death of a modern fighter pilot; "Lament for Enkidu" expands upon the description of Gilgamesh's lament in modern terms; "Underworld," "The Lady Shiduri," and "Ur-shanabi" trace the history of Gilgamesh's grief as he slides into depression and alcoholism before he takes the advice of Shiduri, a woman he meets in a bar, and goes to see Ur-shanabi in an unsuccessful attempt to conquer death; and "Gilgamesh's Death" explains how the wisdom Gilgamesh has gained, despite his failings, has transformed his quiet death into that of a truly heroic human being.

The transitional sections between the major events of the *Gilgamesh* plot are ignored, and some of the interpolated stories, such as Utnapishtim's description of the great flood, are hardly mentioned. Instead, commentary clearly aimed at making the significance of the *Gilgamesh* epic clear to a modern audience has been added. For example, in the first poem, entitled "Beginnings," Hines breaks from the story to put it into a relevant historical context. After introducing Gilgamesh and Enkidu, Hines tells us, "Gilgamesh and Enkidu stand / astride the threshold of history at Sumer" and then reminds us that history begins with writing:

> Here and there,
> jostling with the fast-forward business
> on the quays, spiraling above a potter's wheel,
> buoyed by the clatter of café gossip:
>
> up-drafts of ideas, thermals of invention.
>
> For the cut of every thought here
> is new for our race, and tart with novelty.

> Then look: footprints of the mind's bird
> in its take-off scramble across wet clay tablets.
> Writing! (2)

Notice how this added material with its very accurate description of the look of cuneiform tablets and its re-emphasis of the significance of writing and poetic invention is similar to the commentary that we would expect to find in a college lecture or in a work of interpretive criticism. From this quick overview, it should be clear that Hines is faithful to the original purposes of the *Epic of Gilgamesh.* But rather than simply retelling the story, or using the story of the epic to make a point of his own, Hines has created a companion text, a kind of reader's guide to aid in capturing the spirit of the ancient text for a modern reader.

Hines seems to be attempting to create a context of historical and intertextual material in which a modern reader can understand and possibly interact with the *Epic of Gilgamesh,* at least at a literary level, in much the same way that its anonymous author intended his original audience to understand and interact with the original version. Hines seems to agree with Donald Keesey that the *raison d'être* of literary criticism, especially intertextual criticism, is to teach readers how to read texts, "first by explaining what they need to know and then by showing how they may most efficiently acquire that knowledge" (285). Some of the knowledge needed is historical as the passage cited above concerning the significance of the invention of writing illustrates, but like most intertextual critics, Hines clearly believes that modern readers can use their accumulated knowledge about literature and literary conventions as one of the keys to open up an unfamiliar text. The literary conventions of plot and epic structure, the methods writers use to develop characters, and the images and symbols that characterize Western culture are elements that are shared in most of Western literature. As a result, the more literature we are familiar with, the easier it is for us to read new literary texts because knowing the conventions of literature is one of the requirements of accurate reading (Keesey 284).

Through frequent allusions to texts readers may or should be familiar with, Hines supplements the historical material he has added to his version of *Gilgamesh* with intertextual references to guide the reader toward a meaningful interpretation of the original text of the epic. He does this because, as Northrop Frye explains, the knowledge needed to read a text properly requires a balance of historical and literary principles. In his essay "The Critical Path," he insists that

> when criticism develops a proper sense of the history of literature, the history beyond literature does not cease to exist or to be relevant to the critic. Similarly, seeing

> literature as a unity in itself does not withdraw it from the social context: on the contrary, it becomes far easier to see what its place in civilization is. Criticism will always have two aspects, one turned toward the structure of literature and one turned toward the other cultural phenomena that form the social environment of literature. (298)

Thus, for example, if we assume for a moment that the word "moon-calf" in the passage from the first page of Hines' *Gilgamesh* cited above really is an intertextual reference to Caliban in the *Tempest*—and where else is the typical reader more likely to encounter the word "moon-calf" than in Shakespeare—then it, like the other anachronistic references in the passage (the jock, the chrome, and the beer rings), demonstrates one of the fundamental characteristics of the intertextual approach to reading literature: we as readers can use more easily accessible modern texts to learn the compositional structure of less familiar ancient texts just as we can use our knowledge of the classics of Western literature to interpret the intricacies of complex contemporary texts.

Hines uses the archetypal images familiar in literature as well as references to the classics of Western literature throughout his "reader's guide" to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. In the poem "Shamhat of the April Gate," Hines uses a familiar literary image to describe Enkidu's soul as he is confronted by the sacred harlot's efforts to humanize him. He says,

> You have seen a cottage by the sea,
> white, lap-built against the spray,
> paused in the lilt of dunes
> like a skiff with feathered oars,
> its darkness waiting for summer.
>
> Then the shucking of winter shutters;
> the abrupt gush and gulp of light
> quenching a thirsting interior
> like un-boarding an old fountain:
> thus Enkidu's soul at Shamhat's touch. (5-6)

Or in the poem "The Lady Shiduri," Hines has Shiduri describe Gilgamesh's frustration at being unable to bring back his brother Enkidu from the dead in terms familiar from dozens of prison movies. Shiduri says,

> When it was worst he was banged up with it
> like a rioting prisoner
> wash-boarding his slops pail against the bars
> *in his head.* My head. Enough already. (54)

In fact, the ephemera of the twentieth century C.E. is a constant reference point for Hines' reading of this twentieth century B.C.E. text. When

Gilgamesh and Enkidu meet, they are described as "the Empire State and Chrysler buildings" (14), and Enkidu's dreams are referred to as CAT-scans "imaging his fate" (39).

Intertextual references to the classics of Western literature, all of which are of later date than *Gilgamesh* itself, are also common in Hines' text. When the sacred harlot Shamhat has succeeded in turning Enkidu from a beast into a human being, Shamhat's own transformation from whore to hero is described in epic terms as she "reveals herself like a female Odysseus / transfixing the suitors" (9). When Gilgamesh is troubled with mutinous troops and bad dreams on his expedition into Lebanon, the soldier narrator of "The Humbaba Campaign" condemns Gilgamesh as "a bloody Cassandra weeping catastrophe" (20), and when the same soldier reaches the comparative luxury of Lebanon, he refers to the hidden danger of the place with reference to *Genesis,* describing "the zig of split-stone fences / snaking through terraced orchards, / apple and Eve ready" (20). Intertextual references span the centuries from Lazarus (24) to the Wizard of Oz (27), from the Garden of Eden (49) to Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel* (37). Like a literary critic, Hines relates only enough of the story of Gilgamesh and Enkidu to make it clear to his readers which scene in the epic he is trying to illuminate through his discussion.

Finally, one passage from Hines' *Gilgamesh* demonstrates the intensity of his use of intertextual references "to recapture for the modern reader some of the vigour and excitement the original audience must have felt" (x). Interestingly, the perspective Hines captures of this event, like the soldiers' perspective of the expedition in Lebanon, is not the perspective of the extant cuneiform tablets. Here is a word-for-word translation from the cuneiform of the first meeting of Gilgamesh and Enkidu:

> Enkidu walks in front
> And the lass behind him.
> When he entered broad-marted Uruk,
> The populace gathered around him.
> As he stopped in the street
> Of broad-marted Uruk
> The people were gathered,
> Saying about him:
> "He is like Gilgamesh to a hair!
> Though shorter in stature,
> He is stronger of bone [. . .]
> He is the strongest in the land; strength he has.
> The milk of wild creatures
> He was wont to suck.
> In Uruk there will be a constant clatter of arms."

The nobles rejoiced:
"A hero has appeared
For the man of proper mien!
For Gilgamesh, the godlike,
His equal has come forth." (Speiser 5. 1-27)

Compare the original text presented above with Hines' presentation of the mood or spirit of place in "The Meeting" when the news first reaches the palace that Enkidu has entered Uruk to end the king's practice of taking the virginity of all the young brides, of squatting on Uruk's soul (11), almost entirely in the language of intertextuality:

A messenger stands before the king,
his mouth working like a boated trout,
or a seer fresh out of prophecy.
Silence, a bolt, rigid in the throat.
Empty cups of faces turn to Gilgamesh.

Instantly everything is known—
the news clamps jump-cables to them
and throws a switch—a current arcs and spits
between Gilgamesh here,
and Enkidu at the April Gate,
galvanising the town.

Talk dries in the cafés,
as when the soldiers of an occupation
enter a restaurant, and a coded silence
becomes speech. Where silence is language,
meaning is everywhere.

The people let fear think for them;
fear steels their thought and makes bold.
They watch Gilgamesh pass,
and chant under their breath,

like football fans from the terraces:
Dead. End. Cul-de-sac.
Dead. End. Cul-de-sac.

Still, as the heroes stumble into their roles,
there is someone, as always, disconnected—
someone whistling as he repairs a pot—

unmindful of the great events at his elbow
like the ploughman oblivious in Brueghel's
Fall of Icarus. (11-12)

Mary Shelley's or Boris Karloff's *Frankenstein,* the atmosphere of Rick's in *Casablanca*, sporting events and Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" combine in Derrek Hines' intertextual critical reading of the epic. This "powerful new version of the world's first epic" is then simply a text designed to stimulate an essential understanding of the original epic and provoke a considered critical response from twenty-first century readers. In other words, this *Gilgamesh* attempts to be a continuation of the original author's creative process, which necessarily requires Hines, as "translator," to perform a critical act as well.

Notes

[1] Suzanne Jill Levine is a translator of Julio Cortazar, Manuel Puig, Carlos Fuentes, and other writers of Latin American fiction.

[2] I interviewed Derrek Hines at a Lawrence Durrell conference in Corfu in the summer of 2000. Derrek Hines was at the conference because he had published a volume of poetry entitled *Van Norden* after the sailboat that Durrell used to make the trip from Kalami to Corfu Town in the 1930s (Paipeti 34). When I asked Hines what he was working on for his next project, he told me that, in his youth in Canada, he had earned a degree in Ancient Near Eastern Studies and recently he had been reacquainting himself with the *Epic of Gilgamesh.* Derrek Hines' version of the epic was published in England in 2002.

[3] Compare, for example, Pope's depiction of Achilles in his tent refusing to fight with the original, or with modern translations, or even Chapman's, to see how Pope's *Iliad* reflects Pope's values rather than Homer's.

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The Resistant Gap: Foucault, Lacan, and Resistance

Eric Daffron
Mississippi University for Women

In her book *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists*, Joan Copjec stages a provocative polemical debate between theorists Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan. Copjec stages this debate to prove why, in her opinion, Lacan offers a superior theory of power and resistance. According to Copjec, Foucault understands the social network as an enclosed space of discourses and subject positions in conflict. Copjec finds Foucault's conception of the social order limited because Foucault assumes that all discourses and all subject positions achieve full constitution. In contrast, she argues, Lacanian theory maintains that no identity, whether a discourse or a subject position, ever achieves full constitution. Thus, for Lacan, resistance comes, not from a discourse or a subject position in opposition with another one, but from the failure of all contending parties to achieve complete constitution as knowable identities (18). Despite Copjec's compelling outline of theoretical differences between Foucault and Lacan, I am not convinced of Copjec's assessment of Foucault and, for that reason, not so willing to dismiss him out of hand.

My challenge to Copjec, whose book I greatly admire, finds some of its inspiration in her reading of "Power and Strategies," the title of a 1977 interview of Foucault. In this interview, Foucault makes remarks about the political efficacy of the pleb:

> The plebs is no doubt not a real sociological entity. But there is indeed always something in the social body, in classes, groups and individuals themselves which in some sense escapes relations of power. . . . There is certainly no such thing as 'the' plebs; rather there is, as it were, a certain plebeian quality or aspect (*'de la' plèbe*). There is plebs in bodies, in souls, in individuals, . . . but everywhere in a diversity of . . . irreducibilities. This measure of plebs is not so much what stands outside relations of power as their limit, . . . that which responds to every advance of power by a movement of disengagement. (137-38)[1]

This passage is remarkable for two reasons. First, Foucault claims that "something" in the social network and in individuals themselves escapes power and serves as power's limit. This limit can be understood as the point beyond which one fully constituted entity encounters another fully constituted entity. However, in the spirit of Copjec's interpretation of this passage, this

limit can also be read as a certain something within entities themselves that power cannot reduce and thus absorb (3). Second, according to Copjec's reading of this passage, Foucault makes a distinction between two forms of existence when he says, "There is certainly no such thing as 'the' plebs; rather there is, as it were, a certain plebeian quality or aspect (*'de la' plèbe'*)." Copjec claims that when Foucault denies the existence of plebs but acknowledges a plebeian quality, he differentiates a social reality whose features we can know and describe from a certain something that we know to exist but whose "truth" falls "outside knowledge" (3). Copjec praises Foucault's insight in this passage only to bemoan its absence in his other works. However, I would argue that one can find just such a theory of power and resistance, albeit in different form, throughout Foucault's work, especially in his work from the mid-1970s until his death.

As a preliminary exploration, I will consider only two passages from *Discipline and Punish* and excerpts from a couple of related texts. In discussing these texts, I will argue, first, that what Lacan posits as a structure Foucault narrates as historical shifts; second, that the historical shifts in *Discipline and Punish* plot the seemingly inevitable accommodation of the excluded—what Foucault calls a gap and what Lacan calls the Real; and, third, that two other related texts locate one entity that resists total accommodation: the so-called "dangerous individual." The dangerous individual serves as a potent example of what I call "the resistant gap" and find, in various forms, throughout Foucault's work.

To illustrate the resistant gap, let me turn briefly to the dream of Irma's injection from Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* before moving to Foucault. In this dream, Freud sees Irma, who has broken off treatment because she would not accept his "solution." Now she complains of choking. When Freud takes her to the window to look down her throat, she first gives "signs of recalcitrance" but later opens wide her mouth, in which Freud sees only scabs and patches. Then Freud calls in three medical friends to solve her ailment (139-40). Doesn't this dream dramatize the power structures that Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish* and elsewhere? We have four doctors who penetrate Irma with the medical gaze, see abnormalcy, and attempt to cure it, and we have Irma, who resists their power. Irma resists medical power not simply in her "recalcitrance" but more profoundly in the scabs and patches in her throat. The scabs and patches obscure the gaze because they mark a void or an absence. As such, they thwart knowledge. They also give rise to a curious footnote. "There is at least one spot in every dream," according to Freud, "at which it is unplumbable—a navel . . . that is its point of contact with the unknown" (143). Thus, Irma's throat bears witness, in Lacanian terms, to the Real: that which exceeds and resists symbolization because it is impossible and unknowable except in its effects

(Žižek 161-64, 169-73). Irma's throat also testifies, in Foucaultian terms, to what I call the resistant gap: that which resists power because power can never know or capture it once and for all.[2]

This so-called resistant gap appears at least twice in *Discipline and Punish*. In the opening pages of the panopticon chapter, Foucault traces the historical shifts from the medieval leper to the seventeenth-century plague-stricken town to the eighteenth-century panopticon. Over the course of these historical shifts, an excluded entity—the leper, or, more generally, the gap—becomes gradually incorporated and accommodated within a differentiated social system, thereby annulling its potential resistance (as I have redefined that term). The leper suffered from permanent exclusion in the Middle Ages, cast into a non-differentiated mass outside social limits. In the seventeenth century, the leper remained in exile, while the plague victim saw a different fate. The plague victim became subject to a disciplinary system that sought to differentiate, partition, and otherwise fix individuals in a social space of complete order, total arrest, and perfect interpellation. At least that was "the political dream" (197). Alongside this "political dream" was not only "the haunting memory" of plagues and disorder but also a whole "literary fiction" of indiscriminate co-mingling, transgressing, and, most interestingly, mask-lifting (197-98). "[I]ndividuals unmasked," Foucault writes, "abandoning their statutory identity and the figure under which they had been recognized, allowing a quite different truth to appear" (197).[3] By the nineteenth century, the leper assumed the status of the plague victim, becoming subject to the same disciplinary measures that had earlier subjected the plague victim.

Foucault's narrative spreads out across time a Lacanian structure. In this story, Foucault explains how an excluded entity—the leper, or the gap—functions as a necessary outside to the social structure—that is, as the Real to the Symbolic Order. It does so, in the first phase, in its radical foreclosure from the social order and, in the second phase, as a potent reminder of that foreclosure. In this second phase, the gap also appears when individuals take off their masks, abandoning their symbolic identities for "a quite different truth": the Real (197). In the third phase, the gap becomes incorporated into the social system. In this system, the included excluded becomes subject, as Foucault explains, to "a procedure that would be . . . the permanent measure of a gap [*un écart*] in relation to an inaccessible norm" (227).[4] As such, the gap becomes one among many differences within a system with no apparent outside—a situation in which the symbolic attempts to incorporate the Real.

Foucault tells a structurally similar story in the chapter on "correct training"—this time without historical shifts. In the section on normalization, Foucault claims that discipline aims at punishing departures from the

norm—what Foucault also calls "gaps." The *École Militaire* devised one means of correcting those students who fall away from the norm: a system whereby students were placed in classes from the class that most closely conformed to the norm to the class that least did so. In addition to this set of differentiated classes was the so-called "shameful class": a class that served as "the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal" (183). This class "existed only to disappear" (182), as Foucault puts it; for the whole goal of the school's disciplinary system was to pressure all the classes to conform to the norm. Once again, the excluded entity—the gap in Foucault's terms and the Real in Lacan's terms—becomes incorporated and accommodated within a differentiated system and thereby loses its potential resistance (as I have redefined that term). This is dangerous business. The existence of an outside to a symbolic system can ward off a totalitarian regime and vouchsafe the existence of something other to one's symbolic life.[5]

Although Foucault tells the disturbing story of the included excluded, the impotent gap, in *Discipline and Punish*, two texts about the so-called "dangerous individual" from approximately the same period speak of a gap that stubbornly resists total containment. For the sake of convenience, I will treat these two texts—a course description entitled "The Abnormals" and an essay entitled "About the Concept of the 'Dangerous Individual' in Nineteenth-Century Legal Psychiatry"—as one. Although the dangerous individual made his advent in the nineteenth century, he had previous incarnations in the medieval monster and the seventeenth-century hermaphrodite, among others ("Abnormals" 51). Thus, the dangerous individual's specific features may have changed historically, but he actually occupies an abiding structure. In her present incarnation, the dangerous individual frustrates the legal system because, among other things, her crime comes out of the blue with no warning signs. For that reason, the legal apparatus assumes that something unknown in her personality caused the crime, and demands a confession. This "supplementary material," as Foucault puts it, promises to fill the void in the law's knowledge. Yet the dangerous individual refuses to confess. "[H]e does not play the game," as Foucault puts it, and the legal apparatus shuts down ("Concept" 177, 200). This silence is remarkable because *History of Sexuality*, volume I, would have us think that confessions are always demanded and are always given. Here silence becomes a viable form of resistance. Despite its obstinacy, this form of resistance could succumb to Copjec's critique of Foucault; for the dyad of loquacious power and silent resistance could simply be another pair of competing subject positions within a differentiated social network.

However, if we look more closely at the dangerous individual and especially at her silence, we discover a more radical form of resistance. This

form of resistance comes from a certain something in the dangerous individual that is both impossible and unknowable. According to Foucault, the dangerous individual and her previous incarnations are not only forbidden but also impossible ("Abnormals" 51). As the impossible, the dangerous individual resists total symbolization. In addition to being impossible, the dangerous individual is in part unknowable. He refuses to confess, not because he wishes to hold back pertinent information, but because he usually lacks any self-knowledge to confess ("Concept" 182, 200). Moreover, the category by which he is labeled—"the dangerous individual"—has no medical or juridical content ("Abnormals" 52). In other words, like Foucault's pleb, the individual's dangerous nature is assumed to exist, but nothing positive about his dangerous nature can be said. Finally, among the numerous legal impasses that this figure creates, the most important for our purposes is this: While her crime comes out of nowhere and shocks the legal system—by the way, another definition of the Lacanian Real (Žižek 169)—the legal system can eventually symbolize the crime, identifying, labeling, and proving it. However, when it comes time to ascertain the crime's cause, to trace back from the crime as effect to the criminal's personality as cause, the legal system struggles to find anything positive ("Concept" 187-88). In other words, the dangerous individual exists only to the degree that she harbors "some fundamental non-knowledge," as Žižek puts it (68). This "non-knowledge" is the Lacanian Real; it is also the resistant gap.

In conclusion, although my argument no doubt implies otherwise, my intent is not to turn Foucault into Lacan. Instead, I would like to suggest that Anglo-American critics have often used some aspects of Foucault at the expense of other aspects more rooted in Continental European philosophy. To re-read Foucault in terms of Lacan is thus to put Foucault in one of many possible contexts. The end result, I hope, is a more complex understanding of both Foucault and Lacan. Foucault's stories illuminate Lacan's arcane concepts, and Lacan's concepts prevent us from missing Foucault's central points in a thicket of historical detail. More importantly, I hope that the resistant gap gives us a different notion of Foucaultian resistance: a type of resistance that comes, not from a subject who opposes the power that seeks her truth, but rather from a subject who shuts down power by refusing to disclose the self-knowledge that escapes even the subject.

Notes

[1]In her reading of this passage, Copjec cites a different standard translation of this passage. However, the differences between the translation that she uses and the one that I use are negligible for the purposes of the points that I am trying to make in this paragraph.

[2]This dream, especially the status of Irma's throat and the meaning

of the navel, has received much critical attention. I have been generally influenced by Copjec's reading, in which Copjec equates Irma's scabs with the Real (119-22), and by Felman's reading, in which Felman discusses the dream as a dream of "female resistance" (60).

[3]The standard translation of this passage—"allowing a quite different truth to appear"—obscures the notion of otherness that the original French version implies. The original French reads: "*laissant apparaître une vérité tout autre*" (199). Translated literally, that passage reads: "allowing to appear a truth altogether other." That otherness, I later argue, betokens the Real.

[4]"Gap" is the standard translation of Foucault's "*un écart*" (228), a word which usually denotes the spatial distance between one point and another or the departure from a norm. The word "gap" obviously bears other meanings in English, including "an opening," "an absence," even "a void." A void, such as the void of Irma's throat or the void of Freud's navel, is one of the characteristics of the Lacanian Real, which I am equating with the resistant gap.

[5]See Copjec's provocative discussion of democracy and totalitarianism, a discussion that has influenced my comment here (152-61).

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POETRY

Joe Amoako
Delaware State University

Oh Mother Ghana

Oh Mother Ghana
Why sit down as if unconcerned
To watch your destruction
A destruction to be replaced
By vacuum

A whole people of yours
Are deteriorating physically and morally
A whole nation of yours
Is collapsing politically and economically
A whole destiny of yours
Is hanging in a balance

You're diminishing as a social being
You're disintegrating in your solidarity
You're doing away with your allies
You're winning more enemies

Socially you're indisposed
Morally you're sick
Economically you're ill
Politically you're dying

Awake from your slumber
Arise from sleep
Awake from your nightmare

Written April 16, 1978, 1:00 p.m., at Dora Donkor's house, Staff Village, University of Ghana. This shows the depression years of Ghana.

Rosa Julia Bird and Stacy Southerland
University of Central Oklahoma

Amanecí otra vez

Por creer en tus ojos
como creo en relámpagos
desenredo la luz de un horizonte negro
con espuelas y látigos.

Porque la muerte no duele,
sólo sangra la vida en un par de zapatos.

Ya verás cuando despiertes
los ojos que te he dejado.

Once again I awaken at dawn

Once again I awaken at dawn
Because of believing in your eyes
as I believe in lightning bolts
I untangle light from a black horizon
with spurs and whips.

Because death doesn't hurt
Life only bleeds in a pair of shoes.

When you awaken you'll finally see
the eyes I have left you.

Randy Blythe
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Aunt June at the County Pool

I wonder what prayers do when they pass a pool
full of kid pee and little sluts.
Sluts can't taint prayers in motion (*he lives*
in my heart). You can't buy prayers
like you can mascara or the medication.

Dr. Collins says if it helps me to think so
then I can believe Jesus okayed the medication.
Dr. Collins says I'll have to pray and take the medication
long as I live. His big chair, his legs crossed,
his pad on his knees, he talks slow and deep, like,
"The mothah's post-pahtum repreyussive
teyundencies translit'rated into the child's
wish to reentuh the safety of the woom."

I think Momma dropped me. On purpose. Either that
or held me too close over the stove.
She *did* push me. To school, to church.
"Don't nobody care if you're afraid be afraid
see if anybody cares," she says.

It's a wonder I didn't turn out bad as these girls
with their come-on looks in Jesus' name amen.
They can't know Him, not in those
stringy little polka-dot things,
them and those young hoodlums worrying each other
like dogs in the carport.
Next thing you know he'll grab at her boo boo.

I need an Orange Crush and some cheese curls (PTL).
Somebody ought to say something.

I wonder does the concession stand
sell Benson and Hedges menthols by the singles.

Nobody's sure going to look at me.

I had a body once that was mine before Leonard got it.
I didn't used to mind being looked at.
That's how I got Leonard.
Jesus always had my soul, even when I didn't know it.
Then Jesus got Leonard. That night
in the emergency room when the doctor said
"infarction," I heard Jesus say, "Pray," so I do.

Phone lines from God look like the hairs on my head,
the redder the better.
I listen to every call.
Got good practice working the switchboard at the Berkley.
All those years in Birmingham, Leonard waiting tables
like a good monkey
while I listened to the tenants.
Eight hours a day ten years and I never said a word.
Where else was I going to go?
Nothing happens on the square anymore.
I tell Momma I don't have no body to show, here at fifty-four
and her wanting me to look
"for a swimsuit" at Fashion Bug praise the Lord.
I had this old rag from when Leonard was alive.
I wouldn't give her the satisfaction now anyway,
even if she don't care what I do no more,

even if she wanted me to spend every day
watching these teenagers poke out all over.
She thinks I went to pray with Alma
then give out tracts at the rec center.

I love Momma, but she can't see my prayers spiral up
like smoke in the hall outside my door.
I try to let prayers outside
so they can get up to heaven praise Jesus.
They don't always want to. Sometimes I crack the window
to let one out and it goes the other way
like it wants to hang around.

I think before a prayer goes up
it would like to find a pasture
and doodle around some cows for a while.

(It sure wouldn't want to come here
with all this filth strutting around.)
Red cows, who'd look up from their cud
like they took prayers for granted, like they knew
prayers hover all the time over hayfields.
Like cows were better than Momma at seeing prayers.
"Bless this blade and this blade," the prayers would say,
"and bless the poor walking hamburgers
who take for granted that life
ain't nothing but hay and sunshine."
"Thank you, Jesus," the red cows would say
and look around with those big eyes
like there wasn't no better place on earth.

Fluke

Maybe God was inspired but impulsive,
    not knowing how good it would be.
Maybe his luck held out.
        One *Zap*
(celestial finger-point—one second, millennia;
    deus ex, circumstance; reality, metaphor—
        split gray hairs any old way)
and there were whales singing through the water—
    deacons up continental aisles,
        cetology's etymology—
at home in one pole's ocean or another.
God looked at them singly and in pods
        (together rhyming with gods)
and thought (thinking in trumpet sounds),
                "That's what I want: good, slow, gray:
                        loll and hum in the sea
                        where there was nothing so big before."
One dam surfaced and rolled on a whim
    something like the one that made her.
Her casual fin broke the water
    and an eye that had not seen
            that way gazed at the blue.
She upended, tail signaling a sounding,
    to leave the air world kindly
            to those who would later ponder the pattern:
  one motivated spore in a zillion: a fungus underfoot;
    one spinoff ember-cloud in a zillion: a planet;
        that planet one in a zillion distances from a star:
                oceans full of ambitious microbes.
Now you: forget yourself and time: rise into the air.

Robert Collins
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Organized Crime

Mouthing alleluias, we started Easter liturgy,
the Paschal Candle lit in honor of the lamb,
when fame in the form of Vito Genovese,
accompanied by two of his grimacing henchmen,
strolled through the open doors of Holy Family
straight down the center aisle, entering the pew
reserved for VIP's right in front of the pulpit.
Most of us had never seen the likes of him
up close and in person but we knew his reputation—
kingpin of Cosa Nostra, maven of the Mafia,
and grandpa to three of our brainiest schoolmates
whose parents owned a modest ranch-style
house in town (though Vito rarely slept there,
and, when he did, the white Venetian blinds
were always down) and wouldn't let their children
watch the evening news or read the NY papers.
Come to do his Easter duty in pinstriped suit,
soft Italian shoes, and gray fedora, he dazzled
with his grand largesse, light glinting brightly
off a gaudy diamond on his pinky as he dropped
$500.00 in the basket and stuck his pink tongue
out to take the host until we completely forgot
he was Murder, Inc., *mea culpa, mea culpa,*
mea maxima culpa, the blood of hapless innocents
staining his hands. Mass over and the prayer
for Mother Russia said, the entire congregation
inhaled and held its breath, giving Don Genovese
the opportunity he needed to exit. Nodding
beneficently to several embarrassed parishioners
who blushed with pride to be so recognized
and would've bent their knees to kiss his ring,
he marched back down the aisle toward the open
door of a long black limousine with all the pomp
and circumstance ordinarily accorded a cardinal
of the college, smiling broadly beneath his fedora,
the sea of faith by some miracle parting before him.

Dies Irae

Excused from arithmetic one morning,
a loyal knight of the altar eager to answer
a higher call by serving my first funeral,
I was certain I was special. Surely I was one
of the elect, entering a mystery revealed to
very few my age, better and brighter than the kids
I'd left struggling again to master fractions.

Concealed behind the organ in the choir,
the angry female soloist, a disembodied voice
from the world beyond, intoned the opening
strains of the "Dies Irae," piercing, mournful,
unrelenting, an awful hymn unlike anything
I'd trembled to in church until that morning:
"*Dies irae, dies illa / Solvet saeclum in favilla.*"

As she sang an icy chill swept through me.
Even though I didn't understand the Latin,
I saw how Mr. Condon's corpse had sat up
in its casket sometime during the night before,
opening its vacant eyes like the soulless dolls
my sister sang to, and had its final reckoning,
shocked at the glimpse of judgment day it got.

With its fate in the hands of an angry God,
it groveled beneath the wrinkled brow,
shuddering to hear its wrongs recounted
and its destiny decreed—ashamed of vows
it'd taken and broken, longings it thought
it'd never reveal—and that very moment
howled for mercy from the sloughs of hell.

At my desk an hour later, noticeably paler,
measures of the Latin dirge swelling in my brain
as we reviewed the expulsion from the garden,
I resolved to heed God's word at once and mend
my evil ways all the while stealing jealous glances
at the unblemished faces of my classmates,
who didn't have the knowledge I'd been given.

Ashley Combest
University of Tennessee

Greenfield Cemetery

I never visit, though I swore I would
and I am not even sure I remember the way
to your grave. But with my bare hands I will dig
you out of the earth like stones
from a wolf's protruding stomach,
if that's what it takes to hold you.

I only know you are near the ruins of this old church—
St. John's, gutted by a cyclone in 1904—
You can see straight through it,
parts of it are still standing,
but there are no walls or windows,
only openings that reveal woods and sky
and graves.

The only real words it bears are a fragment—
till the day break and shadows flee away
Its covering has crumbled into patterns
of brick and mortar, cracks, a face,
a woman's face, her head covered in one of those wraps
like you wore, but I do not think it is you—

just a shadow of some woman from the past.
The door goes right through her womb,
beautiful to be broken open.
The day, too, breaks open like a belly,
bearing itself into everything broken
and there is nothing anywhere to hold out the sky.

Mortal Memories

Whoever sees the bridge first
wins the game
my grandmother would say.
Sometimes she still asks
Do you see it?

And I remember
riding in the backseat
counting quickly
  one mississippi
  two mississippi
  three mississippi
I had it memorized
down to the last vowel
sound when the road
would curve and around
the bend would be
the faintest speck
of the steel frame.
A sliver of silver
in the evergreens

I have forgotten
her face.
It should be there
in my dream
but it is not.

The bridge stands—
a fine example
of Darwinian craftsmanship—
to remind me
that memories are useless
when it comes
to progress.
I must move forwards
towards the center
of things where
I see
and have seen
and will see

your face as it is
and at the same moment
faceless as it was
in my dreams.

Who can live
in the center of time
where everything
happens at once
and not at all?
What living thing
could endure its
solitude?
Eternal is not alive.
Progress
is to have nothing
to hold on to.

I gather mortal
memories in my sleep
in hopes
of holding on
to something.
All night long
I dream in reverse
live my life
backwards.
I drive backwards
over bridges
and retrace
my childhood
if only
to see your face again
to pay close attention
when you turn
this time
from the front seat
of our silver Nissan
and say
Do you see it?
So I can answer
Yes.
I see it.

Rosa Luxemburg Platz

I feel the Ubahn move beneath my feet
and I know that I am not at home here
by an old abandoned building
with red graffiti that reads
Nieder mit dem killer Staat USA.
The rest is faded
The only other word I can distinguish
is *Freiheit*, freedom.

I alone am unmoved.
I ride the trains wearily now
accustomed to the lurching
halting motion of the car
A shell of a woman
emotionless empty
transparent

Es gibt einen Zug außer dem Zug, wo ich sitze
unlistening unspeaking
my face in the glass transfused
by these underground arteries
of speed and concrete and cables
but I am not filled up.
No blood rushes
only a roaring
of water in the ears
and a sensation
of falling
like Rosa
into my own
reflection.

Steven P. Deaton
Holmes Community College

In the Prayer Room of the Psych Ward,
a Man Writes a Note to His Sister,
a Patient Seven Rooms Down

You are sick with poet's eye,
I think, trained to find the genuine
and sad to see so little in me,
or in yourself and your scribbling.
I would bring you flowers,
but you would see how weak
they are and how strong
the glass, reshaped, could be.
The dimpled nurse, fat and white,
the keeper of shoestrings,
the hearer of curses deep at night,
tells me the things not to bring—
I'm sad to say she knows your kind,
I guess, better than I.
She keeps me
at safe distance. Yes, Jesus, keep
me at safe distance—
I pray you never read this.

Johnny Cash

When you were dead those two or three times,
did you see June Carter with seraphim?
Or was it Jamaica you saw, paradise of crime
you would know, and cry unto Him

for remedy and release? Was it celestial pain
relief you found for crooked teeth
and crooked jaw? On Earth the fame
you found in methamphetamines

left you no pain relief June Carter
would sanction. Was she not as wise
and as tough as angels? The farther
you floated, what did you see with dark eyes?

Was it as dark as your life-coat was black?
What was that you said about coming back?

Kendall Dunkelberg
Mississippi University for Women

Texas Canyon

Who would believe this was Arizona:
six hours out of El Paso, which
it took me all day just to reach,
these boulders belong on another planet.

A sign warns not to paint graffiti,
but the defiant sun spills madder
down the cracks beyond where
halogen lamps create a haven for trucks.

Over by the pay phones the silver keys
and plastic receiver reflect your cool voice.
I'm half an hour out of Tucson, yet I could
stand here talking all night.

When I finally pull back onto the highway
the moon is a thin sliver above cerulean sage
and the sunset, here in the mountains,
enflames the clouds behind me in the east.

Tucson

If I could grasp the sun
that streamed through your kitchen
to light your hair and set
our bodies on fire. Or nap

again on your prickly-pear porch
the way we waited each afternoon
for thunderstorms to roll in over
the mountains and quench our desire.

On Mount Lemmon there are seven
ecozones from the valley to the top,
and though we counted them and compared
each to the proportions of our bodies,

they are my memories now. Mine alone.
Mesquite is a good wood for burning,
dry, fatty, and fragrant. Sage smoke
drives out unwanted spirits. Saguaro

fetishes stand rigid along the ridge.
If I could grasp the sun I'd set
all of Tucson on fire and try
to sleep again in another bed.

Stephanie M. Eddleman
Harding University

The Angel

Virginia Woolf lied.
She said she killed her—
strangled her in self defense,
flung her ink pot at her,
an ugly, violent death.

But Virginia was wrong.
Somehow she escaped,
stole on a ship across the sea,
and now she lives with me!

I wish *I* could kill her.

She's still up to her same old tricks—
saying I should take the thigh when what
  I really want is the breast,
urging me to keep my opinion to myself,
saying I should stay at home,
ordering me to sympathize, demur,
  flatter, deceive, conciliate,
making me feel guilty,
insisting that I can't write *that.*

I wish *I* could kill her.

What? Oh, no dear.
I really don't need that last piece of apple pie.
You take it.

Terry Everett
Delta State University

from *Lessons of Duncan Grey*
Proem II: His Heritage

I named him before I saw
him from an artist's description
of his grayness, his white paws,
his black stripes, his splash of white
on his chest—I named him
knowing that in this place—
beside the road people drive
too fast on, near the woods
and bayou where coyotes dwell,
near the trees where owls roost—
that he would be an inside cat;
that he would match the grayness
of my graying beard, and I thought
of him growing into a gray name—
the gravest gray name of these parts:
the Right Reverend Duncan Gray
who began his ministry
here as Rector of Calvary,
ultimately to become bishop,
but whose finest hour for me
was when he stood unarmed
upon the campus of Ole Miss
and held his ground for peace,
a man of conservative
theology, who thought racism
to be idolatry, but a man
not just grave, who lives life
joyfully, taking his daily scotch,
delighting in the gifts
of the good life of family,
church, community, and so
I imagined my kitten
growing into that name

spelled in the artist's way:
Duncan Grey, and already
he has begun to teach me
and as the Episcopal Priests
"read Lessons," so he
"reads" me Lessons.

Theodore Haddin
University of Alabama at Birmingham

I Have Two Clocks

I have two clocks the windup type
the one winds but won't run
the other runs but won't keep time
the first one lies dead in time
frozen in a permanent past
always growing longer
the second makes like a clock
with its tick-tock ticking
this morning I reached for my portable phone
to find the weather and the time
and a voice said "this is tuesday
june 18" and shut itself off sharply
as the phone went dead in its little
red dot blinking on and off so there was
no time and no weather only the sun's light
slowly beginning to climb the shutters
opening to a soundless insistence

Crow He Canters

Crow he canters a little
across the lawn in the old park
sidles up to a leftover looks
to see if I am looking takes
a chomp pulls something away
he is so neat in his matte black
from beak to toe black and nothing
but black unless you see him
against sunlight late and his
iridescence shines through
of all the colors that reflect
his road, his field his mud
his high aerial lookout
in dry oak and green
rippling his feathers
he carries the dark waters
of the fountain

Jo LeCoeur
University of the Incarnate Word

In My Sickroom I Seek Horses

Boxed in by sky canyons,
spooked by what I cannot name,
I charge back in upon myself
and spiral out in storm.

I must cross a swollen river,
but first take shelter
in a cave low and dripping.

A twist of horse hair dipped in blood
streaking the rock with a line of horseback
drawing power of a hundred into one
horse-god bigger than current,
stronger than river,
wide eyes staring down the wind.

It feels like a memory
boxed in this corner
spiraling out a barn-child
astride a magic saddle,
cut fingertip streaking blood back and

back into a cave behind my being,
pulled in by the sound
of horses crunching melons,
the suction of warm brown
muscular Breathing.

Bendición de Tierra

High on the red desert mesa—hot *sandía* red
sprinkled with *piñon* scrub and cactus
you shape a house of mud and straw,
and know, to get the most of her,
you have her needs to mind.

Slow to heat up, slow to cool,
la casita bonita de tierra en tierra.

After noon you blanket her doors
and windows. Still her thick walls bake,
square earthen bread in a blue-skied oven,
browned *insolente* beneath your palms,
her smooth *adobe* skin.

You open her up at night,
strip off her blankets,
make windpaths *de las puertas*
y ventanas, invite in sky
that whips and whistles down the slopes,
sets the canyons moaning.

Toward morning she gives up her heat
and you lie, limbs drawn in from the wall
of mountain chill seeped into her bones.

As dawn plays gold her ripe-peach colors
shining as the first firstlight,
you are dust made flesh,
earth reshaped
to earth returning,
twice blessed.

Bendición de Tierra: Earth Blessing; *sandía*: watermelon; *piñon*: pine; *la casita bonita de tierra en tierra*: pretty little house of earth on earth; *insolente*: insolent; *adobe*: mud; *de las puertas y ventanas*: of her doors and windows.

The Catch

An arc of line in the unstirring air
does not disturb the flow of water
where I wait
not knowing that I wait,

your slow-motion cast fluid as morning,
splash so smooth upon my surface,
I am not alerted by the shine sinking
into my senses, my mouth easing open,
eyes gradual dazzle, the promise
of hunger satisfied.

Will some old whisper in the blood
stir to keep me fed on pictures of
the fight, the reeling in,
held gasping in your hands?

It is an old fear—hook, lock,
trap snapped shut.
An old war.

Though not so old as hunger.

I bite.

Jeremy Lespi
University of Southern Mississippi

Toy

At my 12th birthday party
my mother gave me a cake
with trick candles. I'd blow
them out, they'd light again.

When you walk away
you leave a smaller version
of yourself. Smaller each time,
like lifting Matryoshka dolls
at my Nanny's house.
The surprise each time
at the final nothing.

What I mean is
I have something to tell you.

Once a street-man
challenged me to a game
of three card monte.
I lost every time,
even though the card
I wanted had
an edge
slightly bent.

My sister and I
had a favorite game.
We'd hide in the basement
make-believing,
waiting out
a tornado.
For weeks at a time.

One day
you'll walk away
and I'll be surprised.

Denny McBride
Middle Tennessee State University

Woman Eating an Orange

An attractive woman at a picnic table
pulls a navel orange from a
brown paper bag. She inspects
it for a moment, slender hands
full of tree-grown sunshine.
Is she looking for flaws
or finding the best place to peel?
She begins to knead, as if the orange
were a ball of dough awaiting
the oven. Wind pushes dry leaves
around her feet, shadows of
branches dance across her face.
Sinews and veins come alive
in her hands as she rotates
and squeezes. Faster now, hands
a blur of knuckles and orange.
Is she preparing a lump of clay
for a potter's wheel or molding
the world to her vision? Squirrels
stop foraging and watch,
tails curled, noses twitching.
Finished kneading, she removes a
circle of peel, raises the softened
orange to her lips, and drinks.
Her hands cup the orange as
her head tilts skyward, cheeks
hollow as she squeezes,
sucks out the sweet juice.
One drop rolls down her cheek.
She catches it, licks her finger,
dabs her face dry with a napkin.
She drops napkin and dry orange
into the brown bag, disposes of
properly, leaves the scene.
Was this simply practice?
When she returns home, will she

kiss her lover as passionately as
she kissed the orange, will he
taste the sweet juice on her lips?
The circle of removed peel lies on
the ground. Between hill and peel,
a long line of ants marches,
begins the work of breaking down.

Game Face

I always wanted to be
the guy
you know the one
with the snappy patter
who rallies fans at pro sports
venues with his hollered
clever cracked-voice chatter
to the unhearing players

Call without Response

Playing his part
pulling his weight
exhorting and urging
helping the team to
win! win! win!

But I, though I visualized,
dreamed countless witty
even cool calls could never
at game time come up with
better than Yeah! Go (insert team name here)!
Kick their ass! Kill 'em!
and when overcome by
fan emotions carried on fumes
of beer and sweat and sheer want
even worse:
Kick 'em in the nuts! Slit their throats!
Spill their guts! Crush, kill, destroy!
C'mon ref, you blind? Be a Caesar!
Thumb down! Death to the gladiators!

Okay, I never said the last line and a half
so what if I had? Is that any worse than what
the guy says, you know the one,
who shouts
Okay two-four, be a stick!
Tighten up one-five!
or just a few minutes later

Loosen up four-four!
Let's go three-nine, all it takes is one now!
but his now rhymes with meow, like what
a cat says, and I think
God, what a moron.
Do I sound like him?
So no more wanting to sound like a hardcore fan
and now won't he just
sit down, shut the hell up, and let me
enjoy the damn game?

Marth Minford-Meas
Xavier University

Keep the Horse War Emblem on the Track

The spirit of a colt brings people back.
Missed in crowded fall days, we might
Keep the horse War Emblem on the track.

Unreported peace forces slacken;
Trying to avoid war, we are too polite.
The spirit of a colt brings people back

For determined eyes, glistening coat of black,
Emblazoned forehead with a mark of white.
Keep the horse War Emblem on a track.

Restraint terrorists place us in mock shackles,
Fossilize *out-of-the-cave* time into trilobites.
The spirit of a colt brings people back.

Pride is our flaw; tolerance our power pack.
We did not seek spitefulness,
But keep the horse War Emblem on some track.

United, we reject rubbled fracture.
Freedom runs a course like lightning:
The spirit of a colt brings people back.
Keep the horse War Emblem on the track.

Jo Ann Nye
Greenville, Mississippi

Privilege

In gardens beside houses
gated and guarded
electronically surveyed
they want to grow roses
behind walls
in imagined havens
on patches of soil
transported from open fields
still harboring the scent of
ragweed, blue marl, golden rod.
Elevated flower beds
invite Ceres to the cloistered yard
where sprinklers spew orthinex and benolate
so they can grow roses.

Expectations

She rested in the afternoon
lying upon the bed
her right arm bent over her forehead.
Finding her there I nestled beside her
lifted her arm away from her eyes.
As she raised her arm upward we matched hands.
She admired the child hands
laced with her mottled flesh
said they were artistic like those of a pianist.
I dreamed of applause and accolades.
For a time I believed the game we played.

Mike Spikes
Arkansas State University

Tattoo

To take a tattoo
off
costs more
money, time, and
pain
than to write it under the skin
in the first place,
as long as that can take,
as pricey and painful
as that can be.
Everybody knows this.
And yet
all those tattoo parlors,
kids,
barely old enough to vote,
picking out
hearts
inscribed with their lovers' names,
words
from languages
they don't understand,
opting
for eagles,
claws sunk in sayings
to stake
a life on.

Decay

I eat raw sugar,
never floss,
don't even own a toothbrush,
forcing my dentist
to drill.
Like anyone else
I hate the pain,
dread the needle, an aching
jaw, jerk
when a drill bit pressed too hard
shoots beneath the novocaine.
But it's worth it,
the price one pays for the pleasure
of shredded
slick enamel, a tooth's dense heart
hollowed out,
filled with gold or silver,
molar heads reformed,
ground down for
crowns. Without the rot
nothing in my mouth would ever change,
be made new.
There'd be no reason not
to leave things as they've always
been: Pale. Uniform. Full
of nothing but themselves.

Yvonne Tomek
Delta State University

Shadows

Every night
Behind the curtains, she broke
The rules and brought me water,
Cold in melting ice
That I gorged down before
Back out the tube it went
Across my swollen tongue.

All I said was,
"I am so thirsty."

A forbidden game—
She could have lost her job.

She spoke to me of boiled liver
And cabbage soup and okra
Made just so
In the kitchens
In the Elysian fields
In the lands of the living

That starvation was making me desire.

Every night her banquet table
Got bigger with more fantasies on it.

I never, in all those weeks, asked her name.
I think I never could and
Even never thought to.

She was a shadow person, as if
Locked in the veils of those curtains,
One you hardly see,
One you pass right through.

By now she may be homeless
Or alone, lost somewhere
Just around the corner, a
Suppliant's branch in her hands.

Probably by now she is dead.
But if she is in Limbo, so long,
Hanging in the balance between
Heaven and Hell,

I hope someone is bringing her water.
I hope someone is bringing for her

A Nightful of songs.

My Mother

She knew how to live tight,
Be poor, stay contained in small
Spaces, and be afraid. Though
She had been born rich in
Another land, crossing over had
Been another story. She wouldn't
Tell it to you this way, not
Entirely, for she had expansive
Gaiety in her heart and laugh
Lines around her eyes to show
For it. But I am of a different humour,
And there is no forgetting
The crowding of some memories
She told me—how during the
War the armies overtook her
Town.

The enemies played their anthems
In her house upstairs while she
Cooked for them in the kitchen,
Eyeing their rifles against the wall.
They looted her trunk full of her
Souvenirs hidden in the wine cellar.

In a crowd during this time,
Her pig-skin bag had been slit and
The contents robbed,
Without her even being aware
Of it.

I remember this about my
Happy, laughing mother, how
Once when she and my brother
Were traveling together one summer
Night back in the old country,
She woke us up to tell us
We were crossing a historic river, the Rhine,
And we should be awake to understand

It. We looked out of the window
At nothingness, black fog rising at
That midnight hour, and saw only
Reflections of ourselves in the glass,
My mother, my brother and me,
During the crossing with her
Hands pulling both of us near and
Against her, her hands encircling
Our throats.

Patricia Waters
University of Tennessee

Proverbs

I could have stayed home
living like Proverbs,
price above rubies, and all that,
clean kitchen, scrubbed heart.

Dining room chairs do not match,
doors lock at night
on a mind that failed,
minotaur become labyrinth.

Get out say the curtains,
fly into hot sun,
fall into blue sea,
drown in such a bold story.

After Reading "Kremlin of Smoke"
A poem by Gjertrude Schnackenberg

It is not that I cannot imagine this—
this imaginary interior life of Chopin,
intensely rendered. It is sustaining the act,
having to carry the scenario over—
etudes, as I pour drano into
scummy backed up bathwater,
nocturnes, as I check my e-mail for
the umpteenth time in 24 hours,
preludes, as I pay bills, make a grocery list,
that first recording bought
in the Memphis State bookstore,
basement of the student center,
black vinyl Vox, dollar ninety-eight,
I played and played and played,
Ingrid Haebler, I have her still,
a second disc found at a going out
of business sale as I had worn out the first
listening over and over to waltzes—
as I had worn out so much else, my youth,
the capacity to forgive, but never,
never to wear out these turns, counter-turns—
his music an embrace, coupled arms, guiding,
sustaining, whirling circle true,
always completing itself, to the measure, just.

Jianqing Zheng
Mississippi Valley State University

Memories

Ezra Pound, that great Imagist,
said, "Memories
are the white hairs of the heart."

In the 1950s, in China,
the whole nation was galvanized
to wipe out sparrows—
they ate grains. Then
swarms of locusts
ate the whole country bare
wherever they traveled.

When the Cultural Revolution
spread like wild fire in 1966
the Red Guards from all corners
of the country rushed
to Tian An Men Square
to see Chairman Mao,
the reddest sun in their hearts,
rising on the red tower.
They shouted in tears
a long, long life to him.

On September 9, 1976,
the red sun set, for good.
That afternoon,
we were picking cotton
under the hot sun
when a farmer walked by
shouting, "Guys, Mao died."
His voice cool as autumn wind.

Muyu

An old monk
sits on a hassock

chanting scriptures
and striking on muyu

a drab sound that
breaks muggy night

into rustling rain.
I seat my dream

in a lotus position
to listen longingly

for a piece of howling
toward nirvana.

Muyu, which means "wooden fish" in Chinese, is a percussion instrument used in temples.

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