The South Carolina REVIEW

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The South Carolina Review

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THE SOUTH CAROLINA REVIEW

APRIL, NINETEEN HUNDRED SEVENTY-FOUR

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EDITORIAL

We have only one issue of *The South Carolina Review* behind us since we began publication at Clemson, but that effort snowed a white hair or two on the heads of the editors. We learned that mail posted here has to go to Greenville before delivery, which explains, to some extent at least, a curiosity: the *Review* got to California before it reached subscribers here in Clemson. Because we took over the *Review* only in June, we yet endure a few misprint mishaps, the result of trying to keep our first issue on its November schedule without having time to let the contributors share with us the task of proofreading. At a meeting of editors at the Modern Language Association in Chicago, we learned some of the disturbing details about the financial crisis faced by literary and scholarly magazines and the libraries whose subscriptions are vital to their survival.

Nonetheless, despite our local trials and the present crisis for magazines elsewhere, we plan to go on, maintaining our dual literary/scholarly identity. The post office has been filling our boxes with more articles, interviews, poems, and short stories than we can publish; but we want to re-emphasize our request for articles on Robert Frost (whose one hundredth birthday is March 26) to be published in our autumn issue. Our readers should know that future issues will contain articles on Robert Frost and Northrop Frye; fiction by Charles Henley and Mark Steadman; and poems by Arthur Gregor, Paul Metcalf, Grace Freeman, D. C. Berry, and Laurence Lieberman.

We note with pleasure the tenth anniversary of *Studies in Short Fiction*. Frank Hoskins, Purvis Boyette, and Newberry College deserve our thanks for filling a critical lacuna with good publications.

R.J.C.
R.W.H.
W.K.

THREE POEMS BY LAURENCE LIEBERMAN

LEDA'S REVENGE

"I am content to live it all again . . .
The folly that man does
Or must suffer, if he woos
A proud woman not kindred to his soul."

Yeats' soul turned into a swan.
That was a bore.
An hour before the dawn
he blessed a whore,

and taught his flesh to stink.
His heart grew sweet.
He made his genitals think
in a winding sheet,

rehearsed a dance with the dead,
and sang like a bird.
If a man loved a ghost instead
of a woman, who cared?

In life, she spit in his face
and married a fool.
He gave up the human race
to play the ghoul

that fed upon her corpse,
a sort of rape.
To lose the Beloved warps
a man out of shape.

THE SCREAM

(after the woodcut by Munch)

Eyes, mouth, nostrils—
ink-stains on the doily of her face!
Her figure frozen in a glacier of air her voice

constructs, the cubic quarter-mile of space
that surrounds her throat is charged
with shriek-wave

currents—a mushroom
cloud, gorged
with radioactive

particles. Her face, arbitrarily hitched to a body,
does not
move—nor does the bridge, under her feet,

lift . . . it undulates.
The sea, below, resists moon-tides. Her sound
vibrates the water.

Like a tuning
fork, the scene
visibly hums.

THE FATHER SIEVE

(for Isaac)

Aretha is singing
THINK, and at the third FREEDOM cry, monkey,
I am too far into the booze
and rock to see you come flying,
catapulted fourleggedly
from the sofa-armrest trapeze.
Against your guerrilla warplay

I have no defense:
a three point landing—all over me at once—
you slam on my back and shoulder,
bellyplop on my head. No scalphair
to yank, you dive for chestfur,
backflipping so fast my outstretched
hands are nearly too late to clutch

you. *Daddy, love,*
will lose, your safety slipping through the sieve
of my loosening fingers for years,
your danger your big win, your
escape my broken grip. "You'll fall,"
I beg, "stop jumping, be still
in my arms." You relent, scowling to whiff

my ninety-proof
fuming breath, knowing daddy drunk cuddles
better than he drunk rough-
houses. The music in my head, as
the tempo speeds up, unsynchronizes
with the Black Soul-Lady's
rock blues. I cover my wrong steps. Bear-

hugging, we sway too far
one way, too far the other. The hardwood floor
turns to butter, my spine
hums like a tuning fork, my legs
horizontal S's, undulating sticks
in a loose sack: I tailspin
halfway between a calypso step and a twist,

the Tennessee sour
mash tumbler capsizing. I try to sink faster
than I fall, but your arm hooks
my wrist behind your back: hammerlocks!
I can't let go in time to keep
us from falling . . . soft-and-easy knocks . . .
light blows . . . we settle in a ramshackle sleep.

ROBERT LOWELL AND JONATHAN EDWARDS: POETRY IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD

GEORGE S. LENSING

The individual personality and writings of Jonathan Edwards have exercised an influence upon the poetry of Robert Lowell that is both preponderant and perplexing. His 1946 volume *Lord Weary's Castle* contains two poems, "Mr. Edwards and the Spider" and "After the Surprising Conversions," in which Edwards himself is the speaker, and Lowell quotes and paraphrases from his writings throughout the texts of both poems. *For the Union Dead*, which appeared in 1964, returns to the subject of the eighteenth-century Puritan philosopher-preacher with "Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts," and Lowell's most recent volume, *History* (1973), contains a sonnet describing Edwards, "The Worst Sinner, Jonathan Edwards' God." Lowell has remarked upon his discovery of Edwards and other Calvinist writers during his college years. That discovery led to his own embrace of a Calvinist-Catholic tradition: "In college, I began reading Hawthorne, Jonathan Edwards, English seventeenth-century preachers, Calvin himself, Gilson and others, some of them Catholics—Catholics and Calvinists I don't think opposites."[1] This disclosure is highly instructive in its suggestion that the poems of *Lord Weary's Castle* (including the Edwards-poems) are not always or necessarily intended as repudiations of the Calvinist heritage. In another interview Lowell has acknowledged that he was "going to do a biography of Jonathan Edwards"[2] and had begun research for it while living with the Allen Tates after his graduation from Kenyon College. That biography has never been completed, though Lowell's fascination with Edwards was to continue for the following thirty years. Why this extraordinary interest in an historical figure whose life and times were singularly different from Lowell's own? The answer is best sought out by an examination of these four poems, two from an early volume, two from more recent ones. The four poems taken together evince certain consistent, though hardly simple, attitudes which point to a larger thematic consistency in the whole of Lowell's career as

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[1] "A Conversation with Robert Lowell," *The Review*, 26 (Summer, 1971), 19.

[2] "Robert Lowell" as interviewed by Frederick Seidel. From *Robert Lowell, A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Thomas Parkinson (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1968), p. 16.

a poet. Though Lowell's personal theology and poetic style have been modified in the past quarter century, he has continued to regard Edwards with a remarkably steady perspective.

The temptation to speculate about personal affinities between the two men is unavoidable. In the larger sense both are seen publicly addressing themselves in highly moralistic terms to the nature of man and society. They are fundamentally in agreement with regard to their conception of man as fallen and prone to moral lapses. Though separated by two centuries, they look out upon the same New England landscape with a perspective that is consciously historical. In addition, both men emerge as unfrivolously introspective, often brooding, in temperament and habit. "'I have a constitution/ peculiarly unhappy,'" Edwards is made to say in "Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts," while Lowell says of himself in one of the sonnets from *The Dolphin* (1973): "I feel my old infection, it comes once yearly:/ lowered good humor, then an ominous/ rise of irritable enthusiasm."

At the heart of Lowell's interest in Edwards is a fundamental paradox that manifests itself in the Edwards-poems. On the one hand, Edwards represents a repressive and stern morality that is disastrous in its effects upon both Edwards himself and his various audiences. Edwards' Calvinism is of the same kind that Lowell condemns as "the Serpent's seeds of light" in "Children of Light." But Edwards also represents a basically theocentric perspective in keeping with Lowell's own view in his early poetry ("Catholics and Calvinists I don't think opposites"). His moralistic conception of the nature of man makes him a logical spokesman for Lowell himself, though not without irony. The sense of his personal commitment in the face of misunderstanding and scorn endears him personally to the twentieth-century poet. "He was a good man," says Lowell in "The Worst Sinner, Jonathan Edwards' God." And in "Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts": "I love you faded,/ old, exiled. . . ."

The first two Edwards-poems, "Mr. Edwards and the Spider" and "After the Surprising Conversions," are obviously companion poems: both are dramatic monologues in which Edwards is the speaker, and Josiah (Joseph) Hawley, one of Edwards' uncles, figures prominently in both. The order of the two poems is chronologically progressive in the sequence in which they appear in *Lord Weary's Castle*. The first, "Mr. Edwards and the Spider," is at least partially addressed to the living Hawley through terms of moral prescription. "After the Surprising Conversions" takes up the reactions of Edwards' congregation in Northampton to Hawley's suicide.

In the dramatic monologues the chief point of interest lies in what the poems reveal about Edwards himself through psychological character revelation. The reader of the poems is in a position to know more about the speaker than he knows of himself, or at least consciously reveals. A larger and more difficult question involves the degree to which one may regard Edwards as spokesman for Lowell himself. The latter question has given rise to disagreement. Will C. Jumper, for example, insists that "the real point of the poem ["After the Surprising Conversions"] is, of course, that there is no room in the theocracy of New England for the person who takes the tenets of Calvinism seriously." [3] While recognizing dissimilarities between Edwards and Lowell in the two poems, Jerome Mazzaro asserts the opposing view that "Lowell has insinuated himself into the character of Jonathan Edwards" [4] with the desire "to create primarily a character portrayal which would convey a message to the modern world." [5]

Not only is Edwards the speaker in "Mr. Edwards and the Spider," but Lowell cites or closely paraphrases from a number of Edwards' actual writings.[6] The addressee in the poem shifts from the general audience hearing Edwards' moral exhortations to the historical character of Josiah Hawley, husband of Edwards' aunt, Rebekah, and a member of his Northampton congregation. The central and unifying image of the poem is the spider, and Lowell uses it, as Edwards himself had done in his essays, for a variety of purposes: it is both beautiful and deadly, quarry and hunter, human and anti-human. In stanza one the spiders "Swimming from tree to tree" are remembered nostalgically in the context of the leisure of Edwards' own rural childhood. Already in this first stanza, however, they are victimized by the "westerly" November wind which acts destructively upon them—just as in stanza four they are victimized by the "bowels of fierce fire." The spider is not only victim

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[3] Will C. Jumper, "Whom Seek Ye?: A Note on Robert Lowell's Poetry," *Robert Lowell, A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Thomas Parkinson (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1968), p. 58.

[4] Jerome Mazzaro, *The Poetic Themes of Robert Lowell* (Ann Arbor, 1965), p. 71.

[5] Mazzaro, p. 131.

[6] I am indebted to Jerome Mazzaro's *The Poetic Themes of Robert Lowell* for listing the sources from Edwards' *Works* drawn upon by Lowell for the phraseology of much of this poem as well as "After the Surprising Conversions" and "Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts." "Mr. Edwards and the Spider" draws principally from Edwards' essay "Of Insects" and the sermons "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" and especially "The Future Punishment of the Wicked Unavoidable and Intolerable."

but predator, "the Black Widow, death," not unlike the "Black Mud," described as "detritus of death" in "Colloquy in Black Rock." In the literal sense the spider's attack can instantly kill a tiger (stanza three). The whole of the poem exploits this complexity of symbolism inherent in the insect. In the final stanza the spider is metamorphosed into the human form of Hawley himself, who becomes the helpless creature potentially "cast/ Into a brick-kiln" of eternal damnation.

The significance of Hawley, eventually driven to suicide by the pangs of his own despairing psyche, is made manifest in "After the Surprising Conversions"; in "Mr. Edwards and the Spider," however, he seems little more than a personified representative of Edwards' congregation at large. Nevertheless, Lowell's use of overstatement, even in terms of Calvinistic doctrine, is apparent when he makes Edwards say in stanza three:

> It's well
> If God who holds you to the pit of hell,
> Much as one holds a spider, will destroy,
> Baffle and dissipate your soul.

The sermon within the poem here becomes so shrill as to suggest a dissociation between Lowell and Edwards: the vengeance of God has become pathological. Only by a device like excessive exaggeration can the poet declare his own voice as different from that of the speaker in dramatic monologue. In the larger sense, however, "Mr. Edwards and the Spider" is a poem addressed to the subject of human nature and human morality. While it holds out the threat of damnation after death, it is essentially an admonishment to the living. If "the abolished will" suggests that human judgments are frozen after death, the implication also insists that the living man may opt for virtue, even within the context of Calvinism.[7] In this sense, Edwards echoes a number of other

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[7] In "Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts" Lowell alludes to Edwards' "writing, writing, writing,/denying the Freedom of the Will." Edwards' essay, "Freedom of the Will," written largely in response to the Arminians who were challenging the Puritan concept of predestination and divine election, argues that the will is never free as an autonomous human faculty, but passively subject to the dictates of the mind: "It is sufficient to my present purpose to say, it is that motive, which, as it stands in the view of the mind, is the strongest, that determines the Will" (*Jonathan Edwards, Representative Selections*, ed. Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson [New York, 1935], p. 267). A human being was perfectly free, however, according to Edwards, to act on the basis of those principles rationally submitted to the will.

poems in *Lord Weary's Castle*. Edwards' vengeful God is particularly recalled in poems like "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket" where the guns of war are made to "rock/ Our warships in the hand/ Of the great God." The apocalyptic tone here is directly reminiscent of Edwards' sermons.[8] Moreover, Edwards' recognition of man's fallen nature—possessing, he suggests, "a sickness past cure"—is sympathetic with Lowell's own appreciation of an imperfect human nature, redeemable only by a merciful God, the "Jonas Messias" of "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket."

"After the Surprising Conversions" redirects the voice of Edwards to a time several months after the setting of the previous poem. Hawley is now dead by his own hand, and Edwards addresses himself to the causes of his uncle's suicide and its effect upon his congregation. The narration is drawn from a 1735 letter to Benjamin Colman by Edwards, and, as he had done in "Mr. Edwards and the Spider," Lowell employs much of the actual phraseology used by Edwards. The poem's title draws upon the popular name of the letter to Colman, "Narrative of Surprising Conversions."

Inasmuch as it treats one single dramatic event occurring over a period of four months in Edwards' ministry, "After the Surprising Conversions" is more successful as a dramatic monologue than "Mr. Edwards and the Spider." It also uncovers a subtler insight into the character of Edwards himself. Dallas Wiebe rightly points out that "at no place does Edwards see his role in the suicide."[9] Lowell, however, clearly implies that Edwards' sermonizing has contributed to the anxiety and delirium leading to his uncle's suicide: "I preached one Sabbath on a text from Kings;/ He showed concernment for his soul." "Concernment," however, was converted into "terror":

> Once we saw him sitting late
> Behind his attic window by a light
> That guttered on his Bible; through that night
> He meditated terror.

Edwards' attempt to come to terms with Hawley's madness constitutes the poem's central issue. In the repressed regions of his mind lies the recollection of his own role in Hawley's transformation. Although his

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[8] See Mazzaro, p. 39: "The warships are pictured as the sinners of Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon, 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.'"

[9] Dallas E. Wiebe, "Mr. Lowell and Mr. Edwards," *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, 3 (Spring-Summer, 1962), 26.

conscious mind resists the self-indictment, the words of the poem betray his sense of guilt. Otherwise possessed of "more than common understanding," Hawley and his later mental state are indirectly attributed to the influence of his "melancholy parents"—an assertion that implies a kind of unconscious rationalizing on Edwards' part. Hawley's "thirst/ For loving" hints at his natural disposition of compassion rudely upset by his later religious delusions: "he dreamed/ That he was called to trumpet Judgment Day/ to Concord." In this light, the anonymous "peddler" who broadcasts despair among Hawley's survivors ironically stands in the poem for Edwards himself.

The relation between Lowell as poet and Edwards as speaker in "After the Surprising Conversions" is, again, a complex one. The irony inherent in Edwards' account is established by his resolution to resist a sense of responsibility for his uncle's death. Lowell implies that Edwards' evangelical Calvinism is not only socially deleterious, but a kind of madness—driving men like Hawley to mental derangement. At the same time, Lowell concurs in Edwards' conception of the warfare waged between God and Satan for possession of men's souls: "At Jehovah's nod/ Satan seemed more let loose amongst us: God/ Abandoned us to Satan." That same Jehovah appears in other poems from *Lord Weary's Castle*. "Jehovah's bow," for example, in "The Drunken Fisherman" is explicitly dissociated from the "pots of gold" sought after by modern commercial man, who is himself identified with "the Prince of Darkness." Again, in "At the Indian Killer's Grave," Edwards' own New England ancestors are imagined by Lowell as subjected to "Jehovah's buffets and his ends" as a result of their wanton killing of King Philip and other members of his tribe.

The two Edwards-poems in *Lord Weary's Castle* absorb through an intriguing ambiguity two general convictions pervasive throughout the volume. On the one hand, Calvinism and its tenets are nurtured by Satan and by the warped and manic human articulation of those tenets. Yet, they echo in a curious and ironic fashion much of the apocalyptic vision and strident moral foreboding that Lowell redefines in the atrocities of World War II, the abuses of twentieth-century capitalism, and in the flagrant disregard of society toward orthodox Christianity. Jonathan Edwards' unique appeal to Lowell as a poet resides in the fact that he serves both of these ends simultaneously and with historical accuracy.

The next Edwards-poem appears in *For the Union Dead*, some eighteen years after the earlier ones. In the intervening years, Lowell had suggested in *The Mills of the Kavanaughs* (1951) that he was no

longer an orthodox Roman Catholic. The succeeding volume, *Life Studies* (1959), demonstrated more than any of the earlier ones his emphasis upon a more direct personal self-revelation. Lowell also evinced that he had clearly moved away from regular meters and rhyme patterns toward a free verse based partially upon his reading of William Carlos Williams.

In "Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts," the longest of the four Edwards-poems, Lowell speaks of and to Edwards in his (Lowell's) own voice, although, once again, he inserts a number of quotations from the writings of Edwards himself.[10] The poem is particularly noteworthy in the context of the two earlier poems in that Lowell defines, now explicitly, the same dissociation and affection in his attitude toward Edwards implied indirectly in the two earlier dramatic monologues. The poem also explicitly establishes a fulcrum of contrast between Edwards' theology and Lowell's own "trying to do without/ faith." The final meaning of the poem, however, implies not so much the soul in the hands of an angry God as the spirit of the life of a gentle man. The poem's attitude is expressed not by alienation from Edwards but by strong personal sympathy; not by horror at Calvinism but by a nostalgic recollection of the compassion and delicately motivated love which had informed Edwards' relation toward man and nature.

In addition to Edwards, a second historical figure is introduced into the poem, Francis Bacon—though he serves in the poem almost as an extension of Edwards himself. The poem combines phrases from Bacon's essays with Edwards' sermons—even as Lowell himself is the ostensible speaker in the poem. He refers to *"Bacon's great oak grove/ he refused to sell"* after his implication in a bribery case and fall from the court of James I. That *"oak-grove"* recalls another oak said to have been planted by Edwards and recently viewed by Lowell on the occasion of his "pilgrimage" to Northampton:

> It was flesh-colored, new,
> and a common piece of kindling,
> only fit for burning.
> You too must have been green once.

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[10] The poem quotes extensively from Edwards' letter "To the Trustees of the College of New Jersey." Other essays quoted from or alluded to include: "Of Insects," "Personal Narrative," and "Sarah Pierrepont." There are further allusions to "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" and "Freedom of the Will." The poem further cites from the essays of Francis Bacon: "Of Gardens," "Of Vaine-Glory," and "Of Great Place."

The repudiation of Bacon by Parliament and his loss of political power are not unlike Edwards' own experience in Northampton where, as the result of incurring the disfavor of his congregation, he was forced to leave that town and begin his ministry among the Indians of western Massachusetts: "You stood on stilts in the air,/ but you fell from your parish." [11]

"Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts" is principally a religious poem structured upon prominent events in the life of Edwards. Lowell painfully pursues the same theological questions to which Edwards had directed himself throughout his life. Though Edwards' "rock/ of hope has crumbled," and his planted oak is "only fit for burning," Lowell still sees the "paradise" of Edwards' expectation. Lowell discredits the Puritan divine for the identification of his congregation with spiders— recalling the two earlier poems—but he also recognizes almost enviously the "delight in the Great Being" drawn by Edwards and his wife in the security of their own religious faith. Furthermore, Edwards himself, whose black coat is "designed/ like [his] mind," is presented in the last third of the poem as a warmly human and self-effacing man as he leaves his tribe of Houssatonic Indians to assume the presidency of Princeton. The concluding stanzas of the poem reproduce parts of a letter written by Edwards to the Princeton trustees in 1757 wherein he speaks frankly of his own inadequacies ("'I am contemptible,/ stiff and dull.'") and his preference for the private life of study:

> 'Why should I leave behind
> my delight and entertainment,
> those studies
> that have swallowed up my mind?'

What makes "Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts" particularly appealing is not so much the outline of Edwards' life in the poem as the attitude assumed by the poet toward the Puritan. Though Lowell says, "We move in different circles," those circles seem more historical than personal, and Lowell's straightforward declaration of his love for the preacher-scholar garbed in "White wig and black coat" underlies everything else asserted about Edwards in the poem. In "Mr. Edwards and the Spider" and "After the Surprising Conversions,"

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[11] In another similarity, Edwards, like Bacon, kept himself abreast of the latest scientific thinking of his day, and his death as the result of an inoculation against smallpox while president of Princeton (in order to persuade the students to undergo the treatment) recalls Bacon's death of pneumonia while performing experiments with refrigeration in snow.

Lowell's condemnation of Edwards fixes upon his theological stridency. In "Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts," Edwards the preacher gives way to Edwards the private man, and condemnation yields to a far more tempered sympathy.

Lowell's most recent Edwards-poem is a sonnet, "The Worst Sinner, Jonathan Edwards' God," appearing in *History*, though it had earlier appeared in *Notebook 1967-68* (1969) and *Notebook* (1970). For its appearance in the most recent volume, Lowell has revised it extensively—even adding the name of Edwards to the title. In the earlier version, "the venom in the chalice" of line 13 was "the chalice of our death-sentence." The word "venom," besides being harsher in tone, is more in keeping with the general notion of sin; the use of the word "chalice" undercuts the Eucharistic connotations of redemption. Lowell's association with Edwards as a fellow-Christian appears totally severed. Even so, the poem, as its title, "The Worst Sinner," suggests, announces Lowell's self-definition in terms of the human inclination to evil. Edwards' espousal of the doctrine of innate depravity significantly remains contiguous with Lowell's own distrust of the nature of man.

Edwards' self-incrimination as "worse than any man that ever breathed" recalls his self-description in "Personal Narrative." His personal wickedness is designated as "perfectly ineffable, and swallowing up all thought and imagination; like an infinite deluge, or mountain over my head." [12] Though Lowell calls him "a good man," he agrees nonetheless that in his self-indictment Edwards "prayed with reason." In his articulation of the doctrine of personal depravity Edwards becomes a pivotal figure, pointing back to America's "earliest sportsman" and ahead to Lowell himself. The pilgrim of "the earliest dawn" awoke each day as a killer, and the redness that greeted him corresponds with the "red cane" in his grip. Here in the first four lines Lowell describes indirectly the Indian prey of America's earliest settlers or, perhaps, Cain's slaying of Abel. The lines also echo a number of poems from *Lord Weary's Castle*—including "At the Indian Killer's Grave" or "Children of Light," where "Our fathers . . . fenced their gardens with the Redman's bones."

The sestet extends the description of the earliest American and the later Edwards to include Lowell himself, who wakes, not to the redness of his victims, but "to my sin." It is this cardinal principle of man's penchant for evil that has most incisively defined Lowell's continuing sense of affinity with Edwards, his personality, and his theology. It is well to bear in mind that the Robert Lowell of the 1960s, who publicly

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[12] *Jonathan Edwards, Representative Selections*, p. 70.

refused to attend Lyndon Johnson's White House Festival of the Arts, who marched with Norman Mailer on the Pentagon in protest against the Vietnam war, who campaigned in 1968 for the presidential candidacy of Eugene McCarthy, is never deceived into expecting any miraculous transformation of society. The reason is that all men remain individually "the worst sinner," and the utopian prospect of any change in the nature of man is repudiated by Lowell in the sonnet's concluding lines.

Robert Lowell's interest in the personality of Jonathan Edwards throughout his career as a poet is based upon similarities, and indeed contradictions, which the poet sees in himself. Edwards represents a stifling morality which, in its restrictiveness, Lowell finds abhorrent, but the sense of moral commitment is one of the things he finds most appealing in the life of Edwards. In this sense, Edwards as Puritan preacher is not unlike Lowell as exhortative poet. Both speak out, at times shrilly, against the loss of moral concernment in their contemporary societies. Lowell and Edwards share an essentially religious view of the world, one which is colored by a highly metaphorical articulation. Although Lowell no longer envisions sinners in the hands of an Old Testament Jehovah, he has defined another inferno as part of twentieth-century life itself. In "For the Union Dead," for example, he suggests one image of post-World War II society:

> a commercial photograph
> shows Hiroshima boiling
>
> over a Mosler Safe, the "Rock of Ages"
> that survived the blast.

Lowell and Edwards display in their personal lives a passionate commitment toward transforming society, even when against the grain of their own temperament. Just as Edwards wrote to the Princeton trustees that the constitution of the man who had led the Great Awakening was made up of "a low tide of spirits; often occasioning a kind of childish weakness and contemptibleness of speech, presence and demeanor," [13] so too does Lowell describe himself in the recent collection of sonnets as sitting

> in the sunset
> shade of our Bastille, the Pentagon,
> nursing leg- and arch-cramps, my cowardly,
> foolhardy heart.

[13] *Jonathan Edwards, Representative Selections*, p. 410.

Though their passion for moral reform remains firm, both refuse to blink at the imperfect nature of man. Any remaking of society will always have to take this nature into account: "We've so little faith that anyone/ ever makes anything better," says Lowell in "For Eugene McCarthy."

In these views shared with Jonathan Edwards it is noteworthy that Lowell reveals a consistency in point of view that spans the three decades of his career as a poet. In spite of changes in personal religious affiliation, as well as innovations in style and tone, Lowell continues to reflect a consistent moral posture in keeping with his perception of the nature of man.

SEA GULL

Now as the earth
exposed its gentle neck
and surf slicked up
photographic sand,
as the tide held back
an explosive skirt
and mussels
peaked in the flood,
as bell-throated buoys
pushed traffic past
and lanterns
joined the brassy moon,
—I held my breath.

Oh poets of some caprice,
hear me!
This is where
those long songs end.
Boys, the vision mounts,
stoops,
is stepped on and stumped.
It struts through sand like a fish.

JOHN HOLBROOK

THE WORLD AT THE TIP OF MY TONGUE

A castle? All right, then,
We'll make it a castle,
Build all my castles
In the air & make them spin

Like tops throughout the
Elements. I build without plan
A zirconium & selenite
Floor, wasp needles to pin

The stone, tangle & run
Of the sea for an arch,
Zax for the roof-slate.
In each place a man & woman,

None with diamonds.
They slouch in white aprons,
Flour on their hands, sweat
On their brows, heroes to no-one

But themselves, sleeping thin
As brooms dreaming of straws,
Content to know the conjure
Of the conjuring man. Suns

& moons rattle over their heads,
Rattle in a heaven
Of odd-sized scraps.
Now, with a sigh & a line

I bring the castle down, tin
& silver in a heap. The
World at the tip of my tongue
Is not wisdom, a frail skin

To live with; its aim
Is aim itself, to wind
From the wind a heart,
& from that heart, a man again.

A forest? All right, then,
I give you a forest.
I prop my kingdom on paper
With a willow & a wand.

LOUIS PHILLIPS

METRIC

No one knows this cadence
As well as I.
I measure it
Beneath your eye,

Stop. Pause,
& then run on.
A cadence is
A falling down.

To keep a cadence
One must let
A line go slack,
Loosen up a bit

To keep a rhythmic
Phrase
From falling in
& out of phase.

Whether or not
This poem is true,
You go the way
I tell you to.

LOUIS PHILLIPS

RE-RUN OF A QUAIL HUNT

Birds loosen from sage
and blustery as wind
explode the air;
they hang there
wings ablur,
vague-spun November leaves
pinned to a sky.
Shotguns leap
screech out their
little bundles of lead,
heat-seeking blossom of shot
breaking through feathers
and muscles and bones too
thin to turn light—
rare device of break and fold,
hammering out a pattern
of feathers and lumps of bird
on our blue screen
on our blue screen
So simple on our blue screen:
allowing the butt to rise
naturally, cupping it
at the edge of the pit;
and the swing
the sweep
natural as rain,
coming up to pass
the leaping bird;
eye hung on a pearl,
squeezing off
into empty air where
the bird will be:
natural as rain washing
down blood or rinsing
feathers from right eyes.

PAUL RUFFIN

DROPPING OUT

I open
the trap door
of my life
and drop out
leaving behind
ribbons and lightbulbs,
rows of lead
sleeping like bullets
each in its own
pencil. I grasp
in my fists
as I fall
only my own
two hands,
displace nothing
but still air.
Where I land
I will remain
learning slowly
the full weight of the sun.
Already it rests
its burning instep
on my bare
neck.

LINDA PASTAN

BLOCK

I place one word slowly
in front of the other,
like learning to walk again
after an illness.
But the blank page
with its hospital corners
tempts me.
I want to lie down
in its whiteness
and let myself drift
all the way back
to silence.

LINDA PASTAN

HAWKS

Sandra Schor

All night they argued about his child, he, flung across the bed in work clothes, smelling of gasoline and tobacco, the heel of his boot teasing brutally at her bare leg, she, wrapped in a tiger-cloth duster, writhing. The music kept coming out of his transistor radio, and when that quit he reached over and clicked a quarter in the TV. It was an old Elvis Presley movie and she stretched past him to black it out because they needed only the sound to lull the fitful child back to sleep. The girl, curled on an aluminum lounge chair they had set up opposite the bed, stirred.

"Somebody in here's talking too much," she said. "I can't sleep."

They were still, letting the TV drone at her until her head fell back into the damp crescent on her pillow. The lounge scraped against the floor.

Doris spoke. "I don't see why we can't leave her right here. If we slip out now, she'll wake up later and run into the motel office looking for us. Some freak always takes care of lost kids."

"Forget it," Owen said. "That manager would put the pigs onto us. He's had his eye on us since Debbie and me got here. Especially with the bikes up front."

"Listen, Owen, I've been into charts for weeks looking for the best night. I even asked Bienster. We have to get out now. It could be months before a good Mercury hits the ninth again." She turned away, hampered by her own obstinacy. "Anyway," she said quietly, "I know it's perfect tonight. I walked out on Mr. Bienster before the last show. He had a packed house but I told him he'd have to get somebody else, the lights were giving me a headache. We're all set. I'm showered, Owen, the kid's had a bath. All I have to do is climb into my bike clothes and we can take her to Mike and Laura's with the money. Did you put the three hundred I gave you into traveler's checks?"

The girl's sharp scold came again.

Doris lunged for a wad of nail polish cotton on the hat box. "I'll stuff her ears if she's going to bother us now. *We have to decide this.* Just you and me."

One thrust of his arm and Doris dropped back on the bed. She slumped away from him, clenched.

"Then tell me if you sold the car," she said. "Your brother said for half the money he and Laura'd take the kid." Her eyes implored. "And we'll send more. Please, just *tell* me one way or the other. Is it tonight? For weeks you've been saying today, tonight, and then you turn around and breeze into another job. Three or four days. A week. A month. Three months. I spent every cent on this goddam motel room, thinking tonight, tomorrow. Well, you can't beat the indications for tonight. Travel, exploring, willingness to take a chance—the new moon gives versatility tonight, Owen. I want to go tonight!"

Since July, with all her cool capacity she tried to hold on to him, giving him what he wanted, sweetly. He and the child moved into her place, she worked nights at the star-show, he, days at the gas station and in her room they got near each other, or they lay on the beach and plans washed out like the tide. They ate nineteen-cent hamburgers and, after Debbie fell asleep, when the rowdy beer drinkers went to drag on the Bay strip, they made love on a blanket under dazzling skies, stranded in each other's arms as if their jobs, their bosses, their separately abandoned friends, in a single moment had ceased to exist. But Debbie was there, rolled in a bath towel. Sudden headlights made her cry. "I want to go ho-o-me." Eventually, because of Debbie, because when his brother didn't take her he took her along, they came out of the beach still beating for more, pulled back to the room to finish or to begin again. They were so good together that the trip west became an obsession for her as well as for him. She fathomed his need for the money it would cost and she gave him her car. His goals, clear as meteors shooting out of his body, cleft his horoscope: himself, his motorcycle; fame, freedom; and at mid-heaven she insinuated herself into the comet's nocturnal tail. People stared after them wherever they went, she knew that, and it was the thing she wanted, to be somebody, to belong to a man who stunned as he walked. Together they were smashing, age of Aquarius, riding out of the sand pits, strolling downtown, picking up strangers; eyes followed them, envying; they were, without words, a solid jet of power on a raw, break-away jump. She felt like a bird with Owen: she was smart and she knew he gave her the wingspan she needed. Like hawks, they could soar.

Soon his face thawed; color was crawling into show, beneath his dusty hair, into his hard stubborn cheeks. He body-rolled off the bed. "Are you ready, baby?" he asked. "Are you ready like you say you are?"

She waited.

"Okay," he said. "Today I quit. No more three or four day traps. Good-bye to double X Exxon. Good-bye old credit card crap." He

reached into his pants pocket and wiggled out a fortune. On the bed he laid it like a deck of cards. "This is all of it."

Her eyes flew faster than her fingers. "Eight hundred dollars!"

His laughing blonde head fell back, triumphant. "How's that for a nest egg? Eight bills. Touch 'em." He scooped them up and pressed her hand to them.

She held them against her cheek. "Your brother's friend came through."

"Sweet, hah?"

"What about your brother?" Across the bed, her body wandered close to him, entreating in a sudden curve of the neck.

He whistled. "Man, you really are ready, aren't you?" he said, slipping his fingers along her neck.

"Owen, tell me."

"Will you leave the kid alone if I tell you?"

"I never touch her—"

"The cursing—"

"That won't kill her. I never laid a finger on her."

"You better not, Doris."

"Okay. Now tell me."

But he dropped his hand, ending the caress at once. At the closet, he pulled on the only garment left hanging, a grey sweater, forcing long ropy arms through the sleeves, the wool bulk creeping down his torso. "Get dressed, baby. Like the lady says, tonight's the night."

She leaped off the bed and ran to hug him, bent her head back so that the hairs of his beard tickled her neck. "I love you," she sang. "California here I come!" He helped her undo the flashing buttons of her robe and she let it fall around her, a cloud of fragrance moving in on him. He went for her, kneeling quickly, but she skirted him and escaped laughing into the bathroom for her clothes. "You didn't tell me what your brother said," she called out over the sound of the TV.

Shutting the set off, he set to work buffing his boots with a towel, dragging the cloth back and forth until a bright light shone in the toe of each boot.

"Did you have the starter on the bike looked at?"

"Yeah," he said still polishing. "Chappie says we're in good shape for a long ride. The names of the Road Runners, the maps—they're all in the saddle bag. And baby, we got puh-lenty of dough." When he was satisfied with the shine, he stamped over to the sleeping little girl and tickled her under the chin. "C'mon Debbie. Wake up, sweetheart. We're going bye-bye. Let Daddy put your clothes on." He

fumbled in the suitcase near the child's make-shift bed. "Say, Doris, you got any light colored overalls for her?"

"Oh, somewhere."

Through the neatly packed clothes he rummaged, trying to hold on to the neatness. "Anything in yellow? or pink?"

"For God's sake. Are you going to be picky *now*?"

But he found a pair in a brilliant yellow-green. He pulled out a red sweater, underwear, socks, an extra pair of socks, an extra white sweater, and her sneakers. Then he replaced her sneakers and drew out her saddle shoes. "C'mon, sweetheart, let Daddy dress you up real pretty."

The child woke up wearily, rubbing her eyes and longing to hurl herself back down on the lounge. Like a little forest creature she grovelled into the pillow until he shook her with a violent twist and she finally sat up, allowing her socks to be pulled over the warm soles of her feet. When he started pulling the second pair over the first, she complained, "You just did that." He hushed her with his hand over her lips, gently. "It got very cold tonight, Deb. I want you to do what Daddy says so your feet stay nice and warm."

"Are we wearing two of everything, Daddy, two sweaters? and two pants? and two shoes?"

"You're wearing two shoes all right, baby," and they both laughed.

"What's so funny, you two?" Doris came out in a black turtleneck and a pair of bell-bottom jeans, her long hair phosphorescent over her dark breasts. She drew up a pair of thick black ski pants, her regular uniform for long cycle trips, and swung the bathroom door. Suspended on its back were the two shiny black leather coats, hanging together like lovers. She took them down and eagerly set about checking the long diagonal zippers, rubbing a manicured fingernail along the metal edges. With the point of a lead pencil she traced the teeth, lubricating them, and then pulled the zipper open and closed. There would be no more trouble from zippers. At the shoulders, gleaming buttons studded the epaulets with silver hawks, birds she was proud of, her own touch, in spite of the lacerated fingernail the heavy sewing had cost. She threw a few lotion bottles into her hatbox, tossed in her tiger duster, a science fiction magazine, her graph paper and charts, and zipped the box around. Owen's things—shirt, socks, jockey shorts—were already inside. The girl's things were in the little flowered suitcase to go with her to Owen's brother's.

California! Doris might be going to Pluto, to the moon. Anywhere! She fancied herself a Barbarella and fleshed the shapely words of the

science fiction stories with her own likeness, flame hair, green eyes, long impeccable silver fingernails. Supple vinyls molded her and on her head a leather hat with goggles fit for a rocket, for a woman in space. She devoured science fiction, *Galaxy, Amazing Stories, Fantastic Stories,* quality and rot. She pondered the moral issues of strange universes and believed in the expansion of consciousness on other planets. Glory trailed after their motorcycle, their plastic helmets glimmering in the blue heat of the day. How she squeezed her man who would one day take her wherever it was at, man, wherever! up, out, beyond, away. The galaxies, in perfect glorious conjunction, were her destiny.

She opened her mouth and the beautiful places came out. "Big Sur, Carmel, the beaches at Monterey, San Francisco, Haight, hey—do you think we'll ever get up to Seattle?" She had a friend up there, a really harmonious kid, married a pilot. Those two had been everywhere. Now they were climbing cliffs, scaling the Rockies. God, how she loved mountains! On a clear night, high in the western sky, the constellations could speak, Mercury to Saturn, universal conversations whose language she mapped and charted daily. She thought of the northwest and the salmon leaping upstream, into the vortex of sky, back to the sheltering sea of the Mother of mothers. Perhaps they'd settle in Oregon or even Alaska, it didn't much matter as long as they moved together, the two of them, up the blue Pacific coast, smooth as a wheel. She'd take a little job, hustle some grass maybe, and find a room in a good house, keep enough cash to roam about on, free of the same glooey walls. They'd swim and Owe would surf the long waves, and they'd ride the up-country into the great parks of the *National Geographics.* Through the redwoods they'd ride like twin torches through the gates of hell, into the belly of the desert under the ascending command of her beloved mountains. She was working on the crash helmets now, shining them up with a rag until their white domes shone like mirrors, purple leather straps hooked securely into place. In her pocket she had big crazy chrome sunglasses for the days and a long pull of lavender chiffon to tie around her neck and let stream into the air. Ah! Her body eased as if she were performing the wisdom dances, rocking and twisting in the secret rhythms of Minerva. Under her arms that wrapped about his waist, the feel of him as they tore along the open highways of America was like holding the planet Mars in her arms, a dream better than her secret knowledge that God was a woman, a planet-mother, truer than her fantasy that she would be discovered in a discotheque, dancing in the nude with the man who had climbed the Wall of Death, and lived.

"Owe," she called him, "how much did he give you for the car? The whole thousand, the way you said? You said that Buick was worth at least that, didn't you honey? Your brother must be loaded. Doesn't it surprise you that he took his five hundred, the cheap bastard? The kid couldn't eat five hundred dollars worth in just a few months—" And then she shut her mouth. Perhaps he was never going to come back for her. Ooooh, what a silky idea, slippery and cool, it fit her whole being. Just the two of them after all, and none of that Marion's miniature around, none of that hot Marion's looks to remind him of the old days before DORIS. She thought of herself in huge letters, billboard size, helmet on, blotting out all other females in Owen's twenty-three years. Where the hell was Marion? Leaving her baby like that and skipping off with a housepainter. God is a woman, DORIS knows. The planet-mother takes care of us all, especially those of us with unnatural mothers, those of us abandoned, mother-screaming orphans. Whoopee, my man and me and the Harley makes three.

Debbie sat as she was told while they all got dressed. Her Daddy zipped up his jacket and pulled on his black leather gloves. Doris put on her helmet, her scarf, picked up her hatbox and slipped on her black leather gloves. She took the child's red woollen hand and the three of them stood in the doorway of the motel room for last looks. Doris took a final festive bounce on the bed, rump first, then landed upright on her white boots. Owen hung a cigarette on his lip and hurried them roughly through the door. They were out. At the curb, the bike gleamed under passing stars. . . .

The roar of the motor sang between his legs as they zoomed along, looping the town, dipping into 84 that would ribbon by his brother's house and on on on to the Pennsy Turnpike, on through Ohio. They would follow the bones of America, sleeping in fields and waking in towns with unforgettable names in the greatest autumn of them all, when Doris and Owen bombed clear, made the break, the get-on-with-your-living he'd been waiting for since Marion. To hell with Marion. Doris was a brainy chick, if a little nutty about her planetary life. She was a hard worker and good looking and knew how to stay out of his way even if she was too damn clean, always scrubbing away at herself like that with those French soaps. He had to admit Debbie was in good shape even if she and Doris hollered half the day. Hadn't she fed the kid good food and taught her to read street signs and seen that Debbie had all her shots up to date at the hospital? He was sure the kid would make it through. She had his blood, after all, like good warm wine, readying her for anything. Under the gauzy sky, he could feel Debbie's

hard little hands squeezing into him and Doris hugging beyond and over her like a female sandwich in and around his sweating stomach. Into the sting of wind, into the luminous rear mirror, he almost prayed he could take the kid along, wished the magic night would change them into a family, a mother, a father and a changeling kind of kid who could somersault off the handlebars and disappear on command. Then he thought they might become a sandwich like this, careening along from then on. But kids were a pain in the ass for a guy like him. Guys like him should never have kids. They ought to have a kind of gadget attached to motorcycles that took care of that, painlessly. Helpless, straddling the living metal, his thigh muscles twitched at the thought.

When the bike roared past his brother's street, a shriek lit into the wind and he was pinched and rubbed and stabbed with a chin. "Y-O-U L-Y-I-N-G B-A-S-T-A-R-D." Her voice shrilled into the wind and attacked his ears like the music of the band heralding the Wall of Death! Straight up the bikes screamed, straight up the concrete curve, flaring skyward on the jet speed, the roar of the band, the boom of the crowd, beyond earth, beyond steel and burning death and the inner silence under your ribs that mushroomed without end.

He shouted out sideways so that she could catch his words, "N-O-T T-O M-I-K-E-'S. H-E W-O-N-'T K-E-E-P H-E-R."

She pummeled his shoulder with her helmeted head, banging him on the back in her despair, the child screaming out between them, "I'm squeezed! I'm squeezed!" The moon rode ahead through the clouds, a mute, unwilling leader.

"You promised!" Doris shrieked into his ear. "You liar, you promised."

They stopped for a traffic light and Owen swung around fiercely. "Mike would have taken the kid. It was Laura. She changed her mind on the whole deal."

"That bitch. She swore she'd take the kid for half the car money."

"Well, she copped out."

"The stinking cheat. What happens now?"

"I sold the car to a used car dealer. He gave me five hundred. I kept it all and with your three hundred we got the eight we need."

"I don't give a damn about the car, but only five hundred?"

He tore down on the gas again and in a flare of speed they streaked into the open road, shouting again. She whipped out her curses separately and icily, like frozen clothing blinking on a line, pinning herself to the little girl as they raced along highway 84. Houses were left behind. The terrain, sparse and scrabbly around old farm houses, changed suddenly. Wetness glistened in the moonlight. The edges of

the road dropped off into swamps, flooded cellars of the earth. Stumps of trees stood around like old furniture. An area of marshes had been newly fenced off by the state road department, wide shoulders running along to the new chain fence. Behind the fence, giant telephone poles marched through the swamps. Mercury lamps lit the fenced lowland at intervals like votive candles. Over all, the stars let out a glow upon the night.

He was coasting to the right, along this fence, and suddenly, veering off the hard surface of the road, dust swirling up in an envelope around them, he stopped the bike on the shoulder. They all jumped off. Doris' scarf, snagged around the chrome of her helmet, gave her a nun's cupola in the eerie light. She ran off alone to the far side of the clearing. In the warm motionless air, Owen's headlamp glowed like the barrel of a gun.

He called his daughter over to the back of the clearing closest to the highway department's fence and bent over her. Out of his pocket he pulled one of the eight hundred-dollar bills and stuffed it into the pocket of her overalls. "That's a whole lot of money, baby, so don't lose it. Now you tell me a few things. Let's see how smart you are."

The child said, "I'm hungry."

He went over to the saddle bag and returned with a chocolate bar and a plastic bag of candy which he planted in her fist. "All right now, eat your candy and answer my questions. What's your name?"

The child answered willingly: "Debbie."

"Debbie what?"

"Debbie Allison."

"How old are you?"

She held up four fingers.

"Good. That's just fine."

"What's your mother's name?"

"Who do you mean, Marion or Doris?"

"It doesn't matter, honey. That's fine. Now, what's Daddy's name?"

"Daddy."

"No. What's his *name*? What do Doris and Marion call him?"

"Owe. They call him Owe."

"Good. Owe. Remember that. And now, the last question, where do you live?"

"Which place do you mean?"

"Okay. Now hold on to this fence, honey, until Doris and I come back for you. Keep your gloves on and if you get hungry you got more candy bars in there. And don't go near the road for anything. Always

hold on to the fence here with one hand. Don't let go. Let's see you do that."

She held on, her red woollen fingers wrapped tightly through the holes of the fence.

"Good. Now you're nice and bright in those yellow pants. Your suitcase is right here next to you. You can sit on it but you stay right here. Promise me you won't leave this fence."

"I promise, Daddy. When are you coming?"

He grabbed her against his chest and buried his cheek in her woollen hat. "Soon, baby. Hold on to the fence. We're going to look for a gas station. Bye, sweet. See you."

He whistled an aborted signal for Doris who was watching across the brimming distance. "C'mon! Let's go!"

Doris hurled her twisted face toward the road as she ran, vaulted to her seat behind him, and tested the roped down hatbox. Then she wrapped her arms around him.

He leaned back. "Well, you going to say anything to her?"

Under the white helmet Doris' lavender scarf billowed. "I can't," she hissed. "Mother of mothers, let's get the hell out of here."

As the smoke poured into the wide starlit path of highway 84, he waved a high leather hand in farewell.

donald at his weekly reading

saturdays donald read great chunks
of dictionaries talked
of zymurgy over wine
zonars with friedman
at the deli & what
queynt used to mean
with amy the whore donald
liked to know things he toured
the sewage plant weekly
so he wouldnt miss anything saturdays
he put the make on alice
the reference librarian & peanutted
the pigeons in the park
his penance when he succeeded

R. D. SWETS

WHEN I WAS A KID

When I was a kid
I owned a Daisy
Red Ryder BB gun
and at Halloween
every year
I used to carve
the faces of my foes
on pumpkins
and blast them
imagining
I was
Jack Packard
or Reggie
or Doc
I Love A Mystery
was popular then
each afternoon
out in the backyard
I killed the bastards
fighting for justice
of course
until the boy next door
took my Daisy
Red Ryder BB gun
and shot me
in the stomach with it
the stupid shit
thought it was funny
I cried all the way home
that night my dad said
I ought to be
more careful
with guns
and going out back
he bent the barrel
then shattered the stock
across a garbage can.

ARTHUR WINFIELD KNIGHT

ONE BEHIND SLEEP

for Robert Summers, 1927-1972

Do you relish expectations?
I cannot tell if the dentist parted your teeth
or postage stamps forgotten
before the rates were raised
remain in the pockets of the dead.
When you entered the loop with your despair
did a black cat arch its back in terror
or a single flag
crawl halfway down its pole?
When you entered the succeeding dawn
like a parched leaf
was there ice to skid upon
or a particular cenotaph
that attracted your fading eyes?
Did Terra Del Fuego
suddenly assemble
its bleak archipelago of stones
on the torn map of your mind?
Did you amble beneath the skirts of girls
or sniff the odor of hair tonic
from remembered barber shops?
Was there litter of plastic rubbish
in the conduits of your blood
& a bone that might have been your own
wedged in your esophagus?
Did you know that night
you slaughtered your hesitations
there were graves
quietly diminishing towards God?

JACK LINDEMAN

FORECAST

It is sheer madness
this green lingering
after August has been interred
& the sun's strategic retreat
is evidenced
by those fainter echoes
of its great brass horns.
The spherical cavities of the eyes
are amazed
at such ignorant stamina,
the stems holding tight to their branches
though arteries everywhere
are hardening.
There is no cure
for an aging season,
while farther north
above the undulating backs of bears
on land that matches their polar fur
& has rarely been touched
by the footsteps of exploration,
a vast recruitment of winds is underway,
while farther south
autumnal nights
with their black open mouths of wisdom
declare frost warnings
into the green eustachian leaves
of our tomato plants.

JACK LINDEMAN

JOURNAL ENTRY

My God! So long without poems!
How will it end? I feel a
blackness in my soul! What a misery!

—Alexander Blok

Around my belly, twenty pounds
of poems, eaten away
because it is easier
to wield a fork than a pen.

On my face, because it is
safer to define myself
with beard, with mane
than to strain at growing words.

Poems shun me. I do not deserve
them. I crave some
easier way out, escape
to mere amusements. Things.

Poems don't like this. Possessive
as any insecure lover
they carp about
my lack of attention. They pout.

They want to take me over, change
me into their image
of what I ought to be.
They want us to become one.

I must be very careful. I put
up with this more than
when another lover sent me
through this scene before.

I rebelled; she quietly ran away
to someone else who would
give her more attention
and I never heard from her again.

Dale Alan Bailes

"TOM, ARE YOU LISTENING?"—AN INTERVIEW WITH FRED WOLFE

Richard J. Calhoun and Robert W. Hill

On a sunny fall Saturday last September, the editors of the *Review* journeyed over to Spartanburg, South Carolina, to talk with Fred Wolfe, the sole surviving member of Thomas Wolfe's immediate family. What follows is a transcript of our tape-recorded conversation.

Wolfe: I wish you could have been up at Asheville upon the fifth day of May for the dedication of the monument at the house at 48 Spruce Street. Well, we went to Asheville, and the dedication was to be the next morning on the fifth day of May at eleven o'clock. . . . Congressman Roy Taylor (he's a brilliant speaker) made the principal talk at the dedication, and Mr. Robertson of the National Park Service presented me with a plaque. It was a beautiful bronze plaque that we had mounted on a chunk of granite that is now in the front yard at the memorial, saying that the Thomas Wolfe Memorial had been designated as a national historic site as having contributed to the history of the United States. Now when I got up, Dick, to accept the plaque and make my talk, whatever few remarks I had buzzing in my head, that I had jotted down, they went completely out the window. As old Mart Burton said in the *Greensboro News*, "You can't sell old Luke short." He said, "He raised his eyes over his glasses and invoked his remarks to the sky: 'Tom, are you listening? Son, you can come home again. They've been good to you, boy. They have honored you. This is the day I have been waiting twenty-five years for, to see you get the proper recognition in your own hometown.'" I made that and other remarks, and it seemed to go all over the country. I just seemed to hit a keynote. I'm not a very good talker, not by any means. I simply open my mouth and talk. And that's what came out. Everybody there said that they thought that I hit it, just with that remark, and I had no more idea that it was coming out than I know where the next breath is coming from. They're trying to choke us off up in Asheville at the house. They're putting up that Landmark Motel right across the street. It's a 382-room motel and Spruce Street is narrow, and they're coming out now I understand ten feet into Spruce Street, and they won't get the darned thing finished till 1975. But in spite of it, we've got more people this year than we had last year or the year before, nearly four thousand.

Calhoun: I know I first heard you talk on Tom Wolfe about 1960, and you've talked with student groups and various groups since then.

I wondered, from twelve or thirteen years of reading and talking about Thomas Wolfe, what have you found interests your student audiences most?

WOLFE: The thing that interests them most is that Tom has appealed to youth from the time that *Look Homeward, Angel* was published because it is the story not only of his life, but it rings a bell as the story of their lives. They see in what Tom is saying, incidents that they have felt, "Why, my God, this could be me! I have that same experience." And I think that what really interests those students most, when I'm talking, is the fact that they have read *Look Homeward, Angel* or others of Tom's works and that they are being confronted with a living character from the book, for they recognize me as Luke of *Look Homeward, Angel,* and I think that that means quite a lot to them. At Asheville people who come to that house look at me when I say, "I want to welcome you to the Thomas Wolfe Memorial. This is my old home. I lived here for thirty years." They say, "Oh, are you Tom's brother? Why you must be Fred—Luke."

CALHOUN: I think it's impressive that this generation of students, who feel they don't have time to read anything slowly, will still read *Look Homeward, Angel,* which should be read slowly.

WOLFE: That's exactly what Margaret Roberts said, in the *New York Times Book Review* in 1929, that this is a book to be reread and savored slowly, and that the final decision and judgment upon *Look Homeward, Angel* will no doubt rest with another generation than ours.

HILL: It's very easy for students to say, "Oh, it's just like my life," but do they specify any experiences in that book, particular events that seem to them to be real more than others?

WOLFE: I find out that those who have read *Look Homeward, Angel* and *Of Time and the River* like to call back to mind when they meet me the incident that Tom has in *Of Time and the River* in Blackstone, South Carolina (he calls Greenville, Blackstone). That was the incident of the time that Tom caught the bus and came down and met me at Greenville, and I was on the road working for Fairbanks, Morse and Company selling machinery. And Tom caught the bus from Asheville and came to Hendersonville. At Hendersonville he missed the bus that came on to Greenville, and he said, "I have missed my bus and I'm leaving here at 3:30 and I'll be in at Greenville at 5:00." I said, "That's perfectly O.K." I was going to take him to Anderson, over to see our sister, Effie, so in the meantime I left Greenville, and I went out around where Furman University is now and there was a friend of mine run a big dairy out there by the name of Mr. Burgess. He wanted

to buy either an engine or an electric motor, I forget what it was, and he was a man who liked for you to be sociable with him and indulge in a drink, and he produced a quart bottle of red whiskey. In my younger days I was agreeable with my prospective customers. I drank that whiskey with him, and I got the order. I came on back into Greenville to the Imperial Hotel. It's not too far, about seven or eight miles. And I parked and went into the old Imperial Hotel, on West Washington and Coffee Street, right on the corner. I asked Mr. Harley James—he was the manager of the hotel (his father owned it)—, "I was to meet my brother Tom here at 5:30 p. m. It's about 6:00, so I'm a little late. I don't see him. Has he been here?" He said, "No, he hasn't been here, but he's in town." I said, "If that's so, where the hell is he?" He said, "He's right down here on the corner." I said, "My God, well that's the city jail." He said, "That's where he is. You'd better go on down and see him. They've already called." So I went down. I went back into the back, and they had Tom in one cell and Philip Mole and Roger Meriwether, one other boy in another cell. They were from Asheville, college boys, just like that go to Clemson now, like I did when I was at Georgia Tech. Tom at that time was at Harvard; that was in 1923 or 22. I was really in no shape to be admonishing Tom because I easily could have been in there myself, and I finally got in there. So I looked at him and I said, "Well, this is a hell of a note. What are you doing down here?" "Now just a minute, Fred, I can explain the whole thing." "Well," I said, "you'd better." "Well, I met my friends here." I knew the boys, come from the best families in Asheville. And he said, "I was on the bus; and I got as far as Flat Rock. They drove right up level with the bus; they were driving a big underslung Pierce-Arrow or Packard that was probably one of the boys' father's. They were on their way down to the University of South Carolina to see a football game, and they promptly pulled me off that bus and said I was going with them. But they were coming right through Greenville, and I'd ride with them." And he said, "I got off and got in there with them. I'll admit that they had this liquor. They had white liquor, corn liquor, and the red liquor. They got into the edge of Greenville, but people became alarmed."

Calhoun: During Prohibition?

Wolfe: That was 1922 or 23. Yes, Prohibition, and the people got alarmed and they called up the police that there were a bunch of wild boys driving into town and they were afraid something might happen. So the law came out there, barricaded the road, and stopped them, and escorted them all in and locked them up. The upshot of the whole thing

was that it cost about sixty dollars to get the one boy out who was driving the car. Then for Tom and the other two boys, eleven dollars apiece. That was a bond to appear in court. They were only locked up for about an hour. "Now," I said, "you boys get in that car. You're not going to Columbia. You go right on back to Asheville, and they did, and their parents sent me the money, $100, so far as that was concerned. Eventually, I took Tom on to Anderson. It's only thirty miles. But before they left, one of them said, "Fred, they locked Tom in that cell with a Negro." Now in 1922, and fifty-one years ago, that was a different period from now. Well, I was pretty heated up, with what I had in me, Dick. So I said that anybody who did that is a damn blankety-blank. And I said, "Who did it?" So these two boys pointed out these two fellows with big hats. They had on some kind of insignia as officers. So they came up, and I said, "If you locked my brother up with a Negro in that cell, why you are a dirty so-and-so." And they said, "We didn't do it. Well, he was a janitor cleaning out." "Well," I said, "if he said so, you did." One bent a swing at me and one at Tom. We grabbed their clubs, and the lieutenant came up and they promptly put Tom and me back together in a cell. Well, they locked us both up, and when the lieutenant came back he said, "What the hell's going on here? What are you doing in there?" I told the lieutenant my story, and they told him theirs. They had me charged with assault and battery, resisting arrest, three or four other different charges; so I called Harley James up (I had already gotten 125 dollars from him to get them out of jail); so he let me use the phone. I said, "Harley, come on back down and bring me another hundred dollars." He said, "What in the devil's the matter?" I said, "They got me locked up." I told him later about it. So I put up my bond. I was hot under the collar. I got Tom, and I went on over to my friend Mr. Will Sirrine. He was a brother to Joe Sirrine of the Sirrine Engineering Company in Greenville, and he was a big lawyer. I said, "Mr. Will, here's what they have done to me and to Tom." He said, "Now listen, I'll see Judge Aiken and I'll straighten this whole thing out. You take Tom and you get in that car and you go on to Anderson because that's where you started. So we went on to Anderson and spent the night, the weekend, and came on back to Asheville and on the way back I saw Will Sirrine and got my money back. Well, we went on back home to Asheville. Now, a great number of boys and girls always ask me, "Is that true?" and I tell them, "Yes, it is," because it was a true story.

CALHOUN: I taught *Look Homeward, Angel* again this summer, and a good many members of the class were impressed with the family

portraits which I think are among the most impressive things in the novel. I just wondered which portraits in your opinion are the most biographical and which are the most fictional, and why you think some are more fictional than others.

Wolfe: Well, I will approach that a little obliquely. Tom said that fiction is not fact, but fiction is fact arranged and understood; fiction is fact arranged and charged with a purpose. Now when Tom charged it with a purpose, well, he departed from fact, and he built it up and embellished it. Now, I think in Tom's description of me in *Look Homeward, Angel* of the character of Luke (My God, he's got me right. There's no question about that.) I think he made me out a bigger character than I am. I don't think he made me out a bigger fool than I am, but I think that he really praised me more than I deserved to be praised. In his descriptions of his mother, Eliza, there is a departure from fact in some few instances, but I think Tom's description of Mama is about as realistic as you could ask for. Of course there is departure from truth, at times, that is to carry his narrative along and build it up. There's no question about that. Now there's one character that Tom describes almost perfectly, but not quite; that was Papa, our father. Tom told me time after time that he simply could not capture my father. He said, "He's too big." He said, "He's entirely too big, Fred, for me to get." He said, "I've done the best that I could; I've tried to be fair, but," he said, "he's a bigger individual than I am as a writer. I cannot capture him." And I don't think he could, not completely. Now Tom's description of Mabel is fine, and of course, Steve—Frank—is fine and of Ben, is fine; of course, it's unfortunate, his description of my brother Frank—Steve—but it is fine in the point of fact that he does not depart from the truth at all. That's not fiction. Now in the case of Ben, I think Tom covered himself with glory. I think that he describes Ben in every facet and fullness of justice. He was awfully close to Ben for this reason, well, they stood apart as strangers from the rest of we children, but they stood alone. They seemed to have the feeling, the affinity to understand each other, and I think that was theirs and they figured that, well, the rest of us did not fit in to the way they understood each other. When Ben died in 1918, that hit Tom awfully hard. Of course Tom at that time was what? He was eighteen years old, and Ben was twenty-five. Ben died of the flu and pneumonia right there at the Old Kentucky Home in Asheville. If you've been there you know he died in that room upstairs on the front with the ugly Victorian windows, as Tom described them. I think that that description of the death of Ben is very accurate. Now he departs from fact. He comes back at the end

of the book, and what does he give you? He gives you a picture which is a vision. Tom returns from Pulpit Hill, from Chapel Hill, and he walked across the public square in the stillness of the winter morning, and in the light of the moon reflected upon the front of our father's marble shop, he sees the image. It is Ben. Well, he walks up to him and he says, "My God, Ben, that is not you." "Who else, you little fool. Of course it is." He says, "It can't be, Ben. Well, you died two years ago. I saw them bury you." Ben's ghost goes on to say that he was not dead. Now that is a departure from fact, but it makes a beautiful picture, and he does the same thing in *Of Time and the River.* His description of trains, and of October, and everything else is a fact. But in the scene of the death of Gant, just when Gant is going through that last hour, the last night of his life, life is ebbing away. . . . He is not only palpably dying, he is dying (and I was there you see). But when Tom builds that picture of the little golden-haired boy coming through the woods and my father trailing along behind him, for he can't catch up with him. . . .

CALHOUN: Do you think of *Look Homeward, Angel* as lyric or fiction or autobiographical or what?

WOLFE: I think there are lyrical passages, by all means, in *Look Homeward, Angel,* but still autobiographical. I don't think that they're near as lyrical as you will find in *Of Time and the River.* Now I was in New York once, and I was up in Max Perkins's office. Mary was with me too, and Max Perkins, (we were talking about Tom) he said, "Fred," he said, "Tom used to walk up and down the floor here, and he would rave when he would read something by Robert Frost, or the other poets, and he would say, 'My God, Max, I'd give anything in the world if I had been a poet rather than a writer.'" He said, "I had to laugh at him. I said, 'Why, Tom, you are a poet. Why you're nothing but a poet.'" You see, Tom's lyrical passages in *You Can't Go Home Again*—that is nothing but sheer poetry. It moves with a surge. Don't you think that it does?

CALHOUN: Yes.

WOLFE: In that writing, well, there's music to it, and there's power. It's just like with the flowing of Niagara.

CALHOUN: Was the family aware of this lyric aspect? Did you see any poems he wrote when he was young?

WOLFE: No, not a bit. Never knew that he had it in him. I knew that he was quite an avid reader as a kid. I knew that he applied himself in the little contests that they'd have in school, in the little Shakespearean plays, or writing essays, winning a two-dollar-and-a-half

gold piece for such a matter. He did that on several occasions in grammar and high school at the North State Fitting School. Then, I knew after a fashion what he was doing at the University of North Carolina, not that I paid much attention to it. I was too busy on the road peddling machinery.

Calhoun: Of course, he made himself in *Look Homeward, Angel* appear more lonely and estranged than he actually was in real life.

Wolfe: Tom was only lonely when he was alone with his thoughts, with his doubts and fears as to whether he would be a success or a flash-in-the-pan, and then, of course, he was beset with the element of time. "Will I have time enough to do what I would like to do?" Why, he told me that on two different occasions. The last occasion was the year before he died—in August of 1937. We were together up at the Battery Park Hotel at Asheville. Tom had come in from his cabin at Oteen. You know he was there for two months; and he was spending, oh, I think Saturday and Sunday night. He was getting ready to go back to New York. I went over to the hotel. I think I had about a fifth of whiskey that I brought with me. I used to drink back in those days, and Tom always liked to drink, I think you know that, and we were up in the room there for about an hour before going on over to the house at 48 Spruce Street, and suddenly he reached over and grabbed me by the knee, and he said, "Fred, do you think I'm going to die?" I said, "Why, hell yes, of course you'll die and so will I." And I said," Why, what has gotten into you, Tom? According to the laws of averages I'll be gone before you are, because I'm five and a half years older than you are." He said, "Well, I have been worried to death and beset with this, that, and the other. I've got so much work to do, and the doctors have told me if I don't slow down I'm going to crash." I said, "Go on and take a vacation, and get away from this work for a while." I said, "You'll be O.K." He says, "I don't know. The main thing I'm worried about right now is time, whether I can live long enough to complete my work." Well, I paid no attention to it, but Tom went back to New York, and that's when he changed publishers from Scribner's on over to Harper's. He worked furiously that fall and that winter and spring and finished his manuscript, had it in a big packing case, and he left that with Ed Aswell. Aswell was a young man, just Tom's age. He was his editor. He was a junior editor at Harper's. That was the manuscript which produced *The Web and the Rock*, *You Can't Go Home Again*, and then the last book of short stories, *The Hills Beyond*.

Calhoun: I was going to ask about Tom and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Wolfe: They were friendly enemies. Underneath their skin, I think

that they respected each other and thought a lot of each other, but they'd have their arguments about the value of this and the value of that. I was with Tom and Scott. Mabel and my mother were with me, too, oh, twenty-eight miles from here at Tryon, in 1937, and Scott was at the Oak Hall Hotel. Tom came home for the first time since *Look Homeward, Angel*, that was in May of 1937. I went up to Asheville and said, "Well, bud, I'm off for four or five days. I have the old green Chevrolet here." And so I said, "I'll take you any place you want to go." He said, "I've got a friend, Fred" (He had already written me two months before and then countermanded the request that I go see Scott at Grove Park Inn; Scott was there languishing and trying to recuperate from his bout with . . . getting control of himself, not from mental problems but from liquor). And then he said, "No, that might hurt Scott's feelings, Fred, don't go. I'm coming down, we'll see him; I want you to meet him." So we went down to Oak Hall and spent about two hours with Scott. Scott was pale. He was a very handsome fellow. Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* had just been published about three or four months before. In the course of our conversation then, I asked, "Scott, have you read Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. I just got a copy; I haven't read it yet." "Yes, Fred," he said, "I read it in two hours' time, and I didn't find two good paragraphs in it." That kinda went all over me, and I said, "Now wait a minute, Scott. If you read it in two hours' time you didn't take time enough to find two good paragraphs. I've only read about half of it, and it's a very readable book." And I said, "By God, I only wish you or Tom would write a book that would sell half as well as her book is selling."

CALHOUN: That was a very popular statement to make to both of them.

WOLFE: Scott said, "Oh well, yes, it will sell. Tom, have you read it?" Tom said, "No, I've got a copy of it in my suitcase now, but I haven't read it yet. I'm going to, but I'm like Fred. I don't see how you could've read that book in any two hours' time, and I don't think you can and get anything out of it." But Scott was there fighting John Barleycorn and to get control of himself to go out to Hollywood and take on work there for movies, for scenario work, or whatever they call it, and he was trying to recoup his finances. I understood that Scott was broke and that he was in debt to Scribner's and others to the extent of thirty or forty thousand dollars, and he knew that he would have to control himself before he could hold that job. And he went out; he produced a quart of Gordon's dry gin. Oh, I won't forget that. He said, "I'm going to give

this to you." He said, "Will you have a drink?" That's after we had been there a few minutes. I said, "I've never refused." And he produced it and I said, "Now we'll all have one together." We had ginger ale and so forth. He said, "Oh no, Fred, I'm off of it like a dirty shirt." He said, "No more for me." And he stayed off of it, I understand, for about a year and a half or two years. He got out there, and things got a little too much for him, and he got back on it again.

Calhoun: You know, I'm interested in Thomas Wolfe as a Southern writer. I had a friend once who was going to write his dissertation on Thomas Wolfe as a Southern writer and his director said, "You can't do that because Thomas Wolfe was not a Southern writer." He went ahead and did it anyway. I just wondered if Tom thought of himself as a Southern writer or if he were really conscious of being, say, Southern Appalachian when you grew up in Asheville in those days.

Wolfe: Well, Tom broke the barriers and went out. I think Tom's first interest was to produce writings that would portray America and the value of America as it actually is. He was getting to that in *Of Time and the River* and *You Can't Go Home Again*, particularly. He was an Appalachian writer; he was a product of Appalachia. There's no question about that; he was from the South; he was born in Asheville, North Carolina; he was proud of the fact of his heritage, having come from the South, and of some aspects that he wasn't so proud—not of his family, but of the position of the South. He said that New England was provincial and knew it; he said the Middle West was provincial and knew it, but he said the South was provincial and didn't give a damn and wouldn't do anything about it; and that's the part that Tom did not appreciate in the South, that we should throw ourselves out of being more provincial and realize that we were in the swim, that we were a part of the whole country, all over. In other words, don't be stigmatized because you're from the South. I think that's pretty natural, that the South could produce just as well as New York or New England, and I think that New England had the idea that if you didn't come from the ivy-clad part of New England, that you had no background whatsoever, that with the background of coming from the South that you were stigmatized, you were something under stigma. Tom wanted to bring the South out of that. I think he did.

Calhoun: When Tom was away from Asheville and the South, he remembered it; it was in the memory, even as he was in faraway countries.

Wolfe: Oh, yes, it was in retrospect. I think that Tom could look back in perspective and appreciate the scenes along the French Broad

River, the mountains, Chapel Hill, the South, and everything a whole lot better later than he could at the time that he left. I think he was full of resentment when he left, but I think that that resentment disappeared, and he began to become awake to the value of his home land. He told me that if he was in England or France or Germany that he could look back in retrospect, in perspective, and appreciate America a whole lot better than he could when he was right here with it.

CALHOUN: Do you think this is what Europe meant to him, in part? You know, he could get away and get a perspective . . .

WOLFE: I think so, and I think that he had a great love for some parts of Europe, particularly Germany. Of course you know that; Tom was very fond of the Germans. I don't think that he cared too much for the English and a whole lot less for the French.

CALHOUN: A student asked me this summer why the Black didn't have a larger role in Wolfe's novels, and part of my answer was, well, this was Asheville and when Tom Wolfe grew up there were not as many Blacks there as in Mississippi where Faulkner lived, where the Black had a much larger role. And this is true as far as Asheville, wasn't it?

WOLFE: Tom was very democratic and sympathetic toward the Negro, a whole lot more so than the average young man of his day or young writer. Tom loved the Negro. He saw a lot of good in them. I remember one incident over in Greenville, South Carolina. I was a little abrupt with a Negro boy one day. Tom and I were together; I think we were coming back from Anderson. And Tom turned to me and he said, "Now, well, the sharp way you talked with that boy, did that make you feel better?" I said, "No, it doesn't. Really I'm ashamed of it, but I guess I gave way to my feeling." Why, he saw them, the value as they are. Tom loved the Negro, and I think that they loved him, those that knew him. I was with him in New York in the old Chelsea Hotel and at the old Hotel Albert, which was a nice hotel on University Place when Tom was teaching at New York University, and the elevator man would be a Negro. They all seemed to like Tom so much. Most of them were from the South. Tom definitely had a very sympathetic feeling toward the Negro race.

CALHOUN: You know, there's been a recent book, I don't know whether you've seen it or not, on Thomas Wolfe, which is an attempt to psychoanalyze him. This had to come because it is done on almost every writer, and the author of this book makes quite a bit out of the search for a father in Tom's work, you know, with his older brothers, and with his own father, with teachers, with editors. Of course, my

comment would be that this is one of the great themes of modern literature. I wonder if you could comment on this theme in Thomas Wolfe's works.

Wolfe: "Which of us has known his father, has seen his face?"

Calhoun: Yes.

Wolfe: Well, that's not Tom's physical father. I think it's more or less of a spiritual understanding of a father towards his son. It's something that he's seeking; I don't know whether he wants that to be his own father or the image of somebody else who will give him that help that he feels that he needs, the advice of a father. I know that my father certainly tried his best with Tom and the rest of us, but there were times when he was a little rough with us, but underneath that roughness, why, my father loved us, and he was very proud of Tom as a boy, very disappointed in Tom during those formative years when Tom went to Chapel Hill. Papa wanted Tom to be a politician, a statesman. He wanted him to go to the legislature, possibly become governor or a U. S. Senator.

Calhoun: That was a Southern ambition of a father, I would say.

Wolfe: Yes, a Southern ambition of a father. He never had the slightest idea of Tom ever becoming a writer, now . . . and with me, I think I'm expressing it just as it was; I think that my mother realized it a whole lot earlier by far than any of Tom's sisters or brothers. I think she felt that he was going to become a literary character, especially from the time that he went through this high school or this North State Fitting School. My father never lived to see any of this. You see he died in 1922.

Calhoun: You know, I wondered about humor in Wolfe. I think that Thomas Wolfe's humor, as opposed to satire, is underrated. I wonder what you think about it. Do you think that Tom had a sense of humor in his works and in his everyday life?

Wolfe: Oh, a wonderful sense of humor. But I think that just as decidedly pointed is the separation between humor and satire. I think he's got the satire, no question about it. Have you both read that humor and satire, principally satire, in his "Portrait of a Literary Critic"? You've read it, haven't you? Well, that's pure satire, and that's where Tom gives us Dr. Twelvetrees. He paints him up beautifully. And now if you want humor, not too much satire, you read Tom's portrait of his uncle, "The Portrait of Bascomb Hawks." I think you'll find more humor in that than satire, and then I think that when you read his description of me in *Look Homeward, Angel,* I think you'll find a lot of humor there.

His little short story, bringing myself in again, because anything I'm in I'm going to read, that's quite logical and natural, and that's that little story from his first little book of short stories published in 1935, *From Death to Morning* I said—have you read "Circus at Dawn"? It's only five pages. That's very funny. That's Tom and me at the Ringling Brothers Circus. And then there's, oh, there's passage after passage . . . in *Of Time and the River*. Mama has bought this real automobile, and I want to drive it, and she says, "Why, child, you're too nervous that way. You'd tear it up." I think Tom had a wonderful sense of humor.

HILL: Mr. Wolfe, Tom's family obviously meant very very much to him. Did he ever talk to you about any desire to have his own family? Did he ever discuss with you the possibility of his having children and having his own family? Was he ever interested in that at all?

WOLFE: Well, I don't say he wasn't interested, but that's a phase of his life that he never did discuss with me.

CALHOUN: I think that really the only other question I wanted to ask about was the Eugene Gant/George Webber portrayals. I wondered where you felt that Eugene Gant and Webber were most like Tom and then the least like Tom Wolfe.

WOLFE: I think that George Webber was a mistake that Tom made in that he felt that he had to create a new image to get away from his doubts of himself and some of his detractors to dispel. The feeling that some of his detractors were creating in Tom by worrying him to death, like Bernard De Voto, who was the editor of *Easy Chair* with *Harper's*.

CALHOUN: "Genius is not enough," he said.

HILL: What kinds of people did Tom like? What kinds of people were his friends?

WOLFE: People who did not suffer from self-pity, but who were proud of what they were doing. He hated a damn person who would practice self-pity. In other words, he might be making a hundred thousand dollars a year and be ashamed of it because "Here I do this, and I can make all this money, and you can write one book and become famous and possibly not make any money at all." Well Tom would fly into a rage, and he would tell them frankly, "Now I don't like you." He says, "I don't like a quitter; I don't like anybody who is not proud of what you're doing." He said, "If you're a gravedigger, dig a good grave and be proud of it." He said, "If you are a pulp writer," (this had to do with a pulp writer that I knew), he said, "and you can make your hundred thousand a year, why don't you write good ones and be damn proud of it and be proud of what you're doing." He said, "Don't come

around here singing self-pity to me." He said, "I hate dishonesty." Tom did not like dishonest people.

Calhoun: In view of your statement about literary critics, I wanted to say that literary critics have difficulty separating the person from the writer, the person from the persona of the writer. You know the literary artist through reading Tom Wolfe's works and you knew the person, too. And that's why I think your comments are valuable for all of us.

Wolfe: Well, I think that you are seeking information that you are hoping is from the horse's mouth and is true.

September 1, 1973

SWEET LADIES OF ANOTHER GENERATION

This easy sleepy Sunday morning
Sweet ladies of another generation
Fill the pew in front of me
With small white polka dots on navy blue;

Faded white lace nets, with birds
And grapes and ribbons of black
Are bodkined through to velvet hats
White powder splashed.

I take my glasses off and fade the ladies
Back to their sweet sunshine hours,
And then go back myself
To what my mother said at Christmas time,
When we together knelt down
Side by side in the dim
Front bedroom closet sorting boxes
Of old photographs. She said
"I can't believe your father ever was
So young."

This caught me unwarned and threw
Me back to when, deep in the heart of
Half a million people, the quail exploded
From the vacant city lot, as lost and
As anachronistic as the thirty-year-old cologne
Of my sweet ladies of another generation.

David Tillinghast

THE GLASS BOTTOM LIFE BOAT

Laurel Speer

Lou stopped to run her eye over the disarray of their room. Tom was waiting out in the hall, standing impatiently in his white tapered pants and flowered sport shirt. Tom always looked a little like a kept man to her. She couldn't imagine why, she hadn't kept him more than five years out of their married life. But there was something almost suspicious in his swept blonde pompadour and smooth, pink skin.

"Come on honey," he said running a manicured nail down the crease in his pants. "We'll be late."

She shook her head. He was feeling good. They'd left the bed rumpled so the maid would know they'd had sex.

"Coming," she answered. "Just checking to be sure I have the key."

"Who cares?" he said, ducking his head without shifting the position of one hair. "Maybe we'll never return, just disappear mysteriously down some trade current."

"Sorry, I'd have to slip back and pick up my cosmetics case," she said. "Besides, I don't think these Glass Bottom Boats go over the horizon yet."

They were waiting for the elevator, only slightly depressing the rubber padding under the artificial fabric of the blue rug beneath their feet. She smoothed her own dark hair down around her neck, molding the ends over her shoulders and tucked her blouse in around her belled cotton skirt.

"Why don't you like our hotel room?" he said, looking right into her thoughts with his remarkably clear blue eyes.

Tom had a way of catching her off guard with an inherent acuteness applied to areas of self-interest.

"Oh I don't know." She was looking at his shoulder instead of into his face. "Waikiki is so tourist, I think for twenty-two a night, we should get something more than a bed and sink and shower." She laughed a little self-consciously. "It all seems a little sordid to me."

"But that's just what you need." He reached over and cupped her bottom familiarly in his palm as the elevator door opened.

It was empty. They stepped in and she sighed involuntarily.

"Maybe it's all the sweet young things wandering around hand in hand," he said. "Kind of puts you in your place."

"Oh?" she said and quirked an eyebrow. "I hadn't noticed it affected your usual behavior too much."

He frowned and darkened at her. "Next time you better get our travel agent to book us in at the Royal along with the other conservatives. These are really one night pads, disguised to look like high rise."

She was silent. There was no point in arguing with him. The elevator opened onto a lobby crowded with people surging back and forth in bright costumes. Tom straightened and took on the glow that other people always seemed to stamp on his cheeks.

"Come on, or we'll be late," he said. "There's the bus."

A tour bus was standing in front of the hotel, its side painted in high block letters GLASS BOTTOM BOAT. They climbed on and moved to the back where Tom could watch the other hotel guests get on. She hated buses by nature, but Tom liked tours, which by their nature always seemed to originate from buses. It gave him a sense of merging into the native scene. She had planned this trip for him. She knew their first trip to Hawaii, he'd want to stay in Honolulu, in Waikiki at one of the vulgar high rise hotels with access to a beach and bar. He would take Circle Tours of the Island, Pearl Harbor, a Pineapple Factory. He would press a box of freshly picked fruit on her that she would have to struggle to fit under their economy fare seats on the trip home and be held up at the airport going through agricultural inspection. She knew for a fact that she was forty-one years old. Though she'd never in her life been to Hawaii, her own choice would've been a few nights in Honolulu at some tall, stately old hotel with parquet floors, high ceilings and decorous waiters, then the rest of their week in a quiet exploration of the other Islands.

The bus was almost full now with older people and very young couples, sitting shoulder to shoulder, their noses touching. She sighed; the bus started, its exhaust and fumes filling her nose. Tom was smiling in anticipation of his trip, sitting beside her like a small child. He had the same child's capacity to take an event, hold it in the palms of both hands and savor it completely. He was enough of a child himself to make a good father, especially when the children were young. Now that they were getting into their teens and moving out into worlds of their own, she sometimes caught them looking skeptically at their father's enthusiasms, wondering if they were real or just put on for their sake.

"Well, what do you say." He put a hand on her knee, spread out the fingers and squeezed it invitingly. "How about counting fish, the one who spots the most wins, loser buys drinks?"

"No games," she said pleasantly and smiled back from behind her dark glasses.

"Why not?" he said. "Afraid you'll lose?"

"I always lose to you."

"Uh, uh, no fair playing dirty and making enigmatic remarks."

"I'm not playing," she said and got up to get off the bus behind the couple in front of them.

Sometime in her life, when she was young, far too young in fact, considering how many lines were required of you before that last line wound its way through traffic to the cemetery to lower you into the ground; but sometime around second or third grade she'd gotten tired of standing in lines. Tom wasn't tired of it yet, which was why he tolerated tours so nicely.

Their bus emptied onto a sidewalk where they stood in line to buy their tickets and then waited again to file on the boat. The crew members were young Japanese girls in white culottes. Lou could see Tom mentally squeeze their bottoms as he walked to the front of the boat and took a seat on the outside rail. If she leaned over the rail in front of her, she could look down into a murky green through the glass bottom of the trough that ran the length of the boat.

"You can't see anything until we get to the viewing grounds," said Tom.

"How do you know?"

"I went on a glass bottom boat one time when I was in Catalina."

"You did?" Her voice was incredulous. "Then what are we doing on this boat?"

"Because it's so interesting," he said over-enunciating each syllable. "Aren't you interested in interesting things?"

"Terribly," she said and leaned her arm back against the outer rail, running her eye up and down the inside of the boat.

On their right was an almost middle-aged couple dressed identically in red flowered Hawaiian shirts. They had two young children with them, dressed in the same material. She wondered if they were the parents. They didn't act indulgent enough for grandparents. But what would possess two people to tumble twice on children at the age of middle age? A young couple across from them played with each other openly, which made Tom smile and Lou wonder. Either newlyweds or a soldier on leave. She had heard so many of the soldiers took their leave time in Hawaii. Seeing all this marital enthusiasm made her feel old and jaded.

The Japanese girl stepped to the microphone and started reciting her points of interest in the harbor and surrounding areas speech as they pulled away from the dock. Lou looked up to Diamond Head,

then closer in, over the edge where the surfers were idling on their boards or maneuvering for waves.

She looked over at the viewing glass, but could only see swirls of oil boiling up around the surface as they made their turn along the beach. Tom slid his hand along her shoulder, but she shrugged him off. He was perfectly capable under the stimulus and example of the young couple across the viewing glass of taking hold of her breast in public.

"What's the matter?" he said reproachfully. She could never tell by his tone whether he was genuinely unhappy or not. In fact, genuine wasn't a word she would really apply to either of them anymore. "Don't you love me anymore?"

Her throat worked involuntarily in a gag reflex. "Oh for God's sake, Tom," she murmured trying to keep her voice under the sound of the engines.

"We're not so old, you know." She could see his eyes slide off onto the neatly rounded bottom of their Japanese guide, who was detailing the names and virtues of the Waikiki hotels they were steering past along the beach front.

"You've got to know, Lou, a fellow like me, he needs affection." He was so open-faced and sincere about his needs it brought tears to her eyes. She turned her head without moving her body and looked at him wonderingly.

"Yes, I know dear," she said. "I've been serving in that capacity for about eighteen years now."

The children on their right were squirming and fussing. The parents were handing them back and forth and were embarrassed about the noise. Finally the little boy stuck his thumb in his mouth and fell asleep against his father's shoulder.

Tom liked little children. He would've gone on impregnating her forever, but after four in five years, she had to say no, she was tired, she wasn't even sure she liked babies anymore and here she was saddled forever with four of them. It had taken her five more years to find out how wonderfully necessary children were to her. They looked to her for their needs with such a trusting reflection of her own needs in their eyes that, moving to fulfill them, she found herself suddenly become a someone in her own eyes. They only became more complex and interesting as they got older. She had a moment sitting on the boat seat where they rose up before her, very real and blonde, flashing their teeth and smiles, where she needed them, quite suddenly and inexplicably. She turned her head and scrutinized Tom in profile as he leaned over, looking without seeing the water boiling under the glass bottom.

He looked up, feeling her eyes on him. He had pushed his thumb into his lower lip.

"What are you thinking about?" he said through his thumb.

"The children," she said quite simply and smiled at her own recollection of their clean, open faces.

"Jesus," he muttered. "I bring you on a winter vacation to Hawaii, the island spot of the world and you sit there thinking about your children."

She looked back at him curiously. There was so much edge in his voice. She saw out of the corner of her eye that the young couple were hard at it. He had put his hand inside her blouse. She wondered if he thought maybe people couldn't see that he was fondling her breast, exercising his proprietary rights in public. Tom was a little like that. Nobody should be able to do it better or more publicly. Everyone was potentially waiting for the gun. She wondered what it must be like to be so tortured by the necessity of beating the world to the post.

She reached out and took his hand, but he drew back, recoiling from her. She shrugged and turned to the glass bottom.

"We have now reached the viewing area," said their guide. "If you will turn your attention to the viewing glass at the bottom of the boat, you will see the natural coral of our islands. We have a prisoner fish passing under the front of the boat. And I see an angel fish in the same area."

Lou dropped her chin against the rail and concentrated on looking through the shadows and reflections from the sunlight on the glass and people on the rail on the opposite side. The coral was gray, and this disappointed her because she had in her mind the expectation that no dirt would have invaded that world under the water. A striped prisoner fish flitted by.

"That's what I feel like," muttered Tom, his head on the rail so close to hers she could smell the pomade on his hair.

"Oh?" she answered and then turned her attention to what she thought was the shadow of an eel. Tom had a faculty for picking absolutely the wrong time to have a conversation.

"I'm sorry the viewing area isn't clearer." Their guide's voice had such a sweet cadenced quality that no one could possibly be offended. "We've had Kona winds instead of our usual Trades. They make the bottom cloudy."

"And I thought it was me," said Lou.

"It is," said Tom.

She was a little surprised at his persistence. She glanced up quickly and found the young couple had moved down to a different viewing window, so they were reasonably alone.

"For goodness sake, Tom, what's the matter?" she said, dropping her voice and speaking out of the corner of her mouth.

"I guess I'm just sick of a goddamn halfway marriage." His voice was loaded with a bitterness about himself and his surroundings that she always suspected was there, sitting in the shadows behind his sunny smile. But he so rarely let it show that she allowed herself to forget it was there. Tom was the kind of sunny-side up personality that could splatter the yolk all over the side of the pan doing a flip flop, and she wanted to be very careful in her response.

"Oh?" she said and leaned back from the clouded bottom onto the outer rail. "And what brought on this sudden disenchantment with marriage?"

"Not marriage." He leaned his chin on his arm on the inner rail so she had to drop forward to hear him. "Our marriage." He looked over at her significantly and when she raised a questioning eyebrow, went on, taking an obvious pleasure in stripping away what he saw as the outer garments of their marriage.

"I take you on a trip to one of the more romantic spots in the world and I can barely get you into bed. Then when I do. . . ." He stopped, astonished at his own perception. "You know, I don't think you even like it anymore."

"Well perhaps in such a hot spot for lovers, you should've brought someone else."

He sat up stiffly and looked around to be sure there was no one within listening distance.

"Well I could have, you know," he said drawing himself up to his full sitting height. He looked like a boy with a secret star marble in his pocket. "I haven't been without my resources all these years, you know."

"I know," she said quietly and pursed her lips imperturbably.

The sweetly accented voice came over the microphone, breaking over them like a gentle swell over the reef.

"I'm sorry ladies and gentlemen, but the skipper tells me we've run out of time. We'll be turning back to our dock. Again, may I say how sorry we are we couldn't give you a better look at our viewing area, but this time we're just going to have to blame it on the weather. Thank you for your attention and keep your seats until the boat is docked."

Tom looked at her rather hesitantly, biting his lip indecisively. He even ran his hand through his hair in such a way as to leave it ruffled, so she could tell he had his mind completely on whatever he was thinking about.

"You do know?" He said it slowly, looking at her significantly.

"Oh yes," she said and smiled at him, carefully.

"And you don't care?" His face was fighting jubilation and disappointment.

"I didn't say that," she said and passed her hand over her face to steady it. "Let's say I've had enough time to accommodate myself to the facts."

"Oh," he said and turned away, disappointment taking over his face.

She paused and waited very quietly until he glanced up, looking directly back at him, waiting for that fraction of a moment she needed to plant a foot in his face.

"Of course, I've also had time to find my own consolations."

His eyes opened almost to the top of his head, acute with dismay. He leaned forward suddenly, taking her chin between his thumb and forefinger, yanking her face around.

"Jesus, Lou, what are you saying?"

She reached up and opened his fingers, rubbing her chin for a minute to take away the hurt.

"I'm saying we have four children and a reasonably good marriage. The bottom was cloudy today when we went out and I can't really remember anything we saw." She stopped and looked at him, feeling as hard as the coral beds they were churning away from. "Forgetfulness saves a lot of seemingly hopeless situations."

Their boat had come up to the dock and was idling noisily. The young couple were clasping hands and staring soulfully into each other's eyes. Now if he would just take her back to the hotel and take her to bed, they'd be all right until after lunch. The mother and father were hovering fretfully over their children, who were sound asleep on one of the inside cushions. They'd pick them up, wake them and make them fuss. It was inevitable. She was a four-time loser in the same game.

"Jesus, Lou, that was a rotten thing to say." He said it quietly under the noise of the idling engines.

"Surely you didn't expect me to sit demurely and quietly by with my hands folded?"

"I didn't expect anything." He was shaking his head like a dog with a flea in his ear. They were standing now, edging toward the end of the boat.

"I'm glad we went on this trip anyway, aren't you?" she said brightly.

He looked stricken to an animal self-protectiveness. She took his hand and helped him up on the dock.

"But I think we should go back this afternoon instead of tomorrow." They drifted toward the tour bus. "I remember the first time I stumbled on one of your indiscretions. I think it was about twelve years ago. Anyway," she sighed and patted his hand reassuringly, "it must've taken me two or three weeks to pull out of it and decide that after all I guessed I could go on living with you. I'm sure you'll come to the same conclusion." She smiled at his dazed face. "It seems to be something people come to sooner or later in marriages like ours."

If they stopped now, he would start screaming at her.

"And when you see the children," she said without breaking the pace of her voice, "you will smile and kiss them as always."

He nodded and ducked his face away from her, catching his foot on the second step and going down on one knee as he got into the bus.

She followed, stepping neatly into place behind him.

TALK

Reading your image was not easy
through word carpets
chalky moods and cemetery days,

but I thought I'd found you
this morning at three A. M.

over a wine glass after everything
had settled and the door stood still;
reaching, you caught my eyes
while filaments ticked

and pulled back the skin
where I really am.

WALTER GRIFFIN

FAULKNER'S *SARTORIS:* THE TAILOR RE-TAILORED

CARTER W. MARTIN

The family name Sartoris given to William Faulkner's first Yoknapatawpha novel has been accepted as a fortunate artistic choice since the book first appeared in 1929, and several critics have conjectured its source. Matthew Bruccoli queries concerning Faulkner's knowledge of a Broadway musical, *Two Little Girls in Blue* (1922-23), in which twin sisters are named Dolly and Polly Sartoris; if Faulkner knew of the play, says Bruccoli, he may have used the name for his own twin characters "as a stroke of Faulknerian whimsy."[1] Elizabeth M. Kerr, in *Yoknapatawpha: Faulkner's "Little Postage Stamp of Native Soil,"* considers the possibility that Faulkner, browsing through old copies of the *Oxford Eagle,* found the name in an 1874 item announcing the marriage of U. S. Grant's daughter Nellie to Algernon Sartoris. Faulkner's choice would have represented an ironic joke, associating Grant, who as a general occupied Oxford and went on to defeat the Confederate Army, with the uniquely Southern family portrayed in the novel. But Kerr concludes that the name is likely "a rare instance of unconscious irony."[2]

However, most readers would agree that the matter is laid to rest by an extended footnote in Cleanth Brooks's *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country.* Brooks found a Miss Brenda Sartoris in Jackson, Mississippi, whose father went to school in Sardis, near Oxford. Quite correctly, Brooks points out that most of the names used by Faulkner are Southern and specifically found in Mississippi.[3] However, the presence of Sartoris families in North Mississippi does not explain why the name was chosen rather than hundreds or thousands of others available locally. T. S. Eliot found the name Prufrock on a warehouse in St. Louis, but its provocative aptness had nothing to do with its availability but rather with its combination of sounds which associated with the character of the man portrayed in the poem and the ideas developed there. Similarly the name Sartoris must have appealed to Faulkner.

The pronunciation of Sartoris is quite relevant. Mrs. Emily W. Stone reports that she often heard her husband, lawyer Phil Stone, and Faulkner speak of this matter, both of them a little chagrined at the wide-

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[1] "A Source for Sartoris?" *Mississippi Quarterly,* 20 (1967), 163.
[2] (New York, 1969), n. 27, p. 88.
[3] (New Haven, 1963), p. 383.

spread mispronunciation of the name by the placement of the emphasis on the second syllable. Their own logic, according to Mrs. Stone, repudiated local practice in favor of what sounded right to their ears: Sar tor is, with the emphasis falling on the first syllable. Mrs. Stone does not recall that the two men gave reasons for their preference, but one is inclined, impressionistically perhaps, to accept their choice because it lends to the name a more aristocratic ring and therefore contributes more fully to the significance of the family as they are contrasted to the Snopeses, the Negroes, and the hill people.

Another fascinating possibility is that Faulkner, consciously or not, may have chosen the name itself and preferred to pronounce it his way as an allusion to Carlyle's title, *Sartor Resartus.* Although Carlyle's book was not in Faulkner's library, its title and the significance of it are so much a part of the language that it would be fatuous to suggest his ignorance of it. If we take the name as an allusion, there are possibly multiple implications. The most obvious one, however, is the ironic reference to the clothes philosophy applied to young Bayard Sartoris. Like Diogenes Teufelsdröckh before "The Everlasting Yea," Bayard is a disappointed and disillusioned man, unable to see through the outwardness of circumstances to the reality of man's spiritual being; Bayard punishes himself by refusing to accept the world that he must live in. He is haunted by former times (the Civil War) and ancestors (John Sartoris), which he views through the gauze of romanticism. Bayard's return home is a return to the past, represented in differing ways by his grandfather, Aunt Jenny, and even his wife Narcissa Benbow, and he dwells morbidly upon the past, especially in his guilty recollection of his brother John's death. This is to say, in terms of the allusion to Carlyle, who insists upon the adjustment of man to a changing world, that Bayard is not re-tailored.

Faulkner himself was throughout his life often sartorially acute—usually oblivious concerning his appearance but sometimes at pains to appear in elegant, dapper, or unique clothing. Personal reminiscences of him often include descriptions of his dress. John B. Cullen, for example, recalls that Faulkner "disgusted a good many people [in Oxford] because he wore his British uniform so long" after World War I.[4] In *My Brother Bill,* John Faulkner repeatedly describes his brother's unique attire; in speaking of Faulkner's "foppish taste in clothes," John recalls that William, unlike his peers, bought rather than rented a

[4] In collaboration with Floyd C. Watkins, *Old Times in the Faulkner Country* (Chapel Hill, 1961), p. 10.

Style-plus dress suit and subsequently garnered the nickname, "The Count"; that their mother altered his clothing to his meticulous specifications; that he paid extraordinarily high prices for shoes; and that in 1916 he opened an account in Memphis with Phil A. Halle's and continued to buy his clothes there throughout his life.[5] John speaks of many other outfits, from golfing togs to a scoutmaster's uniform, and notes especially occasions when William appeared on the streets of Oxford once in semi-formal day dress and at another time in his fox-hunting pinks, on his way to Cofield's photography shop to sit for what was to become one of his favorite portraits.[6] Murry Falkner, in *The Falkners of Mississippi*, records similar circumstances and observes that William "liked to dress well, and he liked just as much not to dress well. He was perfectly content to wear whatever, to him, the occasion demanded." [7] Like John Cullen, John Faulkner, and other familiars of the author, Murry recalls an occasion when his brother dressed contrarily—in shabby and soiled clothes to accept the French Legion of Honor in New Orleans in 1951.[8]

The imagery of clothing is not pervasive in the novel but occurs frequently enough to be significant. One of the most obvious examples of it appears early, in Chapter 3 of Part Two, when Old Bayard goes to the attic and opens the cedar chest; clothes are among the several highly symbolic items which he touches—a dress, which is the first item that comes to his hand, and a "frogged and braided coat of Confederate gray." Like Colonel John Sartoris' coat, the other objects in the chest are associated with the past; in contrast to his grandson, Old Bayard accepts the pastness of the past. Looking into the family Bible, he regards "the stark dissolving apotheosis of his name" and proceeds with his intention to record there three more deaths, John, his wife and son. Although this scene does not involve young Bayard directly, it comments upon his dilemma and draws a contrast between him and his grandfather.

Bayard is not specifically a part of the Isom-Caspey sequence of Chapter 1, Part Two, but he is again referred to subtly, and the imagery is that of clothing. In her garden, Miss Jenny observes derisively as Isom, her Negro yard boy, dressed in his Uncle Caspey's army uniform, parades ceremoniously and pompously back and forth with a hoe on his

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[5] (New York, 1963), pp. 130-31.
[6] Ibid., pp. 254-55.
[7] (Baton Rouge, 1967), p. 193.
[8] Ibid., p. 192.

shoulder. "If you want to play soldier," Miss Jenny tells him, "you go off somewhere with Bayard and do it." Caspey himself has become vain and arrogant in the army and, like Bayard, finds it difficult to adjust to life around Jefferson. This sequence is a comic reflection of Bayard's inability to extricate himself from the past events not only of the World War but those of the Civil War as well.

There are several instances of clothes imagery which carry a more positive indication; Bayard's appearance in rough farm clothing suggests that he is moving toward an adjustment to the world of Yoknapatawpha County, although here too there is an irony in the contrast between his two-dollar breeches and European boots which cost fourteen guineas. Soon after one of his injuries, Bayard attempts to exorcize the past by burning several artifacts associated with his brother John, among them a canvas hunting coat. His impulse to declare himself afresh is somewhat later manifested in an apology to Narcissa for having talked of John's death and a promise not to repeat his morbid confession nor to drive fast in his car.

Subsequently he and Narcissa are married, but the failure of his promises is inevitable. The imagery of clothing appears significantly in the midst of the narrative of his reversal. Having fled from the guilt of his grandfather's death in the crash of young Bayard's car, he goes to the home of the McCallums, deep in the rural part of the county. The McCallums, old friends of the Sartorises, are solid, sufficient, strong, and self-possessed men; among them Bayard is uneasy and compares himself unfavorably in their eyes with John. When he is in the lean-to room with Buddy, preparing to sleep on a mattress of shucks with a covering of quilts, Bayard stands "in a sleeveless jersey and short thin trunks." Buddy tells him, "You ain't goin' to sleep warm that-a-way," but Bayard refuses his offer of warmer clothing and spends a cold, sleepless, spiritually agonized night. The insufficiency of his clothes, on the literal and symbolic levels, brings Bayard to the point of despair and the consideration of suicide. Through this scene which depends heavily upon the imagery of clothing, Faulkner foreshadows Bayard's final flight from acceptance of the world and his suicidal death in the testing of an unproven airplane. Thus, if the title of the novel is an allusion to *Sartor Resartus,* it is an ironic reference which calls attention to the failure of the protagonist to affirm the "Everlasting Yea."

TWO SIDES OF WASHINGTON SQUARE

ROBERT R. JOHANNSEN

Despite a common criticism that Henry James's *Washington Square* [1] is a hastily conceived work and despite an associated implication that it lacks significant artistic concern and display,[2] there is clear evidence of a careful underlying craftsmanship in the author's manipulation of figurative language and in his creation of two well developed motifs through which readers' reactions have been directed and determined. The first of these motifs, that which involves the image of a fortress and its chivalric associations, dominates the first half of the novel, and, like the ritualistic motif which it precedes, this motif is supported by the attitudes of certain fictional characters, their discourse, the author's purposeful comments, and suggestive descriptions of the architectural properties of Washington Square itself.

In the very early stages of the novel, James provides the reader with a suggestive description of the physical properties of Doctor Sloper's residence. The author describes a wide-fronted edifice which forms an inextricable part of the four solid block-long walls of brick and mortar which enclose the courtyard of Washington Square (26). The solidity of its construction testifies to a strength and permanence apparent in no other structure in the surrounding landscape. Washington Square remains immune to the middle-class mercantile incursions which caused the Doctor's previous province to have seen "its best days" (25), and the Square is completely free of the embryonic character, temporary qualities, Dutch influences, and barnyard atmosphere which despoil the Almond's quarter, for example (27). Washington Square also seems to maintain independent powers which allow James to boast after fifty years that the Square has been able to "remain to this day very solid and honorable" (26); it maintains its regal presence un-

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[1] Laurel edition (New York, 1959). Subsequent references to this work and pages within it will be included in the text of this article within parentheses.

[2] For example, Leon Edel described *Washington Square* as "one of a group of three short 'potboilers' written hastily in the late 1870s" (editor's note to passages from James's notebooks found in *Henry James: Selected Fiction* [New York, 1964], pp. 290-291), and R. P. Blackmur described *Washington Square* as a novel written "easily, rather, almost spontaneously" and reported that James had "no great shaping power of artistic form, in the technical sense, which he wished to impose" (introduction to *Washington Square and the Europeans* [New York, 1959], p. 5).

touched and unaffected by "the dimly-lighted wilderness of the Seventh Avenue" (102) or by nearby regions which appear both empty and undeveloped in contrast (160).

Mrs. Penniman adds her most imaginative voice to the task of describing the Doctor's domain and insists that it include a tower occupied by a maiden awaiting rescue (102). It is not surprising that the observant Morris Townsend should discover the Square to be "a perfect castle" (137) nor, in light of his interest in gaining a foothold in Washington Square and its royal society, that he should agree with Mrs. Penniman in regarding the maiden on the second floor as "the prize" (127) and the Doctor's front door as his only conceivable means of passage through a seemingly impenetrable wall to social acceptance and financial comfort.

Mrs. Penniman chooses to see Townsend as a world traveler recently returned to America from some foreign pilgrimage (37), an adventurer with an exciting past of naval service (46), and a young man whom she chooses to believe is an ingenious hero (48). Mrs. Penniman delights in her perception of Townsend enthroned in a great armchair in the Doctor's front parlor; his presence and posture in the scene "made her think of a young knight" (42). At the same time, she calculates that Townsend would ignore the Doctor's rebuffs and would advance courageously across the threshold, lay siege to the castle, and "carry Catherine off" (98). Townsend supports her view only insofar as he expects Catherine to make a token to him of "a trinket or a lock of her hair" (97); usually he limits his journeys into the Doctor's domain to occasions when the autocrat of the Square is conveniently absent.

Doctor Sloper's view of the knightly Townsend is far less romantic than that promoted by Mrs. Penniman but no less consistent with the fortress-chivalric motif under discussion. The lord of Washington Square has easily established the young pretender's unfortunately common lineage and his association with poverty, a servile sister (87), and an ignoble residence carpeted with straw matting (86). In addition, Townsend seems better acquainted with Spanish than with the gilded *History of England* which properly graces the interior of Washington Square. On the surface Townsend appears helplessly Quixotic in his improbable quest for Catherine Sloper and a fortune; however, the perceptive Doctor makes no such easy appraisal in evaluating the situation and the nature of Townsend's purposes. Doctor Sloper recognizes Townsend to be a worthy opponent and young combatant with "decided ability" (50) who must be taken seriously.

The "great autocrat" (114) responds to this challenging situation with a Machiavellian reign of terror affecting treasonous members of his household and outsiders alike. Townsend, who describes this reaction as "terribly violent" (93), is summarily "banished" (95) from the premises and grounds of Washington Square; his means of communication are reduced to courier service and meetings with an intermediary on "neutral ground" (95). Mrs. Penniman's "handsome and tyrannical son" (158) is relegated to a "gloomy walk around the Square, on the opposite side, close to the wooden fence" (103), well outside the confines of the royal compound.

Catherine Sloper's expression of her situation does not suggest that she considers herself a romantic centerpiece; however, her view does include certain medieval properties. Catherine's description of her situation midway through the novel strongly resembles an expressed rejection of some feudal order; she observes that she no longer has any "right to enjoy his [her father's] protection" (129), and she confides that she has previously been bound to her father's wishes and has sworn an allegiance to him. The announcement of her fealty to Townsend, she explains, has in effect "broken the contract" (129) with her father, the lord of the manor.

James's fortress-chivalric motif is not maintained during the entire course of the novel; it can no longer be sustained by the time of Catherine's tour of Europe. Townsend's tacit agreement to the charade ceases when it becomes obvious to him that any royal prize which he might win would include neither fortune nor nobility. Consequently Mrs. Penniman, this motif's primary sponsor, is left without a friendly listener and subject for her chivalric romance. It is most unlikely that James ever expected his reader to fully and seriously accept Catherine in the role of princess despite her "royal raiment" (25), her place of residence, and the imaginative contributions of her aunt. The heroine's less than regal appearance deprives the chivalric motif of its most essential character, a fair maiden. Catherine's lack of regal beauty, charm, wit, and grace simply removes all possibilities for the success of such a romantic vision, and the incongruencies involved cause the entire motif to take on a comic aspect. In addition, the exaggeration of Catherine's merits by Mrs. Penniman gains little sympathy or credibility for the heroine during the early sections of the novel, and the Doctor's realistic refusal to help sustain romantic fabrications temporarily allows him a relatively sympathetic role in comparison with his later image.

Nonetheless, this particular motif does include certain serious considerations despite its obvious comic properties. For example, it helps

to dramatize the real challenge which Townsend poses to the Doctor's dominion, and it emphasizes the sort of siege which Townsend would be required to launch in order to gain access to the society and finances behind the solid walls of the Square. In addition, the image of the fortress implies a sense of direction in its function as a device to keep undesirable persons or influences outside its walls. Its purpose, as well as that of Dr. Sloper, is the protection of Catherine from offensive outside influences and incursions, a protection from any disagreeable "knocks" (187).

Unhappily those same walls which serve to deny entry to undesirable persons or influences also tend to constrain persons within them, to isolate inmates from the outside world, and to secret them away. Within the framework of the second motif under discussion in this paper, the architectural features of the Sloper home help establish the image of a temple or sanctuary. In this regard Washington Square is not only a place of awesome solidity and permanence; it is also a place of complete quiet and seclusion (26). Catherine's infrequent, well-chaperoned outings and visits with relatives, her limited social contacts, her reluctance to leave her cloister for even a short walk outdoors in the grounds, and Mrs. Penniman's close supervision reinforce James's earlier description of the Sloper home as an "asylum" (17).

The Sloper house is elevated above its surroundings (26), and its entry is described in terms of a temple; James describes it as "a flight of white marble steps ascending to a portal which was also faced with white marble" (26) and through which only the chosen seem to pass. One can well imagine the mere mortals, like Townsend, who troop admiringly below its entrance and "lingered a moment at the foot of Doctor Sloper's white marble steps, above which a spotless white door, adorned with a glittering silver plate, seemed to figure . . . the closed portal of happiness" (102). An interior gloom, its white marble visage, and a lifeless routine within give this structure a sepulchral or monumental aspect.

Catherine's parochial education within these walls has been a failure, and the Doctor bitterly realizes that a second generation has not provided him with a priestess for "his temple of Republican simplicity" (24). Nonetheless Catherine is a faithful daughter and devoted follower who worships (as Townsend sees it) the temple's lord, high priest, and inhabitant of its dark, inaccessible inner recesses. Despite her professed willingness to serve her father, however, Catherine succumbs to Townsend's devilish charms and ceases to obey the dictates of the high priest of the temple. Her rejection of the celibacy which her

father demands of her results in a "curse" (117), and the young lady's existence soon becomes increasingly limited to dusky corridors and the "uncomforting gloom" (116) of a cloistered resident "shut up with the Doctor" (115). Catherine's mistaken attentions for a mere "mortal" (69) are further compounded when Townsend impertinently enters and desecrates the temple's inner sanctum during the high priest's absence (42). Catherine has obviously forfeited any protection or interest otherwise forthcoming from her father; some form of punishment is imminent.

At one point it seems as if Mrs. Penniman, who has been given the task of preparing Catherine for the sacrifice, might also be her executioner. However "it checked her breath a little to have the sacrificial knife, as it were, suddenly thrust into her hand" (161), and it soon becomes apparent that she is not well suited for this role. The Doctor has long recognized this fact and knows well in advance who the executioner will be; he has disclosed earlier that "we have fattened the sheep for him [Townsend] before he kills it" (144). Townsend, as Sloper had foreseen, effects the blood letting, and Catherine immediately "felt a wound" (171). Her surroundings grow dark as if she approached death (171); Sloper insists that her spirit has departed (184); and James notes that "she had been deeply and incurably wounded" (185).

The above motif is essentially tragic and certainly lacks any of the comic dimensions of the earlier romantic motif. James never openly disavows its reality nor do any of his characters; the entire cast as well as the narrator give credence to the motif and its imagery throughout the latter half of the novel. For many readers the novel may have ended on the tragic note inherent in this motif and the supposed sacrifice of Catherine's spirit, but James seems to suggest quite another possibility. Inasmuch as Doctor Sloper, the leader of the cult, represents the obvious cohesive force which maintains this motif, his death represents the act through which the spell of this second motif could be broken.

If we return to James's point of departure, Washington Square itself, we find its description and appearance very much changed after the Doctor's departure. For the first time in the novel, its windows are opened to the natural fragrance of the generative outdoors and human society. The very air and atmosphere seem better able to support human life; summer trips for the revivifying effects of ocean air are no longer necessary. The house is now represented by two ladies who sit on the porch or at an open window, and it is no longer governed by a lord who makes regular retreats to the house's most interior parts. Finally, Catherine is no longer isolated, restrained, and inactive. Her full life of activities has taken on an outward, public, and social direction which

directly contrasts her former captivity and sheltered life. She is now associated with charitable institutions and aid societies, and she now serves as a social counsel to the younger segment of society (190).

In the course of this novel, James has skillfully and humorously guided the reader across the heights of chivalric romance and through the depths and tragedy associated with isolation and domination before concluding with a less figurative, more conventional, and realistic view of Washington Square. The two motifs which precede this final situation constitute not only impressions and emotions for the reader to experience; they also represent developmental experiences which are ultimately shed by the reader in order to reach the balance and realism which characterize the conclusion and culminating effect of *Washington Square*.

KODAK DOES IT AGAIN

(County Sligo)

On a low hill north of Sligo Bay,
a White Lady in a chariot of old
and gold-shod horses in harness
do a sometime haunting. She was
not on stage that still bright day
I waited for revelation, left with
only a snapshot taken at distance.
"Poor show," I doubted, till I now
play the round of color slides,
guests cooing over How green
the grass, How blue the Atlantic.
Only I see her here in my parlor,
her horses' hooves flashing furious
sunlight on the lenticular screen
where they drive along the hill,
while a cold draft stirs the hair
on my withers, and I think a pale
punishing hand lashes me there.

WILLIAM MCLAUGHLIN

in praise of bibles

the oiled elite
imperially environed
despised that book about
carpenters, slaves
shepherds turned heroes
plus those few ragged prophets
dyspeptic jesters
no one believed
even king david was
after the seventh
son of a nobody

the miracle of the bible
is that it survived
the authors not stoned, burnt, strangled
after the first draft
quoting losers and loafers
showing all kings as bad

(sane books that scholars wrote
praised pharaoh not joseph
loved masters not serfs
pilate not jesus
and some ancient footnote
laughed at general moses
whose major tactic was
fleeing from battle)

by miraculous mischance
when the book achieved fame
only chiefs might interpret
no new chapters allowed
since it's hell to imagine
an up-to-date scripture
including tom paine
that devil-god blake
for they're nearly as rash as

the book of creation
leviticus, job
or eve talking to a snake

annuity

for three days
reincarnated
in hotel rooms
our sap recirculating
with the discontinuity
of animals that hibernate
or deciduous plants,
every year we meet,
my convention-al friend,
you from X U
i from Y U

what we have in common is
that we have nothing in common
but full glasses of friendship;
for there's a rainbow
in uncriticism
delirious to be together
because we are alive;
to be able to thumb one's nose at
our daily lives
for three score and ten hours is
a da vinci of art

our meeting is an island
in a sea of mainland
rising above attainment
mocking reward;
bribeless as the satisfied
we give each other only
a handful of the present
my convention-al friend,
you from X U
i from Y U

NORMAN NATHAN

and I thought you were all dying out here

in the old school building
where people go at last
for one more cocoon of winter
afraid, I suppose, to go gentle—
shells of brains lie taut
on foam pillows, and crinkled
wrappings surround straw bones

oh how helpless you all are

suppose an old grey bear
should come into the corridor
seeking your soured flesh—
suppose you woke up
to find a princess had kissed
the bear and turned it
into . . . the doctor who takes
your blood pressure every Monday

what could you do? *you can't do anything*

one of you always smiles
when we visit out here
to warn you of hereafters
with our pious songs—
one of you old men
always pinches my leg and leers
at me with great nothings
of molars decaying on impotent jaws

and I watch the brittle man,
my father, fumble at his robe—
he has forgotten everything
even the frogs he used to catch
to scare his sisters after school

my mother sits at her bedside
pulling the same thread back
and forth through the spread—
once age gets you it doesn't matter
anymore if fingers used to paint
seascapes or play arpeggios
in graduation recitals or knit
hats for little girls
or fold gracefully in repose

once age gets you it doesn't matter
that fingers hold no more scalpels,
no longer fashion lures or groove crosses
into gunstocks—nothing matters anymore

but one of you always smiles . . .
and I thought you were all
dying out here

JEAN RODENBOUGH

FOR YEATS & THE RHYMERS CLUB

". . . after our own verse, after all our subtle colour and nervous rhythm, what more is possible? After us the Savage God."

It was a nice try, though, that last-ditch stand
to preserve the English language. To restore
from Celtic myths and mists and love-strewn wrecks
the simple music of the unthinking poor.
Dowson who loved a girl of twelve and swore
he loved no other, wrote his flawless lyrics
out of his pain, and Davidson was pure
and classical while staggering from drink . . .
Now we're not pure, nor claim to be, but spill
poems like ejaculations from our thighs,
exulting like fox-hunters at the kill
at language stripped and flayed of images,
—subtle? see where our concrete structure stands.
—nervous? we are too powerful, and too wise.

GAIL WHITE

TIE-UP

Crimson signals swim at corners,
and amber warnings flash on
remembered streets, where I
wait for emerald clocks to
beat again.

SANDI HERSCHEL

MEDITATION

I sat with me
in a lightless zone
upon a flimsy seat
undulating from
a cord of void.

I talked with me
in a soundless space
upon a fragile wing
spinning around
a dangling cord.

I watched me leave
in an eyeless realm
on a gossamer glance
swinging away
on a pendulous cord.

I looked for me in
the lightless zone
the depthless pit
the soundless space
the eyeless realm.

I found the ray
on a slender beam
on a cord of void
suspended from
the core of me.

RABIEH BINA MALEKI

NOTES FROM A CHINESE COOKIE FACTORY

The little men work in a dingy room:
The dough rises, trays cool, the sly words
Favor love, hope, the not impossible future,
But these bakers laugh at fortune. Their god,
The naked god with the huge paunch, cackles
Louder than they. Outside, the tourists prowl.
Business is good. Sunlight chases the fog.
But the little men write in blood, in secret
A different book, and love, transfigured,
Turns its slant gaze to the lacquered screen,
The incense pot, the toppled deity
Who lies in a hundred fragments on the floor.
We have borrowed heavily. We have pawned
Night against day. The debt is long overdue.
The hour crumbles like a stale biscuit.
Hope is a moron selling yesterday's papers.
Although the street appears unchanged
And the kids on skateboards normal,
At any moment now the pavement will melt,
The buildings shatter, the sky whine,
And the whole city slide downtown
Into the bay that waited for disaster.
It was the clever eye that learned the trick
And the unfed hand next to the oven
That lit the fuse. Some will go blind,
Others deaf and dumb, and the message
Scrawled on the single upright wall
Will not be read in the poisoned evening.

LAWRENCE P. SPINGARN

THE CHOREOGRAPHY

and you imperfect dancer
dance alone
under the music
under the heavy light

so tired of movement
so tired of unfound definition

you say yourself painfully
being born of no love
and being told again and again
how poorly you dance

look
your feet move wrong
and your hands are tangled up
in old relinquished strings
see how you fail

there is no
applause for you

only the mirrors watch
so what
if you dance for mirrors

overhead
sticks lie across the darkness
marking your freedom

someone has turned away
and the world vibrates
with the sound of that walking

JOYCE ODAM

REVIEWS

Robert Lowell. *The Dolphin*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973, 78 pp. $6.95.

————————. *For Lizzie and Harriet*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973, 48 pp. $6.95.

————————. *History*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973, 207 pp. $7.95.

The compulsion on the part of a poet to rewrite his earlier work is not an uncommon one. Yeats was constantly at it, and Auden's afterthoughts led him to delete stanzas and even whole poems from his canon. Few poets of the twentieth century, however, have undertaken the task of overhaul with such thoroughgoing zeal as Robert Lowell. With the 1973 publication of three new volumes, *The Dolphin*, *For Lizzie and Harriet*, and *History*, Lowell presents over 530 sonnets; by my count, at least 350 of them are rewritings of earlier poems which appeared in *Notebook 1967-68* (1969) and *Notebook* (1970). Clearly, the poetic career of Lowell has entered upon a phase of massive renovation: erasure marks are everywhere. (The only comparable period occurred when Lowell revised about one-third of the poems of his first volume, *Land of Unlikeness* [1944] for *Lord Weary's Castle* [1946].) In one of the sonnets in *History* the poet himself gives evidence of uneasiness—even though the quotation marks distance the lines from his own speaking voice:

> "the last the most discouraging of all
> surviving to dissipate *Lord Weary's Castle*
> and nine subsequent useful poems
> in the seedy grandiloquence of *Notebook*."

An example of revision is "In the Cage," a 14-line account of Lowell's 1943 incarceration for refusing to serve in World War II as an act of protest against the bombing of civilian populations in Europe. Since its appearance in *Lord Weary's Castle*, Lowell first reprinted it in *Notebook 1967-68*. A few phrases were modified; the clause "and age/ Blackens the heart of Adam" was notably changed to "the age/ numbs the failed nerve to serve." When Lowell revised that volume in the following year, he reprinted "In the Cage" in *Notebook* with one minor change: "canaries sing the bars" became "canaries chip the bars." Now in *History* the poem is almost totally redone: tetrameters are lengthened to pentameters, and the poet draws himself more directly into the actions of his cellmates. For example, "It is night,/ and it is vanity" becomes "I am night, I am vanity." The poem has not suffered for its revisions, but it has become a new poem.

The rewritings of "In the Cage" illustrate the movement toward another trait characteristic of these sonnets: Lowell's tendency to emphasize his own subjectivity within the context of a rather closed domesticity. I would, in fact, submit that the poems of *The Dolphin*, containing the one totally new collection of sonnets, is far more "confessional" than those of *Life Studies*. Emotions of torment and guilt are by no means unprecedented in the work of Robert Lowell, but heretofore those emotions have always attached themselves morally to larger conditions of society.

In *The Dolphin* Lowell's psyche is hermetically enclosed within the outline of "one *man, two women, the common novel plot.*" The situation, involving the poet in England with his lover and newborn son, but with his disaffected wife and teenage daughter back in New York, is indeed "common." It is also tedious. The poet tells us over and over that he is happily in love, but also haplessly in anguish. At times the reader is reminded of an installment of afternoon television: " 'Dear Caroline [the lover in England],/ I have told Harriet [the teenage daughter in New York] that you are having a baby/ by her father. She knows she will seldom see him." The love-sonnets of *The Dolphin* are attended, however, by an outrageous irony with the simultaneous publication of *For Lizzie and Harriet*, all rewritings of sonnets from *Notebook*. Here, too, are love-poems addressed to wife and daughter, though written before the emergence of the second woman. Whether intended by Lowell or not, the juxtaposition of these two volumes has the effect of reducing the poet's romantic plaints, present and past, to the level of bathos.

History, the largest of the three volumes, is another matter. Here, too, are rewritings of *Notebook* sonnets, but now rearranged in an historically chronological order (the old general titles of the earlier groupings are discarded). It is no mean undertaking to put forth a survey of Western civilization in some 360 sonnets under the none-too-modest designation *History*. Lowell, however, has been from the beginning one of the most historically oriented of modern poets. For the past thirty years he has reviewed the terrain of his own soul in the context of American and European history ("The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket," "Mr. Edwards and the Spider," "After the Surprising Conversions," "For the Union Dead," "The Vanity of Human Wishes," etc.); it is just this quality I find notably wanting in *The Dolphin* and *For Lizzie and Harriet*.

The first half of the volume inspects a panorama from Genesis and Eden through the Old Testament, to Greece and Rome and the Middle Ages, past eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England and America. The survey fixes almost exclusively upon personalities, the pattern of whose lives is repeated: a moment of triumph and glory followed by betrayal or ignominious defeat: Solomon, Alexander, Mary Stuart, Napoleon, Lincoln, etc. In this sense, Lowell's interpretation of history is cyclical—so much so that the poet can even rearrange historical events. One sonnet, "Fear in Chicago," is removed from its context as one of the 1968 Democratic National Convention sonnets in *Notebook* to the Al Capone era of Chicago 40 years earlier, now retitled as "Little Millionaire's Pad, Chicago," in *History*. Lowell's heroes are few: Goethe, Thoreau, Harpo Marx. But with the great and the near-great, the poet assimilates himself into many of the historical figures: their evolution (he has "breathed through gills, and walked on fins/ through Eden") is his; their overthrow ("we, the Romanoffs with much to lose") is ours.

In the context of this historical pattern and process, Lowell aligns the sonnets of the second half of *History*. Here are personalities and events from Lowell's own lifetime: his family, his poet-peers, his companions like Mailer and Macdonald who march with him in Washington, and the students who campaign with him for Eugene McCarthy. The episodes are private as well as public, domestic as well as national. But the earlier sonnets condition and even predetermine the events of the present; *History* as one poem is sufficiently expansive to provide an organic unity between now and then. One sonnet's title, "Attila, Hitler," even provides such a linking. In another, Ezra Pound and Cicero are conjoined: "The great man flees his greatness."

The Vietnamese My Lai massacre of one sonnet repeats the slaughter of the Spartans at Thermopylae of another:

> "We had these orders,
> we had all night to think about it—
> we was to burn and kill, then there'd be nothing
> standing, women, children, babies, cows, cats . . . .
> As soon as he hopped the choppers, we started shooting."
>
> Leonidas and his three hundred hoplites
> glittering with liberation, combed one another's
> golden Botticellian hair at the Pass—
> friends and lovers, the bride beside the bridegroom—
> and moved into position to die.

A final word about Lowell's use of the sonnet. Richard Eberhart, in a review of *Lord Weary's Castle*, speaks of an early 1935 unpublished manuscript of poems by Lowell: "The forms were scarcely more complicated than the sonnet, which he yet employs." Lowell began by writing sonnets, and a close examination of his ensuing volumes indicates his consistent preference for traditional forms in meter and stanzaic structures. For the past five years Lowell has returned to the sonnet exclusively, a form with which he is clearly at home and consummately skillful. I am inclined to agree, however, with his remark in the "Afterthought" of *Notebook* that he had "failed to avoid the themes and gigantism of the sonnet." Robert Lowell is fifty-seven years old in 1974; his major achievements are represented in forms larger and longer than the sonnet. I hope that in his growth and expansion as a poet in the years ahead he will turn his considerable powers of prosody toward wider experimentation and greater risk.

GEORGE S. LENSING
University of North Carolina

Louis D. Rubin, Jr. *The Writer in the South: Studies in a Literary Community.* Mercer University Lamar Memorial Lectures, No. 15. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972, 128 pp. $6.00.

For several decades, literary critics have speculated about the reasons for the wide disparity in quality between the literature of the nineteenth-century South and that of the nineteenth-century North. What was there in the cultural milieus that caused Timrod, Simms, Hayne, Harris, Cable, and others to struggle to a mere painful mediocrity while Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Dickinson, James, and others were producing a powerful body of writings? Only Poe comes close to holding his own, and he is usually more bizarre than enlightening. Critics have been equally concerned to explain the emergence of superior twentieth-century Southern writers like Ransom, Faulkner, and Warren when their predecessors had been so bad. Explanations for these disparities, either oblique or exhaustive, have included the stagnant nature of rural Southern life; the lack of superior universities; an obsession with slavery that crippled the imagination; the gossipy nature of family-oriented Southerners that usurped the need to write; and the dominance of a dreamy Celtic temper that favored intense romantic loyalties and regional mythologizing long after romanticism had lost its intellectual vitality. Thus industrial change, growth of cities and universities, diminishment of the wilderness, and the stepped-up

pace of Southern life produced a more significant body of writings after 1920, more powerful and more critical of Southern institutions.

One of the more vigorous of these historical critics has been Louis D. Rubin. Since 1953 in books, articles, and scholarly papers he has explored various aspects of these and other theories. Now in *The Writer in the South*, a three-chapter book adapted from his three Lamar Lectures at Mercer University in 1971, he has rephrased in some detail the theory that the quality of Southern literature is directly related to the degree of detachment that the writer has felt toward his community. Unlike his New England superiors, for instance, who carefully scrutinized their community — Hawthorne and Thoreau, especially — nineteenth-century Southern writers consistently remained uncritical. They felt such an organic kinship with their community that they could not get beneath its surface. They actively involved themselves in its politics and defended its "peculiar institution." As editors, lawyers, and public officials, they played the role of Southern writer in a region given to genteel role-playing. They complained about neglect but rarely moved away. Instead, "Within this system of communal role-playing the southern writer seems to have enjoyed a modest but secure part, and the performance apparently made it possible for him to define himself as a man by his conduct within it."

Thus ante-bellum Southerners, says Rubin, wrote a "literature of surfaces." Their works are wooden, superficial, propagandistic, and morally blind. After the Civil War the new generation remained equally loyal to the region and its Lost Cause. Linked "to the collective consciousness" by strong ties of "shock and defeat," writers continued to write a mediocre local color fiction and an insipid poetry glorifying the past while Northern and Midwestern writers turned to realism and naturalism to examine critically the mores of their regions. Only Mark Twain developed a sense of detachment that enabled him to examine the debilitating romantic sensibility of the region, the sham mentality of its aristocracy, its shallow fundamentalism, and its social injustice.

But it remained for the Fugitives and for Faulkner, Caldwell, Welty, and others to break this chain of community attachment, to stand aloof, and to question the social and intellectual pieties of Southern society on a large scale. Rubin cites Tate's "Ode" and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* to document this alienation and the accompanying compulsion to write about the South with a mixture of love and hate. And this alienation has been the driving force of the best Southern writing in recent decades as communal belonging was the driving force in earlier generations.

Certainly no one will quarrel with Rubin over the idea that Southern literature before 1920 is mediocre and uncritical or that Faulkner, Ransom, Tate, Wolfe, Warren, and Welty are more critical, more detached, and thus more penetrating and better than their predecessors. But the theory itself is not very new. Wouldn't the cause have been better served to ask why Southerners have been less critical, less detached, more given to ties of community, less responsive to new ideas, and to have looked more closely at the literary and historical evidence, in short, to have stricken at the root causes instead of whacking at the branches? We seem to have been all over this ground before. Rubin's own theories in his previous writings about social and industrial change and the development of education seem more basic than to describe once more the drift from loyalty to alienation of Southern writers.

I am unhappy to have to say, therefore, that this book is not one of Rubin's better performances. It is wordy, more sociological than literary, and indulges in

more defensiveness about the South than is tolerable for a critic of Rubin's stature. Certainly we don't need to be told again that the Old South was not like a Nazi concentration camp or that Southern writers suffered the same shock of defeat that other Southerners suffered or that a cranky agrarian book, *I'll Take My Stand*, is brilliantly prophetic when it's a colossal bore. The first lecture is the most direct, but it covers ground that appears later. Part of the second chapter on Mark Twain is definitely the best part of the book because it is fresh and because it penetrates into a good writer's life and works. Possibly the reason for this vitality is that Rubin is replying to his colleagues Lewis Leary and Hugh Holman, who had challenged his assumption that Twain was a Southern writer. Rubin makes a strong case, but others will also challenge this assumption. The third chapter on the moderns is the weakest. It is patched together from previous writings, and the long anecdote that starts it is especially ingroupish. With a strange lack of perspective, Rubin has exaggerated an episode about boyish talk by intellectuals during a visit to humorist John Donald Wade's home into a symbol of Southern communal longing and role-playing instead of getting on with literary analysis.

In short, although the book has some interesting sections, it is below the standard we have come to expect from Rubin, perhaps because it is something prepared more for an uncritical Southern audience than for the critical judgment of his peers. In playing the communal role of academic expert, he has unwittingly proved his own thesis that critical detachment is essential to literary—and scholarly—excellence.

ALFRED S. REID
Furman University

Stuart Levine. *Edgar Poe: Seer and Craftsman*. DeLand, Florida: Everett/Edwards, 1973, 282 pp. $13.00.

Stuart Levine belongs among the select company of meticulous scholars whose contribution to the current Poe revival will remain basic after subsequent scholarship has corrected interim conclusions. For in examining his data he candidly distinguishes between fact and supposition. He knows Poe's stories and criticism with admirable thoroughness; further, he knows both Poe's literary contemporaries and—rarer still—the subliterary periodicals that Poe read and wrote for. And if these are not virtues enough, Levine adds to them a malleable style which gives his sentences inevitability and a memorable freshness. The book is not easy reading, however, because of the specific information packed into its argument.

The thesis implied in the title is that Poe the careful literary craftsman was, at intervals, a genius writing under the impulse of intuition and unexplainable inspiration. It is an appealing theory, and Levine makes a good case for Poe's "almost transcendental" commitment to intuition. His preface, however, indicates that he has already begun reconsidering his assessment of satiric intent in all of Poe's writing. Though this satiric intent has as yet been only partly explored by such investigators of black humor in Poe as Claude Richard and G. W. Thompson, their work already documents that when Poe seems most Transcendental he is sometimes most ironic. So in the light of their studies and his own candor it is probable that, as Levine continues to work with Poe, he will find it a troublesome problem to reconcile these "almost transcendental" pronouncements with Poe's plainly satirical statements on the same subject. Saintsbury thought these contradictions the result of Icarian pride. Hervey Allen called them the work of a man sick in mind and

body. But during the last decade, explications indicate generally more irony than Levine's present conclusion: "Even the contradictions in his theoretical writing are easy to comprehend, and in no sense a barrier to understanding his feeling that the artist is at once seer and creator."

In one of the conversational asides which suggests that as teacher Levine shares information rather than imparts it, he explains that in preparation for a symposium in honor of Frank Luther Mott he began delving into microfilm of American magazines that Poe had known and, finding himself fascinated "by the texture of these old journals," he continued reading unsystematically. The experience gave him special insights. Sidney P. Moss has read the same materials *systematically* in preparation for his two very useful volumes on Poe, giving careful attention to the chronology of personal relations between Poe and his contemporaries. By contrast, Levine's desultory reading provides a panoramic overview, much as an aerial photograph reveals through lines of richer green the outline of ancient waterways which the archeologist on the ground had walked over without perceiving. Levine labels these judgments subjective, but his is a subjectivity scrupulously monitored by the scholar. Avoiding the "almost transcendental" temptation to put his trust in untested insights, he has brought to bear on them everything applicable he knows by and about Poe. He reinforces his argument with a formidable array of nineteenth- and twentieth-century works by Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Joyce, Mann, the elder Disraeli, Carlyle, and Thurber, plus *The Perils of Pauline*. And his footnotes are a running commentary on such criticism as Levine finds significant.

Levine's book is notable in that it never deviates from consideration of Poe's work as *literature*. Moreover, he has assimilated the kernels of worth in psychological study and intuitive criticism, which less perceptive scholars tend to reject or accept without discrimination.

HARRIET R. HOLMAN
Clemson University

C. Hugh Holman. *The Roots of Southern Writing: Essays on the Literature of the American South*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972, 236 pp. $10.00.

This volume is a collection of essays about selected Southern writers whose theory and practice of prose fiction have interested Professor Holman. Most of the pieces are, as he notes in the preface, the responses of a Southern student of the novel to certain aspects of his own culture "viewed through the frames of idea or subject matter imposed by the occasions that called them forth." Of the seventeen separate essays in the collection, five are about William Gilmore Simms, three on Thomas Wolfe, two about William Faulkner, and one each on Ellen Glasgow and Flannery O'Connor. Apart from these twelve, three of the remaining five are concerned with the twentieth-century members of the above group in combination with each other or with other contemporaries. Another essay deals with the Fugitive-Agrarians, and the introductory one is concerned with the Southerner as American writer.

No student of Southern fiction writes more perceptively and with greater sense about Simms and Wolfe than does Holman. His extended and rewarding study of these two Southern novelists—one belonging to ante-bellum South Carolina and the other to post-World War I North Carolina—and their attempts to fashion something akin to a prose epic must rank as one of the great achievements of recent critical scholarship on these two writers. His work on Faulkner, Glasgow, O'Connor and

other prose writers of the Southern Renaissance commands the careful attention of all students of the literature of the American South.

What has interested Holman and others who have noted the phenomenon is the use which Southern writers of fiction have made of Southern history in composing their works. Commenting not long ago upon some recent trends in literary scholarship, Professor A. Bartlett Giamatti of Yale University wrote: "More and more history is re-entering the area of formal literary criticism." He went on to say: "Rather I am thinking of a greater use of historical writing in conjunction with fiction—that is, there is an increasing tendency to regard the historians of, say, the 18th or 19th Century along with the novelists of the 18th or 19th Century and a desire to see the novelist's act of imagination as similar to the historian's imaginative act."

Any creative writer of literature needs a myth, a legend, a fable, a mythology, a story, a subject matter through which and by which the great central themes of his imaginative work can be expressed. Almost without exception the best of the Southern writers turned to Southern history for their subject. The one persistent thread which runs through the pattern of the best Southern fiction from Simms to Faulkner is the writer's use of the Southern experience as the vehicle through which expression is given to his ideas.

Somewhat by omission, as his own interest has been primarily in extended prose fiction, and partly by implication in the essays, Professor Holman seems to suggest that this thread disappeared or was poorly used by Southern writers in the period from 1865 to 1920. Not a single Southern writer of fiction who flourished in the period between Simms and Ellen Glasgow is discussed in this work. It would be unfortunate if this omission were taken to mean that none of them were worthy of discussion.

In discussing the Agrarians, Holman has observed: "But the literature of the South had found in the Agrarian myth a viable legend, a fruitful subject through which the themes of order, of tradition, of grace, and of good manners, of those good and surviving qualities of the Old South could be expressed. And these elements, stripped of their economic and political expressions, have given southern writing depth of meaning, grace of expression, and intensity of feeling unique in our time." Without attacking or defending either group or considering the reasons which compelled them to write as they did, it can be observed that Southern writers of fiction in the period from 1865 to 1920—such authors as George Washington Cable, Joel Chandler Harris, and the lesser local colorists—used their knowledge of Southern history and the Southern experience to express much of what is here ascribed to the Agrarian myth.

In this essay on the Agrarians and in the first one entitled "The Southerner as American Writer," Holman writes in more detail about what might be called a theory of Southern literature. In contrasting Southern writing with American writing in the nineteenth century and much in the twentieth century he uses the terms Platonic and Aristotelian and maintains that Southern writers were more likely to take an Aristotelian view of literature. He speaks of the Southern sense of the particular and the Southern distrust of the abstract. These qualities have fostered the Southern sense of place and of time. Above all there has been the Southern writer's view of life as essentially tragic—that there is human guilt and inescapable evil in the nature of man and the world.

For all who are interested in Southern life and literature these truths have been given a powerful and graceful expression once again in this group of essays.

CLAUD B. GREEN
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Joseph W. Reed, Jr. *Faulkner's Narrative*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973, 303 pp. $12.50.

This book clearly does not belong with that large bulk of Faulkner stuff that has now proliferated beyond what even the most avid Yoknapatawpha fan could desire. Reed's thesis is that Faulkner searched throughout his uneven career for a "narrative freedom" which would allow him simultaneously to appear the natural storyteller and the carefully controlled artist. This tension between the two poses gave Faulkner both his most successful (experimental and innovative) fiction and unfortunately some of his least successful. Reed's view is obviously not a reiteration of critical positions already firmly established in Faulkner criticism.

The strategy of this book may be partially understood through a summary of Reed's approach to *The Sound and the Fury*. Faulkner's attempt to recount the genesis of the novel is well-known and deserves mention here primarily because the attempt illustrates Reed's assertion that while we may take Faulkner's statements as valuable, they do not tell us enough about how Faulkner projected the novel toward a kind of completion. "The novel lies beyond what any of the individual sections can give us. The sections do not add up to a narrative whole. . . ." For example, Benjy's section is more than a "deliberately jumbled" point of view. And Quentin's section is not the mere suspension of time. Rather, considered as narrative technique, the sections impinge upon each other in relation to the characters' total view of themselves. Therefore, Faulkner's "failure" is not so much a failure to tell the story "completely" (even though he tried at least five times) but a "failure" in getting the sections to integrate at all. As Reed suggests, readers "tend to fasten upon Quentin because he offers the most hard-core meaning." And how do we as readers integrate Quentin's section with the other three? Conventionally, readers are drawn to Quentin because he gives this "meaning," which everyone seeks in a book so unconventionally structured. If, on the other hand, we approach the book as a "flawed conventional book" (Faulkner being unable to integrate his narration with his structure), the book makes "sense." We attempt to make order out of Benjy's world, and as we near the end of that section we realize the futility of the endeavor. Then Faulkner hits us with a "theme-dominated" Quentin section. These shifts from narrator to narrator and sensibility to sensibility tend to unbalance all readers, even on a dozenth reading. What we have is a narrow, conventional intimacy point of view that we must adopt in sharing the Quentin experience.

Predictably, then, Jason's mode is more complex. The connections between Quentin and Jason are best seen as the differences between a conceptual and pragmatic necessity. We become monstrous ourselves as we subject ourselves to Jason's monstrous point of view. What Faulkner has done, according to Reed, is to seduce us into seeing the Jason world differently as we shift from Benjy to Quentin to Jason.

And the final section must of necessity be a further shift to a third person narrator: "We as readers now need absolute objectivity. We need day-to-day. We need chronology. We need dynamics of the parts interacting. We need the peace of a story told straight out."

In dealing with Faulkner's artifice through the device of a story teller (the "He" or "them") speaking to a listener ("Us") in the fiction, Reed makes a very complex style quite understandable. If any weakness is found in Reed's approach, it is over-simplification. Reed's insistence on Faulkner's conscious carpenter metaphor leaves us wondering if indeed Faulkner did not have more to build than a structure. A building that houses nothing may be quite useless except for the admirers of architecture. And sometimes Reed comes perilously close to emphasizing that "structure" to the disadvantage of our appreciating what is housed therein. For the advanced scholar, this book is destined to add a worthwhile dimension to Faulkner criticism.

EARL WILCOX
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Joyce Carol Oates. *Do With Me What You Will.* New York: Vanguard Press, Inc. 1973, 561 pp. $7.95.

The new novel by the winner of the National Book Award describes the adulterous love of its heroine, Elena Howe, for Jack Morrisey, a young lawyer who perceives her wealthy husband, Marvin, as the father figure with whom he must compete for affection and recognition. The social criticism implicit in Morrisey's defense of poor people and civil rights activitists stresses the difference between him and Elena's husband, an attorney who specializes in sensational and lucrative murder cases. For all its potential, however, the novel is one of divided purposes, for Oates never integrates the theme of reform with the psychological revelation of character on which she is intent.

Propelled by the same mysterious power which drove her paranoid father to kidnap her from the school playground years before, Elena steals Jack away from his adopted son. This is pure and rather dull melodrama, but such cyclical episodes underscore the brutality and imbalance which Oates traces in human relationships. Jack himself is the son of a murderer, and as a boy took the place of his father as head of the household. Although there is much of the same tension and energy in Morrisey that the child Elena sensed in her father, Oates rarely draws the psychological threads of the novel together. Similarly, Jack's desperate love-making in cars and rented rooms reflects the chaotic flight with her father, but Oates never associates the kidnapping and the adultery within the mind of her protagonist.

Publicized as the year's "most transfixing heroine," the beautiful Elena remains a female fantasy who realizes the wish fulfillment dream of the rich but aging husband and the passionate lover in a fashion well-known to readers of women's magazines. Her husband never discusses his profession with her, and Elena feels dismayed when Jack describes his efforts to defend minority groups, for she is utterly passive, a woman without ideas and passions of her own. Both men ask in exasperation if she ever reads the newspapers, but their brutal conversations and the violent relations Oates describes suggest the degree of Elena's emotional crippling and dependency. "Are you ever going to grow up," Elena's mother asks as the heroine approaches thirty.

Although Oates frequently alludes to invisible cameras that grind away behind her characters, the references to drama only remind the reader of how self-conscious and theatrical the narrative technique is. Elena's mother, perhaps the most improbable character of all, turns from modeling to a career as a hostess in a disre-

putable night club, and finally becomes a television personality who eventually marries an Englishman with a town house in Belgrave Square. The reader also finds the hatred which the adult Morrisey feels for Howe as the man who saved his sentimental, drunken father from prison equally unconvincing. Morrisey's pompous desire to "alter the whole universe" on the side of justice seems mere posing.

There are some episodes in this novel which show the author's skill and imaginative power, however. When Howe pretends to be desolate and uses his finest courtroom rhetoric to convince Elena not to leave him, he seems a tragic figure. The moment dissolves, though, when he tells Elena that her girlish purity was to have saved him and redeemed his better self, and once more we are in the world of the Victorian novel. Mered Dawe, the passive and suffering Christ figure who preaches communal love and ends up crippled and imprisoned on a false drug charge, bears Oates' social message. But Dawe seems merely sentimental in the maudlin moment when he embraces Elena in the prison hospital and gives her real tranquility: "She calculated that she might risk no more than five minutes of this, of such peace." Courtroom rhetoric is tedious and abundant in the novel, and the endless social chatter in the homes of the rich is intentionally repetitive, but when Morrisey questions a young black man accused of rape, the tense, slangy dialogue sings with life and reality. Oates also succeeds with numerous minor characters seeking legal aid such as the prostitutes, bartenders, and cooks who come to Jack for advice. They seem truly alive, and so does the violent atmosphere of Detroit with its homicides, riots, and industrial grime.

At the conclusion, Elena abandons her world of luxury and her husband to seek out Morrisey and the life of passion, and at last she tells Howe that she can think for herself. The reader remains unconvinced, for Elena remains as insubstantial as the reflection of her blonde hair and the perfect figure which she endlessly admires. When she stops to pick up the roll of fifty dollar bills which her husband throws after her, the moral confusion of the novel becomes apparent. More than ever she is her mother's daughter, for the act re-echoes Ardis' betrayal of Mr. Karman, the kindly landlord who gave her his life savings when she promised to marry him. Thus, one wonders if Elena's passion and the involvement symbolized by the return to Morrisey is an indication of maturity and self-knowledge, or if Elena is still imprisoned by her own ego. Elena feels that it is hateful to destroy her lover's family, to separate him from Rachael, a woman of intellect who proves herself a liberated wife by an occasional obscene expression; she stands pondering on the street below Morrisey's cheap apartment, wondering if he will take her back. And so the novel's conclusion leaves the reader as undecided as its heroine. *Do With Me What You Will* is an ambitious effort to combine the novel of social purpose with psychological revelation, but perhaps Oates is most successful in describing the most intimate and delicate feelings of her female characters.

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