



The
South
Carolina
REVIEW

NOVEMBER, 1976

VOL. 9 NO. 1

\$1.50

The South Carolina Review

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THE SOUTH CAROLINA REVIEW

We wish to thank the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines for its generous grant in support of this special issue devoted to South Carolina literature.

THE SOUTH CAROLINA REVIEW is published in November and April by the College of Liberal Arts at Clemson University. It was founded by Furman University, where it was published from November, 1968, until June, 1973.

The editors solicit manuscripts of all kinds: essays, scholarly articles, criticism, poetry, and stories. Manuscripts should be addressed to The Editors, *THE SOUTH CAROLINA REVIEW*, Department of English, Clemson University, Clemson, S. C. 29631. They should be accompanied by return postage, and articles should conform to the MLA Style Sheet.

Subscriptions in the USA, Mexico, and Canada are \$2.00 a year, \$3.50 for two years. Overseas subscriptions are \$2.50 a year, \$4.50 for two years. A limited number of back issues are available for \$1.50 each.

Entered as fourth-class mail at Clemson, S. C. 29631.

THE SOUTH CAROLINA REVIEW

NOVEMBER, NINETEEN HUNDRED SEVENTY-SIX

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The South Carolina Review

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CONTENTS

ESSAYS

The Southern Fiction of Mark Steadman, <i>Donald J. Greiner</i>	5
After a Long Silence: James Dickey as a South Carolina Writer, <i>Richard J. Calhoun</i>	12
George Garrett, <i>David Tillinghast</i>	21
Barry Hannah, <i>Robert W. Hill</i>	25
William Price Fox: The Spirit of Character and the Spirit of Place, <i>Joan Bobbitt</i>	30
Charleston: The Image of Aristocracy in Owen Wister's <i>Lady Baltimore</i> , <i>John L. Cobbs</i>	44
Mrs. John C. Calhoun and the Death of Patrick, <i>Ernest M. Lander, Jr.</i>	52
Genie Stovall's Carpetbaggers, <i>William Koon</i>	60
Helen von Kolnitz Hyer: South Carolina Poet Laureate, <i>Paul Edward Allen</i>	115

POETRY

Walking Point, <i>Alfred S. Reid</i>	3
Three Poems by <i>Rosanne Coggeshall</i>	36
The Ballad of Jim Randal, <i>John Ower</i>	41
Two Poems by <i>Paul Edward Allen</i>	42
My Father, On Losing His Vision, <i>Bennie Lee Sinclair</i>	63
After Reading There Are No Paid Grave Diggers in Keller, Illinois, <i>Grace Freeman</i>	64
Love Poem, <i>Susan Bartels</i>	64
Warlock!, <i>Benita Bruce</i>	71

CONTENTS—Continued

Howard Hunter (1904-1975), <i>Robert W. Hill</i>	72
Elegy for Howard, <i>Skip Eisiminger</i>	73
Folly Beach, January, 1973, <i>Gordon Lindstrand</i>	73
Two Poems by <i>Thomas H. McClanahan</i>	118
Two Poems by <i>Virginia Linton</i>	120
 FICTION	
The Man in the Stall, <i>Grady W. Ballenger</i>	65
from <i>The Broken Door: An Autobiographical Fiction</i> , <i>Mark Steadman</i>	74
 REVIEWS	
<i>Individual and Community: Variations on a Theme in American Fiction</i> ed. by Kenneth H. Baldwin and David K. Kirby, <i>Robert D. Jacobs</i>	122
<i>No Costumes or Masks</i> by Grace Freeman, <i>Ronald Baughman</i>	126
<i>Lionors</i> by Barbara Ferry Johnson, <i>Jerold J. Savory</i>	128
<i>Slammer</i> by Ben Greer, <i>Richard A. Underwood</i>	130
<i>Furman University: Toward a New Identity</i> by Alfred Sandlin Reid, <i>Edwin M. Coulter</i>	131
<i>hard shadows</i> by Franklin Ashley; <i>an original sin and other poems</i> by Eugene Platt; <i>Paula</i> by Paul Baker Newman; <i>Fish Light</i> by Michael Waters; <i>The Dark Bus and Other Forms of Transport</i> by Alice Cabaniss; <i>Water Tables</i> by James Seay; <i>New Southern Poets: Selected Poems from "Southern Poetry Review"</i> ed. by Guy Owen and Mary C. Williams, <i>Skip Eisiminger</i>	132
<i>Step Carefully in Night Grass</i> by Susan L. Bartels; <i>A Common Bond</i> by Kathleen Platt, <i>Robert W. Hill</i>	134
<i>Pseudonymous Publications of William Gilmore Simms</i> by James E. Kibler, Jr., <i>Claud B. Green</i>	135
CONTRIBUTORS	136

Alfred Sandlin Reid, co-founder of *The South Carolina Review*, and editor from 1968 to 1973, died on March 7, 1976, at the age of 51. Al Reid was Bennette E. Geer Professor of Literature at Furman University. He was a remarkable teacher, good Hawthorne scholar, and a proficient poet. His third volume of poetry will be issued posthumously. As a token of our grief and as a tribute to his memory, we publish a poem from that volume in its rightful place, in an issue devoted to South Carolina literature. No one recently has done more to promote that cause.

WALKING POINT

I.

I walked the point today, and walked afraid.
The fir trees shadow-boxed with shadows. The shrubs
Deployed like Nazi soldiers, and every sound
The G.I.'s made pounded like drummed-on tubs.
Out there alone, the point of all the action,
A perfect target for my counter-self,
Or one, like me, piercing unknown woods,
I lived the day again, without regret.

II.

At noon above the smoldering ration fires,
My errands done, afraid he would refuse,
I asked to change my carbine for a rifle,
Claiming exhaustion only and need of rest:
"A runner never relaxes when he stops.
He loyally runs his errands without fail.
He lodges troops, gathers each platoon,
Distributes food, and censors all the mail."

III.

All other considerations I omitted,
The work that ground away the edge and turned
To tedium all decisions, cluttering the mind
Like countless ill-assorted blocks of wood.
My health I pled, omitting the accident
Of heroism that elevated me
That fire-engulfing day at the Ziegfried line
When he and I in fright struck the forward ditch.

IV.

Resentments I refrained from telling too:
My bed unslept because my drunk lieutenant
Required a valet and a janitor;
Embarrassment to be exempt from point;
My shame to run and think for one who gave
The order I refused—to shoot the boy
He thought a sniper in the rubble at Mainz,
Wawrowski dead and slumped against the wall.

V.

And so relieved, I walked the point today.
I walked as in a green vision, seeing
The blocks assume their bright and clear mosaics,
My valves now open to modalities.
And so, pointman springing to life again,
Alert to all that moved, scouting the forest
For signs of enemy motion to relay
To my lieutenant, I walked the point today.

—ALFRED S. REID

THE SOUTHERN FICTION OF MARK STEADMAN

DONALD J. GREINER

Readers of Southern literature know the scene: a grand but decaying mansion set well back from the road; wisteria climbs the pine trees and Spanish moss hangs gray from the live oaks; inside, family remnants move at a slow pace past portraits of once-important ancestors and mementos of what has been; a gloomy atmosphere prevails because the overgrowth cuts off the outside light. If we look closely, we note a paneled study; cases with glass doors hold neat rows of law books and matched sets of the classics; overstuffed chairs by the heavy desk are arranged around a small serving table. The water pitcher is almost full, and the sterling silver spoon sits beside the decanter of bourbon whiskey. And near the front of the table, freshly dusted, is a first edition of William Faulkner.

Faulkner's ghost hovers in the background of contemporary Southern literature. If readers fail to sense it, authors don't. It is not a matter of influence, but rather one of echoes. I suspect that even if Faulkner had never written, Southern writers would still be masters of grotesque comedy, violence, and a sense of the past which seems to shape not only attitudes and people but even land and events themselves. Yet Faulkner was the best and the best known, a man who knew enough and wrote enough to place his mark on nearly everything Southern authors use for narrative material. His lingering ghost is the glory of Southern literature and its burden. Perhaps it is time to let the dust accumulate on that first edition, at least when discussing other Southern novelists. But the ghost does not hide behind the bedroom wall, and the echoes do not fade into the gloom.

Mark Steadman is surely no imitator of Faulkner. Author of *McAfee County: A Chronicle* (1971) and *A Lion's Share* (1975), Steadman all but declares his independence when he selects for an epigraph to *McAfee County* a quotation not from *The Sound and the Fury* or *Absalom, Absalom!* but from *Huckleberry Finn*. And yet the echoes remain, not as an indication of influence or borrowing but as a kind of catalyst which suggests parallels. A particularly unsavory character in *McAfee County*, for example, is named Anse, and the concluding chapter titled "Some Notes on McAfee County" cannot help but encourage the initiated reader to recall Faulkner's map of Yoknapatawpha County with its statement: "William Faulkner, Sole Owner & Proprietor."

Steadman's names for his characters are as outrageous and yet as right as those we expect in comic Southern fiction. The list is well-known, a kind of honor roll, from Longstreet's Tall Zubley Zin to Harris's Sut Lovingood to Twain's Huckleberry to Faulkner's Wallstreet Panic Snopes to O'Connor's Francis Marion Tarwater to Steadman's Dropline Richwine (foreman of a road-grubbing gang) and Phinesy Whooten (owner of a filling station).

Steadman has been there; his sense of place is convincing, a complement to his narratives of people who reduce the world to Georgia in general and to McAfee County or Savannah in particular. He knows, for example, how it feels to awaken on a hot June morning with the air already "molasses warm and sticky." He knows about the South in the 1950's, a world where drugstore bags are decorated in red, white, and blue and sealed with an American flag sticker; where "Impeach Earl Warren" signs decorate walls; where "Mercy, Mr. Percy" is a hit tune; and where small-town boys comb their hair in ducktails. His details are correct. They set the scene, suggest atmosphere. This is not the past of immortal memories, the stuff of myth—Pickett's Charge or Sherman's march to the sea—but of Godzilla movies, Stuckey's, Hadacol, Bill Haley and the Comets.

The figures of speech ring just as true, adding the final touch to character, suggesting the undefined line between the grotesque and the familiar. A policeman wearing a hat two or three sizes too small looks like "a man coming home from a New Year's Eve party." A half-dollar is not just placed on a counter but snapped "down flat like a tiddledy-wink." A man's face is "blank and stark, the kind of face a child might draw with a pencil that has had too fine a point put on it." Where does verisimilitude end and comic invention begin? Happily, in Steadman's fiction we cannot always tell. Unlike the different but important comic narratives of Thomas Pynchon or John Barth, untraditional authors who parody the accepted forms of fiction while laughingly calling attention to the idiosyncrasies of their own style, Steadman is a traditional novelist, concerned with plot and character, interested in setting and theme. His figures of speech help locate a scene. He would rather have us grin and nod, as if to say, "Yes, I've seen that policeman," than encourage us away from verisimilitude and into the unfamiliar visions of created landscape.

We remember Steadman's characters, their individuality and pride, their sheer rejection of mass-produced products. Lacking the choices that money often permits, they keep their dignity in other ways. Mr.

McAllister buys a hat, "the same kind of hat that stands on the top counter in Shotford's in nesting stacks three and four feet high," but he touches it up with a snakeskin band he makes himself. Better still, he rolls his own cigarettes despite owning a red cigarette holder because he cannot believe that manufactured cigarettes are any good: "Anything that they make a hundred thousand of them a day . . . I don't want it." The red plastic holder is more than an object of pride; it is a stamp of his individuality. One sentence sums it up: "Singularity—that was the quality that he prized above all others." We admire Mr. McAllister. And yet the irony: leaving the rural haven of McAfee County for a trip to a resort beach, he discovers in a knic-knac store that his cigarette holder is just like dozens of others. The resolution to this crisis is as comic as it is touching. His common-law albino wife buys all of the red holders, breaks them, and throws the mess out of the bus window. Mr. McAllister rolls a new cigarette. He smiles. Dignity has been restored.

Mr. McAllister's story illustrates Steadman's sure touch with folk humor. The opening chapters of *McAfee County* are anecdotal in the tradition of the tall-tale. Many of them, for example "Lee Jay's Chinese-box Mystery," end with the unexpected punchline which causes the expected guffaw and knee slap in the reader, as if he were listening to an old timer tell tales to the boys on the porch of the country store. The pain in these first few humorous chapters is minimal, rarely involving the reader, and thus closer to traditional comedy with its resolution of the wayward individual and the social norm than to contemporary black humor with its unsettling combination of genuine terror and laughter. Indeed, we could call Steadman's funny chapters comedies of situation: Georgia crackers taking a trip to the beach where they nearly purchase a plaster Jesus complete with Christmas tree lights shining behind seashells; an eighteen-year old boy trying to buy a prophylactic in a drugstore run by an adult friend who asks, "I just was wondering what it was you needed them *for*"; the same boy trying to get his father out of the house before the whore arrives.

But McAfee County is not an ideal location for those readers who want only comedy approaching slapstick. The last two-thirds of the book is crammed with violences of an especially grim nature. Lynching, castration, attempted abortion, attempted rape, symbolic incest, prostitution, drowning, childhood copulation, mutilation, miscegenation, and murder: they are all here. It is as if that undercurrent of pain which Steadman keeps just below the surface of the humor in the opening chapters explodes to produce an unexpected shock. We now recall the

epigraph from *Huckleberry Finn*: neither McAfee County nor St. Petersburg, Missouri, is a place of idyllic childhood memories or peaceful lazy living. The suffering is real and often violently extreme. "Daddy's Girl" is a good illustration (as well as perhaps the best chapter in the book). Its grim comedy turns to pathos as we watch an ignorant father love his daughter too much. No longer relying on the comedy of situation or a final punchline for effect, and deftly sketching the father's frustration, Steadman shows how bewilderment, love, and genuine worry combine ironically to precipitate the one event which the father hopes to prevent: the breaking of his teen-aged daughter's hymen. The symbolic incest and ensuing mutilation suggest the even greater psychic injuries which we know will never heal.

These violent tales are truly shocking, for Steadman's sense of pace and ability to create tension serve him well. Yet I wonder if "After John Henry" is overdone, with its lynching, castration, homosexuality, and murder. It is almost as if Steadman believes a book about the deep South must have its obligatory lynching scene. The lynching/castration is described in such detail that Gunther's murder and his son's homosexuality seem insignificant beside it. Indeed, not the lynching but the information that Anse and Dee Witt, boys on a lark in the earlier "Lee Jay's Chinese-box Mystery," are primary participants in John Henry's brutal death provides the unexpected shock value. Their curiosity about the Oriental girl in the earlier chapter carries all of the trappings of tall-tale humor, and Steadman keeps our sympathies with the boys instead of with the unknown woman. Not so in "After John Henry." We find our bearings shaken, now forced to shudder at two young men who have prompted our laughter only a few chapters back. The effect is startling.

The shock carries over to the following chapters where we learn how white Annie Mullins bears black John Henry's "love child," and how Jackie, the daughter of such concern in "Daddy's Girl," is also John Henry's mistress. The tales connect to form a world. A minor character in one chapter plays a prominent role in another and soon the reader knows that Mark Steadman, like Faulkner with Yoknapatawpha, is the sole owner and proprietor of his mythical county.

Like *McAfee County*, *A Lion's Share* is picaresque: both take place largely in the 1950s, and McAfee is even mentioned. A passage halfway through *A Lion's Share* could serve both books:

Everything that happens in the world is taken personally by the people in Savannah. . . . whatever happens, anywhere, is reduced

to a local frame of reference in Savannah. Whether or not that is a diminishment of the world, finally is hard to say. It certainly tends to make life more important and interesting than it is when you start by admitting that nothing means anything.

This passage says a good deal about how myths are made, about how people *create* significance for their lives. Jack Curran, the local high school football star, finds his name mentioned simultaneously with Johnny Lujack and Doc Blanchard, but the myth serves the spectators, not him. *A Lion's Share* tells the story of an un-lived life. An unobtrusive irony dominates the tone, for Jack, the object of hero worship from children and adults alike, experiences disappointment when his own heroes (father, girlfriend/wife, and a local football star) inadvertently spoil his vision of them merely by being human. The disillusionment is not sudden or dramatic, and Steadman avoids melodrama. But Jack Curran is dead at 26.

The novel begins ominously. With compelling description, the kind which encloses the reader in an atmosphere of gloom and uncertainty, Steadman details clouds "the color of ashes," a scavenging gull, Old Johnny's (Jack's father) drunken walk home, and a one-eyed cat smashed under the wheels of a car whose anonymous driver winds up the engine too high. This last detail is masterful, for it gives sound to the nameless tension evoked in the scene. And the mutilated cat with its frantic eye later becomes Jack Curran, smashed beneath a burning wall, looking up with a horribly moving eye. One primary but barely mentioned detail rounds out the opening chapter: Jack's funeral.

By 1956, the 1947 Boniface High football team has become a legend in Savannah. The world in the guise of football history is reduced to a local frame of reference. The problem now facing those who knew Jack is not coping with his fall from greatness but rather their need to shore up the myth. A customer of Feeb Siddoney (who played with Jack on the 1947 team) says, "The story made it sound like he was famous. . . . Well, what was he famous for?" Feeb refuses to discuss the death with a stranger, saying only to his wife, "He was the best of us all." Feeb wants us to believe that the team would have been 0-10 without Curran; that they all played for him; that he was the best in everything. Only upon finishing the novel do we realize the irony. Feeb is correct; Jack *is* the best of them all. *A Lion's Share* is not the conventional story of the discrepancies between the man and the legend, but rather the tale of a man whose goodness remains dwarfed by the myth. Jack never loses his greatness in the sense that

he remains an honest, decent, reliable, hopeful young man. As the epigraph from Ecclesiastes says, it is better to be a living dog than a dead lion. But Jack's friends remember him for all the wrong reasons.

The middle part of the novel tells us why, for it details the story of Jack's glory year as a football star. One problem here is a serious shift of narrative focus. Steadman does not mention Curran for pages. Instead we read long descriptions of his teammates, episodes which are comic and well done but nevertheless distracting since we would rather read about these boys in relation to Jack than about their idiosyncrasies as football players. Yet this section remains crucial, for it illustrates the creation of the myth: "Unfortunately, the local teams were terrible, on the average—though a good team would come along every now and then. Mostly they were nothing at all to get inspired about or build a myth on." Jack changes all of that. He weights 240, but "the biggest of the bigmouths were afraid to stretch the story that far. They didn't know how much he weighed really, but were building on his playing weight for the 1946 season, which they did know, because J. J. O'Brien had told them. It had been 215, which everyone assumed was a lie in the first place. But it wasn't." Before Jack, an unknown quantity, joins the team, the other boys are broody, resentful, and nervous because they have heard that Curran is not used to losing. They are. The point is that his myth precedes him: "What they were locked up about wasn't Jack himself, but J. J.'s version of him." And once the season begins, the myth grows. Steadman's descriptions of the football games are especially good, combining comedy and suspense, and convincing us to admire Jack.

The team wins, and Jack's exploits become the stuff of legend, but Jack himself loses. No one is at fault. Horse Rooney, the first great football player Jack ever saw, turns out to be not as tough as he once was. Mary Odell, the girlfriend Jack places on a pedestal, wants not worship but human love. And Old Johnny must cheat to defeat him in an arm wrestling match. Curran's tendency to make idols of those he admires suggests both his youth and idealism, but it also sets him up for disappointment. He can almost accept the changes in Horse and Old Johnny; still big men, they are growing older. But Mary's response puzzles him. Correctly accusing him of sounding like an old man with the weight of the world on his shoulders, she rejects his urge to worship her: "You're not saying you love me. You're saying you look up to me. It makes me sound like a monument." She knows that his attitude means disaster for their future marriage, so she places his hand beneath her sweater and on her breasts, the first time

a man has done so, to show that she is human. This scene is poignant and beautifully rendered, a cross between the gentle present moment and the future we fear for them.

Our fears, and Mary's, are justified. At Georgia Tech, Jack loses interest in football primarily because he misses Mary. Although intelligent, he flunks out. Marriage to Mary only accelerates the crisis because he cannot bring himself to love his idol sexually. Following a series of demeaning jobs and a disfiguring gain of weight, he dies in a fire, ironically worshipped once again as a hero. Those who knew him make a parable out of his death, for they believe that he broke "out of the limits of a dwarfed and twisted world." In one sense they are right. Their need for myth elevates Jack beyond their own limitations. But we know better—Jack Curran dies before he lives.

A Lion's Share has flaws. The story of Chippy Depeau's death is out of place, interrupting the tension at the end of the novel; similarly, there is too much of George Bogger all the way through but especially at the end. Yet *A Lion's Share* suggests new directions for Mark Steadman. Set in the South, it is not a "Southern" narrative in the sense that *McAfee County* is. It does not rely on the tall-tale, the outrageously grotesque characters, or the sense of place and time which we usually associate with Southern fiction. Faulkner's ghost seems dimmer, less palpable somehow. Still, I prefer *McAfee County*, for Steadman's touch is surer. In that book he describes a world which fascinates me, and for that I am grateful. I don't care who lingers in the background.

The Philological Association of the Carolinas will hold its first meeting at Winthrop College on March 4-5, 1977. Special speaker will be Professor Wallace Fowle of Duke University. Inquiries and papers to be considered should be addressed to the Interim Executive Secretary, Dr. Lawrence D. Joiner, Modern and Classical Languages, Winthrop College, Rock Hill, S. C. 29733.

AFTER A LONG SILENCE: JAMES DICKEY AS SOUTH CAROLINA WRITER

RICHARD J. CALHOUN

Fall 1976 is not the best time for a reappraisal of James Dickey as poet, novelist, and literary critic. But his status as South Carolina's most important resident writer must be acknowledged in any special issue devoted to South Carolina literature. The reason for hesitancy about any major assessment now is Dickey's recent literary silence. His record as one of the most accessible writers for interviews is still unchallenged in the 1970's, but his reputation at the beginning of this decade as very likely coequal to Robert Lowell has diminished, largely by default.

It is not simply that Dickey has failed to write a major work but rather that he chose not to publish poetry at all from 1970 through the greater part of 1976, until the publication of *The Zodiac* in a limited edition late this summer. With this exception there has been no poetry since *The Eye-Beaters, Blood, Victory, Madness, Buckhead and Mercy* (1970), no novel since *Deliverance* (1970), and no book-length literary criticism since *Babel to Byzantium* (1968). This silence was even more surprising when contrasted with his astonishing productivity from 1957 to 1968, not just in quantity but also in quality. Not only did Dickey write good poetry but no poet had written better literary criticism since Randall Jarrell's *Poetry and the Age* (1953). The next three years matched the quantity, if not (in the judgment of most critics) the quality, with one slim volume of poetry, *The Eye-Beaters*; a publicly well-received but critically underrated novel, *Deliverance*; the tape-recorded *Self-Interviews* (1970); and the almost stream-of-consciousness journal-essay volume *Sorties* (1971). His critical reception was distinctly less enthusiastic than that of the previous decade.

In fact, there is a current critical tendency to write Dickey's literary accomplishments off as considerable but limited to his one miraculous decade as a poet—1957-1967. Much of this criticism strikes me as stubbornly oblivious to thematic and stylistic continuities in Dickey's work and occasionally as unfair as any of his 19th-century South Carolina counterparts on the national literary scene—Hayne, Timrod, and Simms—ever received from Boston and New York critics. An evaluation in a recent collection of essays on contemporary American poetry is as nasty a fantasy as was ever spun out of a critic's own imagination.

AFTER A LONG SILENCE: JAMES DICKEY AS A SOUTH CAROLINA WRITER 13

James Dickey's poetry appeared like a tidal wave to flood the poetic landscape of the sixties, washing inland as far as it could, but then settled into one of the lowest depressions in that landscape, producing one of our newest imaginative swamps, where the imitative bullfrogs have taken up residence and taken up the cry, exchanging their stories in indistinguishable croaks.¹

A reappraisal may not be timely now, but the record should be set straight. First of all, a good part of Dickey's creative energies has gone into writing, directing, and producing in a new medium—cinema and television. An example of his work appeared on television this year, his production of Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*, not a surprising choice for the author of *Deliverance*. Dickey takes his efforts seriously, and other works are scheduled to appear. Faulkner and Fitzgerald were also not immune to the siren call of the cinema.

Secondly, I do not regard *The Eye-Beaters*, *Blood, Victory, Madness*, *Buckhead and Mercy* as necessarily a radical and unfortunate departure from Dickey's best subjects and style but rather as an inevitable progression, if one can find, as I do, chronological parallels between the poet and his poetry.

Third, I regard *Deliverance*, also completed and published during Dickey's South Carolina residence, as a flawed but meaningful novel that only recently has been getting the serious critical attention that it deserves.

Fourth, Dickey's "silence" was not a period of complete literary inactivity devoted to the distractions of television and cinema. The appearance of his long poem *The Zodiac* and the advance publication in *Esquire* of "Cahill is Blind," a chapter from his forthcoming novel, testify to some time devoted to poetry and fiction. Rather surprisingly, Dickey, who was in the past so very careful to place his poems in the most prestigious and lucrative periodicals, has quite simply chosen *not* to place them before book publication. A further volume of poetry will soon make this evident.

Finally, an issue of *The South Carolina Review* devoted to South Carolina poetry and fiction would be incomplete without a comment on James Dickey's status as the most important writer currently residing in the state, as poet-in-residence at The University of South Carolina since

¹ Michael Mesic, "A Note on James Dickey," in *American Poetry Since 1960—Some Critical Perspectives—*, ed. Robert B. Shaw (London: Carcanot Press, 1973), pp. 145-153.

his appointment in 1968. It would, however, be meaningless to write of Dickey as a South Carolina poet as one could write of the 19th-century triumvirate, Hayne, Timrod, and Simms. Dickey has written a poem "The Bee," based on memories from his first residence in the state as a football player at Clemson. He has a poem with the title "Gamecock," but it has nothing to do with South Carolina Gamecocks. His novel, *Deliverance*, is obviously set largely on the South Carolina-Georgia border, but the credit is given only to Georgia.

It is not quite as meaningless to write about Dickey as a Southern writer; but it is more difficult to do so than it is to write about the Southern Renaissance triumvirate of poets, Ransom, Tate, and Warren, as possessing distinctive Southern characteristics. I suppose I have already committed myself to a position, for several years ago in a review essay on contemporary Southern poets I concluded that Southern poetry had become in many respects "indistinguishable from that in the rest of the country."² When I asked a Southern poet-critic to contribute an essay on James Dickey to *James Dickey: The Expansive Imagination*, he gave me an answer I could not refuse: "It cannot be done." Dickey is on record himself as rejecting his Vanderbilt heritage. "There is no sense in which it could be said that I was a latter-day Fugitive or Agrarian."³

I can, however, take hope from the fact that in answer to a query as to whether there is "something about the South that is peculiarly advantageous for the writing of poetry and fiction" Dickey made two responses that are worth exploring in connection with his poetry. He finds a concern with the family as a special characteristic of Southern writing, a trait that Louis Rubin, Robert D. Jacobs, and other authorities on the Southern Literary Renaissance have also singled out. Dickey, however, rates this concern with family as a defect. "One of these is the eternal sameness of Southern fiction, which almost always deals with a family either in a single generation or covering several generations."⁴

Dickey has not been entirely free of this concern himself, and I would not rate it as a "defect." An early imaginative preoccupation of Dickey as a poet was his desire to identify with the brother whose death made his own birth possible. But he could succeed only through identification with his own son at the age his brother died.

² "Southern Voices: Past and Present," *SoR*, 4 (1968), 482-490.

³ James Dickey, "The Art of Poetry," *Paris Review*, 65 (1976), 52-88.

⁴ Dickey, "The Art of Poetry," p. 74.

AFTER A LONG SILENCE: JAMES DICKEY AS A SOUTH CAROLINA WRITER 15

Except when he enters my son,
 The same age as he at his death,
 I cannot bring my brother to myself.
 I do not have his memory in my life,
 Yet he is in my mind and on my hands.
 I weave the trivial string upon a light
*Dead before I was born.*⁵

This son, Chris, appears in later Dickey poems, such as "The Bee" and "Messages," where the bond of love between father and son creates a mood affectingly different from the general tone of *The Eye-Beaters* volume.

Dickey's concern with his parents may not have the ambivalence of Thomas Wolfe's or explore a Southern son's relationship to his father as complexly, but it does result in two poems that critics who comment on the sameness and egocentricity of his poetry might examine. In "The Celebration" he conveys a sense of wonder, respect, and love for his parents as he unexpectedly sees them hand in hand at an amusement park.

My mother and my father, he leaning
 On a dog-chewed cane, she wrapped to the nose
 In the fur of exhausted weasels.
 I believed them buried miles back
 In the country, in the faint sleep
 Of the old . . .⁶

Certainly a bond, whether Wolfean, Southern, or just personal, is established convincingly and dramatically in "The Hospital Window." Dickey, coming down from his father's hospital room, looks up and sees his father at the moment he faces the traffic below.

I had just come down from my father.
 Higher and higher he lies
 Above me in a blue light
 Shed by a tinted window.⁷

⁵ James Dickey, *Poems 1957-1967* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press), p. 21.

⁶ *Poems 1957-1967*, p. 201.

⁷ *Poems 1957-1967*, p. 100.

Dickey's second response to the *Paris Review* query is the more useful for application to his own poetry. "Our greatest poetry has been written out of Southern landscape and not out of Southern people." Dickey's comment may have been born out of the context of his work on *Jericho: The South Beheld*, in large part a paean to the Southern landscape; but much of his best poetry, it is worth noting, as well as the best prose in his novel *Deliverance*, has been "written out of Southern landscape." By just checking his titles, I found a surprising number of Southern landscapes, real and pseudo-real. The importance of Southern landscape in Dickey's poetry becomes evident only if one relates it both to one of the main intentions of his poetry and to a perhaps unconscious debt to those Vanderbilt Fugitive, Agrarian, New Critics that, as a son of Atlanta and the New South, he would seemingly repudiate. Perhaps I would have to accuse him of what Harold Bloom in *The Anxiety of Influence* calls "poetic misprision," subconsciously deliberate misunderstanding or misinterpretation of an influence, even though I fear James Dickey would have little patience with either Bloom's diction or concepts. I hope that he would permit me to quote both his prose and poetry to make a comparison.

Dickey nowhere advocates Agrarianism, but he most definitely has his own Lawrentian fears of positivism, specialization, and technology. Ransom feared the loss of "the world's body" and Tate, of "complete knowledge" of man and of his universe. Dickey defines his own fear and his poetic interest as follows:

I'm much more interested in a man's relationship to the God-made world, or the universe-made world, than to the man-made. I remember a statement of D. H. Lawrence's; he said that as a result of our science and industrialization, we have lost the cosmos. . . . There's no moon goddess now. But when man believed there was, then the moon was more important, maybe not scientifically, but more important, emotionally. It was something a man had a personal relationship to, instead of its being simply a dead stone, a great ruined stone in the sky. . . . The relationship of the human being to the great natural cycles of birth and death, the seasons, the growing up of plants out of dead leaves, the generations of animals and of men, all on the heraldic wheel of existence is very beautiful to me.⁸

An effective means of regaining this relationship through his poetic imagination has been Dickey's so-called "way of exchange," his own

⁸ *Self-Interviews*, recorded and edited by James and Barbara Reiss (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 67.

AFTER A LONG SILENCE: JAMES DICKEY AS A SOUTH CAROLINA WRITER 17

version of Whitman's famous democratic empathy. H. L. Weatherby provided the name,⁹ but I prefer my own definition of it as "a vivid imaginative contact with the 'other,' represented variously as animalistic natural forces, the dead, being itself."¹⁰

Enough has been said elsewhere about Dickey's use of exchanges of identities to make a rehash here unnecessary. The point I would add to the discussions of this concept is that more attention should be given to the landscape as the functional scene for Dickey's attempt to reestablish through his imagination "a sense of intimacy with the natural process." No poet has given us more directions about his intentions than Dickey; and, after the passage previously quoted, Dickey adds, "I think you would be very hard put, for example, to find a more harmonious relationship to an environment than the American Indians had. We can't return to a primitive society; surely this is obvious. But there is a property of the mind, which if encouraged, could have this personally animalistic relationship to things."¹¹ Down through *Buckdancer's Choice* Dickey "encouraged" this "property" of mind in his poetry. Although his attempt seemed unique at the time, it was simply his version of what Bryant, Cooper, Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, and Frost did before, creating a landscape for encounters between man and the forces of nature. What Dickey's poetry seems to do is what the modern poet had lost his faith in the possibility of doing, to regain, even if ever so briefly, a sense of intimacy and meaning. Dickey's protagonist is able to take on the powers of the "other," even though only momentarily and not without a fear of the risk. There is no better illustration of this temporary unity of man, animal, and landscape than in his "Springer Mountain."

The world catches fire.

I put an unbearable light
Into breath skinned alive of its garments:

⁹ "The Way of Exchange in James Dickey's Poetry," in *James Dickey: The Expansive Imagination*, ed. Richard J. Calhoun (Deland, Fla.: Everett/Edwards, Inc., 1973), pp. 53-64.

¹⁰ *James Dickey: The Expansive Imagination*, p. 208.

¹¹ *Self-Interviews*, p. 68.

I think, beginning with laurel,
 Like a beast loving
 With the whole god bone of his horns:
 The green of excess is upon me
 Like deer in fir thickets in winter
 Stamping and dreaming of men
 Who will kneel with them naked to break
 The ice from streams with faces
 And drink from the lifespring of beasts.¹²

I think most critics agreed that in such passages the poetry caught fire too. I would add here, in stressing Dickey's importance, that his own defiance of the theory of impersonality of modernism was not as influential as Lowell's confessional poetry but his contribution to poetic constructions of anti-wastelands was much stronger. The question is whether the fire went out after *Buckdancer's Choice*. My answer has always been "not quite." But I do not want to rehearse all the details now. Rather than *change* in Dickey's poetry after 1967 or thereabouts I have stressed *continuity*. For example the image of the survivor has always been a key one to Dickey, at first from war, then later from the destructive forces in the life process itself. The chronology of the poet, flashbacks aside, and the chronology of the poems have always been more or less parallel. Dickey as much as Lowell became the middle-aged poet, and a confessional one at that whose confessions concern the destructive forces that living and aging subject one to.

Two poems that serve as thematic transitions from *Buckdancer's Choice* to *The Eye-Beaters* are "Power and Light" and "Falling." Both poems clearly shift emphasis from a celebration (albeit an always temporary one) to the necessity of confronting destructive forces and finding spiritual resources for that confrontation. To my mind "Falling" is one of Dickey's poetic masterpieces. He seems to dare the limits of what even he can do with exchange, stream-of-consciousness, existential versus real time and creates as engrossing a poem as any produced since World War II. Unfortunately the merits of the poem have been obscured by a controversy over the success or failure of what has been called his "split line," "space punctuation," or "breath phrasing." The poem is successful, and the line is most definitely breath phrasing, as I can testify from

¹² *Poems 1957-1967*, pp. 131-132.

AFTER A LONG SILENCE: JAMES DICKEY AS A SOUTH CAROLINA WRITER 19

utilizing Dickey's own recorded performance in classrooms in as geographically diverse places as South Carolina and Denmark.

I once called Dickey's next book, *The Eye-Beaters*, his most existential volume, and if I may declare my belief that the title poem is one of Dickey's "good ones," I shall gladly leave it at that. I would also admit that Dickey often skirts the dividing line between what is poetic and what is mere prose and that the breath phrasing occasionally seems inappropriate for the subject matter.

If Dickey's poetry at its worst moves towards the prosaic as his critics have pointed out, then they should grant that at its best moments his prose in *Deliverance* approaches the effectiveness of his poetry. I do not find this surprising since what he describes at these moments is pretty much what he has intended in the poetry. Yet the unfavorable reviewers (and there were some) were so involved in chastising Dickey for his apprenticeship failures in learning the craft of fiction that the significance of the novel and its relationship to his poetry were often overlooked. *Deliverance* as a novel has considerable company. So many significant American novels have failed to measure up to Jamesian and post-Jamesian formalist standards for form that some critics have contended that the American gift in fiction is for the romance or the fable.

Deliverance is an impressive Southern "landscape" novel, and once more the landscape is the functional setting for the "fable." The title is remarkably descriptive of the novel's meanings. Ed Gentry is "delivered" from the boredom and softness of his specialized urban life; from the exhortations of Lewis Medlock's Cold War survival rhetoric; from a sense of alienation in the wilderness; from primitive destructive forces in the mountain men he encounters; from the restraints of civilization, both life styles and institutional restraints, which have deadened his own sensual instincts; and from the *dangers* of these instincts once aroused. The anti-hero, Ed Gentry, experiences two archetypal plots necessary for heroic posture, initiation and withdrawal and return. In much contemporary American literature there have been both a dramatization of the waste land syndrome that Eliot taught us and a search for an alternative view — "a way out." Dickey has dramatized both "deliverance" in the wilderness but also *from* the wilderness in a more meaningful return to existence in the city.

If I have argued defensively about both *The Eye-Beaters* and *Deliverance*, the major reason is that I believe they are worth defending and the minor one (relevant only to this essay) is that both were pub-

lished during Dickey's South Carolina residence and are thereby South Carolina literature.

I will not attempt to argue the case for *The Zodiac* now. I expect, however, that what hostile critics have said about *The Eye-Beaters* will be repeated with some justification. But mere critical repetition can be monotonous. I shall mention two discoveries that I hope the reviewers will make and explore in some detail.

First of all, the exchange of identity here is Dickey's version of a technique used by Jarrell, Lowell, Wilbur, in their respective ways. His long poem is a reworking (so Dickey tells us) of a poem by Hendrik Marsman, killed by a torpedo in the North Atlantic in 1940. It is, in short, rewritten somewhat in the manner of a Lowell "imitation." The imitated poet's poem becomes the imitator's as it is channeled through his style and sensibility. The former's themes are given new life and relevance as the contemporary poet's themes too.

Consequently, I find an autobiographical element in Dickey's poem. Almost from its conception the zodiac as an astronomical chart for the navigator has also been an astrological sign for the priest. It has been a tool for the sailor and a symbol useful to the poet. The signs of the zodiac exist for the purpose of navigation and for reading one's future—making predictions as to what will happen, given one's predetermined temperament. In his reworking of a poem from the past, Dickey conveys the impression of a poet seeking directions for his own return to poetry after, as I have somewhat exaggeratedly called it, "a long silence."

Second, some reviewers will inevitably note that the first nine sections of this long poem illustrate once more both the strengths and weaknesses of Dickey's previous volume of poetry. Here perhaps the signs are not too auspicious for poetic success. But there is a difference in style as well as a transcendence in poetic quality in the last three sections of the poem that only the most perverse critic could ignore. In my judgment the evidence *there* is that the "silence" is over, that possibly new directions have been found, and that the signs for Dickey's return to his proper status as a major poet are indeed auspicious.

GEORGE GARRETT

DAVID TILLINGHAST

Books by George Garrett: *King of the Mountains*, 1958 (a collection of short stories); *The Sleeping Gypsy and Other Poems*, 1958; *The Finished Man*, 1960 (first novel); *Abraham's Knife*, 1961 (poems); *In the Briar Patch*, 1961 (stories); *Which Ones Are the Enemy?*, 1961 (second novel); *Sir Slob and the Princess*, 1962 (a children's play); *Cold Ground Was My Bed Last Night*, 1964 (stories); *Do Lord Remember Me*, 1965 (third novel); *For a Bitter Season: New and Selected Poems*, 1967 (poems); *A Wreath for Garibaldi and Other Stories*, 1967 (stories); *Death of the Fox*, 1971 (historical novel); *The Magic Striptease*, 1973 (three novellas).

Offhand observations often reveal truths about people and the times. When I was a child it was quite common to witness someone strolling along the street whistling a tune. No one whistles (or strolls) today.

Whistling is an unconscious gesture, usually a positive signal that everything is satisfactory. We all recognize, however, that there's little worth whistling about anymore. And each has his own way of handling this disheartening fact. Some refuse to confront, some maintain indifference, and some avoid despair by adopting the pitying, most damnable emotion, cynicism.

To me it is encouraging that someone who has the burden of seeing the truth in life so much more accurately than most of us, and feels it more poignantly, takes none of these approaches. George Garrett's very appearance gives him away. There is honesty in his eyes; a brightness, a glance suggesting a sense of humor, a steadiness that identifies him as a man who possesses a correct picture of this existence we find ourselves in: "sometimes neat and soft/ as a puff of smoke/ more often unkempt/ extravagant and formless" (from an early poem, "Forsythia"). There is always the notion with this man that something can be done, and that when a resolution is reached it will be worked out by man himself in terms recognizable and meaningful.

George Garrett delivers the goods. He is a writer whose realistic statement dispels illusions yet encourages hope, as in the poem for his son: "Nothing of earned wisdom I can give you/ . . . I am a foolish father like all the rest,/ would put my flesh, my shadow in between/ you and the light that wounds and blesses."

Garrett refuses to become one of those writers who produce to public specification. "For the aim of these," he states in the introduction to *For a Bitter Season*, his third book of poetry, "is to make the poet, whether a prophet or charmer, into a respected and respectable citizen. At the moment of Truth the Priests and the Pharisees, like the King and the Procurator and even the dancing Princess, are conspicuously absent. Under the circumstances, it seems better to kneel in the shadow with the rest of the common soldiers and shoot craps, better in fact to crap out and lose all when the prize is beyond all price."

This acknowledgement accounts in part for his many experiments in prose, his three books of poetry, a children's play, as well as movie scripts for Hollywood and television. That he doesn't depend on a once successful formula is admirable and risky. For example, the stance he takes in *Death of the Fox* produces a flavor Elizabethan enough to deliver the reader into the age, but not to abandon him there—a crafty technique that allows the reader to maintain proper distance without losing interest and without becoming immersed, thus to forfeit perspective: just involved sufficiently to care about his subject matter and be thankful he isn't part of it.

Other innovations of style in *Death of the Fox*, such as sentence fragments and archaisms which provide the effect of immediacy, work successfully and fall in proportion to purpose. Of course, the greatest risk of all lies in attempting to write an historical novel in the first place. At the outset the author is already aware that he won't be taken seriously by scholars of the period or historians, and that he will be ignored by the popular reader confronted with such depth and exposition. Nor will the commercial reader have any idea of the research required to blend historical facts and imagination into a readable narrative.

The nerve to experiment is part of a writer's charm. We are naturally drawn to someone who takes a chance. Each of the narrators, seven or eight of them in all, in Garrett's experimental third novel, *Do Lord Remember Me*, contributes to the total plot through a monologue of his own that has no truth in it. Yet finally the whole narrative takes shape for the reader. Not only does the technique make sense after the reader participates and learns the rules of the game, but each of the fabricating narrators reaches a point of development as well.

Perhaps this impulse to experiment also accounts for the unfinished quality of some of Garrett's work. But George Garrett is not an average writer. He does not see life only as it relates to literature or to public appeal. *The Magic Striptease*, his latest book, three novellas under one cover, is so outlandish and mischievous that the reader really questions

its intention, but again the imagination of the author fascinates—especially in the book's first novella, about a man named Jacob Quirk, who can change himself into another person, and not simply another flesh and blood human being, but a character in fiction. Ridiculous, extravagant, and successful, *The Magic Striptease* fulfills the basic requirement of all good fiction: the reader wonders what in the world is going to happen next—and keeps flipping the pages. And it is not the least bit inconsistent with George Garrett's versatility that the hilarious *Magic Striptease* follows right on the heels of the sober *Death of the Fox*.

Of course every type of writing calls for a different style, and often these changes (necessary to accommodate purpose) flirt with disaster. In *Death of the Fox* one sometimes finds himself irritated by more supportive material than he can reasonably suffer. He feels that he wants more narration, less information; he is uneasy in the presence of a quantity of material that would appear impossible ever to carry out to a proper resolution. But the prose is engaging, and at the end of the book the reader leaves with a satisfaction that he suddenly, strangely though gratefully, understands could never have been his had he not been required to encounter and endure the shock and frustration. At the end of *Death of the Fox* the reader is content: something has ended.

Sometimes Garrett's poetry, in its flash, seems a bit quick, not resolved sufficiently to suit our sensibilities:

I am amazed. I wonder
 even in a dream,
 what the image with my face
 will ever be able to answer.
 Awake, I'm usually tactful
 and much too often polite.
 I wouldn't know what to say
 if somebody popped that question.
 In dreams at least I'm definite.

(from "Anthology")

It is the truth in statement, though, the accuracy of the word arrangements, and the familiarity of the images (they are close to home) that convince. The responses the poetry provokes are deep and honest ones. The images work because they call forth feelings the reader didn't know he had, or more significantly, had forgotten he had. The suggestions the images and statements make connect.

Still it is difficult to explain the appeal of the poetry, for it is rarely polished sufficiently to feel comfortable settling in with on a rainy after-

noon. It is lyrical, sometimes graceful, often rough; yet one feels this is the way he would have it—he knows that he is in the hands of someone who has been there, who has the equipment to register the happinesses and disappointments of life as we know it (without the imposition of clever nuances and dead-end mannerisms) as he could never do. He finds himself faced with human emotions that matter:

Now that was a long time ago.
And now I know them for what they were . . .

Still I would have them back.
Let them be wooden and absurd again
in all the painted glory that a child
could love. Let me be one of them.
Let me step forward once more awkwardly
and stammer and choke on a prepared speech.
Let me bring gold again and kneel
foolish and adoring in the dirty straw.

(“The Magi”)

Poetry such as this reflects the understanding of a man of travel, experience, and friends. The poet has other things to do than dicker with words on a page, and this is part of the reason that he can size up a situation so correctly.

The reader feels that the solid word choices, mostly nouns, which construct the images are the right ones for him. They are delivered and set up for him so that the background he brings to the poem will take it from there: now they are his. He is grateful to be associated with a poet who doesn't heed the modern obligation to try to reduce an image to its core. Possessed of a genuine tenderness, the poetry is as honest as the man behind it.

It is tone that is most likely to be the key to the man. A tone of concern, without the denying pessimism that cuts the heart out of significance, underlies all the work of George Garrett, a legitimate concern indicative of hope, hope of a moral quality. This is why Sir Walter Raleigh is Garrett's man, to return to his greatest work, *Death of the Fox*. It is right that the two men should be associated, because, as did Raleigh, George Garrett represents amid the limitations and disappointments of our society, a spiritual hope, an example of dignity in a period that hardly any longer knows the meaning of the word. Sir Walter Raleigh maintained a courageous poise in an age that was losing it all—just as George Garrett does today, though he knows that he is casting in the dark.

BARRY HANNAH

ROBERT W. HILL

"The Crowd Punk Season Drew," *Intro* #1, 1968; *Geronimo Rex*, 1970; Story-Essay in *Intro* #6, 1972; "Mother Rooney Unscrolls the Hurt," *Cutting Edges*, 1973; *Nightwatchmen*, 1973; "Quadberry," *Esquire*, February 1974; "Midnight and I'm Not Famous Yet," *Esquire*, July 1975; "Return to Return," *Esquire*, October 1975; "Behold the Husband in His Perfect Agony," *Esquire*, July 1976.

When Barry Hannah writes at his best, he lays down fire on the page, alive and sparkling, even hurtful, to the touch. At his best, there's no better stylist, no more exciting satirist, no more impossibly concise character-maker—all this in the midst of the snarled skeins of some of the most baroque plots this side of *Titus Andronicus*.

It's easy to point at Barry Hannah's technical skill. He knows how to title and begin a story, as in "The Crowd Punk Season Drew": "Not a punk for money, not a punk for women, not a punk for scholarship, not a punk for God, not a punk for country, but perhaps a punk for fame—maybe a punk for flag: that artificial life-artist, Harriman Monroe of 'Mississippi.' Harriman Monroe at eighteen *was*, as a matter of fact, a shallow, facile bastard. Worse than that, he was a musician." And Hannah knows how to conclude, as with that same story: "The next day, as Harriman arose at ten, he began that long pale period in his life, the period in which he relapsed into two more years of college for pre-medical study, then, into medical school, where he made dangerously low passing grades, and was, correctly, nothing, nothing at all." Nor are his conclusions limited to fashionable shuddering and cynical collapse. In "Return to Return," French Edward's manager and Genius, Baby Levaster, watches the now-fortyish, brain-damaged tennis star work toward yet another marvelous display of animal instinct: "He was going against an Indian twenty years his junior. The boy had a serve and a wicked deceptive blast off his backhand. The crowd loved the Indian. The boy was polite and beautiful. But then French Edward had him at match point on his serve. Edward threw the ball up. 'Hit it, *hit*. My life, hit it,' whispered Levaster."

Even Hannah's throwaway characters hang in the mind's eye like sudden, curving flares. Levaster, for instance, dreams "of his own estranged wife, a crazy in Arizona who sent him photographs of herself

with her hair cut shorter in every picture. She had a crew cut and was riding a horse out front of a cactus field in the last one. She thought hair interfered with rationality. Now she was happy, having become ugly as a rock." In *Geronimo Rex*, Hannah's first novel, a National Book Award nominee, the high school principal of Dream of Pines turns his band so enthusiastic that "The tone-deaf dummy on cymbals quit smoking so he could conserve his wind, and looked forward to studying at a conservatory after graduation."

On a slightly larger scale, part of Hannah's concision comes of his skill at telescoping time—flashbacks, as in "Mother Rooney Unscrolls the Hurt," and time lapse, as in "Quadberry" and "Christ Striding Across America" (unpublished, but already accepted, I believe, by *Esquire*, and originally entitled, "I Killed Him and I'm Glad"). Almost always in such lapses, the chief character is discovered in an occupation or place totally unexpected but completely *a propos*: Quadberry a combat pilot, the Confederate/Union soldier at a Civil War Vets convention after the turn of the century.

This is not to claim that Barry Hannah is always and forever brilliant. "Midnight and I'm Not Famous Yet," for instance, is much too loosely done. Its attempt to compare professional golfing losses and wins to the deaths and escapes of troops in Vietnam is quick and casual. There is too much overt philosophizing, even if it is from the mouth of a young soldier recently overwhelmed by fatal insights. The story simply lacks those best Hannah qualities, the precision of "Return to Return" and the dignity of "Mother Rooney."

"Behold the Husband in His Perfect Agony" is a "Three-storied story," according to the editor; but it is, except in some most metaphysical way, not really one work (Hannah himself spoke, when its publication was imminent, of the "three stories" *Esquire* was going to run at once).

The first portion, "Homeless," is a tightly-drawn piece about old retired fellows lying to each other on a fishing pier. But the younger narrator speaks openly of his jealousy over his wife's premarital lovers, although he had had lovers, too. The last tale-teller is still disturbed (and offends the yarn-spinning oldsters) by recounting the true story of discovering his own daughter making love one night in the bushes near a cove where he was fishing from a boat. The narrator, who makes several references to his being thirty-three and Christ-like, concludes, "We were both crucified by the truth."

Part Two, "Home," reports a party held by Carolyn and Mickey Lee, none of whose best friends have attended. They have grown mysteriously

“edgy” around the Lees. Halfway through, Mickey’s retarded twin sister appears, and we learn that the friends’ edginess—and, not so incidentally, the wife’s—is caused by an incestuous fascination and protectiveness of Mickey for Patricia, who witlessly loves her brother. Mickey bathes her, shaves her legs, and is turned from his wife’s bed—apparently a common response by Carolyn to the intimacy these twins share. Mickey concludes rather wistfully that he’ll move South, but no mention is made of any real change in his own state of mind. There are hints throughout the story that Mickey had altered during the time his Washington friends knew him, but the fact probably is that they are only recently suspecting what the brother-sister relationship really is.

“Home Free” is a nightmare of America in starvation crisis. People migrate from cities like locusts over the land, moving South to find food, stripping swamps of vegetation, cannibalizing one another, killing trespassers. The narrator wants some kind of love that has clearly gone out of the world in such desperation. As he and his wife and friends are evicted from their boarding house (following the barbecue of an Oriental shotgunned for leaving a packed train), he is killed by an arrow from a clumsy friend who tries to shoot a turtle he is holding. With another woman, he’d made love earlier, against the law, which seems to be working for population reduction and energy conservation by advocating only oral sex; so he becomes a kind of victim of love, killed randomly by a half-witted bow-wielding agent of misrule. At the end, his wife is simply described as unable to cook, and the cannibalizing of the narrator is clearly and coldly implied to ensue after the end of the story.

Only the most strenuous explicative effort allows me to suggest that the plight of the tri-partite Husband Agonistes progresses from the epiphanous recognition of painful truth (“Homeless”), through an incomplete and therefore doomed effort to relocate Southward and there find happiness (“Home”), to the final enlightenment about love—that it’s an arrow crazily cast through your navel, to result in your being devoured (“Home Free”).

But that’s straining. The pieces are not that ponderous as individual works.

The final word on any writer, though, must be on how much his major characters engage our emotions as well as our minds, how well the exercise of narrative image leads us to significant themes.

Harriman Monroe is the protagonist of *Geronimo Rex*, as he is also in “The Crowd Punk Season Drew.” A different kind of klutz, he draws our sympathy and our distaste—we don’t just feel that he is fatally caught

in a loser's body: he seems especially to deserve it, if only for his postured eccentricity. It is not quite enough excuse to say that he is seeking his identity, although that is true. There seems little chance that he could be anything but a self-indulgent poetaster, which he is in both novels and in "Mother Rooney Unscrolls the Hurt." Although he is obsessed with sex and violence, the theme is beautifully restrained in "Punk Season," Monroe so punky-silly as to be surreptitiously violent upon fat cars, leaning on Lincolns to scar them with his sharp-heeled, reptile-skin boots, and to have his shins swift-kicked, his hand pot-burned, and his lip trumpet-cut by women who so despise him that we must pity (if not sympathize with) him. (Thorpe Trove, of *Nightwatchmen*, is in many ways a reiteration of the character of Harriman Monroe, now grown older. Trove's independent wealth and his lack of artistic aspiration, his more special interest in calculating—tape-recording—what reality is like might suggest that he and Monroe are complements in Hannah's mind.)

In "Punk Season" women generally seem, if tough, much more stable and self-assured than the wallowing female crowd in *Geronimo Rex* or *Nightwatchmen*. None of them, however, comes up to Mother Rooney for strength. Certainly "Mother Rooney Unscrolls the Hurt" is Hannah's most Faulknerian story, and she is his grandest endurer.

In unobtrusively shifting time sequences and rich, convoluted prose, Hannah portrays Mother Rooney as unfulfilled, wanting to see the nakedness of gentle, slim young men who'd treat her intimacy with tenderness, not like Rooney, who had always forced and pounded her. Her longing is partially satisfied, made less destructive, by the furious activity around her in the boarding house. Even the drunkenness, retching, and all the complaining, she puts to use in service of her hurt, bearing it martyrlike, for the cruelty and love of the young for the old. To hurt is to be alive: to have a brooch-pin, deeply sunk into your chest by a fall, drawn out by a half-awake thirty-year-old failure—Monroe—is somehow to feel safer, if not loved. Mother Rooney is a fool for love: she absorbs it indiscriminately from the milling crowd of boarders who bitch about her toilet-noise and, more to the point, who are impatient of her age, her unresilient bladder.

Hurting is living, but Monroe does gesture kindly at the end, having brought her as a joke a seventy-year-old, soused lover. She and Harriman connect: he "snaps" the pin out of her breast, and she tends and pets him to the hospital after her accident leads freakishly to his injury.

Most of Hannah's memorable characters are seeking love and/or glory. In "Return to Return," Levaster, the surrogate mind of the body of French Edward, comes to realize that his medical practice, profitable,

if not scandalously luxurious, is also potentially satisfying in terms of "the good he could do." Yet he leaves it all to act out his dream of that godlike tennis star. Almost everybody in the story is acting out some kind of dream. Even French serio-comically takes up the clarinet; his father dreams futilely of a life bound up in athletics, but he never makes it mesh with reality, not even in the person of his own athletically prodigious son; his mother finds some dream fulfilled in her liaison with the stroke-broken Dr. Word; Word turns, apparently fruitfully (at least he seems happy down to the very end) from homosexuality to French's mother. The capacity to dream seems undiminished during the course of the story, at least for Levaster and French.

Levaster theorizes that one great humiliation would be enough to ruin French's career, to break the vision, and we anticipate that it should happen when the match in Vicksburg is lost to the entirely obnoxious Whitney Humble, the "Tall man from South Africa whose image and manner refuted the usual notion of the tennis star. He was pale, spindly, hairy, with the posture of a derelict. He spat phlegm on the court and picked his nose between serves. Humble appeared to be splitting the contest between one against his opponent and another against the ex-crescence of his own person." Such a repulsive antagonist and his subsequent effect on the town after his victory ("Humble took the check and the sterling platter, hurled the platter outside the fence and into the trees, then slumped off. The image of tennis was ruined for years in Vicksburg.") might reasonably have been the final blow to French's life-as-art on the tennis courts. Nonetheless, and despite his near-death and brain injury at Word's suicide, French, guided and managed by Levaster, comes back again and again, maintaining an impressive, unpredictable (therefore truly impressive) artistry on the courts. Levaster lives it with him, not artificially, like Harriman Monroe, but really. Just before the final match of the story, with the Indian boy, Baby Levaster sees that "French was looking dull. Levaster struck him a hard blow against the heart. French started and gave a sudden happy regard to the court. 'I'm here,' said French. 'You're damned right. Don't let us down.'" These two, perfect complements, do together what Thorpe Trove and Harriman Monroe only fumble about.

Barry Hannah's works are filled with the randomness of experience and of meaning, but they deny neither life nor hope. There are momentary meanings to be seized; fleeting glories to be pursued. Even though, for instance, Quadberry's band leader dies at the moment before his triumphant contest appearance, the concert goes on. For us, the band plays brilliantly.

WILLIAM PRICE FOX: THE SPIRIT OF CHARACTER AND THE SPIRIT OF PLACE

JOAN BOBBITT

. . . Every continent has its own great spirit of place. Every people is polarized in some particular locality, which is home, the homeland. Different places on the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars: call it what you like. But the spirit of place is a great reality.

D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*

At their best the fiction and non-fiction of William Price Fox capture that reality which D. H. Lawrence terms "the spirit of place" in both the narrowest and broadest sense. Essentially, Fox is a South Carolina and a Southern writer. His collections of short stories, *Southern Fried* and *Southern Fried Plus Six*, are good and funny, but with the exception of a few pieces are little more than local color exercises. Similarly, many non-fiction works like "The Chitlin' Strut" which appear in magazines such as *Holiday* and *Travel and Leisure* focus on the peculiarities of the Southern character and scene. Yet Fox's later fiction as well as some of his non-fiction indicates that he is capable of doing much more. Though they have the usual regional setting, both *Moonshine Light*, *Moonshine Bright*, and to a greater extent *Ruby Red*, move toward the development of a larger theme. In essays such as "The Great American Motel" too, Fox progresses far beyond the city limits of Monck's Corner, S. C., in his attempt to define the spirit of character and the spirit of place.

Fox's short stories are varied within a somewhat restricted setting, and there are some fine moments in them. The dominant mood is one of tempered nostalgia as the narrators describe life in the Bottom of lower-class Columbia or reminisce about Wilma, the waitress who helped the neighborhood boys to manhood in the back of an abandoned Chrysler. But it is not until *Moonshine Light*, *Moonshine Bright* that Fox's talent for evoking a mood or creating a "character" begins to attain something *other* than that fine moment. In this novel, Fox does for Columbia, S. C., what Larry McMurtry did for Archer City, Texas, in *The Last Picture Show*. But where McMurtry's vision is essentially negative, Fox's is positive. The novel follows two teenage boys, Earl

FOX: THE SPIRIT OF CHARACTER AND THE SPIRIT OF PLACE 31

Edge and Coley Sims, in their summer-long quest for a cheap car. The loose plot affords an opportunity to introduce quite a few characters and scenes. In the course of their wanderings, the boys encounter professional bootleggers, loan sharks, and even a murderer. But most of their acquaintances are good old neighborhood folks, people who have learned to survive. Instead of being dragged down and defeated by their circumstances, the inhabitants of the Bottom move in and out of the 90° heat and in and out of jail with equal aplomb.

Nonetheless Fox depicts a genuinely bleak existence which he juxtaposes against a world that has insulated itself from the ugliness which it has created:

Four blocks from the Edges' house stood the Governor's Mansion. In contrast to the gray shotgun houses of the Bottom that were jammed so close together a cat could walk from porch rail to porch rail and circle a block without touching the ground, the Mansion stood alone in the center of an entire block. It was flanked and surrounded by one-hundred-year-old magnolia and chestnut trees and almost invisible from the street.¹

Sitting on a low, stone gatepost, young Earl Edge muses as he waits for the pick-up truck which will take him on a bootlegging mission with his father. He wonders why he has never seen the Governor, only his servants, groceries and garbage, "even though they lived only four short blocks away" (p. 94). He considers what it would be like to change places with him, how he would have to listen to people "talking about why he didn't see to it that the streets were paved in the Bottom so people wouldn't have to spend so much on new tires all the time" (p. 94). But as Earl is jolted back to reality by the sound of Leroy Edge's dilapidated truck, the Governor's world recedes into the trees once more.

Though they obviously reflect the limited concern of a young boy hankering after a car, Earl Edge's thoughts aptly communicate the disparity between the lives of the haves and the have-nots. Such homespun philosophizing occurs frequently among the Bottom inhabitants, and much of it concerns the "little man" and his troubles. Though both are familiar, neither the characters nor their homilies appear hackneyed or artificial. Rather than creating what might have been a

¹ William Price Fox, *Moonshine Light, Moonshine Bright* (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1967), p. 94; citations will hereafter appear in the text.

series of stereotypes, Fox has fashioned a believable group of people; poor and uneducated, their expressions of fear ringing with humor and authenticity. When Leroy Edge voices his concern that soon there will be no place for the handyman "who's good with his hands and his head" (p. 90), he speaks for a world larger than the neighborhood he occupies. His vision is appropriately apocalyptic:

I give this country five more years. Five more, and half the country will be working for Ford and General Motors, and the other half will be out repossessing. That'll be it. Half making cars and selling them, and half out collecting and taking them back. That'll be the goddamn day! (p. 91)

Such speeches appear frequently throughout the novel, and always the emphasis is on the multiplicity of forces which seem to contrive to keep down those who are most vulnerable.

Even the institutions which profess to help those in need are little better than the large corporations and other bureaucracies which render the "little man" helpless. When Earl and Coley turn to religion in an attempt to find the \$100.00 they need to buy a car, even their lack of experience does not prevent them from seeing through the blatant sham and cheap commercialism which they witness. Fox's lengthy description of a Southern revival is some of his best writing:

The music was loud. "Come to Jesus. Come to Jesus." And they came. They came. Like late-September Elberta peaches, orange yellow and soft and full of juice. Too heavy for the limb, too ripe for shipping. They came. Sonny blessed each one and sent them back to the Salvation Tent, where the attendants took their Love Offerings and put them on the mailing list for Sonny's book, *The Healing Life and the New Way*. (p. 194)

Although they are avid readers of Captain Marvel, for residents of the Bottom like Earl and Coley, there can be no miracles. As their "colored" friend, Dan, says, "I can sit here and 'Shazam, Shazam, Shazam' until my jaw drops off, and it ain't going to change things one bit" (p. 108).

What the Bottom dwellers do have is a native resilience and instinct for self-preservation. Fox describes their sense of community as they sit on their porches, the women drinking lemonade and the men Pabst Blue Ribbon to combat the summer heat. Though the latter have little regard for the Law, they do have a code of ethics, and they easily assume responsibility for their own. They are also tolerant of each other. When Lonnie Register, who works best when he has had four Millers before

FOX: THE SPIRIT OF CHARACTER AND THE SPIRIT OF PLACE 33

lunch, sees the Light at Sonny's revival, his friends bear his moralizing patiently, knowing that he will come around after a few sober days at home with his talkative wife.

This ability to cope is due to their refusal to take themselves or their problems too seriously. Earl and Coley's response is typical when they lose the 1940 Hudson they have worked all summer to buy. As the boys watch their precious car with its stuck accelerator sink into the Cooper River, they do the only thing possible—they laugh:

They sounded as if they had seen and heard the funniest, wildest thing in the world, and that they would never be able to stop. Their laughter shot up over the mud they had slid through, over the sand they stuck in, back through the canebrake, through the pokeberry bushes and the blackberries, all the way up to Bee Street. It came echoing back. It echoed back from the tin cans, the beer bottles, the deserted car shells, the broken bicycle frames, the rotting tires and oil drums, and all the JESUS SAVES and REPENT YOU SINNERS painted on the backs of Burma-Shave signs. It echoed back from all the kerosene lamps and the black wash pots, the sagging over-all hung clotheslines, the skinny hounds and weary cats, the mail order bedspreads and the Metropolitan Life Insurance calendars and Sears Roebuck catalogues filling the lives that filled the rows of rat-colored shotgun houses lining the streets of the Black Bottom section of Columbia. (pp. 302-3)

Although they acknowledge that they never had a "goddamn Chinaman's chance," the implications of which go beyond the car episode, neither regrets having taken the only available ride. Nor have Earl and Coley and the others lost their awe of life. Their existence has tempered but not hardened them, and they retain their ability not only to laugh but also to appreciate what beauty does exist around them. When neighbors gather on Lonnie Register's porch to watch a moonflower open, the mood is religious. All are rendered speechless by the beauty and mystery of the flower except the host whose muted "Now ain't that something" says everything.

In Fox's latest novel, *Ruby Red*, the characters possess this same resilience but with one difference. They are determined not only to survive but also to prosper, regardless of the cost. Though they have similar origins, with a few exceptions, they are a harder lot than their predecessors in Fox's other works. Most have tunnel vision and would never be distracted by the quiet splendor of a moonflower. Yet their determination commands the reader's respect if not his admiration, for the world in which they do battle is a larger and a rougher one.

The setting for most of *Ruby Red* is Nashville, but like Robert Altman's film, it is really America, an often tacky world of hustlers, opportunists, and sometime innocents. When Preacher Roebuck questions the divine inspiration of Raymond Le Mer's plans to make him an evangelist-star, the owner of the Hollywood Charm School answers: "No, sir, and I'll bet he (God) never told Billy Graham to wear single rolled lapels and make friends with the President of the United States. But then maybe we just can't sit back and wait for him to spell out every little detail."² Before the chapter ends, the preacher is a "success," giving benediction at the opening of a local Piggly-Wiggly Supermarket. For the Honky-Tonk Angels, formerly the South Carolina Rose of Sharon Girls, "success" takes the form of a singing stint through the Bite Quik Hamburger chain where they provide the guests with a cacophonous rendition of "King of the Road." One reviewer of the novel argues that Fox loses credibility when he shifts the scene from the South Carolina midlands which he knows so well to Nashville. It is true that Fox may be less sure of his details. However, vignettes such as these elicit a smile of recognition and possess an authenticity never before evident in his works. The spirit of place has achieved a new breadth.

The characters themselves might have been drawn from Archibald MacLeish's poem "The End of the World." In a way these are grotesque caricatures, but they are also real people furiously pursuing their dreams. Among the more curious are Jimmy Lee Rideout, the albino songwriter whose creative energies are sapped by his affair with the "heroine," Agnes McCoy, who has a religious experience while being seduced by Virgil Haynes in the front seat of a car, and Big John Harmon, whose songs celebrate the life of the truck-driver long before C-B radios made their mark on the American imagination and despite the fact that the only truck he had ever driven was "the diaper-service panel he used to push around South Jackson, Louisiana" (p. 203). But most important is Ruby Jean Jamison, better known as Ruby Red, an ambitious looker whose only goal is making it big in Nashville.

Ruby's adventures on the road to "success" form the narrative thread of the novel. However, Ruby is no innocent meeting the harsh realities of the world. She may be shocked as when her current boyfriend, Big John Harmon, wants to set her up with a kinky songwriter who routinely beats up his lady friends. But she is always willing to

² William Price Fox, *Ruby Red* (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1971), p. 69; citations will hereafter appear in the text.

FOX: THE SPIRIT OF CHARACTER AND THE SPIRIT OF PLACE 35

make sensible compromises to help her career. Even her qualms about starring in a pornographic movie are lessened when she learns that she will have her lines. Though her dream may be romantic, her actions are not. Ruby's decisions are practical and even a favorite boyfriend is expendable if a better offer comes her way. And for Ruby Red, the offers are many.

Fox leaves little doubt that his heroine will succeed no matter the price. Yet the reader is led to wish her well despite the more unsavory aspects of her nature. Like the characters in *Moonshine Light*, *Moonshine Bright*, she has resilience, but more importantly she has the strength of purpose to get by in a world which defeats the less hardy. Ruby's doubts are typical, her refusal to accept second-best atypical. As she wonders about herself and her future, she wavers but only momentarily:

If she could only find out exactly what she was like. If some gypsy or someone off the street would suddenly rush up and give her a card with three or four lines that she could memorize or hold in her hand. She could check it when she was in a jam or had to make a big decision. She could figure out where she belonged. If she had any talent. Who she should live with. Love. Marry. Or if she should stick it out in Nashville or follow her mother's never-ending advice and go back to Southern Bell. (p. 288)

However, Ruby concludes as she must that Southern Bell may be enough for the multitude of nameless, faceless girls, but she demands more from life. When she says, "look out, Nashville," the line is uttered not as a challenge to herself but as a warning to the world which that city represents.

Although Fox's ability as a writer has grown with his characters and settings, his work has certain flaws. He is occasionally prone to outrageous prose as when he describes Ruby on the dance floor: "She was out by herself in the sweet convulsions of her own lonesome madness and could stay as long as the music held, knowing the only way back was to work her way through the fires she'd left behind" (p. 179). For the reader who demands a unified story line, Fox's plots may pose a problem as well. By his own admission, he is less concerned with structure and organization than with evoking the spirit of character and the spirit of place, and it is here that his talent lies. If the pattern of development which has emerged in his most recent work continues, William Price Fox will soon warrant consideration as much more than a regional writer.

THREE POEMS BY ROSANNE COGGESHALL

SAM, WHERE DID OUR SHOES GO WRONG?

I

Sam, where did our shoes go wrong,
 where did the hinge of wings
 break and we wake walking,
 walking down the long tooth
 of unsheathed nerve
 into the pit? You wrote:
 it's bottomless, the walls are slick
 and green.

Now when weather halves
 or hooks itself to stars,
 I come home early.
 I mystify the hanging ghosts:
 speech so easy with the closets full,
 the doors wide open,
 the windows talking back.

II

About crocuses:
 are they *small animals*
 with no breath?
 are they the weather's fingernails,
 tiny, blue, and clacking
 in its sweat, its dust,
 its absences of form?

In the house of weapons
 I grow warm from lack of sleep.
 The missioned ship rocks
 heavy ghosts that speak in whispers,
foreign, fierce.
 Beyond the lighthouse
 strings of buoys toll
 the water's hearth.
 There midwives birth
 mysteries: the misbegotten, the mad.

If hidden in the chimney
there are messages of you,
I will draw one drink
from the well and follow.

*Crocuses are yellow:
they are blue.
They reject their stems,
their roots, the earth
and rain: crocuses leave yellow,
they leave blue.*

III

Night draws back:
now I can move.
Living as we did,
speech through cans,
thin twine connecting,
who could help but prophesy
a cross? And when I spoke
of ditches, I meant troughs
behind the blood
where green stems grow
struggling bodies, dark, alive.

Yesterday the last cat left.
Licked himself first,
electrified to blur,
he simply slipped into a furrow
and was gone.

Pale soup too thin,
I gave the rats the bone
and walked away my hunger.
Suddenly your absences
grew trees and insects,
crickets with loud legs,
and night, unresisting,
fell backward.

GYPSY

The night the gypsy died
you slept alone,
knees pulled up,
hands wrist-deep between.
I was out again
and walking all alone
up and down the stubble hill
behind the house
where we found the porcelain cup,
the fine-ridged knife,
the blistered tire someone had cut
to silhouettes of sharks.

It was darker
than I remember
and her windows
in the house across the trail
kept lighting up, one by one,
then darkening quickly, then
lighting up again.
I held out for total dark:
it never came.

Next day they said
she'd died three times
before it worked; her heart
stopped once, then started up,
stopped twice again
before it took.

Everywhere they sang her song,
and folded bathrobes, put
frail cups away. They said:
her handkerchiefs were silk,
she wore a ring, her gloves
were never stained.

The night she died,
before you slept,
you showed me how
her fingernails had scratched
your palm and left white tracks.
You said she'd clasped your wrist
and spoken crazy words.
You laughed but it was coldedged, wrong;
you wouldn't tell me what she said.

Next day when I came and told you
she was dead, you said you knew;
your hands looked blue,
the tracks had disappeared.
Whatever else we feared
turned small.

We spent the morning
up and down the hill
until the cup, the knife,
the tire were safe, returned.

Across the trail,
that night,
the house looked small,
its windows cold and white.

NOTICE

Often
that October
when the light spun
shadows through the oak
out front and the sycamore
beside the kitchen door
we built an early fire,
and pulled the rockers
to the hearth,
warm drinks in hand.

Brazilli, bless her teeth,
had left us then,
and every day the stack
of dishes grew until
I feared they'd topple
with the closing of a door.

Still,
afternoons,
those late ones
by the fire,
we'd take the album
from the shelf
and look again
at what had come to what.

The day the notice came
the barn door had been unhinged
a week; those cows were everywhere.
Instead of looking out
or looking down again
to read the crystal words
that marked directions
that our palms would have to take,
I called the puppy and the goat
and walked a long time out beyond
the pond to the place
the trees took over
and let go.

THE BALLAD OF JIM RANDAL

"O where have ya bin, Jim Randal, my hun?
O where have ya bin, my handsum young man?"
"Mind yer own business, an' mak my bed soon,
Fer I'm hungry fer luvin' an' fain wad lie doon."

"But the kettle is boilin', Jim Randal, my hun!
An' yer supper is spoilin', my handsum young man!"
"Toss the lot to the dog, luver, mak my bed soon
Fer I'm hungry fer luvin' an' fain wad lie doon."

"But there's grease on yer shirt, Jim Randal, my hun!
Yer unseamin' my skirt, my handsum young man!"
"Stitch it up with yer tongue, luver, mak my bed soon,
Fer I'm hungry fer luvin' an' fain wad lie doon."

"Yer bitin' like sin, Jim Randal, my hun!
Yer breakin' the skin, my handsum young man!"
"Blood's thicker than tea, luver, mak my bed soon,
Fer I'm hungry fer luvin' an' fain wad lie doon."

"Don't tell me yer done, Jim Randal, my hun!
I've hardly begun, my handsum young man."
"I'm starvin' fer steak, luver, fetch me some soon,
Fer I only had stout an' a sandwich at noon."

—JOHN OWER

TWO POEMS BY PAUL EDWARD ALLEN

PAPA:

In the wasted evening
You have read nothing.

Your hands have handled too many books,
Some shelved deep in God.
And, nothing of them gained,

Rising to nothing,
You look only at the openings of poems
You once could say with memory

And wait for something to bring you
Through this time and into night,
Something beyond your cold and drying pipe
Across the room.

Through the blaze you sat too near the fire
And now that the coals are blackening again,
The life of each returning to the heart
Of the hearth, returning to itself and ending,
We roll your chair back and cover your legs.

You have not always been so much a part
Of one room cursed with shadowed corners;

But now in your dead den,
The smell of books and time
Clings to you, quiet,
And the fire draws from its own bituminous life
And thus 200 million years of death.

CARNIVAL AIR

No air at our feet, a little in the dust we breathe.
But higher up, through the grating on the balcony
Behind the talker talking us all to the House of Fun,
There is a silly rush of it triggered by the human form—
Toward the lowest stars, the built sky, a universe
Brought in by truck.

We watch the ladies, one or two, curl a leg
Squat, scream, laugh at the wind's audacity
And step away for the door that leads to earth and us.
But out of all the lot there is the mongoloid
Who is horrible fun. Her delicate ugliness

Brings us to thoughts of holding her in sticky hands,
Looking under her as brothers do their sisters' pretty dolls.
And her thick throat breathes us
To whistles for the sight to come.

She crosses above us. She starts the air.
And then we fear the smile, the bulbous nose, and the body,
And for her father, old man, down here with us
Watching her walk in fun toward the force.

She is simple and is stopped.
And we are defeated by the legs, unveiled and marked,
Locked in air, and white shins shaved and the hirsute thighs—
Revelation of the thing itself.

Even the talker cannot stand this profit
And lets the dutiful father up free and lets up.
No one watches the descent of the creature
And her aging guide. We know their route.

They exit through the door, the dark and mirrors
And the passage with the shaking floor. They return
To booths where she can throw nickels into plates
Resembling carnival glass, where she can pick
Plastic ducks out of the water
And check their undersides for numbers that win prizes.

CHARLESTON: THE IMAGE OF ARISTOCRACY IN OWEN WISTER'S *LADY BALTIMORE*

JOHN L. COBBS

Perhaps the most complete and laudatory study of the city of Charleston, bastion of Southern aristocracy, was paradoxically written by Owen Wister, whose entire popular reputation rests on his fiction portraying the cowboy and the rough years of the opening of the American West. Wister's *The Virginian* was the best-selling American novel of 1902-3,¹ and it came on the heels of a successful series of Wister stories about Lin McClean, Speciman Jones, and other uneducated and uncultivated "characters" who acted out their quaint tales in barroom brawls, Indian fights, and miningcamp poker games. The physical world of nearly all Wister's fiction is little different from Bret Harte's settings.

Yet in 1905 Wister published *Lady Baltimore*, a languid Jamesian novel of a well-bred Northerner's discovery of true gentility in turn-of-the-century Charleston. Although readers may have expected again the broad sweep of the plains, folksy slang, and the constant promise of violence, the novel was an extended sketch of the South's most deliberately civilized city, a novel of manners with little plot but much discussion of the virtues of grace and propriety. Although *Lady Baltimore* was well-received critically,² reviewers of the time did not contain their surprise at the studied elegance of Wister's subject, "real society," and they pointed to the singularity of such a work's coming from the author of *The Virginian*. The general public was obviously disappointed, and after modest sales in 1906 *Lady Baltimore* lapsed into critical and popular obscurity, seldom mentioned and more seldom read.

This neglect is doubly unfortunate. First, the enormous impact of *The Virginian* on the development of American literary and popular mythology should dictate consideration of Wister's only other novel-length fiction, *Lady Baltimore*. But even discounting the importance of *The Virginian* in shaping the modern vision of the American West,

¹ James D. Hart, *The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste* (1950; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), p. 207.

² Literary reviews of *Lady Baltimore* were almost unanimously favorable at the time of its publication. See the *Atlantic Monthly*, 99 (Jan. 1907), p. 99; *Book Review Digest*, 2 (1906), p. 383; *Literary Digest*, 33 (Aug. 1906), p. 58; *The London Times*, 5 (April 20, 1906), p. 142.

CHARLESTON: THE IMAGE OF ARISTOCRACY IN WISTER'S *Lady Baltimore* 45

Lady Baltimore is an interesting book in its own right—well-written in sections, and fascinating in its presentation of a social philosophy designed to raise the hackles of any American not born to membership in the Union League, as Wister was.

The novel is readable simply as social travelogue, an adulatory portrait of Charleston ("Kings Port" in *Lady Baltimore*, as thinly disguised as Wolfe's "Pulpit Hill"). Jay Hubbell believed that *Lady Baltimore* shows keener insight into Southern life than any other novel written by a Northerner, and that Wister captures the sense of place with a skill approaching that of Meredith and Henry James.³ Through the sensibility of the narrator, Augustus, the city is sketched with the perception of a romantic but observant devotee:

Thus it was that I came to sojourn in the most appealing, the most lovely, the most wistful town in America; whose visible sadness and distinction seem also to speak audibly, speak in the sound of the quiet waves that ripple round her Southern front, speak in the church-bells on Sunday morning, and breathe not only in the soft salt air, but in the perfume of every gentle, old-fashioned rose that blooms behind the high garden walls of falling mellow-tinted plaster: Kings Port the retrospective, Kings Port the belated, who from her pensive porticoes looks over her two rivers to the marshes and the trees beyond, the live oaks, veiled in gray moss, brooding with memories! Were she my city, how I should love her!⁴

Romantic as the passage is, it indicates that Wister's vision of Charleston is not without the realism of objective particulars. If, as Carl Bode claims, *The Virginian* is the kind of book "James should have shuddered at,"⁵ *Lady Baltimore* is a novel he should have warmed to as an addition to the literature of aesthetic sensibility projected through objective detail. Like Howells' and James's travel writing, *Lady Baltimore* is filled with the concrete specifics of the Charlestonian scene, supplemented in the 1905 Hurst & Co. edition by dozens of sketches of Charleston itself by Vernon Howe Bailey. The captions of these sketches, taken from the body of the text, are an index to the novel's rich and

³ Jay B. Hubbell, "Owen Wister's Work," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 29 (Oct. 1930), pp. 440-443.

⁴ Owen Wister, *Lady Baltimore* (New York; Hurst & Co., 1905), p. 9.

⁵ Carl Bode, "Henry James and Owen Wister," *American Literature*, 26 (May, 1954), p. 251. This is only one of several studies which point out that, although in terms of superficial realistic detail Wister owed much to James, the two are basically dissimilar in terms of intent and technique.

exact portrait of decaying gentility and preserved tradition: "Up the silent walks to the silent verandas," "Leafy enclosures dipping below sight among quaint and huddled quadrangles," "As cracks will run through fine porcelain so do these black rifts of Africa [the Black sections of the city] lurk almost invisible among the gardens." The tone is that of the awed romantic, but the eye is that of James, Wharton, or Howells.

Although the physical and geographical picture of "Kings Port" is extensive in *Lady Baltimore*, the true subject of the novel is the absolute gentility of old Charleston as set against the tastelessness of new Charleston and, worse, Northern riff-raff (the deferential and apologetic narrator, Augustus, excepted.) The old society of "Kings Port" is against everything "new" and "ill-bred." In *Lady Baltimore* this includes most of the dominant forces in turn-of-the-century America: the stock market, universal suffrage, and "the immigrant sewage of Europe." As old Charleston sees it, America has sold out on the one hand to Mammon and on the other to the canaille, both embodied in the "yellow rich" social climbers, the parvenues, who lure into their bower of bliss, Newport, what remnants of true breeding may be left in the nation. Wister calls these people "The Replacers." They are all of a type, and of this type are bankers, philanthropists, and women who smoke; "a banker," says Augustus, "is merely an ace in the same pack where a drummer is a two-spot."

In contrast to "The Replacers" Wister sets the old Charleston gentry, or what is left of it forty years after the Civil War. These lingering and impoverished aristocrats are, to Wister, "the last of their kind, the end of the chain, the bold original stock, the great race that made our glory grow . . . the good old native blood of independence." In *Lady Baltimore* they are mainly old women, like Mrs. Weguelin St. Michael, who believes that "good taste should be a sort of religion." Wister is unequivocally upon their side, the side of the angels, for Augustus says, "The St. Michaels and the Replacers will never meet in this world, and I see no reason why they should in the next." Much of the novel consists of a doleful lament for ". . . what American refinement once was, the manners we've lost, the decencies we've banished, the standards we've lowered."

Having established this tension between the old and the new, Wister's thin plot proceeds predictably. "The Replacers," led by a Northern first-generation-rich industrial heiress named Hortense, descend upon "Kings Port" like a plague of locusts, running over the heroine's

CHARLESTON: THE IMAGE OF ARISTOCRACY IN WISTER'S *Lady Baltimore* 47

beloved dog, defiling old landmarks with cigarette butts, and talking business in churches whose walls are lined with plaques to the memory of the glorious dead. Hortense's intuition, not to mention her style, is superior to that of the rich rabble with whom she moves, and she is determined to marry John Mayrant, the only young male representative of old Charleston in the novel. Mrs. Weguelin St. Michael and all that is decent in "Kings Port" are opposed. Mayrant, caught upon a point of honor but realizing his folly in slumming, wonders if he can break the engagement. He struggles with his conscience, decides he can back out the day before the wedding, and does. "The Replacers" leave, and "Kings Port" is victorious. The town returns to the well-bred stagnation that Wister pictured at the beginning of *Lady Baltimore*. The life of the city is to be aristocratically static and uninterrupted. The rest is silence.

What is most remarkable about *Lady Baltimore* is Wister's unabashed homage to aristocratic tradition and class distinction. Even if we take into account the shift in social perspective between our time and 1905, the novel is an exceptionally virulent attack on the principles of democracy, and nowhere is this attitude so evident as in Wister's discussions of race. "I often think," says Augustus, "that if we could only deport the negroes [sic] and Newport together to one of our distant islands, how happily our two chief problems would be solved." The remark is typical of the novel. We also find Wister's view that "Africans" with the vote are morally inferior to those without it and to their slave parents, that lynching is objectionable only on aesthetic grounds, and that, "Had I [Augustus] a son . . . I would sooner witness him starve than hear him take orders from a menial race." Finally, we are treated to a scene in which it is pointed out that the Negroid and Caucasian skulls differ radically, and each difference is one in which the Negroid is more like that of the ape.

The other persistent theme, along with class consciousness, that informs *Lady Baltimore* is patriotism. If not as unpopular in critical circles as racism, it is hardly likely to win the novel many admirers today. Wister sees America as sick (largely because of a decreasing number of Anglo-Saxons, no doubt), but still "young and vigorous." He pleads for unity, particularly of North and South. "There's nothing united about these States anymore except Standard Oil and discontent," Augustus complains. When asked what he wants to be, he says, "Not a Northerner nor a Southerner—an American." This aspect of Wister's social philosophy is surely more attractive than his views on class and

race, and perhaps easier to understand today than his respect for formalities and conventions which the Charlestonians of *Lady Baltimore* "tread like a polished French floor."

This is the world of *Lady Baltimore*—haughty, urbane, aristocratic, projecting a code of strict social and racial hierarchy, and celebrating the value of tradition. There seems little doubt that the novel reflects Wister's own approving view of that world. Even if we knew nothing of Wister himself,⁶ we could determine that the narrator Augustus serves as a mouthpiece for the author. Augustus is colorless in comparison with the characters of the aristocrats, the social climbers, or even the Blacks ("uppity" or "faithful"). There is no indication, however, that Wister is ever undercutting him and establishing a biased naif who can see only the virtues and none of the vices of Charlestonian rigidity. Augustus is offered to us as sensitive, intelligent, and in two instances physically brave. Moreover, it is difficult to read any intended ambiguity into his account of the events of the novel. The Blacks who "don't know their place" are manifestly brutal, "The Replacers" unequivocally callous in their contempt for art, beauty, and tradition, and the old Charlestonians undeniably virtuous in thought, word, and deed. There is no reason to believe that Wister's interpretation of society differs from that of Augustus.

How does *Lady Baltimore* square, then, with our image of Wister as the author of the archetypical "Western"? In many ways the novel seems a complete rejection of the basic characteristics of the Western and Southwestern Humor branches of the local color movement from which most of Wister's fiction seems to come. In *Lady Baltimore* Wister

⁶ Actually we know a good deal about Wister himself and his social attitudes. He was a Philadelphia aristocrat who clung throughout his life (1860-1938) to what he felt were the elitist values of his heritage. In later life he published a number of essays, several in the *Atlantic Monthly* attacking the decline of American values, and these project, explicitly or implicitly, exactly the social and racial attitudes of Augustus in *Lady Baltimore*. One of these articles in a 1915 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* was titled "The Genteel Critic," and it called the American literary community to task for not assaulting "common" literature, by which Wister meant the Naturalists and the fiction of social realism; the article produced a flurry of attacks and defenses. Alexander Woollcott called Wister "a deep-dyed product of feudal Philadelphia." For more on Wister and his reactionary outlook see: Mody C. Boatright, "The American Myth Rides the Range," *Southwest Review*, 36 (Summer 1951), pp. 157-163; H. W. Boynton, "A Word on 'The Genteel Critic,'" *The Dial*, 59 (Oct. 14, 1915), pp. 303-306; *The Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1958), No. 22, Supplement Two; Alexander Woollcott, "Wisteria," in *The Portable Woollcott* (New York, 1930), pp. 255-358.

CHARLESTON: THE IMAGE OF ARISTOCRACY IN WISTER'S *Lady Baltimore* 49

appears to hold up Charleston as a shining image of gentility in almost deliberate contrast to the wild egalitarianism of Harte, Bierce, and more significantly, Mark Twain. For Twain, Wister's mistily romantic Charleston with its "brittle old letters spotted with tears / and a wound that rankles for fifty years" would have smacked of that "Sir Walter Scottism" that he blasted from *Life on the Mississippi* to the end of his life.

But *Lady Baltimore* is not simply an anomalous hot-house flower among the sturdy cottonwoods of the Western fiction of Wister. It is a novel written out of the same impulse that produced *The Virginian* and Wister's shorter tales, and it reflects more truly and obviously the author's attitude toward American society in the Gilded Age. South Carolina and Wyoming were both appealing to Wister in their mutual distance from New York, and it was largely because he saw both as areas in which societal hierarchy still existed in defiance of the leveling influences transforming the Northeast. In Charleston an entrenched aristocracy grounded its claim to social superiority in tradition. In the West, as Wister saw it, something akin to a racist version of Jefferson's Natural Aristocracy⁷ worked itself out in rough fashion to produce a rude social structure in which the Anglo-Saxon cream (always called Saxons by Wister) naturally rose.

If we look closely at Wister's West we find it pervaded by an attitude toward Man and society that sets the author apart from Twain and Harte. Wister does not really give the reader a cross section of a heterogeneous society of colorful characters. He creates a solidly structured Western world in which there is a sharp dichotomy between the good people and the bad. The portrait is painted in gaudy Western colors so that at first perhaps we don't notice the crucial split between the elect and the damned that characterizes the moral structure of Wister's world. Initially, it is hard to see the basic similarity between the good people. Doc Leonard of the story "When West Was West" is an irascible, voluble Brahmin of the curmudgeonly sort, whereas Lin McLean, the hero of several stories, is a bashful but hearty cowboy, all nature and no polish. The Virginian himself, Speciman Jones, Governor Ballard, Powhattan Wingo, and Colonel Steptoe McDee are all eccentrics, each with his own set of quirks and oddities.

⁷ Although Jefferson's attitudes on race are still a matter of controversy, he would undoubtedly have been appalled by Wister's undemocratic version of Natural Aristocracy. As Parrington says of Jefferson, ". . . he regarded 'the better sort of people' as a chief hindrance to the spread of social justice." Vernon L. Parrington, *The Colonial Mind, Main Currents in American Thought, Vol. I* (1927; New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1954), p. 360.

They are all among the elect, however, because of qualities that they do not have. They are not cheap, venal, and common, as "The Replacers" of *Lady Baltimore* are. They are not representative of the mass of humanity. Lin McLean's reaction to his brother's grovelling mercantilism is exactly the same contempt that Colonel Steptoe McDee shows for a Negro pimp in "Skip to my Lou." In fact, in all the Western fiction of Wister there is not a single dyed-in-the-wool villain. Wister's loathing for drummers, barflies, and "trash" leads him to feel that their very natures make them evil enough to serve as the heavies in any story. Even Trampas of *The Virginian*, Wister's most clearly defined villain, is no more than an aimless saddle tramp; we feel that he is as guilty in his incompetence and hubris in messing with *The Virginian* as he is in the murder of Shorty.

Beyond distinguishing themselves as being above the common herd, however, each of Wister's heroes is a representative of order, discipline, and civilization in the rough land through which they move. They are the guardians of the Establishment, just as the Charleston aristocracy is. Frequently this civilization takes the shape of formal refinement. In "Hank's Woman," for example, the protagonist produces as an elegy *from memory* the dirge from *The White Devil* at a crude Western burial, and *The Virginian*, who also figures in this story, senses its poetic value and approves. In "Lin McLean" the narrator is highly critical of a girl who doesn't show the proper deference in speaking to the territorial governor. In *The Virginian* itself the hero must train himself in "book-learning," particularly Shakespeare, before he is worthy of the hand of Molly Wood, the prototype of the civilizing schoolmarm. Doctors, legislators, military officers, and teachers—the enfranchised representatives of law, order, and social regimentation—abound in Wister's work.⁸ In "Lin McLean" a prominent figure is the Bishop of Wyoming.

As in *Lady Baltimore*, this Western picture of social determinism is strongly racist. While *The Virginian*, Lin McLean, Speciman Jones, and the stout cowboys of the town of Drybone can be softened and refined by the discipline of civilization, it is only because they are of solid, white, English stock, or, to use Wister's favorite word, "Saxon." There is an enormous class in Wister's West that the author sees as beyond salvation or assimilation. In this amorphous group we find

⁸ See Marvin Lewis, "Owen Wister: Caste Imprints in Western Literature," *Arizona Quarterly*, X (Summer, 1954), pp. 147-156. Lewis says that Wister "created the triumph of the authoritarians over the rough libertarians of the West."

CHARLESTON: THE IMAGE OF ARISTOCRACY IN WISTER'S *Lady Baltimore* 51

Indians, Mexicans, Negroes, Jews, and even a Chinese—the thieving, inscrutable Madden of “The Right Honorable Strawberries.” Of these, the Indians are predictably the most admirable, since they make the least attempt to fit into white society; in most stories the poor Indian is allowed a measure of dignity, for he “knows his place.” Mexicans, however, are all shiftless, treacherous, and greasy. Negroes are consistently lazy and, worse, “uppity.”

This is Wister's version of the West, and it is obviously the product of the same author who wrote *Lady Baltimore* as a reverent homage to Charleston society. The picture is hardly Bret Harte's of varying sorts and conditions of men working things out in a brave new world. Rather, it is the portrait of a shoddy and chaotic world through which move the calming representatives of culture and order, spreading their steadying influence like oil on the troubled waters. That the forces of order are invariably “Saxon” is only a reflection of a belief in the “white man's burden” that Wister shared with much of the Victorian world. The heroes of Wister's cowboy fiction are essentially versions of the “genuine” aristocracy the author saw in Charleston, and the villains are simply “The Replacers” and the “trash,” black and white, of that city in a Western landscape. The real world and social attitudes of Owen Wister are reflected in the Charleston of *Lady Baltimore*; the characters of his Western tales are only the characters of that society in action in an exotic setting.

MRS. JOHN C. CALHOUN AND THE DEATH OF PATRICK

ERNEST M. LANDER, JR.

On March 31, 1850, Senator John C. Calhoun died in Washington, leaving a widow, Floride Colhoun Calhoun, and seven children, ages 20 to 38. Five years later Dr. John C. Calhoun, Jr., the first of the Calhoun children, died. His death was followed in 1857 by that of Martha Cornelia, crippled and unmarried and the constant companion of her mother. The family was struck a double blow in 1858 with the deaths of Patrick and William (Willy). James died in 1861 and Andrew in 1865. Thus, the grief-stricken widow was bereft of all her children except Anna, the wife of Thomas G. Clemson. By that time the old lady was struggling with cancer, to which she succumbed in July 1866. Anna died of a heart attack in 1875.¹

Of the ten Calhoun children (three died in infancy) only Andrew and Anna lived beyond age fifty. The Calhouns' lives were cut short mainly by heart disease or consumption, sometimes with other complications. Family letters carried frequent descriptions of illness and, as occasion demanded, death. The most graphic extant letters are those describing Patrick's demise, written mainly by Mrs. Calhoun, who was constantly at his bedside during his last month.

Patrick Calhoun, born February 9, 1821, became a professional soldier, a captain of the dragoons in the United States Army. He was good-looking, well-traveled, a good conversationalist, and beloved by his family. He was much attracted to the fairer sex but never to the point of matrimony, although he was engaged several times. He mingled at ease with the best of Washington society and often with the worst, cultivating a devil-may-care lifestyle that led to heavy debts. Money passed through his hands easily because of gambling, generosity to sponging acquaintances, or careless habits. Fortunately for the dashing captain, until 1850 he had a benefactor in his father, who paid his errant son's debts apparently without reproach. Nevertheless, says Charles M. Wiltse, "Patrick was his greatest trial."

¹ For a genealogical table of the Calhouns, see C. M. McGee, Jr., and E. M. Lander, Jr., *A Rebel Came Home . . .* (Columbia, S. C., 1961), p. x. There were other family tragedies also. Margaret Cloud, Willy's first wife, died in 1855, and three-year-old Nina Clemson in 1858.

Patrick longed for military glory. He was in Washington when the Mexican War erupted and thought he would have his chance. Instead, he was chained to administrative duties in the capital. Chafing at his post, Patrick inveigled a New York regiment to elect him its colonel, but the regiment was never called into active service. At times Patrick considered resigning his commission, but having no other profession, he remained in the service. He was on official leave when fatally stricken in 1858.²

The first alarming signal of Patrick's terminal illness occurred in September, 1857, when a physician advised him "strongly" for the sake of his health to visit the baths at Hot Springs, Virginia. Patrick found the waters "beneficial" but "too debilitating" to take very long. In any event, he found the society uncongenial. "This is the most stupid place in the mountains," he wrote, "a large majority being confirmed invalids and those who are not, look so miserably dull that it gives me the blues to see them."³

Patrick was back in Washington by September 24. His sister Anna was distressed at his appearance and confided to her daughter Floride: "He looks thin & badly, & coughs a good deal, & I am a little uneasy about him, tho he is I think looking better already, & has a rather better appetite than is now usual with him."⁴

During the fall of 1857 Mrs. Calhoun implored Patrick to visit her at Pendleton, or at least join her in St. Augustine during the winter. She planned to go to Florida in November with her daughter-in-law, Kate Putnam Calhoun, John's widow whom Willy had married early that year. Kate was pregnant and preferred to have her child born at the home of her parents in St. Augustine. As ill luck would have it, the baby arrived early, forcing Mrs. Calhoun to act as midwife late one November night in the Charleston Hotel. Nevertheless, the little entourage arrived safely in St. Augustine before Christmas.⁵

Meanwhile, back in Washington, Patrick was continuing his usual gay bachelor's life. He seemed "too much engaged" even to visit his

² For Patrick's background, see Charles M. Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun, Nationalist, 1840-1850* (Indianapolis, 1951), pp. 121-23, 436-41.

³ Patrick to Anna Clemson, September 16, 1857, Clemson Papers, Clemson University. All letters cited hereinafter are in the Clemson Papers unless otherwise noted. I have kept the original spelling but occasionally changed the punctuation for sake of easy reading. Mrs. Calhoun, for example, greatly overworked the comma.

⁴ Anna to Floride Clemson, September 27, 1857.

⁵ Floride Calhoun to Anna, October 20, November 25, December 20, 1857.

sister's family at Bladensburg, only a short ride from the capital. One evening in late January 1858, while gadding about the city, Patrick was knocked down by a carriage and severely injured. To add to his woe his army leave was canceled, and he was ordered to join his regiment in Utah in the spring. In describing Patrick's misadventures, Anna said to Floride: "He has not you see good luck in anything."⁶

Patrick had hardly recovered from his injury before he received an urgent call from his mother in Florida, who was anxious to visit the Clemsons in the spring. Thus, Patrick found it necessary to travel to St. Augustine, though inconvenient, to escort his mother to Maryland. "She says," he told Anna, "that Willy has to visit Abbeville on important business and she cannot come on unless I go for her."⁷

When Patrick reached St. Augustine in early March, Mrs. Calhoun, though delighted to see him, was alarmed at his physical condition. He was so ill upon arrival, she wrote, that "he has been confined to his bed with pain in his chest and side, with a violent cough, but his physician says he is better, and that it is fortunate he is here, as his lungs are slightly affected, and this climate is advantageous to him." She advised Anna they might be delayed in their departure for Maryland.⁸

Patrick obviously realized his condition was worse than he admitted to his mother, for he sent Thomas G. Clemson a check for \$25 to pay a debt and requested his brother-in-law to remove his possessions from his Washington room to the Clemson home. He had not left his room for two weeks, he said, and was too weak to write much. He planned to leave by steamer for Charleston before the end of March in order to consult Dr. Eli Geddings, a renowned physician and surgeon.⁹

Accompanied by his brother Willy, the ill Patrick traveled to Charleston. He took quarters in the Mills House and immediately placed himself under Dr. Geddings' care. Anna, much worried about his condition, invited him to come by boat to Maryland, where she could nurse

⁶ Anna to Floride Clemson, January 24, 1858.

⁷ Patrick to Anna, February 19, 1858. Willy owned a plantation near Abbeville.

⁸ Floride Calhoun to Anna, March 15, 1858. Mrs. Calhoun likewise reported that Willy had a "troublesome" throat; the baby was sick with a bad cough and fever; the nurse was ill; and "Kate never feels well . . . so you see the house is full of ailments."

⁹ Patrick to T. G. Clemson, March 23, 1858. For Geddings' biography, see Joseph I. Waring, *A History of Medicine in South Carolina, 1825-1900* (Columbia, S. C., 1967), pp. 235-38.

him, but she was not sanguine. She told her daughter: "His affection seems so much like that of your grandfather & Uncle John's—Irritation of the throat finally extending down to the lungs & affecting them. I can not but dread the consequences."¹⁰

Meanwhile, Dr. Geddings warned Clemson that Patrick suffered from an "extremely diseased" right lung, complicated by diarrhea and an abscess. In an understatement he added: "My opinion of the case, as regards ultimate recovery, is not flattering." He urged the patient's removal to a better climate before the arrival of Charleston's "debilitating" weather.¹¹

Still in St. Augustine, Mrs. Calhoun received grim news from Willy which she passed on to Anna. Patrick was unable to leave his bed at the Mills House, and she feared for his survival. "I feel at times much depressed," she wrote, "and feel as though some heavy affliction was about to visit me, and the more I try to struggle against it the more it harasses me, but I hope for the best."¹²

The distressing news from Charleston caused Mrs. Calhoun to hasten immediately to Patrick's bedside. Although lacking an escort, the elderly lady boarded a steamer at St. Augustine, placed herself under the care of a clergyman traveler, and arrived in Charleston on May 2. She took a room at the Mills House where she could maintain a constant vigil over her ill son. Two days after arrival, she guardedly reported improvement in Patrick's condition. His doctor, she said, believed he would be able to journey by rail to Pendleton within a few days.¹³

Patrick soon took a turn for the worse, dashing his mother's faint hopes. On May 10, acting upon Dr. Geddings' advice, Willy telegraphed the Clemsons of the patient's "critical situation." And three days later, the anxious mother poured out her heart to Anna: "Our dear Patrick is still alive," she began, "but how long it may please God to spare his life no one knows. He now has a sore mouth which prevents him from taking proper nourishment. He lives on beef tea and brandy, both of which goes against him." She urged the Clemsons to come at once if they wished to see Patrick again.

Mrs. Calhoun herself was not well. She added: "When I thought Patrick was dying, I was taken suddenly, just as I was when John's

¹⁰ Anna to Floride Clemson, April 4, 1858.

¹¹ Geddings to T. G. Clemson, April 28, 1858.

¹² Floride Calhoun to Anna, April 24, 1858.

¹³ *Ibid.*, May 4, 1858.

corpse was brought up to Pendleton [1855]. A deathly sickness came over me, I vomited awfully, and had to have ice put to my head. So sudden was the attack, and so violent, that my room was filled instantly with persons in the house, all trying to give me aid, and Willy was so frightened that he scarcely knew what he was about." Although relieved by a physician and somewhat improved, she still suffered from the effects of the attack.¹⁴

On May 16 Mrs. Calhoun reported that Patrick had rallied slightly "though kept weak from constant diarrhea" and a cough that was becoming "more troublesome." Dr. Geddings now considered moving the dying man on a spring bed to Summerville for a brief stay and then on to Pendleton, his condition permitting. Above all else, he wished to remove Patrick from Charleston's hot and dusty climate. Again, Mrs. Calhoun urged the Clemsons to "come on."¹⁵

On the 20th Mrs. Calhoun reported that Patrick was sitting up, reading newspapers, talking, and eating "with a relish." Even his cough was better and he slept well. The old lady's hopes were further buoyed by news that her son James had departed from California for the East. She urged the Clemsons, once again, to hurry to South Carolina. Two days later she penned Anna a brief note announcing their departure from Charleston. She felt that Patrick would be able to endure the railroad journey.¹⁶

For her part, Anna felt that "all these losses & illnesses, in our family, seem to draw us more together, & make us more anxious about the survivors." She too hoped James would hurry East. And reflecting on her mother's reception in Charleston, where every kindness was showered upon her and her sons, Anna found such displays of affection "very gratifying." It proved that "dear father was known & loved."¹⁷

Mrs. Calhoun's next letter was written May 23 from Hunt's Hotel in Columbia, where they had arrived the previous evening. Dr. Geddings had begun the journey with them, but seeing Patrick get along "so well," he had left the group in Summerville and returned to Charles-

¹⁴ W. L. Calhoun, telegram to T. G. Clemson, May 10, 1858; Floride Calhoun to Anna, May 13, 1858. Henry Gourdin, Clemson's Charleston factor, likewise reported regularly on the dying Patrick's condition. By mid-May Gourdin doubted that Patrick would leave the Mills House alive. Gourdin to T. G. Clemson, May 15, 1858.

¹⁵ Floride Calhoun to Anna, May 16, 1858.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, May 20, 22, 1858. James never returned home.

¹⁷ Anna to Floride Clemson, May 23, 1858.

ton. Mrs. Calhoun and Willy were also accompanied by "a superior black man" to nurse Patrick. Even so, the mother and son were exhausted from the vigil.¹⁸

Originally, the Calhouns planned to remain in Columbia only two days before leaving for Pendleton, but it was soon evident that Patrick was too weak to endure further travel immediately. His cough, sore mouth, and continued diarrhea had taken their toll. At his request the party waited until early Saturday morning, May 29, before leaving Columbia. Meanwhile, as in Charleston, many friends and acquaintances visited them and offered their services.¹⁹

The weary company of Mrs. Calhoun, Patrick, Willy, and the Negro nurse arrived by rail in Pendleton, as scheduled, on the evening of the 29th. The dying Patrick was put immediately to bed in his mother's home, *Mi Casa*, but by this time he could scarcely eat at all and could sleep only under the influence of morphine. Hearing the sad news, Anna exclaimed: "Poor fellow! he must suffer greatly."²⁰ Patrick did not suffer much longer, for on June 1 his anguished mother wrote Anna of his death.

Mrs. Calhoun said: "Our dearest Patrick has fallen asleep in death, more calmly than I had expected after so much intense suffering for more than a month. He is now no doubt happy in Heaven, surrounded by those who were so dear to him, and joining with them singing Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabbath, Heaven and earth are full of thy Glory."²¹

At Anna's request Mrs. Calhoun sent particulars of Patrick's passing: "He spoke but little several days previous, as it produced an irritation in his throat, and [he] suffered little or no talking, the sounds reverberating in his ears causing a painful ringing and loud noise, but wrote on a piece of paper with pencil all he desired. Early the morning he died, he wrote that he required brandy, but was affraid to take it before he was laid on the Holmes chair. After he was placed on it comfortably, he wrote again, I require brandy immediately. It was given to him, and it was the last swallow he took. [He] looked calmly around the room at us all, and was *perfectly* in his senses to the last moment, but did not at-

¹⁸ Floride Calhoun to Anna, May 23, 1858.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, May 28, 1858.

²⁰ Anna to Floride Clemson, June 6, 1858.

²¹ Floride Calhoun to Anna, June 1, 1858.

tempt to say any thing to any one, which we all regretted much. After a sigh he fell asleep in death, calmly, and I trust is in heaven, surrounded by those who were dear to him on earth, and let us, my dear child, dry up our tears and resign him to his God.”²²

Patrick's mother and his brother Andrew, who had been on bad terms for years, were soon squabbling over his estate and burial place. The main disagreement arose over a proviso in her sale of the Fort Hill estate in 1854 to Andrew that Mrs. Calhoun and the crippled Cornelia would have permanent quarters at Fort Hill. But the mother soon quarreled with Andrew and his wife Margaret, and, claiming great mistreatment, she moved to Pendleton. She clearly showed her bitterness in a letter to Anna: “Andrew always was mean and lowlived, but in his transactions with me, he has acted basely in denying every thing he promised me.”²³

For several years thereafter Mrs. Calhoun and Andrew hardly spoke. She never visited Fort Hill. When the dying Patrick arrived in Pendleton, Andrew and Margaret, according to Mrs. Calhoun, “appeared anxious to make amends for the past, and I hope it may continue, but I never can feel toward them as usual.”²⁴ We do not have Andrew's side of the quarrel, but there is little doubt that Mrs. Calhoun was sometimes unjustified in her suspicions of others. In 1847 John C. Calhoun had written Andrew: “As to the suspicions & unfounded blame of your mother, you must not only bear them, but forget them. . . . I have borne with her with patience, because it was my duty to do so, & you must do the same, for the same reason. It has been the only cross of my life.”²⁵

Regardless of who was at fault, Mrs. Calhoun objected to Patrick's having been buried in the Old Stone Church cemetery. Also, she believed Andrew planned to cheat the rest of the family in settling Patrick's estate. The quarrel dragged on until March 1861, at which time a settlement was reached through the good offices of their cousin Edward Noble, a lawyer from Abbeville. Mrs. Calhoun thereupon removed Patrick's remains to St. Paul's cemetery in Pendleton. But the settlement of Patrick's estate found Andrew indebted to it and able to pay only part

²² *Ibid.*, June 15, 1858.

²³ *Ibid.*, February 7, 1855.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, June 1, 1858.

²⁵ Calhoun to Andrew, April 12, 1847, Calhoun Papers, Duke University.

MRS. JOHN C. CALHOUN AND THE DEATH OF PATRICK 59

at the time. His irate mother wished Edward Noble to force him to make a complete settlement "all at once."²⁶

Andrew, ever the big spender, never cleared up his debts. At his death in 1865 he still owed Mrs. Calhoun for Fort Hill, for which she sued. The litigation extended beyond her death, and at the foreclosure sale in 1871 Clemson purchased Fort Hill with his own private funds. Since he outlived all members of his immediate family, he willed his property to the state for the establishment of an agricultural and mechanical college.

²⁶ Floride Calhoun to Anna, March 3, 18, 1861.

GENIE STOVALL'S CARPETBAGGERS

WILLIAM KOON

South Carolina's literary histories do not record Mrs. Eugenia Orchard Stovall, and the only note on her career as a writer is an entry in the *Library of Congress Catalogue* which says that she was born in 1872 and that she published a novel—*A Son of Carolina*—with the Neal Publishing Company in New York in 1909. There are several reasons for Mrs. Stovall's scant fame. Her narrative is filled with such orations as this: "A Southern lady or a Southern gentleman . . . though he or she were clad in tatters and stood with empty hands, would maintain the dignity, elegance, and culture that have crowned them through generations. The more they become disrobed of their wealth to a greater advantage do they reveal the symmetry and beauty of their character" (p. 174). Her descriptions combine the sublimity of Homer with the clatter of a cotton mill. One chapter begins: "With slender pallid fingers creeping from the bosom of night, Dawn, with a silver thread fluttering on a breeze, took up the first stitch in the warp and woof of another day" (p. 254). And melodrama chokes her plot: beautiful daughters are dispossessed, faithful servants die of broken hearts, and loyal old Confederate generals lose their homes to carpetbaggers.

These are, of course, the standard trappings of the Magnolia School of Reconstruction fiction. But *A Son of Carolina*, in spite of all its predictable sentimentality, still manages to give an old theme an extra twist. South Carolina literature, needless to say, has never been kind to carpetbaggers. J. W. Daniel, in *A Maid of the Foot-Hills* (1905), calls them "fanatics and inhuman vampires" who were bleeding "the prostrate State." Thornwell Jacobs calls them "Maggots" and "Vultures" in *When for the Truth* (1950). In *Manse Jolly* (1973), Garet W. Earle credits the carpetbaggers in South Carolina with little more than land theft and political corruption. His hero shoots dozens of them in the stomach, thereby allowing them a few moments to think about their thieving ways as they die.

Carolina literature has mounted numerous attacks of this sort, and Mrs. Stovall's is one of the most uncompromising among them. Moreover, it is one of the most subtle. Her invaders from the North, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Levering, take over the home of General Manning on the Battery in Charleston as a vacation retreat. At first they seem to be

remarkably kind and civil Yankees. They move with some grace in Charleston society, and they hire the Manning servants, treating them with a kindness and affection second only to that of the Mannings themselves. They even adopt an infant girl, Gypta, the child of a Manning servant woman and a well known Southern planter. Gypta, unaware of her mixed blood, spends most of her childhood in New York, is educated in Europe, and then makes a sensational debut into Gotham society. Every bachelor in the city is passionate about her, and the girl is totally happy.

But here the story of Yankee generosity begins its turn to a study of Northern treachery. Mr. Levering gets hopelessly in debt to a New York bachelor, Emon Handel Hamlin of Fifth Avenue. Though twice her age, Hamlin is madly in love with Gypta and promises to cancel the debt if Levering can persuade his daughter to accept a proposal of marriage. Gypta swears she would rather hang, but because she is faithful to her adoptive parents, even as they abuse her, she becomes engaged to Hamlin. Thus Mrs. Stovall begins her indictment. She has shaped the familiar story about conflicts between parents and daughters over fiancés into an attack on carpetbaggers. Gypta is as much the slave of the Leverings as her forebears were slaves to the Mannings; the Leverings have freed her from what might have been a life of servitude only to impose on her a bondage far worse. Gypta, who is still unaware of her Black blood, emphasizes the irony: she argues with her father, "Am I no more to you than the slaves down South who used to be put on the block and sold to the highest bidder?" (p. 196). She realizes that she has "been well groomed and decked out as a mere chattel—a piece of merchandise" (p. 107). She laments, "I'm sold! sold! sold!" (p. 109). Then she begins to accept her misery: "Nobody will know I'm a convict, because the bars will be on the inside, right over my heart, and not on the outside; no one will see them and nobody will care, in fact. It's nobody's business if I choose to wear the heavy bars across my breast and heart and be a social convict" (p. 128). Obviously, it is much better to be a happy Manning slave in Charleston than a partner in a loveless marriage in New York.

Mrs. Stovall, though, is still not done with Yankee treachery. One day in the park, Gypta is rescued from some thin ice by an adept skater, Barron Baxter, a noble South Carolinian who has come North to try to make enough money to restore his plantation home which was ruined during the War. The author fails to tell us where this son of Carolina learned to ice skate, but we do learn that he falls madly in love with

Gypta, who reciprocates passionately. The Leverings, when they learn that Gypta plans to forsake them and Emon Handel Hamlin for young Barron, tell the Carolinian of the girl's mixed blood, knowing the Southerner will not marry a woman of Black ancestry. Barron, in spite of his consuming love for her, cannot marry Gypta, and it rends his heart to tell her, "My poor girl, if you could but understand all as I do, you would not censure me so. Do you know that my marriage to you would be the prelude to the disgrace of a name that has given honor and lustre to the proudest State in the Union" (p. 235). Gypta's response emphasizes again the treachery of her adoptive parents: "I swear to you I'd rather my own people had kept me, and put me in the cotton-fields where I belonged than that I should now endure this dreadful humiliation . . ." (p. 245). Barron and Gypta are both ruined. He gives up all his ambitions and drifts back to South Carolina where he languishes in the ruined mansion that was his family home. Gypta despairs of happiness and leaves New York to seek out her own people.

Back in Charleston, she learns of Barron's presence in the low country. She avoids him, of course, but then she overhears a plot by some freedmen to do Barron in. She rushes to his side, and she and her true love fight it out with the killers. Barron, a crack shot, disperses the attackers; but Gypta, ever the innocent victim, takes a stray bullet in the heart, dying tragically and slowly in the arms of the only man she loves while he weaves a cross of her favorite flower, jessamine.

Thus Mrs. Stovall demonstrates the villainy of carpetbaggers. Her story, with sentiments as old-fashioned as its prose, indicts those invaders from the North not as horse thieves and corrupt politicians but as people who interfere with the course of true love itself. Even the best of them, she says, even those who seem to mean well, are inevitably corrupt. They simply cannot give over their abuse of good Southerners, Black and White; they simply cannot stop causing misery by promising a happiness and freedom that do not exist. And it may be that this unique approach to an old theme should give Genie Orchard Stovall a place in the history of South Carolina's Reconstruction literature.

MY FATHER, ON LOSING HIS VISION

My father, on losing his vision,
lay each day in the small spare room
of the house of his second wife,

completely inept at light
or how it fractured
whenever I visited him.

Once, it burned for him
in too radiant a form, as a dream,
and we, encumbering, were left.

But that strength
and resource it takes to sustain
eluded him. Not fresh wife nor new life

could halt the diminishing.
When he asked that I visit him,
I carefully worded the brightness,

resurrecting his vision
in mine.
And each day, as his eyes

came to share my sight,
I wondered what might have been
if my father had once kept that light

or source
I suspect we were, a mistaken
sacrifice.

—BENNIE LEE SINCLAIR

AFTER READING THERE ARE NO PAID GRAVE DIGGERS IN KELLER, ILLINOIS

Do they hum in rhythm as they dig,
these straight young volunteers
who come with farm shovels
plucked in midair from birth chores
to send burying dirt
flying
thudding
rising
a rounding heap beside
each crudely measured hole?

And what of the old bent men of Keller
whose shovels now
only lean and wait
against grey sagging sheds?
Do they dread their own deaths less—
aware that in their town
cold resistant earth is gentled
by the sweat of friends?

—GRACE FREEMAN

LOVE POEM

Late October
apples weigh the trees so low
so ripe
I used to tap them into bags
from horseback.
Winds chafed my face
like cold leather on thighs,
strangely burning.
Now, in November,
a new wind comes.
I feel myself rising to meet it,
loosening.
You twist me like fruit
from the stem
to your mouth your body.
Outside your window
clouds move through moonlight
and I am still falling
falling.

—SUSAN BARTELS

THE MAN IN THE STALL

GRADY W. BALLENGER

Henley was simply ecstatic when he discovered the small men's room hidden in the rear corner of the fourth floor of the Law Building. The room, hardly more than a closet, was tiled in small crystalline white octagons bordered in black. It had one wooden stall stained dark mahogany and a washstand finished in fine brown marble. The basin had worn to a dimpled antique cream, not pitted or flecked, though with a shadow of green copper beneath the hot water tap. Its faucets had spoked silver handles. Above a small bevelled mirror a bulb hung in a brown burlap shade, and a vague light filtered through the semicircular window in a niche near the ceiling. It was a pleasant, dark, and silent room.

The fluorescent light in the huge men's lounge on the first floor had always made Henley shudder. With ten metal stalls enamelled ochre and long row of stand-up urinals, the lounge seemed especially forbidding, like a factory bent only on efficiency. The lavatories were shallow and new, maliciously designed to spray the first gushes of water all over his tie. Plastic dispensers, hanging like rotting fruit, dripped an oily green soap smelling faintly of turpentine.

What Henley most disliked, however, was sliding past a row of stalls, nervously leaning against the doors to find one unoccupied. And of course the toilet seats—those obscene black institutional seats. Henley was quite certain he was not the only person who worried about who had sat there before him. When the plastic was cold, shivers turned his toes. But when he plopped his bare rump on a lukewarm seat, he'd close his eyes tight, until all he could see was black germs swimming on a red highlighted background.

Henley's sense of decorum was especially strong. He always tried to be as quiet as possible, concealing sounds he thought primitive. But invariably someone a stall or two away would go about it clumsily, hardly covering the most obvious animal noises with faint newspaper rattlings. Even worse, at times stalls on both sides would be occupied, and with burps and groans and strains surrounding him, Henley would have to clench his teeth to keep from gagging.

As if that were not enough, he would emerge from the stall, feeling somewhat embarrassed and ready to return quickly to his work, only to find someone waiting to go in after him. Especially during the busy lunch hour, he dreaded opening the door on a fellow lawyer, or worse the

brattish Ivy League intern, nephew of one of the senior partners, who always gave Henley a slick pudgy smile and a supercilious hello. What could Henley say? Should he try to cover up what he'd been about by cheerfully ignoring it? Should he shake hands? All in all it was a horrible experience, and Henley was overjoyed to find the small room tucked next to the janitor's closet on the fourth floor.

In over a month he had met no one there. He took his time and often even enjoyed himself. Closed in the darkened stall, he felt secure. In fact, he often did his best thinking in the stall, discussing with himself small points of law and the way to present them to the senior partners.

There was always a fat roll of tissue. One day he marked the roll, and the next morning he discovered it had not been used. The mirror, though tarnished in spots, showed specks of lint, which proved it was periodically cleaned. The soap was a delight. The bar was never cracked or soiled; it lathered well and left a clean, masculine smell.

On impulse he found the janitor's name and left him five dollar bills in a plain envelope. It was a small price to pay for a private restroom.

An especially small price for quiet, since things went badly for Henley at home. Some weeks ago his wife had actually snarled at him for not demanding three weeks, instead of two, for vacation. His children ignored him.

Every evening he would come home at seven. His train was always late, except when he was exactly on schedule. Then he'd reach the platform just in time to pound on the automatic doors as the train pulled away. His wife would be waiting when the next train pulled into the suburban station. She would toss one of her magazines onto the pile crowding his side of the front seat. Then she would glare at him.

"The train," he would say weakly.

At dinner she slid an aluminum-foiled dish in front of him and stuck a fork upright in it. Removing the fork and placing it properly on the left, he peeled back the foil. They always had spinach quiche on Thursdays. The children had macaroni and cheese in small animal-shaped casseroles.

"Hey you," the littlest one cried, margarine dripping down his nose. "Give me some more chocolate."

Henley looked across at his wife. Her black hair was frosted silver, and her eyebrows were drawn straight across in the new cosmopolitan style. She glared back. "What do you expect?" she seemed to say.

THE MAN IN THE STALL

67

"Never call your father 'hey you,'" he explained slowly.

"Yeah?" the littlest one answered, wiping margarine from his nose and smearing it across his flannel pajama top. "Give me some more chocolate."

Henley tensed; he knew what would happen next. The littlest one took several spoonfuls of chocolate and stirred them into his rhinoceros bowl of macaroni. Henley had to leave the table.

Some nights when the kids were building cold war fortifications out of card tables in his bedroom, Henley would slip their portable TV into the laundry. Sitting on the warm vibrating dryer, he would turn the volume off, and with the kid's spring gun, he would shoot rubber-tipped darts at the people in the silvery television world. Talk shows were his favorites—and of course advertisements. He was a good shot.

With life turning sour at home, the little restroom on the fourth floor was all the more precious to him. When he walked in one August morning, in fact, to find the light over the wash basin turned on, he was crushed. He stood still. The door to the stall was closed. He persuaded himself to relax, walked over to the basin, and flicked on the cold water. The soap was dry—an encouraging sign. He fumbled for his breath freshener and dropped it on the tile floor. When he bent down, he could see two fat white knees and gray trousers rolled down around the feet of a man sitting in his stall.

It was a trying moment. Summoning all his professional poise, Henley washed his hands and took a look at his face.

The eyes were a bit closely set, their grayish-green perhaps too subdued, the nose a little too narrow. But it was not a bad face. Of course one would hardly expect to find it on the cover of *Time*; it was not a spectacular face, or even a face evidencing great character. Still there was something distinctive about it. Henley liked to think it was the notch at the base of his earlobe. When the light struck it in a certain way, he fancied the notched ear made him look strong, even gruff, like a secret agent, or pirate, or perhaps an outlaw of the old West.

He cut off the water, checked his watch again, and began whistling. There was no sound from the stall, and that, at least, made him happy. Perhaps, he reasoned, the man merely needed prodding.

Sometimes tapping his foot, sometimes coughing in the crumpled handkerchief his wife refused to iron, Henley spent a desperate half-hour waiting. He simply could not humiliate himself by returning to the main floor men's room.

Finally he decided to speak. "Wouldn't you know it," he began, cautiously avoiding too forward an approach, "the courts ruled in favor

of the Krishna people." Krishna converts worked the station near the Law Building especially hard. Not a morning passed without a stringy-haired teenage girl and a bald college student, in saffron robes smelling of curry and sandalwood, cornering Henley with their red carnations and cartoon literature. All the lawyers complained about them.

But the man in the stall was silent.

"I'm the first, of course, for free speech," Henley offered, just in case. The man still did not answer.

"Well, either way I suppose there'll be appeals and more appeals." Henley bit his lip. It seemed to him that he had closed the conversation without giving the man in the stall a fair chance to say anything. The very least he could do was to wait patiently for a few more minutes.

After half-an-hour he began to worry about the afternoon conference. If he came in late, shuffling behind the armchairs of the senior partners, everyone would stare at him. The nephew intern would smile.

Suddenly he realized how stupid he had been. The man in the stall was obviously sick! "Are you all right in there?" he asked quickly.

No answer.

He walked to the door, tapped his fingernails across it a few times. It was not locked. He pulled it open, saw the man sitting there, said "Excuse me," and shut it in one smooth motion.

The man was not well. That was obvious in the brief moment that Henley saw him. He was overweight. His face, bent forward at the neck with his chin propped on his chest, was fat, so fat that his eyes were lost in a mass of flesh. Strangely enough, though Henley could not find the man's eyes, he saw the fine blue veins running wildly across his slightly red face.

The man wore a respectable pin-stripe suit. His arms hung limply, one draped across the tissue holder, the other thrown over his lap with the pudgy hand dangling at the knee. The legs were bloated, and afterwards Henley felt that they had been an icy blue, though he could not remember seeing the separate blue veins there.

He felt especially bad about barging in on a sick man. He thought of leaving a note, to apologize, to explain. But even if he had stationery, he could hardly push a note under the door of the stall. He had been too crude already.

Finally he said, "If you need something in there, I'd be glad to help." He meant it sincerely; but listening to himself in that still, dark room, his offer seemed clumsy.

All afternoon Henley felt sick. He had missed lunch and could not eat, because he was beginning to feel constipated.

THE MAN IN THE STALL

69

He took a cab home early, surprised his wife who was just throwing the children's dinner on the table. Without eating, he went to bed. He was sick and could not sleep. He rolled in bad dreams, half awake. Suddenly he heard his wife's inevitable magazine slap onto the floor; he felt her cold feet breaking under the sheets. He imagined her sound asleep, the oatmeal flannel nightgown open down the front. He imagined running his hands up and down her soft warm stomach. He imagined her feet warming the whole bed. He woke in sweat and saw that it was quarter of six. The prune juice his mother-in-law had left on her yearly visit did not help his stomach cramps. He felt sick.

At 10:30 he took his morning break and walked with pain up the stairs to the fourth floor. The light above the basin was on, and the man was still in the stall.

Oddly enough Henley felt relieved. "I thought you might have gone," he said, catching his breath. Today I'll have to be more careful, he reminded himself.

The man in the stall was silent.

"I say the wrong thing often enough I suppose," Henley continued. "Not that I can't be eloquent when the occasion demands."

Henley leaned against the wash basin and thought of the fine blue veins racing beneath the reddened skin of the man in the stall. He worried about the man's fat thighs squeezed tightly on the black seat. A sudden urge possessed him, to enter the stall again and ask if he might help, if there was something he could do. But he thought better of it, turned to the mirror and eyed the distinctive notch in his earlobe.

"The others were jealous," he added, still staring into the mirror. "A professor, you see, compared me to Bryan—William Jennings—said I had courtroom presence. But those jealous brats laughed; they only wanted to talk themselves into politics and rich wives." Henley stopped, thought through all he had just said, and it seemed longwinded and a bit too personal. He polished a smudge off the mirror. "Back to the grind," he called out, as he carefully opened the outer door.

At lunch he talked to the man in the stall again. Somehow he got around to talking about his wife. He described his first date with her—a sorority dinner where she was being honored for a cooking award she had won from a national magazine. Her specialty was preparing dishes in distinctive shapes—her favorite, Henley noted, was salmon mousse jelled in a fish mold with a lemon peel hook in its mouth. The salmon struggled through waves of garden lettuce.

Henley's mouth went dry, but he kept talking about his wife, until the strangest thing happened. He was describing a clever anagram she

had frosted on a cake for their engagement party, and he realized that he had forgotten her middle name. Of course he knew her first and maiden names. But had he been married so long that he had forgotten her full unmarried name?

There was an awkward moment when he almost fell apart. Of all things in heaven and earth, why in that pleasant conversation did he have to entangle himself in so small, so unimportant a matter as his wife's name. The restroom of the fourth floor was painfully quiet—even the periodic blare of ambulances was muffled. Henley washed his hands, threw cold water in his face. The man in the stall did not rush him.

Finally Henley said, "Have I told you about my kids?" He gave their full names, exact birthdays, and grades at school. He even offered an anecdote about the littlest one: one evening Henley had opened the washer to find three mangled kittens. The littlest one had thrown them in with the dirty clothes after Henley complained about their fleas. His kids never ceased to amaze him.

Henley felt his story was especially successful. He hadn't come across so effectively, in fact, since college. He had managed an impossibly awkward moment with triumph; he had made an impression. Whistling, he took the elevator to the first floor and walked resolutely into the men's room. As he stepped from the stall, he recognized the pudgy face of the Ivy League nephew. The intern's name escaped him, so he slapped him sharply on the back and unfurled his arm before the open stall and gurgling toilet. "There you are, old boy," he said. For the first time since Henley had met him at an afternoon conference, the nephew intern seemed dumbfounded.

After straightening his desk, Henley walked out of the Law Building, whistling past a Krishna girl who stuck a red carnation in his lapel. He brushed several drops of water from his collar, stuck the carnation behind his ear, and walked on, deaf to the girl's pleas.

He caught an early train home and kissed his wife. Kissed her near the lips. She started, dropping a stack of magazines she was filing, and rubbed her lips with her fingers. Still dazed, she called the children to their sandwiches and sent them to their room to watch TV. Then she fed Henley lasagne, miraculously boot-shaped, a tiny Italian flag tooth-picked at Rome. She had entered the dish in a contest in Italian cooking, and the first prize, which she wanted badly, was three weeks for two in Rome.

Henley ate heartily. She watched him closely. "They gave you the extra week off?" she asked. He'd manage the week somehow, Henley

THE MAN IN THE STALL

71

answered, and explained how he had mimicked the nephew intern's cocksure smile. His wife seemed puzzled.

In bed that night, as a particularly grand gesture, he threw his leg over her stiff body. She started. "What's her name?" she asked point-blank.

"Whose name?"

"This new woman." She pulled away, while Henley thought for a moment. His wife actually imagined him capable of entertaining new women! The man in the stall would be surprised.

"What's your middle name?" he suddenly asked.

"My maiden name?"

"No, your real middle name."

"I don't have one," she said. "What made you think I did?"

"So that's it," he said triumphantly. He turned and kissed her, this time squarely on the lips. She pressed back with her body, hesitant at first and then with force.

"It's even better than I had imagined," he told himself, turning to sleep.

WARLOCK!

Your birthdate, October 31st,
 Proves it: I can't break your spell.
 I've worn garlic around my neck
 And attracted some weird Italians.
 I tried the dead cat and was almost
 Seduced by a man from the SPCA.
 I lead no charmed life.
 I've learned to avoid odd numbered days
 And to stay inside during full moons
 (I've heard you howling under my window).
 The corner store carries no wooden
 Stakes or silver bullets;
 My defense has weakened
 I am no longer cool,
 Calm
 Or collected.

Someone has stolen my broom.

—BENITA F. BRUCE

HOWARD HUNTER (1904-1975)

Johnny Yount, tough young writer,
tried and tried to swim underwater
the cove at Folger Street. He
arm-wrestled and won, hunted,
fished stark New England woods,
hiked the Carolina mountains, strode
through the best trout streams,
kicked in doors, but

I saw Howard Hunter, grey at 60-plus,
Dean of Arts and Sciences,
turn young Yount ass-over
with an Indian leg-throw and laugh to shreds
the Steadmans' hardwood floor.

Who could be bitter at such losing?

The heat of Howard's body
sometimes steamed his glasses, and
his spirit rose like hot earth plowed.

I never played poker with him,
but I'd guess he didn't win at it—too open,
too intent to swallow life and friends.

Now, overthrown himself, he has left
their feet on wood and carpet, shuffling
under tables, flailing arcs in the air,
their faces left to bluff and call.

—ROBERT W. HILL

ELEGY FOR HOWARD

Pruned but live the tendrils twine
among the lids and lobes,

but more than the touch
piercing the lens,
and bulbs he set beneath the earth
rising now in keening blooms;

watered by his gift,
the nodes of good are green,

but the shears are in the ground.

—SKIP EISINGER

FOLLY BEACH, JANUARY, 1973

II. THE BEACHWALKER'S DOG

The weather will turn better today.
The beachwalker is out, stick point down,
a single bristle cleaning miles of sand.
Summertime athlete home for the cold
holidays, whistling for his dog
crested the duneside for a high perch to strut.

But the dog saw me, chaired out of surf's sight
and, certain of my admiration, posed.
All men should envy those disinterested eyes
ready to untie metaphysical knots
in their direct path to the object.
Should I fail here, I'll follow that dog to its home.

—GORDON LINDSTRAND

from THE BROKEN DOOR
An Autobiographical Fiction

MARK STEADMAN

I

My name is Nathaniel Louis Loftin, Jr.—“Nate” as my family called me. “Louis” was the name my father went by on formal occasions—though “Loft” is what people called him day by day (“Lawf” as we would say it). My mother also called him “Loft”.

Georgia, the state of Georgia, is the place where I was born and raised, and I am convinced that has caused my life to be more complicated than it might have been had I been born and raised in some other part of the country more up-to-the-mark and forward looking, and less inclined to brood. Certainly what goes on between a father and a son will always be complicated, even when love and the warmth of heart prevail. But in the South of my generation there were tangles in the web that could become unbearably intricate, and constrained my heart in a peculiar tightness and longing. Perhaps this is all just short-sightedness on my part, and I have not yet read out my lesson to its end. But at this moment I cannot see that my sons feel the warp and curve of distance from me that I felt from my father. And I never saw that he had ever felt it from his father before him. There was never any talk of a generation gap then, for our insights were limited and uninformed. And now—now we seem to understand each other, my sons and I, in a way that my father and I never did. Though I believe that he felt that solidarity with my grandfather, and perhaps with others who had gone before.

My father was a kind man. He really was. And I suppose he was generally liked about as much as anyone I have ever known. His family felt that way about him—I do not mean my sister and myself so much as I mean his own brothers and sisters—and they could be very demanding with each other. All the Loftins were shallow at the quick. Those of us who lived with him were extensions of himself, and he could be hard on us at times. We were never pals, he and I. But I respected him more than any man I have ever known. And I saw that everyone liked him—the people he worked with and our neighbors—and his own high-minded and independent sisters and brothers.

He was not an especially wise man, though he was quite intelligent, with quickness and a certain depth of understanding—I would not want to mischaracterize him nor give the wrong impression. But he was a

pleasant man to be around, considerate and kind and thoughtful, without being witless or dull. He laughed a great deal. And my mother worshipped the ground that he walked on. Which, to my mind, is a telling point.

He loved bird hunting, and during the season we could have eaten out of the barrel of his Fox ten gauge. Only he loved it for the sport and not the meat, and his job confined him to a certain degree. One year he did not bring in his deer, but there was only one that I remember. Two eight-point heads were mounted, and one hung on the dining room wall. And every spare closet in the house had at least one rack of antlers waiting to be put on a board.

He liked to fish, but was not especially good at it, as far as I could tell, though he never came home with an empty string. He was not a very patient man, and so he preferred the quickness of his gun.

He *was* a very good tennis player. And when golf became fashionable in Georgia, after Bobby Jones, he became a very good golfer. He was particularly deft and skillful with his hands, and he loved to work with wood. As a small child I would watch him making turnings on his lathe in the basement workshop. Later I read that in England there was a time when lathes were denied to everyone by royal edict, except for a few chosen artists, and the king himself. And what I recall of watching my father paring those sweet curves into humming blocks of hard maple and poplar makes that most understandable to me. It was like a show of magic, that transformation. My eyes were on a level with the wood, and I had to look up to my father where he stood under the hooded light, calm and full of purpose and absorbed as a wizard, with the skew, dull silver, moving like a wand in his hands.

Magic itself was another of my father's hobbies. Card tricks and color-changing handkerchiefs and escapes from manacles and chains. He had a cardboard box—the kind that new suits used to come in—that was filled with the illusions and tricks that he had accumulated. During the war he would sometimes give magic shows to raise money for the war effort. After he died, I claimed the box, and tried to make myself adept at his art. But I did not have the touch for it, and the things have gotten lost over the years.

By the standards against which I measured my own life, my father had lived in high adventure. He had done manly things.

Once he had knocked down another man who had insulted my mother. That was before they were married. My mother was the one who told me about it, because my father never talked about himself, and was not a raconteur in any case. He certainly never boasted.

"He always had a temper," my mother said. "Most people with any breeding do."

I do not have a temper, and the comparison I make with my father still shames me in that respect—though my mother only made that statement one time, and, it must be, over thirty-five years ago.

But the three events in his life that were told over and over again in the family, and which defined his manhood for me best, because they all involved pain and risk and had the taste of death in them, were the stories about the snake, and the railroad trestle, and the time he was shot in the leg by his friend.

My father was a civil engineer for the Georgia State Highway Department, and the first job he had was building bridges over the Savannah River where U. S. 17 comes into Port Wentworth out of South Carolina. The land is low and marshy, and part of the right-of-way went through what had been a rice plantation in the old days. Surveying the line, my father had to wade through the water and muck wearing hip boots, and he always went armed with a machete and a Smith and Wesson .32 carried in a flap-top holster because of the snakes. There were alligators too, and bears in the woods on the higher ground. But those were occasional menaces, while the snakes were always there—Eastern diamondback rattlesnakes that could measure seven feet from nose to button, and water moccasins the size of a bicycle inner tube. We have pictures of him with his weapons, in khaki riding breeches and high, lace-up boots, looking like Richard Harding Davis at San Juan Hill—except that my father had finer features and was a more handsome man than Richard Harding Davis. For years the machete followed us around in our moves through Georgia, propped in closets here and there. It had a blackened leather sheath, and a handle that looked like green mother-of-pearl. Though by the time I came along the blade was rusty and pitted.

One day when he was running the line through the marsh, he felt a tightness around his right thigh, and when he looked down, there was a water moccasin coiled around his leg. They were all over the place, and used to glide into the water ahead of the boat when my father took mother riding along the canals of the project. When my father saw the snake, he slid the machete out of its sheath "stealthily" (my mother's word), and cut off its head with one swipe. Not all the Tarzan pictures I saw in my childhood left me with such a vivid image as the one that I took to bed with me after my mother would tell that story—of my father cutting off the head of that snake with one hissing swipe of the green-handled machete. I could hear the sound of it in the dark air of my room.

The story about the railroad trestle—that was also something which happened while he was working on the Savannah River bridges. At the beginning, before the roads were in—the construction lasted for over two years—the survey party would drive to Port Wentworth, then ride handcars out the Coastline railroad tracks to the river. One night my father stayed late and was the last person there. When he started back across the trestle on the handcar, he heard the whistle of a train. It came down on him when he was right in the middle of the river, and he had to get off the handcar and hang from the ties while a freight train passed over the trestle. He had the transit with him—it was his responsibility—and he saved that, laying the folded legs of the tripod across the ties, and hanging from it like a horizontal bar. I could always see the handcar smashed by the locomotive and sailing into the air in a slow motion arc with my father hanging there above the black waters of the river while the train thundered by over him. I have seen that trestle a number of times from my father's bridges, with the sun going down red behind it, and the river slow as blood between the black patches of marsh. In my mind's eye there was also the small, spidery figure of my father, swinging in the air below the webbed frame of the trestle.

It was at an earlier time that he was shot in the leg. And, as I understood it, he was shot by the same Smith and Wesson revolver that I could see in the holster in the photographs of him, and which he kept wrapped in a green towel on the shelf in his bedroom closet in all the houses we lived in.

He had just bought the gun then, and was showing it to a friend. No one thought it was loaded, and the friend pointed it at my father's stomach. I suppose he gave my father a William S. Hart look, then he said, "Reach for the sky!" (My mother would be telling the story.) My father pushed his hand down. "Don't do that," he said. "Even if it's not loaded." Then, with my father and his friend both holding it, the gun went off, and the bullet went into my father's leg just below his knee. They carried him to a local doctor who couldn't find a place where the bullet had come out, and decided that it must have lodged in the bone, which, as it turned out, it had. So they put the tongue of his belt into my father's mouth for him to bite on, then they tied him to the table, and without anaesthetic the doctor ran a steel probe into my father's shin bone, while the friend who had shot him laid across his chest to hold him down. My mother always told the story, and the only statement that I ever remember my father making was a comment on how cold the probe had felt. "It was like a piece of hot ice in my leg," he said. "I bit off the end of my belt." They never got it out, the bullet, and he was buried with it still lodged in the marrow of his shin bone.

In the movies I saw bullets probed for any number of times. One scene that I remember with particular vividness was the time Anthony Quinn, as a Mexican bandit, cut a bullet out of his own thigh in *The Ox Bow Incident*. I thought it must have been like my father's experience, but it lacked my father's comment about the coldness of the probe raking inside his shin for the bullet of that .32 pistol, which I could sometimes talk him into taking down off the shelf and showing to me, and, once, letting me hold it in my hand.

I thought that those were all wonderful, manly things, and they showed my father to me in a way that I could never lose sight of, no matter how often we might disagree later.

But my memories of him were not all manly and grim. There was more to him than that.

He loved to hear a joke well told, though he could not tell them well himself. And he enjoyed giving shows of magic for the family. He also did a wonderful imitation of Charlie Chaplin's hobbling walk. Sometimes he would dress like Charlie Chaplin to do it. That was always private, an entertainment for the family only. My father was a dignified man, but with enough of the world's sadness in him to appreciate a buffoon, and even, on occasion, to be one himself. Once I saw him in the bedroom that he shared with my mother, practicing the Chaplin walk in front of his mirror. He took his responsibilities seriously, and he always wanted to be ready when the time came.

Charlie Chaplin was his favorite movie star, and he never missed one of his pictures. When he went, he would insist that the rest of us go with him. The first picture show that I remember seeing was *Modern Times*. It frightened me when Charlie got caught in the train of gears, and I do not recall laughing myself. But I do remember hearing the laughter of my father in the darkened theater. It was ready and open, but high-pitched. Mine is a good deal like it.

Those are all bright memories.

But there is another, darker side to the memory of my father—the way he felt about race. The tamped down black third of Southern humanity that he referred to, with an unconscious sense of delicacy, as “colored people,” deferring to their own sense of propriety and choice. It is the thing most likely to be misunderstood by people who see it only in a quick, flat way, and who have the happiness to feel no blood connection with it.

I never heard him use the word “nigger,” though it was certainly not a word that was interdicted for Southern whites, even the most

from THE BROKEN DOOR: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FICTION 79

aristocratic and blood proud Southern whites—men and women. I have read, more than once, that “nigger” was a hard word that truly self-respecting white people never used. But that was not my experience. And I am sure that there were occasions now and then when my father used it too. Only I never heard him use it myself.

Feelings ran particularly high during the nineteen sixties, and if my father had been alive then, I might have heard him use the word. But he wasn't. For my father died in 1946, when I was fifteen years old.

I loved my father, not because he was good to me as his son. He was that, but he was also unkind and willful and demanding of me. I loved my father because the feeling was on me before I was old enough to see the ways in which he was wrong. I saw him hanging like a spider from the black web of the trestle above the black water too soon, and with the skew in his hands at the spinning lathe. And he made me laugh with his Charlie Chaplin walk. When the time came for me to be able to make my judgement, it was already too late for the judgement to be made.

Some authoritative books say that by the time the foetus drops into light and air it has already been formed as what it will become. Others say that the first five years of life are irreversible, and I was much later than that. But this is no theory that I am talking about. This is a simple record of what actually and irrevocably happened.

And my father was not the only one to whom this would apply, just as he was not, finally, the only one I loved or respected. There were others. Great Uncle Bonneau, who put the rope across the limb. And Uncle Polk, who might have. All those men of cruel blood, and women too. I have known and loved them for the other sides they showed me. Carrying the dark spot like a breastplate of horn beneath the blue serge vests hung with gold watch chains—under the pet beads stranded and wound, and the smell of lavender cologne.

In *Cat's Cradle*, Kurt Vonnegut says that his book will not be understood by people who cannot understand that a useful religion can be founded on lies. It struck me when I read it as a very Southern thing to say. And also as something to be taken at face value. Paradox is a central fact of my life, and I do not think that I will ever separate it out into light and dark. Though I could not stop trying if I wanted to.

So what follows is a record of my evolution. The autobiography of a decent Southern white man perhaps. For I was no more vicious than my good father, whom I loved, and whom I cannot forswear.

II

Uncle Polk Ashley was my father's favorite relative. He never came out and said that. My father was not one to make estimates of others out loud. I believe that if I tried hard enough, I could remember all the opinions about people that he ever expressed in the time I knew him. I mean that quite literally. But he was always at ease and relaxed when Uncle Polk was in the house. My father was least guarded at those times.

For my father, Uncle Polk felt something like adoration. He was a more demonstrative man, and always outspoken. The two of them had been friends for quite a long time.

When my grandfather Loftin died in 1912, Uncle Polk and Aunt Sister, my father's oldest sister Cecelia, had taken my father into their house in Savannah and had raised him the rest of the way to manhood. He had been fourteen at the time. Because of this, Uncle Polk had taken a father's interest in the success that my father was making of his life, but in affection they were more like brothers, or very good friends.

Uncle Polk's people had been from Columbus, Georgia, where John Ashley, Uncle Polk's father, had owned land and slaves. After the Civil War, John Ashley had stayed on in Columbus for awhile, selling off little pieces of land bit by bit to pay taxes on the rest of it, until finally he saw what a losing game that was. So he sold out what was left in 1869 and took the money and went to Texas with his family. He bought a ranch somewhere around San Antonio, and Uncle Polk was born there in 1880, the last of ten children by John Ashley's second wife, Claudine.

"Daddy went out on the veranda the night I was born, and there was a panther ready to spring through the bedroom window." Uncle Polk was a great embellisher of stories. At this point in the panther story, he would hold up his hands, palms out, beside his head, to imitate the claws of the panther getting ready to spring.

"Daddy quick-drew his Colt and shot him dead." He used his hand, pointing the finger, to illustrate the pistol. After that he would hang his meerschaum pipe in his mouth and finish the story talking through his teeth. "The shot scared Mama, and she birthed me right there." He made some kind of gesture, using both hands, to illustrate the birthing, but I don't remember how it went.

Uncle Polk liked to tell stories, and was very dramatic about the way he presented them. Even people who loved him thought the stories were about forty percent lies, but he would tell them over and over, repeating the same little details from one telling to another, year after year, without expanding on them. If he was a liar, he was an artful one, and he was at least truly interested in the lies he told. So nobody was ever able to

be sure exactly what to believe. But, of course, nobody really cared one way or the other, as long as the stories were interesting and well told. I never had any doubt that Uncle Polk was absolutely truthful where money and honor were concerned. He would never lie where profit was involved.

My father loved to hear Uncle Polk talk. And though he must have heard the same stories over and over he never got tired of hearing the way Uncle Polk would tell them. I certainly never remember any of the family who ever challenged him while he was actually telling a story, but guessing about the basic truth of what he said was, I suppose, some kind of debt we felt we owed to the idea of honesty.

He had left West Texas, Uncle Polk had, just after the tidal wave hit Galveston (which he always pronounced "Gal-VES-ton") around 1901. I think he was really there—in Galveston—but never did settle it absolutely. It wasn't of much consequence one way or the other.

"The National Guard went in in boats," he said. "Rowed out across the bay along the railroad causeway. We could see the tops of the spans sticking out above the water." I read up about it later. Eleven feet of water went over Galveston when the wave hit. "We had to soak our handkerchiefs in sea water and tie them around our faces." He would lean forward in confidentiality. "You could smell the bodies clear across the bay. We didn't dig some of them out until Thanksgiving." The wave hit Galveston in September.

He told about shooting looters, and digging out the bodies. "They'd cut off a finger to get a ring. Cut an ear off to get a trinket. Half the bodies we found had their teeth knocked out." He always implied that it was the work of the Mexicans. "'Mining mouths' we called it," he said. Thinking about it would bring lines of indignation to his brow, and he jutted out his chin. "'Mining mouths.'" He would say it again.

He also claimed that he had played fullback for Texas A & M. Later, when I knew more about football than he did, I became sure that he lied about that. Though, as always, he knew a certain number of significant details. "We wore a rubber nose protector that pulled down out of our helmets." He would cup his hand over his nose, the fingers together with the tips touching his forehead between his eyebrows. "We held it in our mouth. At halftime they would bring on a washtub of oatmeal water—water with oatmeal soaking in it. We would sop it up with a sponge and suck on the sponge."

He also claimed he had been a sergeant in the AEF under Pershing. "I should have stayed in the army. No better career for a young man. Gravy. I'd have been retired twenty years ago if I had stayed in the army." I think he was in the army, but I don't believe he was ever a

sergeant. It was an especially suspicious story, because I don't remember him telling it before my father died. My father would have known if it was true. Also he only told it once. He was giving me advice when I was trying to decide what to do at the time I was graduating from college. He had just retired himself, and the choice he had made was on his mind I'm sure. I never saw his uniform. Not even a photograph of it. And our family kept uniforms. My father had been a naval cadet during the First World War, and his midi blouses were rolled and stored in a foot locker in the basement. Also there were a great many photographs of him in his navy uniforms.

All of this, finally, was neither here nor there. It was an incontrovertible fact, which all the family verified, that Uncle Polk had been a true and authentic cowboy for the first twenty-one years of his life. Nothing could have impressed me more than that.

After the tidal wave in 1900, Uncle Polk came East to see his father's people, riding a meandering course so that he could stand and look at land that Ashleys had come to rest on at one time or another. Some of the places he stopped still held Ashleys, but most of them did not. None were left in Columbus, and the house his father had owned was gone, burned down unoccupied in 1894.

"The downtown part of Columbus is on land my daddy owned," he said. "Seventeen Ashleys in the telephone book, and every one of them niggers." He shook his head. "There's not a white Ashley left in Georgia."

After he left Columbus, he rode to Coatesburg, South Carolina, to see my grandmother, who had been an Ashley before she married. His father's first cousin.

Maybe it was all the green things growing, and the trees, after the dust and alkali of west Texas. Whatever it was, he never went back. Sold his pony and went to work for my grandfather at the dry goods store.

In 1901 and 1902 he courted a young widow named Alicia Poindexter. I heard him tell the story once, and it made him so emotional that he ended up crying until his nose bled. She died shortly after he married my father's oldest sister, Cecelia, in 1903. At the time he told the story he seemed to think that it was grief that had killed Alicia Poindexter, and that he was to blame.

He was sitting in our kitchen, and it must have been 1946 or 1947. I was still in high school, but it was after my father had died.

"That's over forty years ago, Ashley," said my mother. "Good grief!" She could be very nostalgic herself, but she didn't have much patience with sentiment that was totally useless.

Uncle Polk was, as I said, my father's favorite relative, but when I was a small child, he certainly was not mine. He had no idea how to deal with children, and I was terrified when he was in the house. He was much bigger than my father, with thick white hair and hard blue eyes. His mouth and lower jaw looked like they had been made in a foundry.

The pictures I saw of him as a younger man, when he still had his natural teeth, looked somewhat better, but not much. There is no doubt that the false teeth he wore added something mechanical to his face. He had had all of them pulled at one time in 1925.

"All at once. All at once. The dentist wanted to string it out, but I told him to do it all at once."

That was the way Uncle Polk moved when he felt the time had come. Perhaps it was even a form of cowardice. My Aunt Sister had her hair bobbed when it was the style in the twenties, and when Uncle Polk came in off the road and saw her, he went down to the barber shop and had his head shaved. Absolutely shaved. He was a quick and emphatic man.

"I just told him, 'Get 'em out of there, Doctor Pull'em. Out! I've hurt long enough.'" He came home from the dentist with his new teeth in his mouth and ate corn on the cob for supper. Aunt Sister verified that.

The pipe he smoked was a bent-stem meerschaum, which he held in his hand to make gestures when he talked, but which he put into his mouth to laugh. Holding the pipe hardened his laughter and filled it with menace—coming through those teeth that were too white to be real, clamped on the amber stem of the meerschaum.

I think I was actually afraid that some time he would take the pipe out of his mouth and bite me. He looked like he could have eaten a keg of nails. And my father loved him too much to tell him not to do it.

The pipe never did strike me as an affectation with Uncle Polk, though I later came to think of pipe smokers as people who tried to make the world take their sucking for wisdom. My father smoked cigars, and Uncle Polk would smoke them with him when he came to the house. But I don't think his salary was high enough for him to do it all the time.

To some degree smoking the pipe must have been insincere, even for Uncle Polk, he made such a principle of it. And he smoked cigarettes on the sly. But even when I caught him redhanded, he would deny that he had been doing it. The case he had built against them was so strong, "Poison," he would say. "Pure poison."

Actually he thought they were effeminate. He would as soon have been caught in a dress, or wearing a beret, as smoking a cigarette.

His eyes were also quite formidable, menacing enough in them-

selves. All of the people in my immediate family had eyes that were shades of brown. My sister and I and my mother all had medium brown eyes. My father's eyes were hazel, or gray. And my Grandmother Hoskins—my mother's mother, who lived with us—her eyes were so dark as to be almost black. Perhaps I was not accustomed to light-eyed people. And Uncle Polk's eyes had the true northern ice in them—pale as a glass-eyed pointer dog. They seemed to confront the world and come out to meet it, where the eyes I was used to let the world come to them.

I have always felt a little ashamed that my eyes are brown, and have envied the elegance and hardness of blue-eyed people.

I grew to love Uncle Polk, after my father died, and I had taken my father's place in the family. The way that Uncle Polk treated me—shifting to me the admiration he had felt for my father—well, there wasn't anything else to do but bask in it. I was only fifteen at the time.

If my father gave me a direction toward manhood which I could conceive in my mind's eye, Uncle Polk was the living example. I wanted to take my father's place with him in a desperate way. Maybe I knew that his anger would be implacable, and was afraid of that. I believe that I thought of him as a man who was capable of killing. Probably because he had been a cowboy, but also because of the mouth and eyes.

Perhaps he mellowed as he got older, or I saw into him more. I truly loved him at the last, feeling I could stand toe to toe with him the way my father had, whom he had also raised.

Uncle Polk did not live the life of a killer by any means. He was a conductor for the Pullman Company, and he claimed that he hated every minute of the thirty-three years he worked for them. When he retired, they gave him a lapel pin with the Pullman emblem on it. He was furious about it, and when he came home from the banquet, he took the pin down to the marsh and threw it as far as he could.

In the beginning, as I came to understand, railroading had a certain ambience—a status—and Uncle Polk thought of himself as having a position. But by the time I came to know him, the glamor had worn off, so I just thought of him as having a job. He couldn't stand riding on trains, and when they air conditioned the cars, the mechanical air (which is what he called it) gave him migraine headaches and made his nose bleed.

But there was something in him that sought out pain, and he certainly admired fortitude. I don't think he ever contemplated quitting his job and trying to find another one. For one thing, he had to support

Aunt Sister and his three daughters. But I believe that the work itself was constitutionally agreeable for him, because it was a thorn in his side. Anguish, particularly when it was suffered for someone else—preferably a woman—that, I am sure, was what he felt to be the proper lot of a man in this world. He was proud of the headaches, and the bloody handkerchiefs he would show to my mother when he visited us on Sundays after my father's death. He didn't complain about the job often. But, when he did, the complaints came all the way up from his shiny black Pullman shoes.

"What kind of a god damned job is that? Bossing niggers and staying up all night hearing people fart in their sleep." Uncle Polk was the only person I ever remember who could talk obscenity out loud in our house. It seemed to amuse my father, and my mother put up with it. She loved Uncle Polk for his devotion to my father. "I've been all over the god damned country. But I never *went* anywhere. You know?"

In 1937 we were living in Decatur, Georgia, just outside of Atlanta, and Uncle Polk was on the Central of Georgia night train from Savannah to Atlanta. He worked two nights on, then one night off, leaving Savannah at eleven o'clock in the evening, and getting back to Savannah the morning of the day after. His schedule put him into Atlanta one Sunday out of the month, and on that Sunday he would come out to the Decatur house and spend the day, eating Sunday dinner with us. I don't know when he slept.

After dinner we would sit on the side porch in the wicker furniture that my mother had painted with apple green enamel, and Uncle Polk would talk and smoke his pipe. I remember that apple-green furniture. My childhood was a time of pale colors, and my mother was always conscious of style. Pale green, and pink with yellow in it—the color of women's underwear—those were the colors that predominated in our house, though my mother did the painting herself, and blue was her favorite color.

I remember Uncle Polk talking, with the wicker furniture groaning and hissing in the background when he moved. Mostly he told family stories, but often he would talk about himself.

He had come into contact with a good many famous people because of his job, and quite often they would figure in the stories he would tell. Whether he really had the kind of conversations with them that he used to report, nobody ever knew. Probably he had some of them.

"George M. Cohan! I've hauled George M. Cohan." I later concluded that was a railroad term—"hauled." Uncle Polk always used it when he

told that kind of story, and he never seemed to be aware that it was undignified or incongruous. At the time I did not know who George M. Cohan was.

"Lillian Russell. I've hauled her." I didn't know who Lillian Russell was either.

"Lillian Russell told me the secret of staying young." He leaned forward making the wicker hiss. "Never worry," he said. "Never worry about anything in this world."

"What did she have to worry about?" my mother said.

"It's constitutional. You don't have to *have* anything to worry about. It's how you look at things."

My mother didn't like the story. After my sister was born, she weighed a hundred and ninety pounds. That's what she weighed until after my father died, when her weight went down to a hundred and forty.

"Lillian Russell didn't have a sign of a wrinkle," he said.

Uncle Polk would punctuate his conversation by lighting his meerschaum, cupping both hands around the bowl, and making us wait for the important parts of his stories. He carried a box of wooden matches, and he always arranged the unstruck ones with their heads facing the same way. After he lit his pipe, he would put the spent match into the box with the blackened head turned in the opposite direction. He was not a fastidious man in general, and I suppose I remember the detail for that reason.

"I've hauled her many a time," he said.

One Sunday when Uncle Polk was there in the summer of 1937, he told us about what they did to rustlers in Texas.

"Mostly they were greasers," he said. "Didn't have anything of their own, and wouldn't know how to work for it. They'd come over and try to get our stock." Even in July he kept on his black conductor's uniform, coat and vest and tie.

"When we'd catch them at it, we'd lasso one off his horse and take off with him." He made a running motion with his hands, holding them with the palms facing and chopping them past each other like he was dusting his hands. "Drag them across the prairie. Wouldn't be nothing but a couple of bones and a little bit of skin when we got through." He stopped and shook his head.

"Greasers," he said, putting his pipe back into his mouth. "You couldn't teach them anything. Next week they'd be back for some more dragging." He lit his pipe. "Greasers are worse than niggers," he said.

from THE BROKEN DOOR: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FICTION 87

For awhile we didn't say anything. I tried to imagine what the Greaser would have looked like at the end of the lasso. Just bones and skin. I didn't know what a Greaser was at the time, except that it was some kind of a person.

Uncle Polk shifted over to a story that involved my father.

"Remember the fight, Loft?" he said. "D. Ford Crowther's fight?"

My father nodded his head.

My father was so laconic that I really wonder how I remember what his voice sounded like. I have the feeling that if I tried hard enough I could actually remember all of the words he ever spoke out loud in the years I knew him. I am almost certain that I could remember all of them that he spoke to me.

"Loft was white as a sheet when he came home," said my mother.

"I was too," said Uncle Polk.

"White as a *sheet*," said my mother.

I looked at the two men. Both of them had ruddy faces, Uncle Polk's redder than my father's, in spite of his nights on the Pullman cars. I was very interested in the idea of them being white as sheets.

The fight happened before I was born and I had to get the details by hearing about it. I know that I had heard of it before that Sunday in 1937, but I don't remember the first time. My mother had never said anything about my father being white as a sheet before. That was the first time she had said that.

Until that Sunday in 1937, the stories about the water moccasins, and the railroad trestle and the time my father had been shot in the leg—those were the stories that I remembered. But I couldn't imagine my father being white as a sheet. I found the idea very interesting.

"Came down right in the ring," said Uncle Polk. "D. Ford Crowther didn't know what to make of it." D. Ford Crowther had promoted the fight. It was held in his tobacco warehouse in Brattleboro, Georgia, in the summer of 1930, the year I was born.

My father didn't say anything.

"Those boys coming down right in the ring and all," said Uncle Polk.

"Yes," said my father.

I looked at my mother. Because my father talked so little, I was used to getting information from her. But she didn't explain about the fight to me at the time. It was later that I found out about D. Ford Crowther promoting the boxing match in Brattleboro. Some boys had climbed up into the top of the warehouse to see it without buying tickets. They were lying on a piece of corrugated steel sheeting up in the rafters, and just before the fight was to start the sheeting buckled and dropped them into the ring from the loft of the warehouse.

"Fell right out of the roof," said Uncle Polk.

I thought about the boys falling, but what I was interested in was my father being white as a sheet.

"He flopped around like a chicken with its head cut off," said my father.

His face had a numb look to it as he spoke—the way it would look six years later when he would come home from the dentist's office after being treated for pyorrhea.

My father had the ability to withstand a great deal of pain himself, but he had absolutely no tolerance for observing it in others. The sight of someone else's blood made him weak. I once saw him nearly cut his thumb off working at the bench saw in his shop and the expression on his face never changed. He even remembered to turn off the lights before he went upstairs to have my mother put a bandage on it before she called the doctor. But the small cuts and scratches that my sister and I brought in from play when we were children were beyond his level of tolerance. When I started shaving, and would come down to the breakfast table with a patch of toilet paper on a spot where I had cut myself, he would have to get up and go out of the room.

The look on his face told me more than what he had said about the chicken with its head cut off, because I didn't know about chickens at that time. Later we raised chickens in the back yard in a brooder, and I remember watching the cook wring their necks, holding them by the head and whirling the body until it was a blur of feathers. Then the body would sail off and come down with the wings beating, to flop in the dust of the yard, the blood making dark, wet places in the dust.

But I had not seen that yet when my father made the comparison on the porch in Decatur. I could see the boys coming out of the roof, falling with stiff arms and legs like gingerbread men, turning cartwheels in the air.

It was my father white as a sheet that held my attention.

"Why were you white as a sheet?" I asked.

They looked at me. Then my mother told me. "The boy was killed," she said.

"Like a chicken," I said, nodding. "But why was daddy white as a sheet?"

They changed the subject, and the talk turned to politics or business—something outside the family. I went into the yard to play.

Behind our house there was an alley, and on the alley was an old garage. It wasn't being used for anything, and I went there to play by myself because it was cool in the summer and quiet. My father's work

with the State Highway Department caused us to move every two or three years, so that I was always the new boy in town, and I came up living in fear of bullies who would do some kind of physical harm to me. Because of my fear, I was accustomed to playing by myself a good deal. I gravitated toward quiet places like the garage that I could have to myself.

Somewhere I had found a half used can of red enamel, and I took it out to the garage, then I stole a small paint brush from the can that my mother kept them in in the kitchen pantry. I would collect things and transform them with red enamel. There were three pecans that I had painted red. And a comb. Also a broken tin automobile. And one of those little tin motor boats that were propelled by a candle stub. I kept them in a cigar box that I had gotten from my father.

After I left the porch, I went out to the garage and took out my treasures and made a small display of them on the lid of the cigar box. While I looked at them, I thought about the boys falling like gingerbread men down through the air. And about my father being white as a sheet.

It was my father that the story was about. And he had been white as a sheet. I had never seen him white as a sheet, and I wondered what he would have looked like. In fact, I had never seen *anyone* white as a sheet.

After awhile I put the painted treasures back into the cigar box. They were red as jewels, and I thought of the pecans in particular as beautiful. They did not look at all like pecans, with the shiny red paint on them. Somehow I had managed to get the paint on without handling them too much, and they weren't smudged with fingerprints like the other things. I thought of the pecans as rubies.

After awhile I got out the can of red paint and the paint brush and on the wall of the garage I wrote:

A SHIT

I meant to write "sheet", but I had just finished the first grade, and I had had trouble with spelling. My mother didn't whip me for it when she found out, though I don't think she agreed with my explanation. Maybe she was too amused by it to do anything.

I think I had wanted to write, "White as a Sheet," but I must not have been sure of the words. And I was almost out of paint.

"What did daddy look like?" I asked my mother later.

"What?" she said.

"When he was white as a sheet, what did he look like?"

"He was very upset," she said.

"Have I ever seen him white as a sheet?" I asked.

"I don't think so, dear," she said. "I don't recall that you have."

"I know I haven't," I said. "I would remember if I had seen him white as a sheet before."

"Why don't you go out and play?" she said.

"I never saw *anybody* white as a sheet," I said.

She didn't want to talk about it.

"If he ever does it again, I want you to tell me," I said.

She looked at me for a minute. "It wouldn't happen often," she said.

"If it does, I want to see it," I said.

"Why don't you go out and play, dear?"

I started out of the kitchen.

"I don't want to catch you with that paint again," she said. "You'll get it on your clothes."

I looked at her. "What did I spell?" I said.

She didn't answer me.

"Was it something naughty?" I asked.

"It was very naughty."

"I hope I wouldn't do it again," I said.

"I hope you wouldn't too," she said.

III

Until I was nine we always went home to Coatesburg, South Carolina, for Christmas. Coatesburg was my father's home. We went back to the house he was born in.

My father's people were South Carolina Methodists, and my grandfather was a businessman of some kind. He ran a dry goods store, or sold hardware, or something like that. I never understood exactly what he did. He failed at whatever it was, and the family didn't like to talk about it.

In *Loftin* terms most of my father's brothers and sisters also failed in life—all of the men did, except my father—but they never got over the idea that failure was shameful. Also they didn't like to talk about my grandfather's business, because *being* in business in the first place was below the traditional expectations of the family, and a little shameful in itself. You could say that it doubled my grandfather's failure according to the terms of their family pride—except that he had made so much money doing it for awhile.

"He trusted everybody." Uncle Polk didn't talk about it much either, but he was the only one who talked about it at all. "*Everybody*," he repeated. "Even niggers. Make his mark, and promise to pay, and any coon in Edgefield County could go driving off in a brand new Coleman

buggy. Gene Loftin held paper from everybody in Edgefield County—black *and* white.” He stopped and fiddled with his pipe. “It wasn’t worth five cents on the dollar when the bank called it in. After he went to the wall.”

The Loftins had mostly been professional men, with a sort of inborn disdain for commerce and the people who engaged in it, though a good many of them had been farmers. One of my grandfather’s brothers, Wilbanks Loftin, was a Methodist minister. Before he died, he was presiding elder for the State of South Carolina. His other brother, Bonneau, was a lawyer. Those were successes in Loftin terms.

I never met Grand Uncle Bonneau. He was still living when I was born, but he had moved to the southern part of the state—somewhere across the river from Louisville, Georgia—and we had lost touch with that branch of the family. He was the oldest of the three brothers, and there were more stories about him than about my grandfather, who was dead before I was born, or of Grand Uncle Wilbanks, whom I did meet.

“Uncle Bonneau killed fifty-two men.” Uncle Polk lowered his voice when he talked about Uncle Bonneau. He also forgot to gesture with his pipe. Telling stories about the killing uncle flattened out his voice. I must have been six or seven the first time he talked about Uncle Bonneau when I heard him.

“Four Yankee soldiers.” He held up four fingers. “Four bluebellies—those were the first ones. He wasn’t but ten or twelve at the time.” I remember being particularly impressed because that was only three or four years older than I was myself the first time I heard the story.

“They came into Lawton. Four of them outriding when Sherman went up to burn Columbia.” The old family place was at Lawton, which is still there—at least it is on the maps—out in the sandhills about fifteen miles south of Coatesburg. There isn’t anything left now but the family graveyard and a Missionary Baptist Church. The house was burned down just after the war. We found what looked like the hearthstone in the weeds, and near it were several overgrown rose bushes.

“Bonneau shot them through the parlor window. Them standing on the veranda talking to the niggers in the yard. Shot them with a Colt cap and ball.” The wicker chair hissed gently. “They buried them out in the woods.” He stopped, tamping his pipe absentmindedly. The chair was quiet. “Gene showed me the place once. It was grown over with pines.” He thought a minute. “Gene wasn’t but six or seven when they did it, but he said he remembered the spot very distinctly.” He nodded to himself. “Very distinctly.” He fiddled with his pipe. “Gene’s the one told me he used a Colt cap and ball. He may have confused it with the one he used later.”

Uncle Polk leaned back in the chair and it groaned under the hissing. "Shot the mounts and buried them too. So nobody wouldn't find out." He thought a minute. "Must have been a hell of a hole they had to dig. *Four* mounts."

"As low as the food was, they should have cooked the horses and eaten them," said my mother. My mother's Uncle Toby Walsh told stories about the war that were always concerned with how short the food supply was—them having to eat boiled grass and stewed fence lizards—things like that.

"Wouldn't nobody eat horsemeat in those days," said Uncle Polk. He thought a minute. "I'd sooner eat a spring lizard myself," he said.

"They ate those too," said my mother.

"Well," said Uncle Polk.

The family always claimed that Uncle Bonneau killed the Negroes one at the time—in personal grudges, man to man. "Bonneau never did ride with the Klan. He was a lonesome and solitary man. He didn't hold with mobs. I guess he liked to settle his own scores."

According to Uncle Polk, Uncle Bonneau didn't go armed. So when he took offense, he would have to go home to get his weapon. And he always let the black man know what he was doing, so he would have a head start.

"You got an hour's start, boy," he'd tell him." Uncle Polk would point his finger, imitating Uncle Bonneau giving the boy the warning. "It didn't make any difference if the colored boy ran or not. Bonneau never was in a hurry. He'd go home and load his Colt, and have the stable boy saddle his mount. Sometimes he'd shave himself." Uncle Polk made scraping motions along his cheek. "Just to fill up the time he'd give the boy." He thought a minute.

"Couldn't any of them run fast enough. The longest one he chased went up into North Carolina. Bonneau caught him and shot him dead on top of Grandfather Mountain. Sometimes he'd be gone two or three weeks." Uncle Polk shook his head. "Forty-eight," he said. "Georgia. Tennessee. All over South Carolina. He always brought the body home and buried it in Coatesburg."

I couldn't tell about the expression on my father's face when Uncle Polk would tell the story. The way the stories were told, I think everyone was ashamed of Uncle Bonneau for *what* he did, but they were proud of him for doing it so well.

There was a picture of Uncle Bonneau that I saw once. He was a benign looking, small man, with long white hair and a moustache. He looked serious, as did all the people in the nineteenth century photo-

graphs I ever saw, but the photographer had missed the implacable quality that was the main point of Uncle Polk's stories about him. I wasn't very impressed with the sepia colored photograph.

"Edgefield County niggers stepped light around Uncle Bonneau," Uncle Polk said. He lit his pipe. "Forty-eight of them didn't step light enough." He opened the box with his finger and slid in the spent match, facing away from the good ones. "Even after he moved down to Louisville, they worried about 'Mr. Bonny'."

There were nine children in my father's family. Half of them were raised rich, and half of them were raised poor. It depended which side of my grandfather's failure they were born on. The older children had their own horses and took piano and painting lessons, and lessons from an elocution teacher.

My father was the fifth child—the third boy—so he was right in the middle and had some of it both ways. I remember hearing my father's younger brother Waddell talk about it in 1958, and he was still resenting it at the time.

"They had their own *horses!*" he said. He had stopped by to visit my mother in Savannah. None of the other Loftins were there when he said it.

The Coatesburg house was paid for at the time of my grandfather's death in 1912—my Grandmother Loftin had seen to that. Aunt Sarah, my father's younger sister, lived in it with her husband Sam Leech and their three children. They were the ones we visited. Though, to a large extent, we visited the house.

It was a wooden house. Not elegant, and too small for nine children and a hired hand. Or it seemed so to me, according to my suburban standards. It was built on high brick piers, and until I was twelve years old I could walk right under it without bending over. The dirt was dry and powdery, and we would go there to twirl doodle bugs out of their craters.

It was a cold house. Just physically it was cold. Probably it was cool and pleasant in the summer time, but my memories of it were of the visits we made there at Christmas. I'm sure we went in the summer too, because I remember Uncle Sam showing us how to make a whistle out of a willow twig. But I don't remember the house as ever being warm.

The way the house was laid out was peculiar. At least I was never in another one that had quite the same arrangement of rooms. It was almost like two houses under one roof, with the living room and parlor and the three bedrooms in one section, separated from the kitchen and bathroom by an "L" shaped gallery that was open at both ends of the ell.

I would have to say that, morally, it was superior to any house I ever lived in, particularly in the winter time, because of those open halls with the wind whistling down them. Going to breakfast was especially brisk and character building. But once you had made the dash across the gallery—the floorboards rang like steel plates on those cold mornings—you felt you had really earned the warmth of the kitchen.

Aunt Sarah did her cooking on a wood stove, so the room was always pulsing with heat. And she cooked hot breads for every meal—biscuits and yeast rolls in the mornings, and cornbread, loaf bread, and biscuits for the other two meals. It clouded the room with the smell of yeast bread baking and lightwood kindling from the stove. But the kitchen wasn't big enough to hold the crowd on our visits, so we had to eat in shifts. Between the warmth of the stove and the pinesmoke smell of the bread baking, I could have spent the whole visit right there in that room. But I was always having to make way for someone else to take his turn.

The bathroom wasn't nearly so pleasant as the kitchen. It was big and drafty, with a clawfoot tub, and an electric heater with a round reflector. The floor sagged so precariously that the tub seemed on the point of launching itself through the window onto the back porch. I don't remember what color the walls were painted. The light was so dim it may be that I couldn't tell. There was one bare forty-watt bulb that hung by its cord from the ceiling, and was turned on and off by a surface mounted rotary switch on the wall. The way it was placed, the only way to read in there was to sit sideways on the toilet. None of the light got onto the page, but at least sitting sideways kept it from shining in your eyes. The red glow of the element in the heater provided more light than the bulb did.

The fact that my father had been raised in that spartan house was something that I used to ponder a good deal after our visits. Living in it must have been a rigorous kind of training, full of the need for exertion, and pleasure after pain. It seemed to go along with the stories about the snake and the railroad trestle and the time he was shot in the leg. Later I realized that the bathroom and the running water in the kitchen were relatively recent improvements, and hadn't even been there when my father was a child.

Aunt Sarah worked in a ten-cent store in Coatesburg, and Uncle Sam kept the house. I am sure that everybody in the family noticed that arrangement, but I never heard anyone comment on it. Uncle Sam was a wonderfully gentle man, but not in the least effeminate. He was stocky and firmly built, with thick forearms and wrists. His hair was dark brown and coarse, like an Indian's, and hung down over his forehead in a fan.

He had a natural feel for the soil, and we always came home from our visits with Mason jars full of butterbeans and peas and tomatoes put up out of his kitchen garden. His voice was deep and hoarse, with a phlegmy resonance in it, and he loved to tell stories for children, which he illustrated with small, delicate gestures of his hands. Aunt Sarah was absolutely devoted to him.

There were three children—James Fletcher, Billy Wynne, and Leigh, the youngest, who was a girl. She loved silver bells—the Hershey chocolate drops that came wrapped in tin foil—and my father always used to take her a bag of them as part of her Christmas present.

James Fletcher was the oldest. He was a waterhead, and from the time he was two or three years old he had been bedridden. They kept him in the first bedroom, the one behind the living room and off the kitchen gallery, on a small iron bed under a window that always had the shade drawn. For as long as I could remember, he had been paralyzed from the neck down, and when he tried to talk he sounded like he was choking. I can remember standing across the room and watching my father in the dim light trying to talk to him where he lay in the bed, rolling his head from side to side and making noises like there was something stuck in his throat.

I was afraid of James Fletcher, and would never approach his bed very closely. The top of his head was as big as a watermelon, but his face seemed smaller than average. He looked like a bottle-nosed dolphin, or a sperm whale, or the kind of creature that was always helping Ming take over Mongo in the Flash Gordon comic strips.

At first my father tried to force me to come up to the bed and talk to him. "Come on, son. I want you to meet Buddy." My father called James Fletcher "Buddy."

I guess I must have felt like Isaac did when Abraham called him to come in the Bible story. I ran out of the room and hid myself under the house. My father tried to insist, but I ended up making such a scene that my mother stepped in and put a stop to it.

The family always told each other that James Fletcher could hear my father, and that he looked forward to our visits in Coatesburg. Aunt Sarah and my father would discuss the signs that their belief rested on.

"Did you see his *eyes*?" she would say. She lived with James Fletcher all of the time, and could see the differences that my father might have missed.

"I know," my father would say. "Old Buddy understands more than we would think. A lot more than we would think."

"He understands good as you or me," Aunt Sarah would nod her head. "You can see it in his eyes."

"There's a lot of life in Old Buddy," my father would say, agreeing with her. I believe I heard him talk more, discussing James Fletcher with Aunt Sarah on those Christmas visits, than I would hear from him the rest of the year taken altogether.

At odd times of the day I would look in on James Fletcher. For me he was some kind of lesson in the potential for treachery that life might have in store for me, and I always hoped that my father and Aunt Sarah were mistaken about how much he was able to understand. He had *always* been that way. That was what I couldn't get over. Every time I looked he would be lying there on his back, in the same position he had been in the last time I'd seen him—rolling his head on the pillow and moving his lips. Once I was brave enough to creep up close to him and try to look at his eyes. But I couldn't see anything. The bulge of his forehead put them into shadows that were too deep to penetrate.

To me it was a terrible thing. A terrible thing that he was alive at all. I never saw him out of the low iron bed under the shaded window, though I am sure Aunt Sarah or Uncle Sam must have moved him around the house sometimes—when no one was there. If I had had the courage, I would have pulled down the covers to see what the rest of his body looked like.

Even then I knew that the grown-up members of the family recognized that James Fletcher was living a terrible life. But they didn't seem to be outraged about it to the degree that I thought they should. There were times when I felt we should all be beating a drum. The dark room was unspeakably awful to me, with that swollen head rolling on the pillow. It was like looking at what death itself was going to be.

Billy Wynne was four years older than I was, and Leigh was four years older than my sister, who was two years younger than myself.

Billy Wynne was a paragon to my father in a way that I never was. I don't remember resenting that—though it was the kind of thing I feel that I would have resented. Partly I didn't resent Billy Wynne because my father only saw him once or twice a year, while he saw me all of the time, and naturally would have less patience with me. But the rest of the reason I didn't resent him was that I thought Billy Wynne was a paragon too. My father never talked about him except in general terms. He never explicitly put him up to me as a model.

Billy Wynne deserved better of the world than he ever got as a child. He was always working to bring money into the house, which he never got to spend on himself, but gave to Aunt Sarah to use for household expenses. Sometimes he would keep out a dime or fifteen cents to buy a barrette or a comb for Leigh.

from THE BROKEN DOOR: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FICTION 97

He also did interesting things, which he was willing to share with me, in spite of the difference in our ages. The first time I shot a shotgun, it was Billy Wynne's. He was hunting squirrels for meat before I was even allowed to have a B.B. gun for plinking at tin cans. He also built model airplanes. Great red and yellow ones that he hung by wires from the ceiling of his room. Sometimes he would take them out into a field behind the house, and he would let me help him fly them. He kept the boxes that the kits came in, and every box was accounted for by a finished airplane hanging from the ceiling. Building model airplanes got to be a sore point between my father and me later on.

"Couldn't you *finish* one? Just once? I'd like to see what one *looks* like when it's finished."

That was my father, talking about model airplanes—the kind you made by cutting out little pieces of balsa wood and glueing them together. It got to be an obsession with him, and I believe more words passed between us over model airplanes than anything else we ever talked about.

Between 1941 and 1944 I must have started a hundred ten-cent *Comet* and *Whitman* airplane models. I would always get the balsa wood frame glued together, but when it came to putting on the tissue paper covering, something happened to my momentum. The only one I remember finishing was a Beechcraft biplane. The tissue was green and black, and it looked really good. But my father never got to see it. I sailed it out the window of my upstairs bedroom to see if it would fly, and a stray dog picked it up in his mouth and ran away with it. I never finished another one, and my father never would believe me when I told him about the dog.

"Wouldn't *you* like to see what one looks like?"

"Of course," I'd say.

"All right," said my father.

I worried about it a good deal myself, reading a gloomy omen of my life to come when I would remember those beautiful red and yellow models that Billy Wynne had hanging in his bedroom. But worrying didn't help me to finish them.

For Christmas of 1938 my father bought a bicycle for Billy Wynne, and a big doll for Leigh, which my mother wrapped up in a package with a two-pound bag of silver bells.

We took the bicycle up to Coatesburg tied to the radiator of our car, and my father worried the whole way that something would happen to it before we got there. Fitzgerald, Georgia, is where we were living

at the time, which is down in the southern part of the state, and the trip to Coatesburg was an all-day affair. Usually we spent Christmas Day at home, and would go up to South Carolina the day after Christmas, but because of the bicycle my father wanted to be there on Christmas Day to see Billy Wynne's face when he got it. We left Fitzgerald about the middle of the morning on Christmas Eve.

It was a gray, overcast day, as Christmas often seems to be in Georgia and South Carolina—but cold, which it usually isn't. My father was driving, with mother beside him in the front seat, and my sister and I in the back, with Grandmother Hoskins between us to keep us from fighting. Grandmother Hoskins was the most benign presence imaginable, and just about perfect for a boundary marker on our long trips. She would get into the car, cross her ankles, and fold her hands in her lap, and, except for her eyes, she wouldn't move for the rest of the trip. Only my father had to stop every fifty miles or so to let her go to the bathroom.

Across the river from Augusta, Georgia, on the South Carolina side of the river, there was a long, steep hill. It must have been a mile up from the bridge to the crest—maybe a mile and a half. In those days the Highway Department hadn't gotten around to paving it yet.

When we got to Augusta, the light was beginning to fail. I remember the lights on the Christmas trees had been lit, and we could see them through the windows of the houses as we passed. It must have been raining the whole day all over Georgia, and by the time we got onto the South Carolina side of the bridge, the road up that hill looked like a swath cut by an avalanche, with red water boiling in the ditches and overrunning the culverts, and mud in the roadbed that seemed to be moving down toward the river like a lava flow. There weren't any cars on the road, but there were several in the ditches—one with its hood buried up to the windshield in the red water.

As we came off the bridge, my father stopped the car and looked up the hill. He didn't say anything, but we all thought when he stopped that he had decided not to risk the climb, and we would have to take the long way around. My mother gave a sigh of relief. The long pull after Augusta was always the worst part of the trip for her. It made her nervous, even when the road was dry. Two hours would be added to our trip by avoiding it, but she was clearly happy when my father turned the car around and pointed it in the opposite direction. Only, instead of going ahead, back over the bridge, he shifted into reverse and started backing up the hill. *Backing.*

My mother couldn't believe it. "What are you going to do, Loft?" Her voice cracked when she said it. She sounded like she was going to cry. I almost never heard that tone in my mother's voice.

My father didn't answer directly. "Billy Wynne's bicycle." That's all he said. I guess he thought he would be less likely to damage it if he took the hill in reverse.

My father was always a mild and reasonable man, and almost never committed himself to a course of action irrevocably. As mother said, he had a temper. But in 1938 he was forty years old, and the only time the temper came out was over small, exasperating things—a wood joint he'd made in his shop which fitted badly, or the car not starting when the battery had run down. The worst I ever saw him lose himself over anything big was that Christmas Eve on the North Augusta hill.

Maybe he took offense at my mother telling him how to drive. He might have thought his judgement was being called in question. Or it could have been that the eight hour drive in the rain had just worn him out. Whatever it was, there just wasn't any talking to him about backing the car up that hill—notwithstanding it was like trying to paddle a canoe up Niagara Falls.

There were houses on both sides along the road, and until the car windows caked over with the mud flung up by the back wheels, we could see the Christmas trees and wreaths in the windows, and people standing in them watching as we crept by with the engine screaming like a diesel on a greased track.

"Look at the pretty wreaths," said my grandmother, pointing to a house that had wreaths with red electric candles in all four of its front windows.

My Grandmother Hoskins was absolutely one of the loveliest people I have ever known. In the thirty-seven years I knew her, I never saw her angry or confounded by life. I do not think it ever occurred to her that the world could have a demonic side to it. My grandfather had presided over their house, cooked the meals, given orders to the servants. And there were two grandmothers living there to take care of the children. The only times grandmother ever went into the kitchen were to make cole slaw and egg custard. You could call them her specialties, but they weren't exactly that, because she didn't know how to prepare anything else. She played the piano—usually "The Glowworm," always slowly, and with a little pause after the first four bars while she rearranged her fingers for the change in chords. To sum up her life, as far as the overt facts were concerned, you could say that she had seven babies (the last of which weighed fourteen pounds and was born dead) and she was

taken care of. She was a lovely, lovely person, but the trust she put in others almost amounted to stupidity. Everyone who ever met her came away feeling he had learned a lesson in goodness. But there were times when it just wasn't a lesson you could bear.

"Mother," said my mother. "Shut up."

We crept up the hill, the back tires sending roostertails of mud over the top of the car, with people coming out in the rain to stand on their front porches silhouetted by the Christmas trees and wreaths to watch as we went creeping by. The sounds the car was making were more like some big animal in pain than a piece of machinery.

It took us half an hour to slither to the top. The rate of progress we made, relative to our expenditure of energy was absurd and nerve wracking—like a centipede trying to climb out of a soapy bathtub. The way the back wheels were spinning, if we had been on firm ground we would have been doing a hundred and twenty-five miles an hour—but our actual rate of progress was about two.

The whole way my mother sat braced sideways in the front seat, one hand on the dash and the other twisted in the doorpost strap, looking at my father. His head and shoulders and arms were all caked with mud, since he had to hang his head out the window to see where we were going. And mud was spattered over the inside of the windshield and the dash.

At the top of the hill he cut off the engine and got out of the car. There were popping and cracking noises coming out from under the hood, and the sound of steam hissing.

My father took off his coat, folded it carefully, and laid it over the back of the front seat. Then he went around to the front of the car to see about the bicycle.

"It's all right," he said when he came back. "The bicycle's all right." He made an "o" with his thumb and index finger.

Down the hill we could see the lights of the houses, and the city lights of Augusta across the river. Some of the people were still on their porches looking up at us.

My father leaned down and put his head into the car. All I could see were his teeth and the whites of his eyes, and the white sleeves of his shirt, with a dark "V" stenciled in mud where his coat had been. There was a little smile on his lips that was not a smile.

"The bicycle is okay," he said.

"We could have been killed," said my mother.

My father was standing with his foot on the running board, his head

from THE BROKEN DOOR: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FICTION 101

ducked down below the roof of the car. "We could have gone in the ditch," he said. "Nobody was going to be killed."

"Get back in the car," said my mother. "It's raining."

The feeling in our house was always one of calmness. I believe that was mostly my mother's doing. The Hoskins were all low-keyed people, but my mother was the kindest and the steadiest of the six children. There was never a harsh word between my mother and my father that I remember. And there weren't any harsh words that night on the hill outside Augusta either. Except for mother telling grandmother to shut up—which, because of its tone, would have amounted to an obscenity in our house.

But the way that my father looked, talking to my mother, stooped over with his foot on the runningboard of the car—the way he looked brought to my mind the stories about the water moccasin and the railroad trestle and the time he was shot in the leg. Then I thought about him knocking down the man who had insulted my mother, and I imagined how it might have been if he had missed the man and had hit her instead. My father had a hard hand, and I knew it would hurt terribly to be hit by him, even if it happened by accident.

I had been excited by the climb up the hill, but after it was over, watching my father and my mother, I became frightened. Something had happened between them, and it was having an effect on all of us. They were no longer an entity to me—something that I am sure the poet E. E. Cummings must have somewhere called "momndad." They had become two separate people.

My father had a little trick that he liked to perform. It was a very simple trick, and he even taught me how to do it. You would take five toothpicks and break each one in the middle to form a "V". Then you would put them together on a smooth surface, like linoleum, with the bottoms of the breaks touching so they formed a skinny five-pointed star. To perform the trick, you placed a drop of water in the middle where the arms of the star came together—and right before your eyes it would blossom into a fat, fully drawn star like the ones on the American flag. It was one of my favorite tricks, because even though it was simple, and you knew what was happening, you couldn't *see* the water flowing into the arms of the star.

Something like that slow and inexorable motion took place in the car among the members of my family on the top of that hill. Each of us seemed to retreat into a compartment of his own. It was the first time I remember feeling that I was not the main concern of my father and

mother. The first time I actually saw that they had lives of their own to live and that a time might come when I would be alone.

My father's face was covered with mud from hanging out the window, but the whiteness of the shirt where his coat had covered him was shining in the rainy darkness. I thought that if he washed off the mud, right there at the top of that North Augusta hill, then I would be able to see for myself what he had looked like that night the boys fell out of the roof at D. Ford Crowther's tobacco warehouse in Brattleboro, Georgia, the night they had the fight.

IV

The mud from the North Augusta hill was still thumping under the fenders of the car when we came into the back yard of the Coatesburg house. It streaked and caked the windshield, except for the fans made by the wipers. My mother was no longer braced in the seat, but she and my father had not spoken for a long time. In the back seat my sister and I rolled down the windows so we could see. Uncle Sam and Billy Wynne were standing on the porch waiting for us, and Leigh came out of the kitchen door as we pulled up. When he saw them, my father tooted the horn.

"Merry Christmas!" Uncle Sam said. He had his hands in his pockets, and after he said it he took out his right hand and made a small gesture with it. Then he peered at us in the darkness. "Loft?" he said. Billy Wynne was standing beside him with his hands behind his back.

My mother had wiped some of the mud off my father with her handkerchief, but he still looked like the end man in a minstrel show. The car was solidly caked with mud, and must have resembled the kind of vehicle in which some life or death message might have been delivered to the commander of a winter army.

"Merry Christmas!" said my father, waving out the window of the car. He drew out the "merry"—"mehhhh—ry."

Aunt Sarah came out of the kitchen door, wiping her hands in her apron. "Sweet Jesus, Louis. What happened?"

"That North Augusta hill," said my father, getting out of the car. "It looked like Verdun." He went around and opened the door for my mother while my sister and I piled out of the back. Uncle Sam helped my mother up the steps to the porch while my father held the door for my grandmother.

"You hit a bicycle?" asked Uncle Sam, looking at the front of the car in the light from the kitchen door.

"That what that is?" said my father. "I thought it was a shoat." Both of the men laughed. "Help me get it off, will you, Sam?"

They untied the bicycle and brought it up onto the porch. Billy Wynne knew it was for him, but he made no move to claim it. He was very dignified and reserved. While they brought the bicycle up onto the porch, he stood with his hands behind his back, looking out into the dark of the back yard, his mouth tight and his chin pulled back.

My father took out his handkerchief and wiped some of the mud off. "You reckon that's a bicycle, Billy Wynne?" he said.

Billy Wynne looked at the bicycle, then he looked back into the yard. "Yes, sir," he said.

When I saw the shiny red paint where the mud had been wiped away, I suddenly began to feel a mountainous resentment at my father. There was a little voice inside my head that kept saying, "Unfair! Unfair! Unfair that my father would give the bicycle to Billy Wynne instead of me—though I knew that it was not unfair at all. I had been seeing the bicycle for a week on the back porch in Fitzgerald, and my mother had told me that it was Billy Wynne's Christmas present. I had been pleased for him in Fitzgerald, but now we were in Coatesburg and the bicycle and Billy Wynne had actually come together.

I *already* had a bicycle. My father had gotten it for me the previous summer. And, anyway, I hadn't learned to ride it yet. So Billy Wynne's wouldn't have been any use to me. And, most of all, I knew that Billy Wynne had *earned* it. Because he worked and gave the money to his mother to buy groceries with.

With Billy Wynne standing there in the light from the open kitchen door, his hands behind his back but getting ready to claim the bicycle, I went over all the reasons why it should go to him instead of me. I was a fair-minded child, and I could see that the arguments were all on his side. When I had summed them up and was sure that justice demanded Billy Wynne get the bicycle—that there was nothing in my father's decision that I could complain about—I stepped up and pointed my finger at it.

"Daddy," I said.

He looked at me.

"I want that goddamn bicycle," I said.

He looked at me for a minute. "What did you say?" he said. He was too surprised to be angry at me right away.

"You heard me," I said.

I was eight years old at the time, and profanity wasn't tolerated in our house in any case, except for Uncle Polk. I remember once making a list of all the dirty words I knew, writing them down on a piece of paper. It went something like: "pee pee, doo doo, vomit . . .," things like

that. I got the worst spanking of my life when my mother found it and reported it to my father. Nobody in our house said "damn" out loud, much less "god damn."

"Mary . . .," said my father, looking at my mother.

She looked at him, and I felt them coalescing into an entity for the first time since we had started up the hill in North Augusta.

My father took me by the arm, gripping me so hard his fingernails almost made the blood come. He marched me to the bathroom that way, holding me at arm's length. When we were inside, he locked the door and turned to me. The expression on his face was one of puzzlement more than anger, and I could see that he didn't know exactly what to do. He was nonplussed. Of course he didn't want to spoil Christmas for everybody, and maybe he also felt a little guilty about the bicycle. I don't think I had ever defied him so openly before.

He looked at me for a long time. "It's Christmas Eve, Nate," he said. His voice was much softer than I had expected it to be.

"I want the bicycle," I said. It wasn't exactly what I wanted to say, but I couldn't think of anything else.

"You have a bicycle," he said. "You won't learn to ride it." He looked around the bathroom for a minute. There was a sad expression on his face.

It was a sore point with both of us. He had threatened to give my bicycle away if I didn't learn to ride it, but I was afraid that I was going to fall and hurt myself. I can remember whole afternoons we would spend in the street in front of our house, with my father pushing me on the bicycle, running along with his hand on the seat until his face was red and swollen and he was gasping for breath.

"Now, Nate! Now!" he'd say, and would give me a final push to send me off on my own. As soon as he let go I would become rigid with fright. The bicycle would coast for a little way, but as soon as I felt myself losing my balance I would jump off and let it crash. "Pedal, Nate! PEDAL!" He would be shouting at me as I coasted away. I enjoyed the feeling of coasting when he would be pushing me down the street and I could feel his hand on the seat under me. It was glorious. But I was afraid the moment he let go. In the bathroom of the Coatesburg house I tried to put that out of my mind.

"I want a *new* bicycle," I said.

I suddenly remembered something that had happened to me when I was three or four years old. We were living in Macon, Georgia, at the time, and a boy my age invited me to come to his house to play. Maybe the boy was younger than I was. He lived on the edge of our neighbor-

hood, and I didn't see much of him. My mother let me go and we played with lead soldiers in his back yard. There was a fish pond, and I remember that we threw some of the soldiers into the pond. Then we started fishing them out with a piece of string that had a hook on the end of it. As I was fishing out one of the soldiers I decided to run away with it. Just—click—and I turned into a thief. I ran off dragging the soldier at the end of the string. He chased me down the street, but not all the way back to my house. I told my mother that he had given the soldier to me. Later, when I was playing with it, I tripped and cut myself on a piece of broken glass. It was a bad cut at the heel of my hand, and my mother told me that if it had been a little nearer my wrist I might have cut an artery and would have bled to death. I thought about bleeding to death. But I never did tell her that I had stolen the soldier.

I still had the scar on my hand, and I looked at it in the light from the forty watt bulb.

"I want a *new* bicycle," I said.

"Billy Wynne *needs* a bicycle to deliver his papers," said my father.

"I know," I said.

I couldn't get *two* bicycles," he said.

"I know," I said. "I know you couldn't get two bicycles." Then I started to cry, rubbing the heel of my scarred hand on my pants leg. I had the feeling that I had done something that was irrevocable, and I knew that Billy Wynne needed the bicycle more than I did.

My father was sitting on the toilet looking at me, with his hands on his knees and his elbows turned out. I was standing in front of him. I tried not to cry too loud, because I didn't want the others to hear me. I was embarrassed enough already.

For a minute I stood there sobbing as quietly as I could. My father watched me without saying anything, and then he leaned forward and put his arms around me and pulled me to him. As soon as he did, I could feel him sobbing too. He did it without making any noise. I think that he was crying because he really did love me, and also because of what had happened on the North Augusta hill.

"I know he deserves it," I said.

For a minute my father didn't say anything. I felt him stop sobbing, slowly, like an engine running down. When he spoke, his voice was almost a whisper. "You wouldn't want a *red* bicycle anyway, would you?"

"No," I said. I didn't know why I shouldn't want a red bicycle.

"*Everybody* has a red bicycle," he said. I could feel him moving his hands to his face, wiping his eyes. "We'll get you a blue one."

"How about a black one?" I said. A red one was what I wanted.

"Yes," he said. "We'll get you a black one." He held me at arm's length. "When you learn to ride the one you've got, I'll get you a black one."

"Okay," I said. I didn't know whether I would learn to ride my bicycle or not. But there really wasn't anything else to say.

He turned on the water in the tub and wet the washcloth. Then he wiped my face. Afterwards he wiped his own, which was streaked with the mud from the crying.

He put the washcloth back on the rack. "Listen," he said. "Let's not spoil Christmas."

I nodded. "I'm sorry," I said. "Billy Wynne deserves the bicycle more than I do."

He looked at me for a minute. "Billy Wynne *needs* it," he said.

"Yes, sir," I said.

He got up and looked at himself in the mirror over the sink. "I'm a mess," he said.

I didn't say anything, even though I agreed with him.

He got the washcloth and wiped his face again. After he put it back on the rack he looked at me. "Do you think you could apologize?" he said.

I thought about it for a minute. "It would be hard," I said. For awhile we looked at each other. "It's what I ought to do, isn't it?" I said.

"It wouldn't be much of a Christmas for any of us if you don't."

I thought a minute. "I could write them a note," I said.

He seemed to think about that for awhile. "No," he said. "You couldn't do that."

I thought about it again. "I suppose I could do it," I said.

He nodded. Then he looked at himself in the mirror again. "Do you think you're ready to go out now?" he asked.

I felt like I might start crying again, but I nodded. "Yes, sir," I said.

Before he opened the door, he put his hand on my shoulder. "Merry Christmas, Son," he said.

"Yes, sir," I said. "Merry Christmas to you."

The bicycle my father had given to me was part of something that was another sore point with me through most of my childhood. Like all of the big toys I received as a child, it was second hand. Of course I was happy to have them, those toys. But there was always something missing—something that didn't work the way it was supposed to. There were two or three pieces that had been lost from my Erector Set before I got it, so I couldn't build the ferris wheel. And the transformer of my electric train stuck when I tried to run it too fast. I didn't feel that I

could complain about little things like that, but I couldn't help being aware of them either.

As with most of the other toys, there was no particular occasion on which the bicycle had been given to me—only that my father had found a good trade just then.

My father was a great trader, and the only big item that we always got new was the automobile. My father had to use that in his job, and the Highway Department paid a part of the cost. But even so, I don't think he would have taken a chance on a used one. That was the way he felt about automobiles.

But nearly everything else that came into the house had the marks of wear on it. And for everything that came in, something went out. I don't know how my father's mind worked when he was trading—it moved along lines that I could never make out. He wouldn't trade a stove for a stove, for instance—nor even for another piece of kitchen equipment. I remember once he traded a Shetland pony for a Delco home generating plant. A *Delco* home generating plant. I didn't even know what that was at the time. Once he traded two hunting dogs for five thousand board feet of cypress lumber. There was never any connection that I could make out. It was always a puzzle to me.

I finally decided that the way he traded was a sign that my father was thinking about the world in wide and general terms. Years later, going back over it, the thought came to me that there was a sort of inspiration in the lack of connectedness in his trades. And I became proud of him because of it.

My father was a very good trader. He enjoyed the action involved, and was, in fact, a bit vain about how good he was. He didn't talk any more during a trade than he did in general, perhaps he talked less. But that worked to his advantage it seemed. The times I saw him engaged in it, the men he was swapping with seemed to feel that they had to argue on both sides of the trade, because my father almost wouldn't talk at all. It was strange to see the man doing the talking for both of them, while my father just stood there and listened to him—nodding his head now and then and smiling right along. Finally the man would get smiled and nodded into something like a frenzy so that he always developed the best arguments on my father's side of the swap, and would wind up cheating himself. It was always terribly one-sided.

Uncle Polk said that in one series of swaps, my father started out with a Barlow knife and traded it all the way up to a Ford automobile.

"He wouldn't *say* anything. It was nerve-wracking. You wouldn't believe how nerve-wracking it was to watch him." He stopped and thought

about it. "I love Loft," he said. "But I wouldn't swap with him for all the tea in China." He raised his eyebrows and nodded his head. "All the tea in China," he said.

Christmas Eve night turned off bitter cold, and the wind got up after the rain had stopped. Billy Wynne and I shared a bed in the back bedroom, which had been a storeroom of some kind, and wasn't finished on the inside. The cold came in through the cracks in the clapboards, and when the wind subsided, between gusts I could hear the house creaking and moaning like a glacier as it tightened itself in the cold. The only way to keep warm was to pile on the blankets, and there must have been a dozen of them on the bed. After mother pulled them over me and kissed me good night I couldn't move. It was like sleeping under a sand-bag. I felt like I had been buried alive.

I was ashamed of myself for the way I had acted, and although I had apologized in front of the family, I felt that I needed to do it in private as well. Just to make it something between myself and Billy Wynne.

"Billy Wynne," I said, when we were alone in the bedroom.

He didn't answer me.

"I'm sorry for what I said about the bicycle," I said. "Can you hear me?"

It took him a minute to answer. "I *need* it, Nate," he said.

"I know you do," I said. He sounded like a grown man.

"Uncle Louis will buy you a new one."

He said it matter-of-factly. The calmness and resignation in his voice made me want to cry again.

Before I fell asleep I listened to Billy Wynne's regular breathing for a long time, and to the house creaking in the cold. Finally, just before I went to sleep, I moved my foot over into his warm place.

Christmas morning I had to wait for Mother to come and get the covers off before I could get out of bed.

"A bag of switches for me, I guess," I said. I meant it as something of a joke, but after I said it I wasn't quite sure that it was.

"Santa Claus knows you apologized," she said.

When I put my bare feet on the floor it was so cold it felt hot. I danced around like a spider on a stove top until I got my stockings on.

In the kitchen no one said anything about the way I had acted the night before. Uncle Sam told a Christmas story at the breakfast table, and he seemed to be directing it at me just so I wouldn't feel so badly.

Only Aunt Sarah looked at me in a way that made me uncomfortable, but she didn't say anything.

After breakfast we went into the living room and opened our presents.

The living room had bright yellow walls, but it always struck me as a gloomy room—and never more gloomy than on that Christmas morning. It wasn't as naturally depressing as the parlor across the entrance hall, which was all maroon and white and dark mahogany. I had never actually been in the parlor, but once I had opened the sliding doors enough to be able to see what it looked like.

There was a fire in the living room fireplace, but Aunt Sarah would only burn four lumps of coal in the grate at one time—even for company—and the floorboards leaked air freely. All of the rooms had fireplaces in them—except Billy Wynne's back bedroom—but the living room was the only one that ever had a fire in it that I remember—and that never did any good. I suppose it was a gesture of hospitality on Aunt Sarah's part, but as far as the heat was concerned, you would have had to sit on an andiron to feel it. The draft sure worked without stint though. It sucked like a Kansas tornado. All the women's dresses, and the skirts on the upholstered furniture, billowed out from the air coming up through the cracks in the floor.

The Christmas tree was a big personal disappointment to me. It was a pine that Billy Wynne had cut down in the woods—just a plain pine tree, scraggly and bare. It looked like the framework that you might start with if you were going to build a real Christmas tree. And it didn't have any lights on it. There was a long popcorn chain that wound around and around. And little stars and bells cut out of cardboard and covered with tinfoil from old pipe tobacco packages that Billy Wynne had collected. And chains with links made out of colored construction paper. At the top was an angel that had been cut out of the Sears Roebuck catalog, with a dress and wings made from tinfoil. But there weren't any lights at all.

It would take more than twenty-five years for me to see how beautiful Billy Wynne's scraggly pine tree was, with its tinfoil ornaments made one by one. I should have been a quicker study, though that is a lot to ask of anyone as middle class as I have been. All the valuable lessons I ever learned had to be written into my hide. That is a tedious but emphatic way of bringing home a point, though it has the advantage finally of being indelible—if only it doesn't come too late.

Still, in 1938 I loved colored Christmas lights. Our tree at home always had three or four strings of them. Some were just plain colored

lights, red and blue and green. But there were three or four special ones that I looked forward to from year to year. One was milky white—round, with a grid on it like a globe, and little red fish behind the grid. There was another one that was a red cottage with snow on its roof. When just the lights of the tree were on, I liked to put my face up close to the globe with the fishes on it—and to the windows of the little red cottage. They were part of what I looked forward to at Christmas from one year to the next.

I understood that I couldn't complain about Billy Wynne's tree, and my mother kept remarking on how clever they were to make their own decorations the way they did. But I couldn't bring myself to say anything about it at all, so that everybody knew how I felt.

As the day wore on, the wind died down and it began to warm up, though the overcast didn't lift.

Just before noon, Aunt Sarah came in from the kitchen and told my father that William was out in the back yard with his family.

William was a Negro man who lived behind Aunt Sarah and Uncle Sam on a piece of land that had belonged to my grandfather at one time. In 1938 it had belonged to someone else for a number of years, and William farmed it on shares for whoever the owner was. But William had been born on that piece of land.

William Lawton was his name. He had simplified the spelling too, but his name was closer to the original than my own was.

Our family name had been "Laughton" until sometime in the eighteen nineties. My grandfather and his brothers had changed it to "Loftin" because the Negroes had all pronounced it like they were sight-reading it as two words: "laugh-ton." They pronounced it "Laeftin," or "Leftin."

Uncle Polk told me about the changing of the name. "Gene couldn't stand to hear the niggers call him 'Leftin.' He started all over again with the spelling."

No one ever remarked on the fact that the Negroes had decided what our name would be.

William was the same age as my father, and they had played together as children. He still did odd jobs for Aunt Sarah and Uncle Sam, and on Christmas they came to the house to exchange presents.

We went out onto the back porch and found William and his wife and children standing in a line in the back yard. His wife held a large brown paper bag that was tied at the neck with a piece of red string. William was holding his hat in his hand like it was a basket, and there were several smaller packages in it also. Tied up in brown paper with red string.

"Merry Christmas, William," said my father.

"Yas, sah," said William. He looked a little like my father, with pale, coppery skin and light eyes. His wife's name was Octilla. She was a very thin woman who always wore a bandanna on her head. She stood extremely straight, but the shanks of her legs beneath her dress were bowed, and she was wearing a pair of men's brown cap-toed shoes.

My father went down the steps and walked up to William. William looked down at the ground. They didn't shake hands, though I had expected that they would.

"Is that Rufus?" My father nodded his head toward the oldest child. There were nine of them, standing in a line off Octilla's shoulder, stepping down from oldest to youngest. William stood at the end beside his wife.

"Sho is," said William. "He be done got some size on him."

"Going to outgrow you, William," said my father.

"Yas, sah," said William. He would speak only in response to my father.

My father reached into his pocket and took out a quarter, which he gave to Rufus. "Merry Christmas, Rufus," said my father. Rufus nodded his head, but didn't say anything.

There were six boys and three girls, and my father went down the line giving each one a quarter. The way he looked doing it was like a mechanic making some kind of minor adjustment on a row of machines. He spoke to each child in turn, but with some of the younger ones he couldn't recall the names. The boys all had their hair close cropped, with shaved-in part lines. The girls had their hair done up in pigtails that stuck out from their heads in spikes, except the oldest, who wore a bandanna like her mother. The five youngest children were barefooted.

"Dethonia? Where did you find a name like *Dethonia*, William?" said my father. The youngest child was a boy, about five years old.

William looked at his wife and nodded his head. "Octilla give them they names," he said.

Octilla had a pinch of snuff inside her lower lip. When William nodded at her, she leaned over behind his back and spit onto the ground. Then she straightened back up and stared straight ahead. "Hit's fambly," she said.

While they were talking about him, Dethonia put the quarter to his mouth, holding it with both hands. Then he put it into his mouth and swallowed it. It stuck in his throat and he fell down on the ground holding his neck in his hands.

"He swallowed it!" said my father. The line of blacks looked down

at the small child on the ground. None of them made a move to help him. They didn't seem to be particularly interested in what was happening.

My father went over and picked Dethonia up. Then he put him over his knee and pounded him on the back three or four times. There was a gulping sound and Dethonia let out a yell. My father let him go, and he ran to his mother, burying his face in her skirt and hugging her legs.

"He swallowed it," said my father again, looking around on the ground where Dethonia had been.

"Hit'll pass," said William.

My father reached into his pocket and took out another quarter. "You keep it for him," he said, giving it to Octilla. She took it and rolled it in the corner of her apron.

"Much obliged," she said.

"You don't eat them, do you, William?" said my father, speaking to William.

"Don't get 'em to eat, Mr. Louis," he said.

My father blushed red when William said that, then he took out his billfold and gave William a five dollar bill. He looked at Octilla. "This is for you too," he said as he handed the bill to William.

William didn't look at it to see what it was. He took it and put it into his pocket. "Yas, sah," he said. "Much obliged, Mr. Louis."

Then Octilla handed William the paper bag with the red string on it, and William took the bag to the porch and gave it to Aunt Sarah.

"Sandy Claus," he said. He looked around. "For all you all," he said.

Every Christmas William and Octilla gave Aunt Sarah and Uncle Sam a ten pound bag of shelled pecans. The trees belonged to Aunt Sarah and Uncle Sam. Aunt Sarah and Uncle Sam gave William and his family their Christmas dinner as their present. Uncle Sam always raised four or five turkeys for Thanksgiving and Christmas, and they gave one to the Lawtons on those two holidays. Also Aunt Sarah set aside one of her fruit cakes for them when she did her Christmas baking.

William took the small brown packages out of his hat. "For the childruns," he said, giving them to my father to distribute. My father brought them to us where we were standing on the porch. Inside each package was a light bulb that had been painted red, with "Mery X" swirled in the wet paint with a finger before it dried. My sister was pleased with hers, but I didn't know what to say.

"Thank you," I said, speaking more to my father than to William.

Alice had gotten a tea set from Santa Claus, and she went into the house and came back with a place setting of the miniature knives and forks and spoons. She gave a piece to each of the three girls. While she

from THE BROKEN DOOR: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL FICTION 113

was doing it, the boys all looked at her, and when she had finished, they all looked at me. I tried to think of something that I had six of that I could give them. I wanted to do it partly because I thought that it would wipe away the memory of the way I had acted the night before, but also I just *wanted* to do it. Only I didn't *have* six of anything. I had already gobbled up all the candy in my stocking.

I was wearing the new cowboy suit I had gotten from Santa Claus, and I wished that at least I hadn't had that on. The boy who was nearest my age, was named Ligon. Sometimes I played with him when we would visit. Every time I looked at him, he would be looking at me—at my cowboy suit and the new Gene Autrey pistol I had gotten to go with it. He kept on looking at me, even after it became clear that I wasn't going to give them anything the way my sister had.

Aunt Sarah took the bag of pecans into the house, then Uncle Sam brought out the turkey, and she brought out the rest of the dinner on a tray with a white cloth over it.

Afterwards, Billy Wynne gave each of the children an orange out of a bag, and Leigh gave each of them an apple.

When Leigh got back onto the porch, William said, "Much obliged." Then he put his hat back onto his head, and they all faced right and marched out of the back yard single file with the smallest child leading and Dethonia holding to his mother's skirt.

After they had gone, I held up the red light bulb and examined it all around. "What's it *for*?" I asked my mother.

"They made it for you," she said.

I didn't understand her answer. "Do they think it's beautiful?" I asked.

She looked at me. "I think it's beautiful," she said.

Later I tried my bulb in a lamp, but it didn't work. When I shook it beside my ear I could hear the filament rattling inside the globe.

As with Billy Wynne's Christmas tree, it took me years and years to see for myself how beautiful that painted light bulb was. I must have gotten at least two of all the things I ever wanted. Over the course of my childhood I had more than a dozen Gene Autry cap pistols. But I only got one of the Lawtons' painted Christmas light bulbs, and before Christmas week was over I had lost it.

We ate dinner in the living room where a table had been set up big enough for all of us to sit down at one time. Aunt Sarah told my father how William and his family were doing.

"He's a *good* colored man," she said. "Of course, Octilla's surly."

"Loft thinks we should have taken that colored boy from D. Ford Crowther," said my mother. "Because he remembers the way it was with William."

"What colored boy?" Aunt Sarah asked. I looked at my mother. I had never heard this story before.

"When Nate was born," she said. "D. Ford Crowther wanted to give Loft a colored boy to play with him."

"Give him one?" said Aunt Sarah.

"Can you imagine?" said my mother. "There were colored children all over D. Ford Crowther's place. Loft tried to talk me into it."

My father didn't say anything.

"It was going to be trouble later on," said my mother. "Just *think* about it. Loft really wanted me to take in that colored child. We were talking about it for two or three weeks."

I thought about Ligon, and how it would have been to have him for my very own, to play with all of the time.

"Did you *really* do that, Louis?" said Aunt Sarah, talking to my father.

"I didn't think about him having to stay in the house," said my father. "William was my best friend when I was a child."

"It's a good thing you knew what *you* were doing," said Aunt Sarah, talking to my mother.

Aunt Sarah looked at my father. "I can't imagine what you were thinking about, Louis," she said. "I can't imagine what in the *world* you were thinking about."

"Yes," said my father. "Well. Everything works out for the best."

When I went to bed that night, I lay awake thinking how it would have been if I could have had Ligon to play Tarzan with. Ligon was copper colored like his father. He would have made a good Indian.

HELEN VON KOLNITZ HYER: SOUTH CAROLINA POET LAUREATE

PAUL EDWARD ALLEN

When in April, 1974, Governor John West bestowed the honor of South Carolina Poet Laureate on Mrs. Helen von Kolnitz Hyer, he was affirming that her work of over five decades was appreciated by the people of her state. Though generally regional in perspective and in theme, her poems have been published in several national magazines, among them *Poet Lore*, *Argosy*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*. She first appeared in print in *Romance* when she was seventeen. Later, when the editor of that magazine became editor of *Adventure Magazine*, such poems of adventure as "The Guns of Keokuck," "Amorer's Song," "Vulture Blood," "White Squall," and "The Cotton Gin Conjurers" (rept. in *Danger Never Sleeps*, 1970) appeared there. It is interesting that these two magazines, *Romance* and *Adventure*, first put Mrs. Hyer in print, since her poetry and her approach to the duty of the poet hinge on the love of romance and the thrill of adventure; if we care nothing for these, we will not enjoy Mrs. Hyer's work as it should be appreciated. As she writes in "Consider This" (*What the Wind Forgets A Woman's Heart Remembers*, 1975), "Poetry is a passionate, touched by magic pilgrim, / Following a golden thread through mazes Time has wrought. . . ."

Indeed, this love of romance has always been with her, even in her initial introduction to poetry. When Mrs. Hyer was a girl, she spent her summer with her grandfather's family in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, where they entertained the seminarians from a nearby Lutheran seminary. Her "tall . . . queenly . . . quite romantic" aunt had young Helen memorize and recite poetry for these gentlemen. Mrs. Hyer remembers that the first time, her aunt had her memorize "a ghastly poem about two lovers who were swamped in a flood. The last two lines are all I can remember now, but I just gave them a most dramatic reading. I said, 'Dead with the love light still gleaming / In the depths of their fast glazing eyes.' That was some way to start anybody doing poetry." But sessions such as that and her aunt's reading to her from a little red leather book of 19th century English poets gave her her foundation and introduced her to Tennyson, one of her favorite poets still; and to Camelot; and, as she says, to "all the rest of it." She remembers that the first poem she ever wrote had some-

thing in it about "white samite mystic wonderful." That she is no less a devotee of that same kind of romance which touched her in her youth is evident in the title of her most recent volume (*What The Wind Forgets A Woman's Heart Remembers*) as well as in many of its poems and images.

But the romance of Camelot and Shalott Mrs. Hyer moves generally to the low country of South Carolina. We are constantly being reminded in her poetry of the romance of the old South, the South we associate with magnolias, mammies, and mint juleps. In *Santee Songs*, her first volume of poetry (1923), we catch that exuberance in a poem called "Chat Ile Plantation—Deserted:"

Chat Ile, in the vanishing splendor of space where
 the rice-fields rolled gold to the sea,
 Thou art slumbering still in the somnolent shade
 of the moss-curtained oaks which conceal
 The treasons of time that have torn the veil from
 thine altar of chivalry,
 Chat Ile.

We get this kind of Southern flavor not only in her descriptions, but also in her language, her love of history, and her praise. Mrs. Hyer does not hold back when she wants to use an old song she learned from the Blacks who worked around Mt. Pleasant, as she does in "White Squall" (*Wine Dark Sea*, 1930), or to use the "gullah" dialect of the low country as in "Mauma's Sleep Song" (*Santee Songs*):

Shiny eye, shiny eye, shuteye time iz cum,
 All along duh rice-fiel' bank yuddem san'-fly hum.

A typical history poem which shows the strength of character and nobility of purpose in some of our heroes is "Andrew Jackson Refuses" (*Wine Dark Sea*). The poem is based on an incident where Jackson refused a marble sarcophagus of a Roman emperor which a Naval officer had offered him if he would ask to be buried in it when he died. In this poem, Jackson nobly says:

Can I so far forget my people's trust
 As basely, thus, by one last act to turn
 From practice of the high simplicity
 They reverence, to panoply of pride
 With which the mediocrity of kings
 Is gilded to deceive posterity?

Praise of the Southern sense of duty in wartime is found in "Fish Boat."

HELEN VON KOLNITZ HYER: SOUTH CAROLINA POET LAUREATE 117

This poem tells the story of the *Hunley*, a Confederate submarine which sank the Yankee blockade ship *Husatonic*, being sunk and killing its seventh crew in the process. The poet says of this poem, "I have always felt that it took the most tremendous amount of courage, knowing that the submarine had already killed six crews—and then to know that they were going to their deaths—that's pretty hard for a young man to look at." The closing lines of the poem illustrate her concern for that bravery and for the dutiful Southern gentleman-soldier:

The Confederates lie with the wind and the sky in the
 harvest field of the sea,
 Who, unafraid, fought the tight blockade to keep a
 lifeline free.
 But I think, tonight, by the star's faint light, that we
 might see them rise,
 Each at salute in his stained gray suit with Saint Martin's
 fire in his eyes,
 An honor guard, keeping watch and ward to welcome home
 from the sea
 The men today, who die that way on the road to Victory.

It should be noted here, however, that Helen Hyer is not indiscriminate in her love of the South. "Vignettes From Another Slant" (*Danger Never Sleeps*) is a humorous collection of eight little poems which treat some of the ironies in our southern way. "Portrait of Two Ancient Ladies" gives us this twist:

Her waist is small, her shoes are tight,
 She wears black silk and diamond broaches,
 Her parlor's full of Hepplewhite
 Her kitchen's full of roaches.

But Mrs. Hyer's love of history and the low country does not limit her strictly to Southern themes and settings. "Full Moon—High Tide" (*What the Wind Forgets*) is an Irish legend told in blank verse, and in *Danger Never Sleeps* she has a group of poems set in the cold north country of Michigan and Canada. Among this group are such poems as "Rivermen," "Shaking the Rails," "Chief Wawatam," and "Paul Bunyan's Flapjack Rising," a humorous tall-tale narrative poem which reminds us of some of Robert Service's work:

Us lumberjacks wuz hungry 'cause the grub wuz gettin' low
 (I mind me well, that winter of the Big Blue Snow).
 Paul Bunyan came a-ridin' up to our snowed-in shacks,
 Says he, "I'm mixing sourdough for hot flapjacks!"

But though not all of Mrs. Hyer's poems deal directly with Southern romance and adventure, they do all depend on our appreciation of these qualities as dominant themes in poetry. If we approach Mrs. Hyer's work looking for something else, we may be disappointed. For she believes that poetry must be made up of "the finest expressions and similes and ideas" and that the impact of a poem lies in the music and idea. The poem is not an experience in itself, but rather it relates an experience or gives the reader one. If the metaphors are mixed, so be it. Those who as she says "pick a poem to pieces little by little and bit by bit," are often "cranky critics," lacking "a sense of consecration of the ideals of poetry." As she says in the couplet closing the sonnet "Deplorable to Learn" (*What the Wind Forgets*), "Not by the poet's mistakes the beauty dies; / But by the critic's horrible surmise."

Mrs. Hyer, nevertheless, has a purpose. She wants to create what she calls "people poetry." She wants her readers to enjoy her work and be drawn by the romance or excited by the adventure. She wants the people of South Carolina and her friends in the eight poetry societies to which she belongs around the country to read her books and to be touched by the language, the ideas, the themes, and the music of her poems. In that respect Mrs. Hyer's reach does not exceed her grasp.

TWO POEMS BY THOMAS H. McCLANAHAN

MUSEUM SONNET

The map we bought to tell us how to find
 Our pilgrimage among the mute displays
 Was like the pedigree that leads the blind,
 A warning not to lose our human ways.
 Four bipeds with our noses pressed against
 The panes that made us see ancestral sights,
 But we were not prepared for such intense
 Examination of our mortal plights.

What had begun in wonder stopped in rage
 For as the day evolved we grew to hate
 The notion that in some untimely age
 Two quadrupeds had organized our fate.
 Regressive doubt became hostility,
 The voiceless rant of stuffed ferocity.

LEFT

The leaving,
Silent creeping toward the West,
Was something viewed as comedy—a gas
To those grease monkey demons
Who watched me watch that Chevy wagon
Pull away—a family minus one.
Past the pumps, silver fingers in silver ears,
I made my way through pit-tire-swirls,
The fuming ether of gasoline
And Lethe lubricants,
A Texaco Hell, to gain a manly foothold
Somewhere back from sun and gooey tar
And roads that have left children behind.

An hour orphan, mapping out alone
The plan to crawl the desert,
Working my way, eating cactus and wild hares.
And where—
At eight, when the mind wanders,
The body does not know to wait.

When he found me,
Sneering like a gila monster
Over the top of an Arizona map,
My father did not laugh:
He let me steer lap-heavy until
The western sun became my sleeping eyes.

TWO POEMS BY VIRGINIA LINTON

HIDDEN IMAGE

you sidled
into shadow
like a drug pusher
on the lam

I know you're there
somewhere hiding
behind a word
most likely
SPEED? (you got away
fast enough)

but *lie low sheepie*
I know the waiting game
I'll be here
when you come out
and then I'll frisk you

my father
before he went on the nod
could whistle
on his fingers
high

and wide enough
to crack the sky

DIFFERING VIEWS OF A DEAD WHALE

Looming monstrous,
he shone a hide weathered
like an old rubber boot
in the wrack of the last spring-tide
his blowhole puckered, crater-dry,
into a silence beyond size.
Children, who had run, shouting
toward sky, around the South Point
to look at him, trampolined—
slipping through slick in sneakers,
off and on the high side of his flank .

Sand ran
in his open jaw, tooth-deep;
and the eye (so small
a light for such a mound)
lay closed above the sludge of blood
and juices oozing under his head,
staining the deep sand to rust
and hissing like a full kettle
shoved back on the stove
with the burner at *low low*.

On this quarter,
the children kept their distance
and stared at their own feet;
even the voracious,
golden-eyed flies buzzed clear
to drone a monotone around
the vortex where the great hulk
simmered down to merge with
the age-bound mud.

A variation of gulls hovered; canted
and swung closer, on an indifferent air,
deceiving soft as grey cloud-cover—

Calling in,
up the long sea-wind, the celebrants.

REVIEWS

Kenneth H. Baldwin and David K. Kirby, eds. *Individual and Community: Variations on a Theme in American Fiction*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1975, 222 pp. \$9.75.

This book is a *festschrift* for Charles Roberts Anderson, Caroline Donovan Professor Emeritus of American Literature at the Johns Hopkins University and now a resident of Charleston, S. C. *Festschriften* are quite likely to be still-born unless their deliverers exercise considerable pre-natal care, and in this case care was exercised. The usual defect, a scattering of essays of uneven quality on a wide variety of themes, has been partly eliminated. All of the authors of this collection are experienced scholars and the editors have made an obvious effort, both in their introduction and in their selection of essays, to develop an appearance of thematic consonance. As skilfully as they have wrought, however, the web of connection virtually disappears on close examination. The theme of community is a major issue in only two of the essays, and the individual, at least in thematic terms, is virtually non-existent.

The opening essay, by J. V. Ridgely, explores the "empty world" of Brown's *Wieland*, focusing on the fallacy of unmediated sense perception in apprehending truth. The absence in America of traditional mediatory agencies in the form of established institutions necessitated a reliance either on the perceptions of the individual or the "light of reason." Needless to say, the characters in *Wieland* rely on what they see and hear, and reason goes a-begging. Professor Ridgely has isolated a technique here (the use of *chiaroscuro* to establish a ground for faulty perception) that has been explored fully in the works of Hawthorne but has been relatively neglected in Brown. He examines it in a compact essay that makes its point clearly and neatly.

I wish I could say as much for Roy Harvey Pearce's essay on *The Blithedale Romance*. It is disappointingly inconclusive even in its severely limited approach to the novel as a version of a failed Arcadia, an "anti-utopia" that "grows out of Hawthorne's Brook Farm experience." An interesting point is made relating the writing of the novel to Hawthorne's concerns during the period in which he was re-telling the classic myths for children in his *Wonder-Book* and *Tanglewood Tales*, and the relative failure of the book is ascribed to the necessity of developing an anti-utopia in terms of a novel instead of a romance. In other words, Hawthorne had to present the immediate in concrete particulars instead of developing events in the twilight atmosphere he found congenial to his work. Well and good, if writing an anti-utopia was Hawthorne's major concern. There is one topic of the novel, however, that is rendered with particularity, and that is the relations between the sexes. Hollingsworth is as complete a male chauvinist as Hawthorne ever presented, and it is a beautiful irony to have him reject the sexually abundant Zenobia in favor of wilting Priscilla, only to be emasculated by his choice. Then, to compound the irony, Coverdale, self-proclaimed worshipper of women who swears that he would gladly submit to feminine rule, also disdains a woman who *could* rule and declares his love for Priscilla, who makes little purses with a secret opening. Did Utopia fail, then, because of the way nineteenth-century men related to their women? Hawthorne's Hester might say so if we could move her up a couple of centuries, and the irony (perhaps unconscious) of the sexual preferences in *Blithedale* points up the possibility. Professor

Pearce never mentions this topic. The bulk of his essay is derived from his historical introduction to the novel for the Centenary Edition, and one can only suppose that the editorial attempt to develop the theme of community may have had something to do with the narrowness of his approach in this excerpt. Perhaps my chief complaint is only that I expected more from Professor Pearce.

Edgar A. Dryden's essay on *The Marble Faun* is more substantial, although I think the introductory section is a bit misleading, particularly as it categorizes the reading of fiction too exclusively as the play instinct. The luminaries are quoted—Derrida and Ortega—but the general response to a novel is oversimplified. All of us do not identify with the fictional world and “always” feel a sense of disappointment when the final page is turned. It is possible to finish a novel with the fullness of aesthetic gratification without surrendering in the least to the virtual world it creates. I don't believe any but the naive find a problem in the fact that “the relationship between fictive worlds and externality is discontinuous.” The preliminary section is also misleading in that the subsequent discussion, as it is brought to bear upon *The Marble Faun*, centers less on the difference, however keenly felt, between Hawthorne's fictional world and reality than upon Hawthorne's melancholy representation of the distance between the self and the other, between the individual and “God, nature, and his fellowman.” This topic is explored in depth, and the conclusion is reached that for Hawthorne “sympathetic communication is impossible.” Since sympathy, in the Romantic sense, involves imaginative identification with a consequent loss of self, Hawthorne, who wished to be a “spiritualized Paul Pry,” observing others but maintaining separateness, negates that possibility, creating “a world where human relations are based on distance and mutual distrust” rather than a sympathetic communion. Thus the generalization made without qualification in the first section of the essay is refuted in *The Marble Faun*. We do *not* feel “a gentle and sympathetic interest but a desire to question and probe.” For reader and author the play instinct surrenders to the adult act of interpretation, a process that seems to me normative for a sophisticated reader.

Louis D. Rubin, Jr. appears in a lengthy essay on a big subject, Mark Twain and the South. One is impressed by Professor Rubin's limp prose, and this essay, like his many others, displays a beguiling lead, Twain's anecdote about the *Begum of Bengal* from the “Last Lotus Club Speech.” Although it is necessary for the author to recite a number of well-known biographical facts in order to establish the ground for his interpretation of Twain's attitude toward the South, it is biography well-told and pertinent. Sam Clemens' ambivalent attitude toward his father, John Marshall Clemens (who tries to hold his Virginia head high among the ragtag and bobtail of the frontier), appears almost subversively whenever Twain in life or in his tales confronts a situation in which breeding is at issue. This attitude manifests itself as a “lifelong love-hate fascination with men of aristocratic bearing.” These flawed aristocrats do turn up in Twain's fiction, whether the setting be St. Petersburg, Bricksville, Dawson's Landing, or Camelot. Especially Camelot. Professor Rubin sees Twain's Arthurian England as reflecting the South of his youth and suggests that the disastrous consequences of the Yankee's introduction of industrial capitalism show Twain's ambivalence not only toward the flawed aristocrats but also to the New South of Henry W. Grady. Can it be that Twain enlisted his novel under the banner of progress, “only to realize at the end that the nineteenth century industrial capitalism of Northeastern society was no valid alternative”? This is an interesting speculation that would at least explain the change in Hank Morgan's character from sym-

pathetic to unsympathetic. I shouldn't leave this essay without a minor complaint, however. It was a Simon Suggs tale instead of a Sut Lovingood that was the raw material for the episode of the King at the camp meeting in *Huckleberry Finn*.

Another worthy essay is Carlos Baker's examination of Hemingway's "empirical imagination." Hemingway at his best succeeds in creating an "impression of vital authenticity," because he made, at least in his early works, a "fetish of accuracy and veracity in seeing and saying." This accuracy is well documented in the essay. The change came when Hemingway's observational powers began to fail and he wrote out of memory and feeling, perhaps attempting to justify himself to the world. Professor Baker's thesis doesn't strike me as new, for many have noticed the increase in subjectivity and the decline in Hemingway's ability to crystallize fact in some of his later works. Still the *point is important enough to deserve this further analysis*. When Hemingway began to rely upon what "was mined from the depths of his own psyche rather than from enabling sources outside himself," the effect on the quality of his work was self-evident.

Like Professor Baker's, Philip Momberger's essay is a fresh treatment of an old topic. Ever since the publication of Cleanth Brooks's *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (1962), the significance of the community in Faulkner's works has been debated; but here the focus is on a group of six stories (Section I of *Collected Stories*) that provide a contrast to Faulkner's more usual treatment of decayed families and isolated individuals. Footnotes reveal Professor Momberger's awareness that he is treading a worn path. *The yeoman farmers of the South* have been the darling of Southern historians for more than a quarter of a century, and it is surprising that Faulkner, for all the claim that he admired them, gives them relatively little attention in his works. In these six stories, however, there is presented "an ideal of communal health, wholeness and peace against which the reader can measure the social and personal disintegration rendered . . . throughout the Faulkner canon." No evidence is presented that Faulkner himself assembled these tales into the order of the *Collected Stories*, and if his editor did it one wonders if the claim made here is completely justified, that this group of stories is deliberately functional "in the traditional manner of pastoral—to define an ideal vantage point from which to measure the corrupt realities of a fallen world, and to evoke a condition of social and personal fulfillment toward which men of moral imagination may strive." The case is well argued, however, and this is as much as we should expect.

James E. Miller, Jr. undertakes to rescue Faulkner's *Sanctuary* from the adverse opinions of "Faulkner's best commentators," but his introductory remarks are sometimes curious. Faulkner, for instance, is alleged to have been "unkind" to the novel in "his flip Introduction and weak sequel." The structure of the sentence could lead us to the ludicrous conclusion that *Requiem for a Nun* was a product of Faulkner's hostile attitude toward his earlier work. Furthermore, I cannot see that the 1961 film version of *Sanctuary*, bad as it was, muddied the critical waters. If it did, we should also consider the effect of the 1933 film version with Miriam Hopkins and Jack LaRue. I am also puzzled by the statement that the critical question of the novel hinges on whether "Faulkner was trying for reality and misfiring, or whether he was trying for something else—a trans-real quality . . . and actually succeeding superbly well." If Faulkner's best critics are perplexed because they are employing some Jamesian criterion of conformity to our sense of the way things happen, they are unprepared to deal with Faulkner. Faulkner often evoked the trans-real; the "absurd and nightmarish" quality is as pervasive in *As I Lay Dying* as it is in *Sanctuary*,

REVIEWS

125

and the savage Snopes children of *The Town* are as far from any conceivable norms of the real as Popeye Vitelli.

Professor Miller errs only in his searching for a hook to hang his article on. His survey of *Sanctuary* under the analogy of Eliot's *Wasteland* is productive of insight, as is his account of Faulkner's technique of the double perspective (the comic and the serious): "By bringing the two perspectives so close together, Faulkner was implying something about the nature of human experience itself: that it absurdly contains, at one and the same time, the comic alongside the tragic—humor in the horror." I agree, but I would not consider *Sanctuary* the sole beneficiary of the double perspective. It is in *As I Lay Dying* and *The Hamlet*, to mention only the obvious examples. The critical question is whether Faulkner did it as well in *Sanctuary* as he did in the other novels. Professor Miller evidently thinks that he did and makes a good argument for his opinion.

James Baird invites us to a new reading of Djuna Barnes, long a favorite of the *cognoscenti* but now a feature of survey courses in modern American literature. This new reading finds its locus in the assumption that Miss Barnes, intentionally, was an American surrealist. She "wished to bring to the American novel the full burden of the dark of the mind, the night, the subconscious." Her first novel, *Ryder* (1928), explored allegorically "the subconscious of Protestant morality" and the "baleful night of American Puritanism." It is the Protestant psyche that is obsessed with the need of return to primal innocence, to Adam and Eve. Far better to "envy the unknowing animals." *Nightwood* picks up at this point. It is "an allegory of the loss of innocence, not the innocence of Adam and Eve . . . , but the innocence of the jungle." Professor Baird maintains that Djuna Barnes is properly interpreted from the vantage point of French metaphysics and French art. Her attempt, like that of Baudelaire, is by means of art to join the dark and light aspects of the human experience in a representation of the wholeness of the human psyche. This essay is both convincing and eloquent—the latter a quality too little appreciated these days.

The final essay of this collection is an admittedly tentative "attempt at an interim progress report, with new observations, on the reading of Pynchon's second novel," *The Crying of Lot 49*. I, for one, am very happy to have Edward Mendelson's expert help, being one of those benighted who were baffled by *V*. The claim is made that *Lot 49* clarifies *V*. by employing the concept of entropy "as a metaphor of exceptional range and emotional power." The irreversible loss of heat-energy, the second law of thermodynamics, is also the central metaphor of *V*., but *Lot 49* exists to *V*. as recovery to decline. Energy is infused into the dying world and the possibility of reversal is at least contemplated. Discovery of an ancient system of communication called the "Trystero" is the enabling factor in *Lot 49* that projects the possibility of relatedness and sacred connection, a sense of significance behind historical events. With its matrix of metaphor drawn from thermodynamics and information theory, *The Crying of Lot 49* could remain opaque even to those of us who coped in some measure with *V*., but Professor Mendelson's description of the organization of the book helps. Perhaps a new generation of readers will find itself as comfortable with Pynchon as my generation learned to be with Joyce and Faulkner. There is one problem concerning the value of this essay to the reader that Professor Mendelson could not control: the date of its appearance. A brief postscript is added on *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon's third novel, which fixes the date of composition of the essay. A "progress report" describing the structure of a novel must be up-to-date to have its best value. Several essays appeared in 1973 on *Lot 49*, and in 1974 there

were two essays on *Lot 49* and three or four on *Gravity's Rainbow*. One supposes that these essays were published between the composition of Professor Mendelson's essay and its appearance in this book in 1975.

To recapitulate, this *festschrift* is less uneven than most. Its editors have made a good choice of essays and have provided a useful introduction; as a whole it is a worthy tribute to Charles Anderson, the scholar whom it honors.

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Grace Freeman. *No Costumes or Masks*. Charlotte: Red Clay Books, 1975, 48 pp. \$3.00.

Grace Freeman's *No Costumes or Masks* is an admirable, though uneven collection of poetry. Ms. Freeman was recently named the Stephen Vincent Benet Award winner, and this volume illustrates how thoroughly she deserved the award. The title of the book suggests that the poet's concern will be with the mysteries behind costumes and masks, and the first poem serves as an invitation to the reader to move "down my long dark hall" into submerged memories, fears, and desires. Although one expects a plunge into her psychic darkness in order to shed light on what exists behind artificial covers, the darkness Ms. Freeman confronts is neither deep enough nor illuminated enough to produce the extremes of great poetry. Yet, within her deceptively gentle voice, the poet moves toward an emotional toughness that promises future maturity and power in her poetry.

Childhood moments and memories are Ms. Freeman's greatest source of material for her art. Being an only child provides the impetus for two consequences: as in "Only Child," the protagonist overcomes her loneliness by depending upon her imagination for comfort and drama. The idea that there are "battered children/who have never had a hand laid on them" suggests her awareness of additional suffering that goes beyond herself. Out of such loneliness comes the poet's reliance on the creative impulse, and her sympathies remain with those isolated outsiders who "try and purchase tickets to life-things/that are free."

The poet wishes to remove facades covering the essence of the self as well as to distinguish between genuine and false emotional responses within her speakers. "Spelling Lesson" forms a subtle commentary on a child's growing comprehension of the differences between such responses. When she is "five, going on six," the protagonist is taught the word *death*, but giggles inappropriately when her arm sticks to a tablecloth. A few years later, however, she and a friend create a game of stares and tears; the narrator cries on cue by concentrating on the moment when death first became important to her. In the few years between the two events, the child has started to grasp death's meaning; she thinks back "to the day when I was five and learned/to be born does not mean/always to be alive." Although the young girl wins the game of artificial grief, she becomes aware of a larger loss looming.

Two of Ms. Freeman's most emotionally authentic poems are "House Beside Woods for Sale" and "Side Effects of Tragedy in Suburban Woods." The dramatic center of these two related poems involves a fifteen-year-old boy's failure in delivering the child of his young lover; instead of giving life, he causes the death of mother and child. "The pine whose dropped needles cradled/and later covered her body and the child's/stands sentinel all year long." The poet prevents these poems from falling into standard folk-tales of tragic love by emphasizing the "side effects" of those who live in the house next to the wooded lot. That the house is for sale indicates the quiet agony of the homeowners who can no longer endure looking through their kitchen

REVIEWS

127

windows at the woods where "the girl, not yet sixteen,/knew birth and death together." The haunting dilemma of the suburbanites, related initially as a peripheral element, in fact determines the central mood of these two poems. The dual dramas of the young lovers and the homeowners represent Ms. Freeman at her best; here the poet is in careful command, allowing the drama to emerge on its own merits.

The poet's concern for the lonely child, hurt or dying, gives an unearthly, surrealistic atmosphere to her poem "Upon Reading of a Young Father Still Searching for Small Son Lost in the Smoky Mountains in June." The writer imagines the child perhaps alive "curled in a thicket-womb of rhododendron," waiting to be found. But, as in many of the other poems relating to childhood, inevitable death is always close, and the father, like the homeowners, agonizes:

Will he rush to move his shrunken family
somewhere safely flat?
Or will he choose to stay close by,
aching at the first pink hint of June
on the mountainside,
knowing there is no place to go,
no soil nor season he can ever find
where rhododendron does not grow
in a sudden crevice of his mind.

The poem moves tenderly through the father's gloom. These three poems particularly demonstrate Ms. Freeman's successful fusion of craft and vision; other poems, however, illustrate the unevenness and perhaps restrictions of her abilities.

"Color Schizophrenic," for example, is too neatly divided and rhymed. The two-stanza poem strains for rhymes with rather odd results. The first two lines of each stanza read respectively "On sun days" and "On un-days." This rhyme pattern creates an awkwardness in the next lines when "Poet" is rhymed with "goat," suggesting a curious pronunciation, presumably depending upon a strange Southern drawl. The first stanza refers to the days when the poet rises within the speaker, while the second stanza in contrast indicates moments when the poet feels drained of anything poetic: those "un-days" when she feels as if she is more like a goat than a poet. This odd counterpoint draws attention to itself and away from the author's intended focus.

Another poem one wishes Ms. Freeman had reconsidered is "Mental Health on Saturday." The poem focuses on a town character, Trotting Salley, who shuffles into town on Saturdays to play his violin for coins tossed at his feet. When "ragged children" occasionally steal his earnings, Salley turns away, pretending not to have noticed. The sentiment is fine, but the Christianity of such an act does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the old violinist's artistic impulses compare with those of a Heifitz, simply because he plays less for money than for aesthetic appreciation: "Did there burn inside/your loose boned body/the same hot flame that makes/a Heifitz seek a concert stage?" The answer to the rhetorical question may well be an emphatic No.

By comparison, the very next poem, "Endowed Chair," aims for a simpler statement and achieves a higher artistic accomplishment. The poem becomes a wrenching dramatization of a professor who has distinguished himself enough to earn a prized academic award but whose speech is slurred as the result of a stroke. His inchoate struggles to carry on amenities with his colleagues and students are met with impatient rebuffs. The protagonist's groping for speech becomes a moving testimony of internal anguish.

Ms. Freeman's sympathies for the alienated loner also influence her view of the relationship of blacks and whites. As a Southerner, the writer cannot avoid the subject; with a sense of overdue justice, she walks around "three black girls, Afro haired, /their jean-fringed legs rhythm locked/as though the sidewalk belonged to them." She gladly walks off the sidewalk because for "Too long, too long,/I thought I owned it." In general, however, her poems about blacks and whites do not seem fully resolved; yet, when the poetry's location occurs outside the South, especially outside the U. S., Ms. Freeman is able to dramatize her response to blacks with greater empathy and force. In "Upon Half-Viewing a Film on Drought in Africa," the speaker watches the film "Through thin eye slits," as if forcing herself to comprehend the horrifying details, though her first impulse is to shrink from such a sight:

I have to cheat, not look
at closeup shots of clustering flies
on faces of children paper thin,
too weak to lift their hands.

Though she does not wish literally to see, the speaker's poetic vision forces her to perceive the details she wishes to avoid; the force of the imagination that once offered comfort when she was a child now insists that she clearly see the horror as an adult. However, when Ms. Freeman recounts her own childhood experiences with blacks, the poems seem rather flat. An emblematic poem, "The Rope," for example, rather perfunctorily portrays a lynching.

The limitations of Ms. Freeman's treatment of the black-white relationships are most fully demonstrated in her work "Limited Vision." The poem concentrates on a child's inability to understand how blacks can recognize their own children, since all blacks look alike to the young white girl. The work's tone depends, of course, on a mild self-mockery. Yet, just as the child is unable to perceive the distinctions among people, so too does the poet at times fail to broaden her vision adequately. In fact, the writer tends to look too often "Through thin eye slits" rather than confronting completely her own "long dark hall." However, just as the poet, reading to a study hall of high school students on a rainy afternoon, eventually woos her audience to herself, so too does this volume of poetry generally win over her reader. Ms. Freeman's voice is not young, but it is a new, developing, and intensely compassionate one. Her future volumes should indicate even more growth of vision and emotional accuracy. Hers is a voice to listen to and for.

RONALD BAUGHMAN
University of South Carolina

Barbara Ferry Johnson. *Lionors*. New York: AVON Books, 1975, 278 pp. \$1.75.

Malory mentions her briefly in *Le Morte D'Arthur*. T. H. White acknowledges the rumor of Arthur's "affair" with her. Now, the "passing fair damosel" upon whom Arthur "set his love greatly" has a story of her own. Barbara Ferry Johnson's novel *Lionors: King Arthur's Uncrowned Queen* is, as the author claims, a light romance resulting from her "literary love affair" with King Arthur and her intrigue with the untold legend of the Earl of Sanam's daughter who captured the affections of the young Arthur, bore him a blind daughter, endured his expedient marriage to Guenever, and claimed his love until his death.

Despite the plot-potential for a medieval soap opera, *Lionors* is a well-planned and well-written novel. While it lacks the skillful anachronisms of White's *The Once and Future King* and the ingenious blend of history and romance in Mary Stewart's Arthurian saga novels, it clearly displays Johnson's fertile imagination and talent for

REVIEWS

129

entertaining historical fiction. With sales well over the quarter-million mark, *Lionors* has obvious popular appeal and is written in a style that should easily lend itself to screenplay adaptation. Furthermore, the book is something of a landmark example of successful "original" paperback novels. *The Washington Post* reviewed it as one of a "new breed of romantic paperback fiction" that offers economy-minded readers enjoyment that is inexpensive without being "cheap."

For the more discerning reader, *Lionors* is not without merit. While Johnson's first novel proves her story-telling skill, it also reflects her career as a college English teacher whose scholarly interests in the Arthurian legends have prompted studies in Oxford and travels into "King Arthur Country" in Wales and southern England to visit the haunts of Britain's most famous mythic hero. Kay, Merlin, Mordred, and various knights and ladies of the Camelot cast move in and out of Lionor's life, along with several Johnson-created additions including the mysterious Gundrig, Will the steward, the old housekeeper Marta, and the rapist Seth, all of whom are well-described and well-woven into the plot. Early in the novel, Lionors takes Arthur to her "secret place":

I named the island Ave Lion. I think I had just learned that *Ave* in Latin means 'hail,' and the island always seemed to be calling me to come over. I first used my whole name—Ave Lionors—but that was too much of a mouthful, I think 'Ave Lion' has a haunting, musical sound to it. (15)

In addition to giving Avalon its name, Johnson's charming and resourceful heroine gives the reader several fine passages, such as her reflections following the deaths of her father and two old companions of Sanam Manor:

Within the span of nine months I had lost three beloved companions. More than that, I had passed a peculiar milestone in my life. There was no one left who remembered me as a child, who could recall with me the foolish things I did when I was three or four. Those who were left knew me only as an adult. To them I had never been a child. Such a moment is a Rubicon that must inexorably be crossed, but one takes that step sadly, knowing there is no one to see the face of the child behind the lineaments of the woman . . . The greatest loss comes not from having no one to turn to for advice or comfort. The desire is not to be a child again, but the need is to see in the eyes of the parent the memory of the child that was. (174-175)

While *Lionors* is a believable, intelligent, and strong young woman with remarkable perceptions of her medieval surroundings, at times she may seem a bit *too* refined for a sixth century Earl's child raised by a warm but simple housekeeper. But Johnson is careful to note that the Earl of Sanam was an unusually cultured man with a daughter unusually receptive to his fine collection of Greek and Latin manuscripts and the comforts of their Roman-style villa. After all, if Merlin could tutor an unlikely Arthur into kingship, Lionors deserves our equal willing suspension of disbelief as Arthur's female match. Although the dialogue is occasionally awkward with faint suggestions of a Rhett Butler-Scarlett O'Hara antebellum love affair, *Lionors* is a delightful evening's reading and should be the first of many from one of South Carolina's bright new voices in fiction.

JEROLD J. SAVORY
Columbia College

Ben Greer. *Slammer*. New York: Atheneum, 1975, 256 pp. \$7.95.

Ben Greer's first novel is a lovingly detailed story of the men and events leading to a major prison ("slammer") riot. There is considerable suspense, some fine characterization, and Greer has a strong story to tell. It fails ultimately because of clumsy writing and lapses of taste. The author also seems to lose his *moral viewpoint* (this is an old-fashioned term), obfuscating the motivations of the young prison guard Aaron Walsh, the first character encountered.

One story line concerns Walsh's career (Greer himself worked as a South Carolina prison guard); a second has to do with the competition between Father Edward Breen, the oldtimer priest, and Father White, his trainee-replacement; there is a murderous power struggle between the idealistic black John Moultrie and the sinister "Muslim" who presides over the prison's seventy-per-cent black population; and finally, there is a continuing sexual struggle for an attractive young mental defective, Daniel Childs, who becomes queen of the prison's perverts. Greer tells his story in short chapters within four books, or sections, cutting from one character to another, from one aspect of the developing riot to another, and the novel ends with a bleak epilogue.

Structurally, the cutting back and forth becomes somewhat mechanical, but the major problem is the graceless, truncated style the author has chosen:

In Portland that restless he felt in college grew into something. Rice and Lewis busted for stealing a jeep, winding up on Kittery Island. And when he saw that place, what stone and mortar did to men, he knew where his stand would be. And he knew, too, that only a few had the blood. Now returned, a beginning in this prison. Wondering when he would toughen up. (p. 14)

There is nothing inherently wrong with this kind of writing—it works marvelously well in J. P. Donleavy's *The Ginger Man*—but it demands an ear for cadences and some ingenuity, and all too often Greer is merely clumsy:

Breen saw beyond this though, to the grief which was now resting lightly and tight on his face and that hung in his eyes like a stone. He knew how it was for these hard men and that they would have grief out their own way.

"Moose Club gave it to him—that eye. They brought him up in front of all the Mooses—drunk, all of them eating baked beans and chicken salad, and right there between the American flag and the Moose banner gave it to him. It winked and danced in that little box and he was proud as a new penny and liked to 'a bawled over it." Jenkins slipped his hands to his face and wept. (p. 140)

Moultrie's victory over "the Muslim" is assured when he enlists the vile-smelling John Darcy, "the angel of death," dying of cancer, who kills by insinuating himself into inaccessible places and piercing his victim's head with an icepick, through the ears. Walsh learns that his job includes the taking of bribes (as his superior tells him, "Cons don't trust men who aren't on the take. Neither do guards"); he becomes a hero to his fellows when he bluffs the return of another guard from the hands of barricaded prisoners by shooting out the ceiling lights and pointing his shotgun at the ringleader; and later he assists in the torture of a prisoner. Breen humiliates Father White, beats him physically in the boxing ring, but cannot break his spirit. Childs is seduced and becomes a hooker for his pimp/madam, one Montana Red. With a fine sense of pace, Greer moves steadily toward the Goya-like scenes of the riot. The writing is realistic, the emphasis on the degenerative consequences of contact with corruption.

REVIEWS

131

The most clearly realized character in the book is Father Breen, a flawed, violent man so like the prisoners that only his conferred sanctity enables him to save his liberal colleague Father White from the rioters camped in the yard; the Augustinian White, who has translated *Urbs Dei*, needs saving by someone who understands muscle, Breen. Breen and Moultrie, his black counterpart, meet climactically, and Moultrie is destroyed. The only real ambiguity has to do with Walsh, the young guard. He muffs his task as sniper, receives another chance, and presumably will stay on as a corrupt prison guard. He is a sympathetic figure for much of the book, but Greer deserts or dismisses him at the end, pursuing a gothic melodrama that ignores Walsh's situation.

Greer's prison verisimilitude is what makes this nasty, brutish story memorable. The nastiness of the story eventually affects Greer's selection of imagery, however, and the reader gets the uncomfortable feeling that Greer is enjoying it. Father Breen tells Father White, "It's like your head's a can of worms. Squirming around, screwing out your ears. It's like you want to open your head and scoop out the maggots" (p. 185). The writing gets worse, the story more melodramatic as the book winds down:

Breen—whom [Moultrie] would like to pump full with his own bad blood, the weak blood that had failed. Pump the ugly white body tight with spoiled nigger blood like a slick, fat wood tick and then listen to the lovely pop of the knife as it dove into the shiny belly, spewing his own weak blood out of Breen's white body, before Breen's gutless and outraged eyes. (p. 257)

Tolstoy, speaking as critic, says this to all of us:

In our time a man who wishes to follow art either takes a subject current at the time and praised by people who in his opinion are clever, and clothes it as best he can in what is called "artistic form"; or he chooses a subject which gives him most opportunity to display his technical skill, and with toil and patience produces what he considers to be a work of art; or having received some chance impression he takes what caused that impression for his subject, imagining that it will yield a work of art since it happened to produce an impression on him (*What is Art?* Oxford, p. 61).

Nothing has changed in the last 75 years. Greer's novel is based on experience, is full of apt detail and shrewd characterization, and has already made money. It is not the true work of art, "the revelation . . . of a new conception of life arising in the artist's soul," as Tolstoy puts it. Greer has shown that he knows how to put a novel together, however, and perhaps next time he will choose a more effective style.

RICHARD A. UNDERWOOD
Clemson University

Alfred Sandlin Reid. *Furman University: Toward a New Identity, 1925-1975*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1976, 288 pp. \$9.75.

"Learning is an excellent Handmaid to Grace," wrote Oliver Hart in 1768. Hart, William Bullein Johnson, and Richard Furman were the creators of what was to become Furman University, and their collective faith in the "principles of Christian liberality, and . . . the rights of private judgement" was the inspiration for what it was to become. The late Alfred S. Reid has given us a fine history of that institution's search for its destiny amid "a continual conflict between proponents of a broad vision of liberal arts education, open to all ideas, and the proponents of an

anti-intellectual sectarianism, suspicious of learning," whose focal point was and is the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

Whereas the first century of Furman's struggles is covered in brief and general terms, yielding to three previous works on that subject, Reid gives a quite detailed account of the administrative history of the last fifty years. There is a great concern here for Presidents, budgets, curricula and the struggles with the S. C. Baptist Convention over policy—the stuff of old Board minutes, catalogues and reports. Unfortunately, there is little of student life and the "feel" of the academic environment. Perhaps this is asking too much for a brief work such as this, and source material, other than the recorded literary and journalistic efforts of students, is hard to come by. But those who were Furman students at one time may find it hard to relate to the image of "their period" which appears in the text. On the other hand, present and past administrators and perhaps faculty might see it more as Reid presents it.

This is an "in-group" book, whose main fascination will probably be for those who have had some close relationship to the University. However, there is much to interest anyone who wishes to understand the problems of a denominational school wishing to avoid narrow sectarian teaching while remaining to some extent the creature of a church. Reid tells it "warts and all," concluding with the observation that "the fundamentalist wing of the convention . . . will no doubt arise periodically into new contentions."

Selected professors and all of the presidents of Furman are described shrewdly by Reid who seems to be making several editorial points concerning the progress of Furman by the manner of his comments concerning them. Some of his evaluations of more contemporary personages may elicit debate. Revealing anecdotes appear here and there which help create an impression of the character of the school. Heresy trials, behavior codes (little changed from the 1920's to the 1960's), the impact of the Duke Endowment, and John Plyler's "edifice complex" are the stuff of an interesting narrative.

There is no "dedication" of this book, but after a careful reading of it, and from remembrances of certain members of the faculty who were there during the decades of the 30's, 40's and 50's, one would like to have seen it dedicated to those who consistently received so little, but who gave so much, not only to Furman, but to the South Carolina Baptists whom they sought to enlighten.

EDWIN M. COULTER
Clemson University

Franklin Ashley. *hard shadows*. Rock Hill, S. C.: Peaceweed Press, 1975, 25 pp. N.P.
Eugene Platt. *an original sin and other poems*. Chapel Hill, N. C.: Briarpatch Press, 1974, 70 pp. \$3.00.

Paul Baker Newman. *Paula*. Georgetown, California: Dragon Teeth's Press, 1975, 64 pp. \$2.50.

Michael Waters. *Fish Light*. Ithaca, N. Y.: Ithaca House, 1975, 55 pp. N.P.

Alice Cabaniss. *The Dark Bus and Other Forms of Transport*. Charleston, S. C.: Saltcatcher Press, 1974, 48 pp. \$2.50.

James Seay. *Water Tables*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1972, 71 pp. \$3.45.

Guy Owen and Mary C. Williams, editors. *New Southern Poets: Selected Poems from "Southern Poetry Review"*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974, \$6.95 cloth, \$5.50 paper.

REVIEWS

133

Franklin Ashley's chapbook is most successful when, as the title suggests, the poet achieves a sharp focus, and the vague becomes vividly physical. Unfortunately the mastershots are rare; too often the focus is fuzzy: "Strange thoughts" are arbitrarily "blacks and greens." Definite shadows are loosely specified as "certain cool shadows." At times, the lens cap is left on altogether, and the reader finds himself blankly flipping a page. Ambiguity, like irony, needs handles if its richness is to be grasped, and often Mr. Ashley neglects the requisite handholds.

Eugene Platt's collection is one to be read from the start, for the ordering of these poems is careful. They chart his persona's progress from the guilty son of a Baptist minister to the Whitmanesque chanter of bodily delights. Unhappily the poems themselves are not given the same careful attention the arrangement is. Mr. Platt's discursive narratives embarrass more often than they excite; clichés are common and frequently function to undercut his much protested emotional maturity.

While Mr. Platt brings his lens too close to his ladies, Mr. Newman's speaker views his subject, his daughter Paula, from below and afar. Though there is a reference to her acne, she is more often an ethereal feminist: "the dawn," "a trellis of grapevines," and "a goddess" who tries to destroy paternalism and chauvinism. Despite the father-poet's protestations to the contrary, he dotes on her, not as a father doting on his maturing daughter but, disturbingly, as a lover. Somehow we prefer that our poets speak to their daughters with the detachment of a Yeats praying for his. Furthermore, Mr. Newman goes on too long; consequently, *Paula* lacks the intensity which comes from concision.

The best poems of Michael Waters possess precisely the intensity Paul Baker Newman's work lacks. Frankly Mr. Waters' poetry is a real surprise despite a sameness of voice and imagery in these thirty poems. Leaving the book, the reader takes only the surprises like the "young girl who wakes/ to feel her breasts for the first time" and "like the magician . . . discovers a strange bird in his coat." Too often though the pleasantries (roses that "bloom like dust") are set against a cliché or prosaic line (roses "bloom like dust in the mind's eye"). In another splendid passage a young man, "drunk/ and dirty from loving/ another man's wife," has his small bones washed with rice. But the performer of this gentle and interesting task is "my larger self," an abstraction which dissipates the force of image.

Superior writing, however, dominates in this collection which is fine testimony of the caliber of the poets serving as Poets-in-Residence for the South Carolina Arts Commission.

Though occasionally guilty of saying too much ("The dark bus comes to me, and I remember/ walking down the cold dirt path to where/ the bright white house was shining/ in the crisp moon. . .") or saying too little ("Raw slip converts by fire/ to temporary set, its molecules arranged/ by curving motions of keen-bladed tools. . ."), Mrs. Cabaniss's slim work is another pleasant surprise. Though sometimes (as in "Shadows in a Glass of Israeli Brandy") one gets the impression that somewhere in her lines there lurks a good poem that has not yet seen the light of day, in her best work ("One Poem Written to Miss Dickinson After Reading About Five Hundred of Hers," "Memory Candle," and "Prima Gravidia"), she is terse, sensitive, and memorable.

In one of James Seay's best poems, some happily drugged dancing folk "appear on the damp lawn/ and give us their blurred version/ of a story they want to live/ where image arises from image, freely. . ." This poet's work rises spontaneously and gracefully from the same giving impulse: "my feet are moving into moonlight/ like clouds; friends are waiting." Count yourself lucky to be among Mr. Seay's friends.

Though a few of these poems just don't matter much, and some are cumbersome in their metaphysics, most are challenging and rewarding. The ecology poems are a trifle conventional, but poems like "Natural Growth" and "The Green World" are a delight.

Sometimes Seay will begin promisingly but peter out in the closing lines with some misty generality: "Or are you trying, tree man,/ to remember something forever?" There are probably a hundred good poems that end in a question, but this strategy must be regarded as a weak one.

Despite my weak carping, Mr. Seay easily fulfills the promise of his first book.

From an old hand press in Lake Como, Florida, the *Southern Poetry Review* has progressed steadily: recently its poetry was favorably compared with the verse published in *Atlantic*, *Nation*, and *The Sewanee Review*. Yet in the fifteen years of its existence, it has not, as Louis Rubin points out, succumbed to cliquishness. "What it does is to select the very best poetry it can get . . . and publish it in modest but attractive fashion." Unfortunately the best a poet has published in *SPR* is not always the best he has published, but the quality of these poems is very high.

The editors have chosen seventy poets who, despite the title, are neither new nor narrowly Southern: over 140 books of poetry are represented by these authors who come from as far away as New Zealand. If possible, read these poets from Adcock to Wright. If you can't read them all, but can browse, here are three poems not to be missed: Josephine Jacobsen's "Breaking and Entering," Joseph Edgar Simon's "The Soldier and the Singer," and Fred Chappell's "My Grandmother Washes Her Feet."

SKIP EISIMINGER
Clemson University

Susan L. Bartels. *Step Carefully in Night Grass*. Winston-Salem, N. C.: John F. Blair, 1974, 55 pp. \$4.50.

Kathleen Platt. *A Common Bond*. California, Pa.: Allegheny Press, 1976, 58 pp. \$3.00.

Susan Bartels can work with smooth deliberateness to carry her reader just where she wants, as in "Transposition.": "Love darkens with the night/or the imagined night/as midnight forces/converge./At noon/behind a desk/behind a business smile/the eclipse begins./Pupils dilate/responding to diminished light;/afternoon candles flicker,/licking the blackened walls./Were you to prick my finger then/blood would run dark as burgundy." Sometimes, though, even in so controlled a work as this, she slips a bit to overexplain, to over-abstract. For instance, is it necessary to tell us so bluntly that the pupils' dilation is for their "responding to diminished light"? Sometimes, too, she pours over us inordinate concentrations of polysyllabic, Latinate words, as in "Jellyfish": "Swept onto an indifferent beach/the translucent jellyfish/begins its dying labor/as the embryonic brain/visible through colorless layers/of swollen sac/floats laconically/in the heaving sphere." Ms. Bartels' strengths show best in works such as "Woman," in which she treats a clear set of images with fresh insight and in natural-sounding rhythms: "A pamphlet on my doorstep/urges me to be re-born./No need./I am immune to dying fully./I am the eternal witch/offering Snow White the apple./I am the girl who takes the fruit/and sleeps a not quite dying sleep./When a cloud sears the sky/over Nevada again/I will be there and will survive./I have eaten toadstools for the taste/and known small daily deaths. . . ." Susan Bartels is vigorous in her perceptions, relentless in her determination, and, if she can more often sidestep the abstractions and, as they pass, put form and color to them, she will be even better as a poet.

REVIEWS

135

Kathleen Platt's book is organized in three parts simply as "Woman and Man," "Woman and Child," and "Woman Alone," but it bears no placards and shows no frenzy. The poems are generally well modulated, the images appropriate, sometimes genuinely fresh and enlightening: "Why are the thirties/so destructive?/The reach of the scythe/so broad?/It would seem a time/for mitering the corners of a life. . . ." Occasionally a poem is undercut by weak rhythms and, as in the case of "Wanted," ponderous diction: "WAITRESS WANTED/for the hourly, half-hourly pattern/of unimaginative verbal caress,/Hey, baby. . . ." This poem nonetheless sustains our interest for the juxtaposition of the bored, sometimes desperate, waitress with the cheap ads in "empty matchbooks/bright with empty promise/of bigger biceps, breasts,/or bilingual ability . . .," with the lusting, possessive eyes and hands of customers, and the prospects of doing this sort of thing till death: "Headlines, then,/ WAITRESS WANTED." Ms. Platt has perhaps a slightly indulged expository tendency. One of the best short poems in the book is the gently restrained "Woman Thinking," in which women are described as thinking of their men and their children as words, as physical signs of communication: "We talk above the children,/who punctuate, you say./Still, I easily separate your words from theirs,/place them as I think you meant them to fall,/hear them in your voice." Good lines, but the conclusion, turning pointedly from "women" and "men" in the first stanza to the singular and more austere collective form, "Woman, thinking of man,/becomes his," is a little more distant than the context of the poem suggests should be the case. Ms. Platt can be tough: in "Seasonal Preoccupation" she begins, "Again October/brushes leaded glass,/leaves, tortured to one-time intensity,/giddy in the wake/of new velocity/that did not trouble/the green days." Such clarity and precision are a lesson.

ROBERT W. HILL
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James E. Kibler, Jr. *Pseudonymous Publications of William Gilmore Simms*. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1976, 102 pp.

For the specialist in William Gilmore Simms and the scholar with more than a passing interest in the literature of the ante-bellum South, this publication lists the titles of all the prose and poetry that Simms is known to have published under pseudonyms, initials, and symbols. This listing almost doubles the size of the Simms canon.

Why did Simms publish so much under pennames? In his introduction Professor Kibler cites several reasons—personal reticence about poems revealing private emotions, particularly melancholy; commentary on the title or subject matter of the article, story or poem; and a desire to secure the reader's unbiased reactions—but the principal reason seems to have been that the greater portion of Simms's pseudonymous work appears in his own magazines and newspapers. Simms simply did not want his reading public to know how much of what he was editing and publishing he had to write himself.

Perhaps this is also the main reason that Simms used so many different pseudonyms, 186 proved ones for verse, with another 9 classed as possible, and 32 more proved exclusively for prose. There is also no doubt that Simms's wide reading in both ancient and modern literature and especially his love of the Greek and Latin classics inspired his use of a variety of pseudonyms.

Fugitive pieces of his were collected by Simms in nine large scrapbooks. By using these scrapbooks and evidence in the Simms *Letters* and by making a page by page search of contemporary magazines, newspapers, giftbooks, and anthologies, Professor Kibler established the pseudonyms used in publishing poetry. He found it

even more difficult to identify the pseudonymously published prose works, a smaller percentage of which appears in the scrapbooks. But this task too was accomplished.

All Simms admirers can be grateful for a very thorough and careful contribution to the knowledge which we have about him.

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